



THE UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY COST-EFFECTIVELY MANAGES ONLINE CAMPUS SYSTEMS WITH TRUESIGHT®

The University of Kentucky's IT organization is now using Coradiant TrueSight to monitor performance, troubleshoot, and plan capacity for its Blackboard Course Management system, SAP-based MyUK Portal, Exchange Webmail, SharePoint and other applications and IT systems.

"We couldn't tell what was going on. Someone would report a problem and we'd go back and forth with the vendor for months trying to reproduce it."

NICK MCCLURE
UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

INDUSTRY

Higher Education

CHALLENGE

Initially, the IT group at the University of Kentucky was facing performance issues with its Blackboard application and other on campus IT systems. It was also having difficulty planning hardware capacity for these systems.

WHY WEB APPLICATION PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT?

Because IT was unable to replicate problems, issues would take months to resolve. Additionally, the university was relying on vendor estimates to determine when to upgrade hardware. Since these estimates were cautious, the university was overspending. The university needed a better way to troubleshoot problems and plan capacity.

SOLUTION

The University of Kentucky installed Coradiant TrueSight, a complete, turnkey reporting device that detects web and server problems immediately while also providing the forensic details needed to solve them. Performance vs. usage reporting helps improve capacity planning.

KEY BENEFITS

- Enables the team to instantly identify the source of problems so they solve them faster
- Reporting functions enable the IT group to demonstrate today's high levels of service and help increase system adoption
- Better capacity planning reduces hardware costs

The University of Kentucky provides its students, faculty, and staff with access to many online systems. Eighteen thousand students are enrolled in courses that use the Blackboard Academic Suite to enable hybrid online/on campus courses and real time chat or discussion boards or to post announcements, course syllabi, exams, tests and homework assignments. The MyUK transactional portal allows students to register online for courses, check grades and change contact information; it also provide staff with online pay stubs and HR, financial and business services. The university provides Webmail through Exchange and blogs and wikis with SharePoint.

Several years ago, performance problems caused many faculty and students to avoid using these systems, and the university was unable to track down the source of the problems so the vendors could fix them. Said Nick McClure, Lead Systems Programmer, "We couldn't tell what was going on. Someone would report a problem and we'd go back and forth with the vendor for months trying to reproduce it."

In addition, the university was unable to optimally plan capacity. Said McClure, "We were using the standard counters on our servers. We could look at CPU usage or memory utilization to track peak times and loads and correlate slowdowns with usage, but it wasn't an exact science. We'd rely on vendor recommendations. But vendors want to play it safe, so we found ourselves overbuying hardware."

The university needed a better way to monitor, troubleshoot and plan capacity for its systems. After exploring several options, the university chose Coradiant TrueSight. "We selected Coradiant because it had direct knowledge of Blackboard and was the only turnkey solution available on the market. It was extremely easy to get up and running. We literally unpacked the box at noon and were collecting data by 3 p.m.," said McClure

MONITORING, TROUBLESHOOTING, CAPACITY PLANNING

Today, the university uses Coradiant to monitor Blackboard, the MyUK portal, Exchange and SharePoint to proactively prevent problems and troubleshoot issues that do arise. "We can find problems before users start complaining. If a student or faculty member calls with a problem, we can see exactly what the end user saw, get the data about what they're doing, and provide the information directly to the software vendor so we can open a trouble ticket. That saves us a lot of time." Said McClure.

The IT group also employs TrueSight to plan hardware capacity for servers, server farms, and virtual systems. TrueSight monitors performance for some new applications during development. And it keeps track of network performance.

CASE STUDY

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Said McClure, “We have Watchpoints for locations on and off campus including our local cable Internet provider, we can see if we have any slow areas on the local network or common customer networks. We can also determine without asking whether a call is from someone on a dialup network out of the country or in a dorm room. This makes it easier to determine potential issues without spending additional time asking questions the end user may not be able to answer.”

BENEFITS

The biggest benefit is that TrueSight has helped restore confidence in campus applications by enabling consistently high system performance. Explained McClure, “We use TrueSight reports to show management, students and faculty that our systems are providing the best possible user experience. If we install an upgrade, we can compare service levels before and after to demonstrate increases in performance. We can also demonstrate that we’re actively monitoring the back end and working to improve the system. Without TrueSight, all we have is anecdotal information.”

The result has been a decided uptick in the number of courses on Blackboard and the

number of students using it. Satisfaction with the portal and email systems has improved as well. Said McClure, “We hold student forums to talk about IT systems; a year ago they said that Blackboard and other systems were slow, or not working. Now they say that all those issues are fixed and they want additional wireless access to the applications.”

TrueSight has also helped the University save money on hardware. Said McClure, “TrueSight helps us understand when it’s time to invest in infrastructure. At the same time, if we see that when the number of users increase, performance remains stable, we can make a business case that we don’t need more hardware and we can take those funds and use them elsewhere.”



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ABOUT UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

Founded in 1865, the University of Kentucky is the state’s land grant university and the largest university in the commonwealth. With 27,209 students, the university is home to 16 colleges, a graduate school, 93 undergraduate programs, 99 master programs, 66 doctoral programs and four professional programs.

ABOUT CORADIANT

Coradant is the leading provider of equipment used to manage, optimize and troubleshoot Web applications. Coradant’s award-winning TrueSight products use customer metrics gathered from each Web user visit as their primary data source for IT management.

Coradant Web Application Performance Management products are deployed in hundreds of leading organizations and Fortune 500 companies including software as a service (SaaS), e-commerce, entertainment, finance, insurance, healthcare, and education.

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