



Debenhams Depends on Quest's Spotlight® and Foglight® to Dramatically Improve System Performance and Availability

Debenhams is a leading department stores group with 144 stores in the UK and Ireland. With a growing volume of online sales, Debenhams found itself with more than 300 servers to manage. It recognised that its IT department required a more proactive approach to application management and turned to Quest Software for solutions.

The Challenge

Like most leading retailers, Debenhams relies on its web site to support its brand and its revenues. In November 2006, the company relaunched Debenhams.com and sought a proactive approach to deal with performance issues in the applications and systems supporting the web site. The company recognised that dealing with performance issues before they affected customers would ensure the smooth operation of Debenhams.com as well as help in protecting its business. For instance, data for new products, including images, are automatically added to the web site each night. If there is a problem uploading the images, Debenhams' IT support team needs to know before the start of the next working day. The team needs to ensure that the web site's presentation retains its high quality for the best possible customer experience. For the same reason, the team also needs to monitor other automated jobs and available disk space and resolve issues as soon as possible.

Debenhams uses a store-based application for ordering furniture and locating stock. Shop floor and call-centre staff use this application to help customers find stock that's unavailable in the store. Use of the system had grown substantially since it was first developed, increasing the risk of system strain and downtime. Debenhams needed to be certain that as its business grew, system performance remained high to help maintain its positive reputation with customers.

As part of its proactive approach to system improvement, Debenhams was also keen to prevent any e-mail problems that could compromise incoming and outgoing communication among customers, suppliers and staff.

With service level agreements in place for Debenhams' 20 most business-critical applications, the IT team set out to improve the performance and management of its applications. Debenhams began its search for a solution that would provide fast diagnosis and resolution of various application performance issues. It also wanted a solution for monitoring all critical applications to minimise any adverse impact on customers, suppliers, staff and ultimately its business.

The Quest Solution

Debenhams selected Spotlight® to diagnose both operating system and database performance problems, and Foglight® to provide ongoing application monitoring for proactive management of issues.

"The functionality of the solutions from Quest was exactly what we wanted, and we felt confident that they would meet our requirements," explained Aqil Nasser, technical architecture manager, Debenhams.

Spotlight is a real-time diagnostics and resolution tool, enabling administrators to anticipate and correct availability and performance issues across multiple operating systems and database platforms. It identifies and diagnoses thousands of performance issues at the source, sets thresholds and displays alerts when it detects bottlenecks. Foglight monitors each component of the technology stack in real time to warn application managers of potential problems before performance suffers. It also highlights trends, enabling Debenhams to tune applications to better accommodate peak periods of system activity.

The Bottom Line

Spotlight and Foglight help ensure that Debenhams can maintain more stable applications with the highest possible availability. As a result, the company provides better service to its customers, staff and suppliers, and therefore protects its business.

"IT departments often replace their systems with the latest new offerings. Quest's solutions have allowed us to continue using our existing systems and platforms. Not only are these solutions less expensive and faster to implement, but they're also driving operational efficiencies. Most important, Spotlight and Foglight provide us with a means to ensure that our business does not suffer due to poor application performance or system downtime."

– Aqil Nasser
Technical Architecture Manager
Debenhams

Overview

Headquarters

London, England

Services

Retailer

Critical Needs

System monitoring solutions for fast and accurate diagnosis of application performance issues and a more proactive approach to application management

Solution

Spotlight on Windows, SQL Server, WebLogic, DB2, Foglight Cartridge for Windows, AIX, Linux, DB2, SQL Server, Oracle, IIS and WebLogic

Results

- Provided time savings through proactive application monitoring
- Reduced problem resolution time through better diagnosis of application performance problems
- Delivered time savings of approximately eight days of work hours per month through automation of tasks
- Delivered proactive application management to reduce risk of lost income
- Provided a consistent toolset for performance management of heterogeneous database environments
- Improved application availability for customers and staff
- Increased ROI from existing technology

Debenhams now can resolve problems faster, thanks to Spotlight's ability to isolate the causes of system performance issues. "Spotlight highlighted a number of hidden problems—some critical—that helped us optimise the applications to run more efficiently," noted Nasser. "With such detailed diagnosis, resolving system problems is now faster and more straightforward."

Debenhams has also realised significant time savings through Foglight's proactive application monitoring. This feature allows Debenhams to spot problems before they become serious. For example, Foglight has eliminated the need for manual checks of the file and e-mail servers to manage capacity and performance—an action that had previously required nearly an hour each day. Foglight has also eliminated the need for manual checks to SQL Server, the intranet and other web-based applications such as Debenhams' time and attendance systems, saving Debenhams approximately eight days of work hours per month, in total.

Spotlight and Foglight have enabled Debenhams to retain and even maximise the performance of its existing systems. "IT departments often replace their systems with the latest new offerings," said Nasser. "Quest's solutions have allowed us to continue using our existing systems and platform. Not only are these solutions less expensive and faster to implement, but they're also driving operational efficiencies. Most important, Spotlight and Foglight provide us with a means to ensure that our business does not suffer due to poor application performance or system downtime."

About Debenhams

Debenhams is a leading department stores group with a strong presence in key product categories such as womenswear, menswear, childrenswear, homeware and health and beauty. Debenhams has a total of 135 department stores in the UK and the Republic of Ireland as well as nine Desire by Debenhams locations, which are new small stores featuring a mix of womenswear, accessories, lingerie, cosmetics and childrenswear. Debenhams is the second largest department store chain in the UK. Designers at Debenhams include Ted Baker, Nigel Cabourn, Jasper Conran, Theo Fennell, Pearce Fionda, Frost French, Betty Jackson, Ben de Lisi, Julien Macdonald, John Richmond, John Rocha and Matthew Williamson. Debenhams also has 36 international franchise stores in 16 countries and an online store available at www.debenhams.com.

About Quest Software, Inc.

Quest Software, Inc. delivers innovative products that help organizations get more performance and productivity from their applications, databases and Windows infrastructure. Through a deep expertise in IT operations and a continued focus on what works best, Quest helps more than 50,000 customers worldwide meet higher expectations for enterprise IT. Quest offers the only adaptive application and services management solution that connects business services to infrastructure, end user to database, and production to development to unify IT and the business. Quest Software can be found in offices around the globe and at www.quest.com.

Quest Software Incorporated. • To learn more about our solutions, contact your local sales representative or visit www.quest.com.
Headquarters: 5 Polaris Way, Aliso Viejo, CA 92656, USA

© 2008 Quest Software Incorporated. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. Quest Software and Spotlight and Foglight are trademarks and registered trademarks of Quest Software, Inc. in the U.S.A. and/or other countries. All other trademarks and registered trademarks are property of their respective owners.