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Senior Manager
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDUSTRY</th>
<th>Manufacturing: Industrial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOLUTION</td>
<td>Storage Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Software</td>
<td>Hitachi IT Operations Analyzer, v2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>Technical support provided by Hitachi Data Systems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The WHITING Group Rolls Up Efficiency and Flexibility with Hitachi IT Operations Analyzer for All-systems IT Infrastructure Monitoring

When a small but growing industrial manufacturing business needed to meet IT demands without adding complexity or pricey resources it turned to Hitachi Data Systems for the solution. Since self-installing Hitachi IT Operations Analyzer v2.5, including virtualized servers, staff at The WHITING Group of Canada is now able to monitor and manage the entire infrastructure.

Entrepreneurial spirit runs deep at The WHITING Group of Canada, from its progressive line of products to the way the company operates. The WHITING Group designs and manufactures transportation-grade rollup doors, shutter-style aluminum doors and LED lighting for emergency vehicles, trucks and trailers. The WHITING Group also supplies industrial and vehicular hardware products at competitive prices, along with exceptional service to customers and suppliers.

Always focused on service and quality, The WHITING Group is ISO 9001:2008 certified and has journeyed through lean manufacturing initiatives to reduce waste and increase efficiencies across the fulfillment processes. With 50 employees and 3 distinct businesses, The WHITING Group is a burgeoning small company where almost everyone wears more than 1 hat to ensure the work gets accomplished.

First, Measure the Needs of an Expanding Business

With business growth often comes IT complexity, and according to Steve Kopelchak, a senior manager at The WHITING Group, complexity begets responsibility. In addition to overseeing the fulfillment chain, manufacturing and customer service, Kopelchak is The WHITING Group’s part-time, and only, IT guy.

“We started IT with a single server. Today, we have an IT infrastructure to support labor and inventory transactional records, an ERP system from Epicor, a Microsoft Exchange environment, and a few virtualized instances of VMware ESX Server. I make a weekly habit of going to the server room to view performance logs for our systems and ensure that no disasters are waiting to happen. And I’ve set up some of the systems to send critical alerts to my BlackBerry,” Kopelchak says.

To extend the capabilities of existing systems, Kopelchak wanted to find a performance and availability monitoring solution. “Smaller companies don’t always have the budgets for costly tools or consultants. We had heard about the Hitachi IT Operations Analyzer, but did not expect that it could conform to our business-size needs or would be affordable. I was happy to learn that we were wrong,” he furthers.

A Good Fit for Monitoring Performance

The WHITING Group purchased Hitachi IT Operations Analyzer, with 1 license to support up to 25 nodes. IT Operations Analyzer is a cost-effective performance and availability monitoring software solution that provides feature-rich diagnostic and reporting capabilities for multivendor, multiprocessor environments.

Kopelchak was able to install IT Operations Analyzer himself. Wizard-based discovery configuration, standard interface protocols and agentless architecture allowed

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SUCCESS STORY

for simple, intuitive and rapid deployment of the tool. “I was a little nervous about the whole thing, but it turned out to be so easy to install and configure. I called Hitachi support to ask some questions and the support tech was happy to talk me through the steps. It didn’t take long at all before I had the tool up and running and ready to go, analyzing operations and the infrastructure,” he explains.

IT Operations Analyzer is helping The WHITING Group to better monitor and manage across mission-critical applications, such as the Epicor ERP and production systems, as well as business-critical Microsoft Exchange and Blackberry environments. “The tool is monitoring all of our systems, even file and print servers and a couple of legacy servers. We wanted to ensure that performance thresholds are being met, and that we are able to view data replication and backup activities. With the IT Operations Analyzer, I can now monitor the whole infrastructure from my desktop. It’s like having a dedicated IT person,” Kopelchak says.

The Right Tool Lights the Way

IT Operations Analyzer provides logical path-view topology, along with a health status, tables and an at-a-glance view of user-defined groups. Simplified network path visibility integrates with the Hitachi root cause analysis feature to show instantly any devices experiencing issues. The progressively intelligent root cause analysis feature is designed to reduce downtime with automated identification, downstream acknowledgement and quick recovery.

“At any time, I can view any of the servers, including the virtualized servers, and all the details and relationships related to each one. I particularly like the list view, which is easy to understand and to navigate. I can see all the nodes in 1 window, and then open a sub-window to tab through everything from events, status info, drive capacity and components, and see installed software, and so on. The visibility is fantastic and it’ll save me a lot of time when needing to plan for future build-out on our network or deciding where resources are best used or when to upgrade,” Kopelchak details.

In the 1st week after implementing IT Operations Analyzer, Kopelchak was receiving numerous alerts from the tool. “It seemed I was getting alerts for everything, until I learned how to adjust the thresholds for our unique needs. Every environment is going to be different, so a cookie-cutter monitoring approach won’t work very well. IT Operations Analyzer lets me fine-tune alerts, so when I do get one, I know it’s something real, something important to us, and I can quickly resolve it,” he says.

IT Operations Analyzer capitalizes on user-defined alerting to allow organizations to classify and set thresholds based on particular requirements for applications, groups or components. Then, whenever a threshold is violated, an email alert is automatically sent to the defined set of recipients, in this case, Kopelchak’s Blackberry device. IT Operations Analyzer also enables the generation and delivery of alert reports at user-defined intervals.

“With the Hitachi tool, there’s a lot less assumption and time spent investigating at my end, a real value-add for me. Rather than worrying about when something critical might happen with a system’s performance or availability, or wondering if an alert in the performance logs is real or false, I now have peace of mind knowing that if something is falling outside a threshold, I’m going to know about it before it’s an issue,” Kopelchak continues.

Infrastructure Visibility Locks Down Benefits

IT Operations Analyzer enables faster and easier problem identification to accelerate efficiency of the data infrastructure and help reduce the mean time to diagnose issues by up to 90%. With a unified web-based interface and continuous, real-time views of performance and availability status, The WHITING Group can better ensure system uptime and manageability of data and applications. As The WHITING Group grows its business, IT Operations Analyzer will easily accommodate changes in the IT environment, with expansive support for devices, protocols and plug-in frameworks.

“I didn’t really have any tools before, other than the Microsoft interface. With the Hitachi product, I can literally see everything I need for each node, without having to get up and go to the server room unless there’s something physical to do, such as replace a disk. I’ve gotten back at least an hour or 2 a week that I can certainly use to manage other areas of the business. That’s the kind of flexibility that’s so important to a small and growing company. IT Operations Analyzer has given us the opportunity to elegantly and easily manage growth,” Kopelchak concludes.