



Stoke City Council

Tackling Performance Management

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With the government's commitment to performance indicators and the aggressive e-government agenda, capacity planning and performance management of local government IT systems is more important than ever before. In this increasingly demanding environment, the only guaranteed way of achieving these objectives is to rigorously and proactively use the power of capacity planning and performance management tools, consultancy services or a combination of both.

Stoke City Council is no exception. The Council has standardized on Sun Solaris as its platform of choice, although a number of more specialized applications run under Windows NT or remain on the original ICL VME mainframes.

The Council had invested in a highly specialized document imaging system for the benefits office. Any correspondence or documentation relating to benefits claims could be scanned into the new Sun Solaris-based 'jukebox' optical system and



stored electronically in an Oracle database. Letters could be output automatically in Word format. The system was also linked to the Council's ICL VME mainframe which calculated the benefits due. The process of inputting historical data into the new system was lengthy but the system was able to go live, on a limited basis, in early 2000 with some sixty members of staff using it. On commissioning, the system ran increasingly slowly.

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Server consolidation:

Many of Metron's clients are undertaking extensive server consolidation projects – an area of activity in which Athene is playing a key part in determining an infinite variety of 'what if' scenarios – before any decisions are put into a live environment.

Hands on Experience

Metron is hosting a series of workshops offering a day's 'hands-on' experience with Athene. Suitable for both users of the software and those interested in seeing the product in more detail. 'hands-on', please see the web site for dates or contact sally.thorne@metron.co.uk

Avoid Wastage!

According to Gartner, 20% of the average organization's IT budget is wasted, with over-specified hardware cited as one of the three key reasons for this. Users of Athene would – of course – avoid this pitfall.

Kent County Council



Adopting APR Model

The Information Systems Group of Kent County Council is using Metron's web-based Athene APR (Automated Performance Reporting) service, which provides 'on-demand' performance reporting over the Internet/Intranet. Athene APR obviates the need for organizations to invest in the full suite of software which is usually required by companies, whilst providing them with a fast, flexible means of gaining performance management information.

Kent County Council first considered using an APR service last year, with the aim of trying to improve the reliability and uptime of a number of systems, primarily NT-based, which had failed without any obvious reason.

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Stoke City Council

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Consultants from capacity planning specialists, Metron, were commissioned to carry out a study to identify the cause(s) of the problem. Using Metron's Athene performance management tool, data was collected relating to the

network, CPU, disk utilization and contention for memory resources. The report identified seventeen different actions which needed to be taken to improve the performance of the system.

Within three to four weeks, users were noticing huge improvements to the system. The backlog of claims began to drop. As expected the first and least expensive of the recommended actions produced the most dramatic results with a reduction in disk utilization from over 50% to around 6%. Adding indexes to the most frequently accessed Oracle tables reduced Oracle's CPU usage by more than 50% and reduced the I/O generated by Oracle by 90%.[Ⓜ]



South Yorkshire Police

Monitoring with Athene

The Information Systems Department of South Yorkshire Police is using Metron's Athene to monitor and provide capacity planning information on a number of Unix and NT systems.

Norman Norsworthy from South Yorks Police: "We took the decision to install Athene about eighteen months ago. Prior to that, it was extremely difficult to identify where or why we appeared to have slow response times or other problems with the systems. Athene has proved very useful in helping us gain this information, which we make available internally using the automatic web page generation facility within the product. In particular we have been able to identify where we need to install additional discs and which servers are under-utilized."

"Athene is the foundation of our ability to monitor our systems. It does exactly what we need it to do."

South Yorkshire Police is purchasing additional licenses which will extend Athene's use to other platforms.[Ⓜ]

Kent County Council *continued*

The aim was to capture performance data on a regular basis and then seek to identify and analyze the cause of the problems.

Tim Bick is Projects Technical Lead at the County Council:

"The concept of APR was attractive because it would give us access to Metron's well-regarded performance management software but at a low start up cost. It also meant that we wouldn't have to employ the specialist staff usually required to manage sophisticated performance management software."

The Athene APR service for Kent County Council delivers performance data reports relating to Disk, CPU and Memory, Exchange Server and Oracle metrics, including buffer hit rate. To date the APR service has provided Kent with a "useful baseline view of what demands the current workload is putting on the hardware."

Kent is planning to continue with the APR service until the end of the year, which will have provided according to Tim Bick, "a worthwhile taster", before the Council decides whether to buy its own full copy of Athene to provide capacity planning facilities on its several hundred servers, as well as having access to all the features of Metron's software.[Ⓜ]

About Athene APR

With the emphasis on meeting individual client requirements, customers for Athene APR are able to choose from over fifteen hundred performance metrics to ensure that their reports provide the requisite level of detail. High level reporting options include which machines they require performance reports for, the specific information they need, when the reports should be available, how they should be delivered (Intranet, e-mail, print or saved to file) and to whom. Daily reports on the selected performance metrics are provided by Athene APR via the web and updated at the frequency chosen by

the client to provide a picture of how the system is performing. Weekly, monthly and quarterly summaries highlight trends in system performance to enable longer-term management and capacity planning of hardware requirements.

Athene APR provides performance management information for any organization with Windows NT or Unix systems. The service is backed up a telephone-based support centre, staffed by Metron's technical experts, who can provide additional help if required. Remote management of the service is handled by Metron.