



Quest Ensures Application Performance and Keeps the Games Alive for BSkyB's On-demand Sports Site

BSkyB designed, built and now hosts a service known to its customers as Video Lounge, which provides on-demand sports footage over the Internet.

The Challenge

Known to the consumer by many different names, Video Lounge has become very popular with tens of thousands of football fans downloading footage, which provides incremental revenue to BSkyB. Initially developed for one football club, Video Lounge grew in popularity far beyond its anticipated demand. Through active promotion and recruitment, membership grew significantly year after year.

By the end of the 2004/2005 football season, BSkyB was hosting Video Lounge for 11 football clubs, as well as BSkyB's own branded Websites.

The huge volume of users, particularly on football match days was causing high levels of Web traffic. BSkyB's platform was not designed to cope with this demand, so delays were inevitable and system crashes were not unusual. BSkyB's IT department was under pressure to rectify the issue before the start of the 2005/2006 football season, to ensure Video Lounge customer retention and growth.

The first task for the IT department was to determine the root cause of the performance problems. A top-down approach was adopted, investigating each element of the architecture, resulting in a list of around 20 possible causes. "We didn't want to simply work through the list, without knowing where our efforts would lead. We needed to be confident that if we invested in a solution, it would really solve our Video Lounge performance issues," explained Paul Jepson, applications development and support manager for England at BSkyB. "We even had some consultants here on-site for weeks but they were unable to shed any light on the issues, apart from suggesting a hardware upgrade."

The Quest Solution

At that time, Quest Software was in discussion with BSkyB about a solution for a different project and suggested a solution to the Video Lounge performance problems. "We provided Quest with a list of our requirements and within two days we had pretty much made the decision to invest in their solution," said Jepson. "Not only did the technology meet our requirements in full, but the solution lived up to Quest's promise. We felt confident in Quest's approach which included an element of contingency—refreshingly realistic."

BSkyB used Quest's Application Assurance Suite for Java and Portals (an integrated set of products for optimising, deploying, monitoring, diagnosing, changing and auditing applications) to quickly identify the handful of problems that were causing the Video Lounge performance difficulties. Within two hours, a longstanding problem with the application server to database connection was identified. Also, the cause of some slow pages and high CPU usage were identified, having been inexplicable under previous monitoring.

With performance issues resolved in time for the start of the 2005–2006 football season, BSkyB often analyses user activity of Video Lounge. They use Quest's Performance Management Suite for Java and Portals (this solution provides continuous, real-time performance and memory monitoring and diagnostics, for improved responsiveness to problems) to create a recording of activity over the weekend for analysis on the following Monday. This enables IT to establish, for example, whether any performance issue is being affected by the database or by the code.

Overview

"With Quest solutions, we are saving months of time, as there is now no need to dump logs and manually search through the code to find the cause of the problem, and there's no need to implement a workaround whilst the problem is being fixed. Problems now take two days on average to identify, analyse and fix, instead of two weeks. This represents an 80 percent time saving, as well as reduced support costs."

- Paul Jepson,
Applications Development and
Support Manager for England,
BSkyB

Headquarters

London, UK

Services

Entertainment provider

Critical Needs

A solution to identify the causes of performance problems experienced by BSkyB's Web services, to assist with problem resolution and to enable proactive application management of the service thereafter.

Solution

- Application Assurance Suite for Java and Portals
- Performance Management Suite for Java and Portals
- Big Brother

Results

- Increased the support team's ability to quickly identify and resolve performance issues
- Achieved ongoing time and support cost savings through 24/7 application monitoring; 80 percent less time to resolve problems
- Improved customer relations
- Assured the priority of business-critical issues, minimising the impact on the business

On an ongoing basis, BSkyB also uses Quest Big Brother™ to proactively manage Video Lounge, monitoring on a 24/7 unattended basis and getting high-level views of the application's health. Big Brother simplifies the management of computer networks and features tests to notify administrators when defined events occur.

The Bottom Line

BSkyB has improved customer relations by proactively managing the Video Lounge application and fixing problems quickly. "Thanks to our Quest solutions, the clubs have not complained once about performance issues this season," commented Jepson. BSkyB is also able to tackle problems in terms of the way they affect the business. "Other monitoring products typically highlight an issue from a technology perspective. With the Quest solution, we tackled problems from a business level and were able to resolve them from an end-user perspective, ensuring that the most business-critical issues received priority," added Jepson.

Quest's solutions enable BSkyB to establish the cause of performance problems quickly and efficiently, saving resources. "The Performance Management Suite enabled us to quickly understand the cause of the Video Lounge performance problems, to get all issues resolved well within our deadline for the start of the new football season. This has increased management's confidence in the support team's ability to handle issues in the future—something that we didn't really have previously," noted Jepson.

BSkyB is continuing to experience huge time savings as alerts are issued, pin-pointing the precise line of code causing the problem, enabling IT to resolve problems as soon as possible. "With the Application Assurance Suite, we are saving months of time, as there is now no need to dump logs and manually search through the code to find the cause of the problem, and there's no need to implement a workaround whilst the problem is being fixed. Problems now take two days on average to identify, analyse and fix, instead of two weeks. This represents an 80 percent time saving, as well as reduced support costs," said Jepson. "With the Quest solution, we tackled problems from a business level, so we were able to resolve them from an end-user perspective, ensuring that the most business-critical issues were addressed as a priority."

About BSkyB

BSkyB is the operator of the leading multi-channel television platform in the UK and Ireland. Around 21 million viewers in 8.1 million households enjoy an unprecedented choice of movies, news, entertainment and sports channels and interactive services on Sky digital, the UK and Ireland's first and most popular digital television platform. BSkyB's channels are available in 10.2 million households through cable and digital terrestrial television. Sky is included in the Dow Jones Sustainability Index and FTSE4Good and was recently named to the Global 100 Sustainable Corporations list is a Sunday Times "Company that Counts".

About Quest Software, Inc.

Quest Software, Inc. delivers innovative products that help organizations get more performance and productivity from their databases, applications and Windows infrastructure. Through a deep expertise in IT operations and a continued focus on what works best, Quest helps more than 18,000 customers worldwide meet higher expectations for enterprise IT. Quest Software can be found in offices around the globe and at:

www.quest.com