

RGIS®

RGIS Inventory Specialists

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Clarence Mylin
 Vice President Information Services
 RGIS

Global Inventory Services

RGIS is the world's largest provider of inventory services to the retail industry. RGIS performs more than 400,000 inventories each year for retailers, wholesalers, manufacturers, and institutions, along with other services such as stock-on-hand and replenishment-data updates, shelf price audits, asset inventories, UPC/SKU cross references, mystery shoppers and site surveys. Its 40,000 employees and more than 400 locations worldwide are linked by a global WAN that is critical to fulfilling the company's promise to its customers of unparalleled data integrity and the complete safety of their inventory data.

Monitoring Application Performance Worldwide

RGIS's business depends on the performance of a battery of networked applications back-ended by Oracle databases, and new applications are constantly under development—in fact, 5% of the company's revenue goes into R&D to improve its services and provide new ones. The development, testing, deployment, and operation of these applications depend on close cooperation between

various teams: programmers, database administrators (DBAs), network administrators, and others.

Unfortunately, each of these teams was using different tools to measure performance. The result was applications that too often did not perform as well as expected, an epidemic of "finger-pointing," and a lot of time wasted by various teams trying to deal with problems that didn't, in the end, turn out to originate in their "management silo." There simply was no unified view of end-to-end performance that could reveal the true cause of networked application problems.

Immediate Results

All that changed when RGIS installed the ACE Live appliance at their corporate headquarters. "Within 48 hours of the installation we were able to find some nagging problem areas and resolve them," says Clarence Mylin, vice president of information systems at RGIS. "In fact, because of the granularity of detail the appliance provides about networked application performance, we've been able to tune the network to get phenomenal response times; reducing the average response time in some cases from four seconds to under a second. That's a 75% improvement without any further change to the infrastructure—just making better use of what we have."



RGIS Problems

- Pinpointing problems across different management silos
- Finger-pointing and lack of cooperation between management teams

ACE Live Solution

- An ACE Live appliance deployed in corporate HQ
- Visibility into every component of application response worldwide
- Business groups defined to support the needs of each team

RGIS Benefits

- 75% improvement in application response
- Much faster problem resolution
- Greatly improved collaboration between management teams
- Improved user and IS staff productivity
- Reduced expenditures on network management products

Speeding Up Problem Resolution

Many of the benefits delivered to RGIS by the ACE Live appliance come from its ability to break down end-to-end application response time into its various components: Connection Setup Time, Server Response Time, Network Transfer Time, Outbound Retransmission Delay, and Round Trip Time.

"I've never seen a product that can break down application response as well as the [ACE Live] appliance," says Mylin. "It's a huge timesaver, enabling us to zero in on the real source of a problem right away. We can typically identify and resolve a problem in a day or less because our various teams no longer waste time trying to troubleshoot problems that aren't really their responsibility."

Promoting Collaboration

This application response granularity delivers an even more important benefit; a major improvement in cross-departmental collaboration and cooperation.

"Because we know immediately whose responsibility a problem is, there's a lot less finger-pointing and a lot more cooperation," Mylin notes. "The [ACE Live] appliance has become the glue that holds our teams together. If it never did another thing, we'd still be happy with it because it gets people communicating."

Saving Money

The ACE Live appliance is used by a variety of people at RGIS: programmers and DBAs for pre-deployment testing and post-deployment service quality assurance, network administrators for network troubleshooting

and tuning, department directors and VPs for oversight, and others. Each team is encouraged to add its own business groups, which group traffic flows according to their business significance (which application, which user, which customer, which branch office, etc.), in order to focus on issues critical to their particular area of responsibility. This versatility and wide applicability is delivering notable savings, both in terms of time and money.

"The speed-up in application response it made possible is making our users more productive," says Mylin, "and the speed-up in problem resolution makes our IS staff more productive as well. And because it can monitor performance, utilization, and many other aspects of our operations—from a single point—that formerly took several different types of systems to see, we don't need to invest in so many different network management products, for even further savings."

**For more information,
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