HanoverSoft

Case Study: Healthcare Insurer

A healthcare insurer assessed their highly heterogeneous monitoring environment to save recurring maintenance costs, discover exposed resources, and improve management's visibility.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

This healthcare insurer has over 3.7 million subscribers, who place 42 million claims per year, which generated payments of $9 billion. Founded 75 years ago, it has kept up with technology changes with industry trends, creating what is today a heterogeneous IT environment – Cisco data networking, Cisco and Nortel telephony, PC's, Unix servers, midrange systems, mainframes, middleware, storage systems, and commercial and custom applications.

Top priorities for IT management are to assess the current state of their monitoring technology to (1) discover what is in production, (2) determine what tools can be eliminated, and (3) determine how to improve monitoring coverage and accuracy, which increases resource availability.

This healthcare insurer had performed in-house assessments in the past, resulting in brief presentations, which were incomplete, biased and short on detail. They needed a comprehensive assessment, provided by an objective expert researcher, who could substantiate all findings.

Executive Summary

Healthcare Insurer
- 3.7 million subscribers
- 42 million claims/year
- $9 billion claims paid/year

Business Challenge
- Reduce monitoring costs
- Standardize monitoring
- Validate monitoring environment
- Identify monitoring weaknesses

Assessment Solution
- Discover all monitoring tools
- Assess key monitoring tools
- Compare to industry practices
- Create a practical, usable report

Business Results
- Technology reduction saved $230K annually
- At risk assets identified
- Improved management visibility

ASSESSMENT SOLUTION

This healthcare insurer turned to HanoverSoft's Monitoring Technology Assessment service to review 43 tools that monitor all the production elements of their heterogeneous environment. The assessment judged tools for their FCAPS functionality, capability, and integration. FCAPS functionality covers fault, configuration, accounting, performance, and security management. This approach provided IT management with the ability to readily size up and compare various tools.

This insurer extended the assessment beyond a network and system assessment – the assessment also covered telephony, storage, middleware and applications. With an enterprise view of all monitored resources, it is possible to understand service level or line-of-business coverage.

When the assessment process started, the insurer estimated they had 43 distinct monitoring tools. During the course of management and SME (Subject Matter Expert) interviews, an estimated total of 80 tools were discovered. This helped IT management understand the actual status of monitoring tools.

The result of the assessment was a status report with more than 370 pages. The report, although detailed, is readily scanable by IT management. Highlight bars categorize each tool by functionality and resource coverage; diagrams depict the tool's use at the healthcare insurer, and summary tables underscore key information. When the report was presented to the CIO, the CIO leafed through the pages and easily found a tool of concern that generated discussion. The insurer found that the text surrounding the tool highlights, diagrams, and tables is useful to SME's and managers to act on IT

management's concerns.

Through the report's comments, the insurer learned how their monitoring technology implementation compared with industry peers. Through the report's recommendations, the insurer learned how to correct and improve that technology. This provided valuable information to understand currency of their technology.

An unexpected benefit of the assessment was to educate the many disparate – but interdependent – groups about the big picture – the enterprise view. For example, the Unix server group didn't realize that the databases running on their servers were actually monitored. Before the assessment, the Unix server group was concerned that no databases were monitored; from the report, they learned that those databases were each monitored by four different applications.

BUSINESS RESULTS

Annual maintenance costs reduced. Six of the reviewed tools were deemed redundant; they were removed without impact to overall monitoring. Those tools had been costing the insurer $230,000 per year.

A group of e-Commerce servers were not monitored at all. During the assessment, a group of mission critical production servers were discovered as not monitored due to firewall issues. These servers were at risk of failure without notifying IT support staff. Because of the assessment, the IT support group began monitoring them.

IT Management accurately knows its monitoring tool assets. Before the report, IT management believed it had 43 tools; after the report, IT management understood it had 80 tools. Now IT Management has visibility into all available monitoring technology.

IT Management knows its monitoring vulnerabilities (exposed resources). The report provided IT Management with comments on vulnerable groups of resources. The report also described how to mitigate those vulnerabilities with actionable recommendations.

Increased productivity with existing tools. Like many of its industry peers, the insurer was not suffering from a lack of tools, but instead a lack of sufficient configuration or integration of those tools. The assessment described how to configure and integrate the insurer's tools to increase employee productivity, resource availability, and overall reliability.

NEXT STEPS

The assessment report positions this healthcare insurer with many recommendations to achieve productivity gains and cost savings. For example, by sharing network outage and server outage reports with application and middleware support teams, the insurer saves needless duplicate efforts by multiple support teams: when a server fails, the server support team responds – not the application, middleware, or telephony/CTI support teams as well.

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