

Case study: GaVI

Have a clear run for business applications

As leading IT and communication service provider for customers in the insurance branch GAVI was searching for a tool that allows the automation of the monitoring and reading of numerous installed reference systems. GeNiEnd2End Application meets these requirements – and further supports the company with additional functions.

These numbers impress: The organization for applied insurance computer science, in short GaVI, is responsible for 30,000 end devices, 2,200 servers, 75 Internet appearances, 30,000 E-Mail-accounts, 70 telecommunication systems and a total of 280 million printed pages. In spite of this, the company does not push to be the centre of attention but rather prefers to monitor the application performance of its networks. Thus, helping to ensure that more than 10 million German customers can always rely on the services offered from companies such as the Provinzial, the Sparkassenversicherung or the Versicherungskammer Bavaria.

As specialized provider for insurance companies GaVI handles the complete ITC infrastructure of the customers in technical and economic issues. „Our task is the ideal support of all business processes of insurance companies with an economically optimized IT infrastructure“, says Mr Alfred Everwin, Department Manager for Application Performance at GaVI.

For the applications to run reliably on the networks they must be permanently monitored. No trivial task, as Everwin confirms „Guaranteeing a defined service level poses high requirements towards the networks and the service management. All essential application parameters must be consistently monitored and analyzed“. This includes the measurement of the response times and availability of business applications. Customers receive monthly SLA-reports that certify that the agreed service qualities were adhered to.

GaVI installed a total of 29 reference systems at different locations for the network monitoring that simulate user transactions selected in cycles, for example logging in into the email system.

These measurement robots also serve to collect data about the service quality of business applications for the monthly SLA-reports. Up to the middle of 2009, the administration of the measurement robots was conducted manually, was correspondingly time intensive and thus expensive. „The reading of 25 robots used a capacity of approximately 0.3 employees, which further increased through weak criteria such as vacation and illness“, says the GaVI-Manager. Ultimately, an unpleasant event was decisive for the search for a mainly automated solution: The failure of a measurement robot was not discovered immediately, so that some data for the SLA-reports was lost.

The new solution should increase the system reliability by controlling the reference systems automatically without manual interference and thereby help to reduce the increasing monitoring effort in the network control centre (SNCC, Service Network Control Centre).



The organization for applied insurance computer science, GaVI, is a specialized provider for insurance companies. GaVI is responsible for the complete IT and TC infrastructure of its customers in technical and economic issues. To do this, the company bundles its own services with those of competent partners.

The service range includes the development of the IT and TC infrastructure, including all necessary consulting services, along with the technical operation of central application and communication systems and the provision of all decentral technical workplace components. The main residence of the organization is located in Mannheim. All in all, GaVI employs 490 workers at the main locations in Kiel, Mannheim, Munich, Münster, Saarbrücken, Stuttgart and Wiesbaden, as well as the branch locations Berlin, Erfurt, Hamburg, Karlsruhe and Kassel. In 2008, the company generated a turnover of 187 million Euros.

Solution

In the search for a product GaVI relied on the company NETCOR, a long-term partner with very extensive experience on the area of IT-performance. „Next to the matching functionality of the solutions it was very important to us to bring a strong partner on board that is able to answer all questions regarding the applied tools“, explains Everwin. „Here the company NETCOR, with who we have already successfully installed the Alcatel-Lucent VitalApps-solution with, once again convinced us.“ In the end, GeniEnd2End Application became the solution of choice.

It is a proactive end-to-end-monitoring solution that supplies key data from critical business processes from the view of the users. The solution emulates the end user transactions in interaction with applications, around the clock and seven days a week. It creates the basis for a 24x7-availability and a top performance for the entire service chain.

GeNiEnd2End Application measures the service quality of critical business applications on client/server, web and mainframe platforms and for example supports SAP R/3, Telnet 3270, Oracle, Lotus Notes, MS-Exchange and other proprietary client/server-solutions.

GaVI is able to manage service levels proactively under business viewpoints with GeNiEnd2End Application and provide reports about the adherence to SLAs for complex applications in different surroundings. This way, quantifiable availability and performance metrics seen from the end user can be recorded, enabling performance weaknesses to be isolated and eliminated, even before agreed service-level-goals are violated. The performance information can also be used in the operative control of the network resources for the prioritization of applications.

GeNiEnd2End Application consists of three function groups: GeNiAgent, GeNiServer and GeNiReporter. The GeNiAgents are installed at defined service transfer points and simulate defined business transactions (Reference transactions). Different actions can be summarized to comprehensive business transactions.



«We are now able to monitor the availability of applications proactively for the entire transfer path from the application to the end device. For us, the solution amortized itself within half a year.»
Alfred Everwin

The GeNiAgents work transparent, supplying realistic measurement data such as availability, response times (broken down by client, network, and application) and data throughput from a user view. The creation of the scripts is very easy, these can be created with a recording function (Capture-Replay). The server component provides the necessary applications, while GeNiReporter summarizes the collected measurement data in the form of meaningful reports.

Next to the far-reaching functionality of the GeNiEnd2End Application, the fact that the NETCOR-solution could be directly connected to the Alcatel-Lucent VitalApps system, which GaVI uses for the network monitoring, was decisive for the selection of this application.

Implementation, operation

At the beginning of 2009, GaVI started a six week evaluation phase with a test simulation, and came to the conclusion that GeNiEnd2End Application meets all posed requirements. „As of the second half of the year 2009, the GeNiEnd2End Application-products were exclusively set for productive operation“, says Everwin.

This implementation took only 3.5 days and was partially conducted together with NETCOR. 1.5 days were used for the installation of a new Windows server as well as for the installation of the GeNiEnd2End Application server.

Two NETCOR employees consulted with the GaVI technician team in the adaptation of the robot scripts for two days. In the current configuration, all important applications are automatically recorded by at least two robots. The redundancy prevents that measurement data is lost by a failure of a robot.

Thanks to its graphic surface the GeNiEnd2End Application can be easily operated. The user is able to zoom into suspicious events from the overview page and analyze connection details. In addition, it is possible to display the transaction times in real-time. Even though the system can be controlled intuitively, GaVI decided to conduct trainings. „This way we were able to present the advantages of the system directly. With

the training, we achieved immediate acceptance of the newly introduced solution.“, says Everwin.

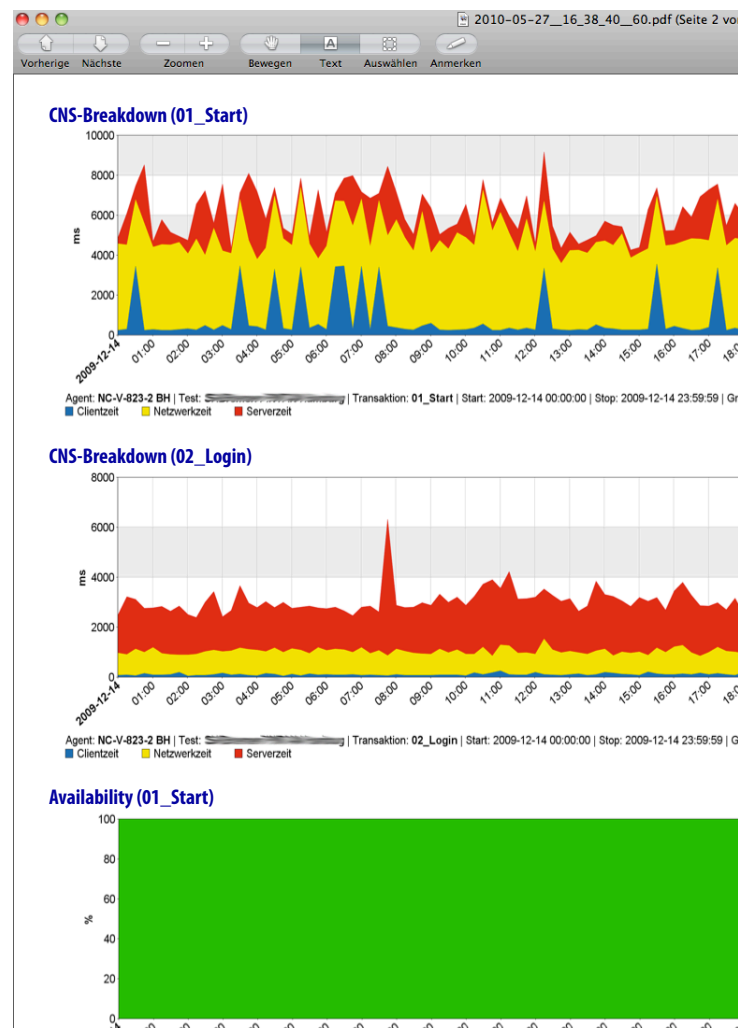
„We are now able to monitor the availability of applications proactively for the entire transfer path from the application to the end device“, explains the GaVI-department manager. The NETCOR-solution automatically classifies the response times according to network and client/server part. Based on this information GaVI is able to react immediately if the performance of an application decreases. This way the customers receive a consistently good application performance. GeNiEnd2End Application indicates access peaks or system overloads in time.

Profitability

With GeNiEnd2End Application GaVI has built a solid, central management system for its reference systems. The required monitoring effort for the SLA-management decreased significantly, also at the same time the company eliminated potential error sources. In addition, the system offers further functions that support the company in the qualified consulting of its customers.

„Trends also become visible based on the regular elaborate reports“, explains Everwin. With this information we are able to support our customers with consultation, for example, in the optimization of their networks.“

The GaVI-Manager calculates: „For us, the solution amortized itself within half a year.“ He is convinced that the usage of the GeNiEnd2End Application solution pays off, at the latest, if more than 20 measurement robots need to be monitored. GaVI is convinced of the solution and plans a further expansion with GeNiEnd2End Application systems. „An evaluation is currently underway at several large customer locations“, says Everwin.



Multipage performance report of several transactions

NETCOR

NETCOR was founded 1991. During the first years the main focal point was the sales of products and services in the area of network analysis, monitoring and troubleshooting. A few years later the development of our own tools was added, which were partially marketed as supplementation to products known on the market or also as independent products. The origin of these own developments was always in the fine sense of our company for the „requirements“ of our customers and the comparison to solutions available on the market. In our developments the special focus was always on being able to offer user friendly, high performance products at a reasonable price for medium-sized companies.

NETCOR GmbH
 Innungsstraße 14
 D-21244 Buchholz i.d.N.

Telephone: +49 4181 9092-02
 Telefax: +49 4181 9092-345
 eMail: netcor@netcor-europe.com
 Internet: www.netcor-europe.com