

Progress Ensures Network Availability During Daily Newspaper's Peak Production Hours

CASE STUDY



INDUSTRY

Media

PRODUCT

WhatsUp® Gold

KEY CHALLENGES

- Needed to know in advance of dependencies that could potentially affect access to its publishing application

RESULTS

- Faster response to application problems
- Better availability during peak hours
- Improved ability to provide information about system administrators' work

The daily newspaper Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung brings current news to people in the Osnabrück and Emsland region of Germany. Together with its regional editions, Neue OZ is one of Germany's largest regional newspapers, with more than 440,000 readers each day. During the crucial evening production period for the next day's edition, the newspaper staff is particularly dependent on such functional applications as the content management system and printing programs.

Jan Terhalle is the system administrator in charge of ensuring that the network and applications are accessible without interruption. The size of this network poses a particular challenge: "Around 1,000 employees are currently using it, but we're in a period of rapid growth and that number is rising steadily," says Terhalle. "The Osnabrück headquarters, where about half the staff is located, is connected to twelve satellite locations that house functions that include our local editorial offices."

Recommendations From a Colleague

For years, Terhalle and his colleagues used special monitoring software to detect problems that could impact production when a server went offline or a switch failed, for example. When the software provider terminated its support services, Neue OZ needed another system. The search for a replacement did not take long. "A colleague at another company highly recommended Progress's WhatsUp Gold network monitoring solution," the system administrator recalls. "We tested the software and liked its interface and features so much that we didn't even consider another product."

Soon the system was installed in Osnabrück with the support of Freising-based Progress reseller treeConsult in May 2013, and then connected to the network components, such as servers and switches. treeConsult also trained the staff in charge of the system. "It went really well," Terhalle says. "After just two days we were able to monitor our network with the new system."

During the WhatsUp Gold implementation, treeConsult also presented the newspaper with a completely new integrated option for the network monitoring solution: the Application Performance Monitor, or APM. This software collects information about the behavior of applications across multiple servers and systems, and it monitors whether the components used by an application — such as databases and servers — exceed a critical threshold. When this happens the system automatically issues a warning about potential problems.

Plug-in Increases Uptime During PDF Preparation

"We tested the APM plug-in and were very pleased," Terhalle says. "We particularly liked the tool's evaluation capacity, which allows us to oversee the stability of our active applications and track their usage level at all times. We can then identify bottlenecks that always occur at certain times."

About six weeks after the introduction of WhatsUp Gold, Neue OZ introduced the APM plug-in to the production environment. One of the most important applications it monitors is Adobe Distiller. Employees depend on it to convert text into the PDF files required to produce the electronic editions of their newspaper for tablet PCs — usually under great time pressure. Jan Terhalle and his colleagues also use the APM to monitor the CMS's SQL database. They plan to connect the entire exposure process to the APM in the future.

“Presenting our work to outside parties will also be much easier,” Terhalle explains. “Now, for example, it will be no problem to show that uptime for a certain application was 100%. We never had these kinds of analytical options before.”

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JAN TERHALLE
Systems Administrator

Early Warnings About Problems Ensure Seamless Production

The system administrators at Neue OZ use the Progress solution every day. A single dashboard provides a continuous display of network, component and application usage, and the system administrators are automatically notified via email if problems arise.

This has fundamentally changed how application performance problems are handled. “Before, we could only address problems with, say, Adobe Distiller in an on-call approach, after the affected users had notified us,” Terhalle explains. “If these issues occurred during the crucial evening production phase, there could be a tendency to panic — particularly since they often had to call us at home. This meant waiting for us to return to the office and accumulating overtime hours.”

Problems Solved Much Faster

Everything gets done much more quickly now. Terhalle and his colleagues can begin solving the problems when they start to emerge, long before receiving a desperate phone call. This means that problems with Adobe Distiller, for example, can be remedied in the afternoon so that they do not interfere with peak evening work times.

“We don’t regret our decision for WhatsUp Gold — quite the opposite,” Terhalle says. “The software is easy to use and offers excellent possibilities for expansion — which we have already experienced with the APM plug-in.”



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About Progress

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