

Imagine the scene: demand is growing quickly for 'triple play' (television, telephone and Internet) digital services, so you've deployed the Oracle E-Business Suite to increase efficiency and streamline business processes. To coincide with it, Marketing has launched a large-scale advertising campaign. Your call center agents are primed to field new customer enquiries. But then you find your Oracle environment coping struggling to cope with the surge in demand. Agents have to wait as much as 30 minutes simply to book an installation appointment. Customer satisfaction is draining away. Technology vendors blame one another. Enter: Precise. Using the Precise i³ application performance management solution, code problems are immediately identified and resolved to restore peak performance. The potentially fatal \$38,000 per hour cost of downtime is avoided. This dramatic, real-world scenario occurred at Casema, a leading provider of network services and entertainment in The Netherlands.

Organization Profile

Casema (www.casema.nl) is a leading provider of network services and entertainment in The Netherlands. The company manages more than 12,500 miles of underground cable, providing 1.4 million households with radio, analog TV, digital TV, Internet and telephony services.

Industry

Telecommunications

Solution

Application Performance Management,

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Aad van Boven

Senior Manager IT Operations
Casema

'Triple play' digital TV, Internet and telephony services

Casema manages more than 12,500 miles of underground cable, providing 1.4 million households with radio, analog and digital TV, internet, and telephony services. Casema is active in and around Dutch cities such as The Hague, Amersfoort, Utrecht, Amstelveen, and Breda.

The company is a stalwart of the cable broadcast industry, having first launched its services 30 years ago. Traditionally, Casema had marketed analog television services to households—and the primary emphasis was not on individual customers. Instead, the aim was to ensure cable service delivery to different residential addresses and manage the billing across real estate. Developing intimate customer relationships was not considered a priority. All of this changed with the advent of the Internet. Demand grew dramatically for Casema's 'triple play' (television, telephone and Internet) services and the company found itself reaching out to individual customer for the first time.

Leading Dutch cable company and entertainment provider deployed Precise i³ application performance issue in oracle E-Business Suite.

"We suddenly had people as customers, not addresses," explains Aad van Boven, senior manager, IT operations, Casema. "Demand for our services was rising, and we were adding new services, such as digital telephony, Broadband Internet, and digital TV, all the time.

Support multichannel customer enquiries

Casema deployed Oracle E-Business Suite to help increase efficiency, streamline business processes, and enable end users to do their jobs more effectively. The Oracle system was intended to enable Casema to effectively market its services, support multichannel customer enquiries, and cross sell/up-sell complementary solutions. Casema's Oracle E-Business system was designed and developed by Oracle in India over an 18-month period and—among other modules—it incorporated a call center model, supporting internal and external agents.

When the Oracle system was ready to go live, Casema's Marketing team prepared a large-scale communications campaign to promote Casema's new digital telephony product, based on the company's ability to manage the anticipated growth in demand. Extra call center agents were drafted in and trained in the two sales call centers and one support center, the promotional campaign was launched—and a flood of customers quickly contacted Casema eager to take advantage of the triple play services.

That's when the problems started. As more and more customers called the call center to order the services, the Oracle-based system ran more and more slowly. Customers were left waiting on the line, and it sometimes took several weeks to send an invoice out to a customer. Moreover, it took up to 30 minutes for a customer on the phone to book an appointment with Casema to install the product. An SQL query involved almost 880 full table scans to propose an installation date. "Performance reached the stage where we wrote to customers asking them not to contact us by telephone," says van Boven. "We also had to give out a large number of free temporary subscriptions in return for the inconvenience they were suffering."

Casema's immediate reaction was to escalate the issue with Oracle and the platform provider, Sun. Not surprisingly, the software vendor claimed there were issues with the hardware, and vice-versa. "In reality, the original application had only been developed and tested on a small database with 1,000 customers and a very limited number of network components. The live system was in fact operating 200,000 network components and supporting 1.4 million customers," he adds.

Precise's operational excellence

Casema met with Precise, discussed the performance problem the company was experiencing, and Precise were immediately on the case.

SOLUTION AT A GLANCE

Business Drivers

- Manage rapid rate of customer growth and demand for 'triple play' services
- Ensure call center applications correctly sized to cope with peaks in demand
- Adhere strictly to the service levels agreed to with business units

Technology Challenges

- Overcome performance issue with Oracle E-Business Suite
- Tackle risk of downtime, with its cost equivalent to \$38,000 per hour
- Identify the most effective course of action for performance degradation, and quickly solve the issue

Solution

- Precise i³ application performance management solution, implemented by Precise Global Consulting Services

Precise Products

- Precise i³ for Oracle applications
- Precise i³ for J2EE
- Precise i³ for Web Servers

Technology Environment

- Oracle E-Business Suite
- Sun Solaris operating system
- One Sun e6900 database server, one Sun v490 and four Sun v480 application servers, Hitachi Data Systems SAN of 55 Terabytes
- Three call centers (2 X sales; 1 X customer support)

Precise Services

- Precise Global Consulting Services

Precise Partner

- Getronics-PinkRocade
- Ymor

"We weren't interested in blame, we just wanted operational excellence," says Van Boven. "Three weeks after the problem had first been detected, and only a day after Precise had been consulted, the Precise Account Manager referred us to the example of another Dutch organization which had experienced similar performance problems to ours in the Oracle environment. We spoke to them—and they confirmed how brilliant Precise i³ had been at pinpointing the cause, identifying the most effective course of action, and quickly solving the problem to restore peak performance. The reference customer in fact said that Precise i³ for Oracle had helped him keep his job!"

"The problem this time turned out to be a combination of a CPU bottleneck and an I/O bottleneck," says Shammout. "Precise i³ gave us the information we needed to redesign the disk, and add more storage and CPUs precisely where they were needed to improve performance. We were able to quickly address the problems and hold a successful open enrollment with no customer complaints."

Spurred on by this glowing testimonial, the Casema team conducted a proof of concept of Precise i³, in conjunction with Precise Global Consulting Services. "The Precise consultants were very knowledgeable and as committed as we were to identifying and resolving the problem. They deployed Precise i³ on two small servers, and very quickly it was clear that there were inefficient queries in the SQL statements. We had millions of lines of code, so we knew the problem was serious, but at least we were starting to identify the root cause."

In 80 percent of the situations, Precise i³ found that the code which had been developed in India was at fault. By providing an end-to-end view of performance management, Precise i³ enabled Casema to isolate the performance problems by tier and recommend indexes to improve the Oracle database performance. Precise Global Consulting Services created a Performance Warehouse covering the Oracle database, the Java code, forms, and the database server.

Following the implementation, Casema was able to optimize performance to the extent that average call waiting time was reduced from 90 minutes, at the height of the issue, to a maximum of three minutes now. Average call handling time was also reduced from 15 minutes to three minutes.

Customer satisfaction is also now back up to 90 percent of the level it was prior to deploying Precise i³.

"Using Precise i³ in the test and user acceptance phase of a new application, we can base line performance before we release it, and pick up any problems. This ensures Casema adheres strictly to the service levels we have agreed to with our business units."

Aad van Boven

Senior Manager IT
Operations
Casema

Complete view of performance monitoring

Based on this exceptional success, Casema has standardized on Precise i³

Risk Reduction

- Detected issues before they impacted end users and ensued critical Oracle business applications performed at peak efficiency
- Isolated the performance issues by tier and recommended indexes to increase Oracle database performance
- Overcome risk of downtime, with its cost equivalent to \$38,000 per hour in lost revenue opportunities

performance

- Optimized performance to the extent that average call waiting time was reduced from 35 minutes at the height of the issue to a maximum of three minutes now
- Reduced average call handling time from 15 minute to three minutes
- Cut processing time for customer configurator screen from up to 15 minutes to 15 seconds

Cost Saving

- Enabled call center environment to scale up to 500 agents (in three call centers) without any change in server capacity or expensive hardware upgrade

Productivity

- Created efficient plans for coping with disruption to stuff, facilities, processes, brand, applications, data, and IT infrastructure
- Analyze the information that is collected over time and provided recommendations based on changes in performance

Customer Satisfaction

- Increased customer satisfaction back up to 90 percent of the level it was prior the Oracle issue occurring
- Reduced open enrollment user complaints from dozens to zero in one year
- Base lined performance and ensure Casema adheres strictly to the performance service levels agreed to with business units

to provide a complete view of performance monitoring across the entire Oracle E-Business Suite. The complete bundle of solutions includes Precise i³ for Oracle Applications, Precise i³ for J2EE, and Precise i³ for Web Servers. The Casema team has also used the SmarTune™ Expert Advice utility in Precise i³ to help tune components and improve performance. The utility is used to analyze the information that is collected over time and provide recommendations based on changes in performance. Changes are compared to the baseline, and if performance is slow, the problems and suggested solutions are displayed. Based on this, SmarTune generates alerts and enables Casema to proactively identify performance trends. “Using Precise i³ in the test and user acceptance phase of a new application, we can base line performance before we release it, and pick up any problems. This ensures Casema adheres strictly to the performance service levels we have agreed to with our business units,” says Van Boven.

Casema's business partner Ymor is also building on the Precise solution to manage connections, so that technicians can receive customer orders from their mobile device—a true end-to-end service delivery solution. Getronics PinkRocade— Casema's major asset management partner-delivered the software and hardware.

Other benefits abound for this next-generation application performance management system. Casema has built a Java-based configurator screen in the Oracle E-Business Suite. The screen is used by the call center agents to calculate different customer product bundles, based on specific details provided by the customer. The customer-based subset of this screen was taking up to 15 minutes to process, once the data had been inputted—because Precise i³ was able to identify and resolve performance issues here, processing time has been reduced to 15 seconds.

Furthermore, when Casema was experiencing its performance shortcomings at the launch of its new service, the Oracle E-Business Suite was only sized to accommodate 150 call center agents. By again eliminating the performance problems, the system can be used by up to 500 agents in three call centers—without any change in server capacity or expensive hardware upgrade.

“The cost of downtime for Casema is huge,” Van Boven concludes. “We have almost 500 customer service representatives now, and if they are unable to work because the system is unavailable, it would cost Casema \$38,000 per hour in lost revenue opportunities. Using Precise i³ for Oracle, we can detect problems before they impact end users and ensure our critical Oracle business applications perform at peak efficiency. It really is a hugely important piece of software to Casema.”

More customer success stories can be found at: www.precise.com

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