

END-USER EXPERIENCE MANAGEMENT

“TrueSight™ went from an exploratory product to one that has become mission-critical in its usage.”

JONAS HIRSHFIELD
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DEVELOPMENT
BLACKBOARD, INC.

INDUSTRY

Enterprise Software and Application Service Provider

CHALLENGE

Blackboard needed to deliver the best possible customer experience on their hosting offering and respond quickly to customer issues on network service problems. The company needed to have better insight into a variety of metrics, including bandwidth utilization, which was a part of their revenue model.

WHY END-USER EXPERIENCE MANAGEMENT?

Real user monitoring allowed Blackboard to find out where applications were failing, down to the script level, to save time, money and resources wasted on after the fact troubleshooting. The company also wanted to gauge end user performance, and determine if system slowdowns were caused by issues within, or outside of their network operations.

SOLUTION

Blackboard chose Coradiant TrueSight for real-time network monitoring that was simplified, non-intrusive and agentless. The Coradiant system offered a high level of network information, as well as the ability to drill down on actual application performance and bandwidth utilization.

KEY BENEFITS

- Improve customer experience and application performance
- Save time and valuable IT resources from constant troubleshooting
- Stop problems before they escalate into customer service issues
- Offers customers weekly or monthly reporting on network performance and bandwidth utilization
- Offers valuable insight to real world application performance for product development and test



CORADIANT TRUESIGHT GIVES BLACKBOARD A NEW STANDARD FOR PERFORMANCE AND A NEW PATH TO PROFITS

Blackboard Inc., a leading provider of educational enterprise software, offers a hosted service that allows teaching institutions worldwide to deliver real-time coursework and create portal environments that support commerce, personalized services and online communities. Blackboard's hosting facilities, in data centers around the world, needed to support around-the-clock access to a potential audience of hundreds of thousands of users, while providing their education customers with a flexible, stable, secure environment.

TRACKING DOWN PROBLEMS TO IMPROVE SLA S & REVENUES

For Blackboard's ASP service, the end user experience is paramount to success. With the hosted model, the quality of their product was entirely dependent on end user satisfaction. "As a hosting provider, we needed insight into how our product was delivered to our customers – beyond how fast disc drives were spinning, and CPU and memory utilization. We needed to understand how users interact with the software and how the environment responded to them," said Jonas Hirshfield, Director, Infrastructure Development for Blackboard Corporation.

The hosted Blackboard solution was delivered through a state-of-the-art environment that consisted of thousands of servers, co-located in key locations worldwide. The goal was to provide a reliable, secure, cost effective solution, with a high SLA. In addition, site performance was directly tied to revenue, as the company charged customers based on several usage metrics, including bandwidth utilization.

Customers would call in with a variety of issues – slow response times, lack of access or other network problems. Tracking down the source of the problem and finding the solution

was a time consuming, reactive process. "If someone called with an issue, it could tie up three of our resources for days – to a week," said Hirshfield. "During that time, the client's frustration level would get higher and higher, with continued escalations to executive team members. Ultimately, this would channel back into our group, creating more of a stressful environment, as we tried to find a root-cause solution."

There was no standard way of effectively tracking down system slowdowns and failures – creating a reactionary service environment. "We would just do a lot of legwork, look at Web log files, or have clients do trace routes and identify different types of performance metrics. Often, we couldn't find where the problem was," said Hirshfield. "In this industry the first thing that everyone tries to do is reproduce. And, when you can't reproduce it, it's really hard to troubleshoot."

CASE STUDY

“I’ve seen a lot of products that tout all their abilities, but this is one that actually truly delivers and delivers out-of-the-box.”



TrueSight shows production Web application and platform issues exponentially faster than any method today, and sets a new benchmark for lower total-cost-of-ownership and ease of use.

Coradiant also allowed Blackboard to generate additional revenues through new services. “From a service perspective, we also offer what we call Premium Reporting. Our complex clients can get another level of detail that’s beneficial to their user base – it allows them to see application adoption at certain times of the day, who are the most active users, what are busiest parts of the application, and the response times, too. It’s very interesting.”

FOR THE FUTURE: BETTER PRODUCTS & PREMIUM SERVICES

TrueSight has become the standard for troubleshooting for Blackboard’s hosting customers, and is now widely relied on by the entire Blackboard team. “TrueSight went from an exploratory product to one that has become mission-critical. It gives us the to quickly show a quantitative report that indicates performance issues that are most often outside of the Blackboard network. That is really beneficial to the team.” The company is now looking at adding new functionality with Coradiant’s Web.I, which offers even more advanced reporting on captured data.

In addition, TrueSight has made an impact that goes beyond customer service and now impacts future products at Blackboard. “TrueSight has become very useful within our product development and performance engineering departments,” said Hirschfield. “To date, they’ve only had the ability to generate synthetic data, synthetic load and usage on the application. Now they can capture real-world metrics on how the application performs under different environments, especially moving from one application version to another.”

Real-world performance is critical to a hosting operation like Blackboard. And, for Hirshfield, Coradiant is a product that lives up to its claims. “I’ve seen a lot of products that tout all their abilities, but this is one that actually truly delivers and delivers out-of-the-box.”



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ABOUT BLACKBOARD, INC.

Blackboard Inc. is a leading provider of education enterprise software applications and services that enables educational innovations by connecting people and technology. Blackboard is used by millions of people at academic institutions around the world, including colleges, universities, K-12 schools and other education providers, as well as textbook publishers and student-focused merchants that serve education providers and their students. The company is headquartered in Washington, D.C., with offices in North America, Europe, Australia and Asia.

ABOUT CORADIANT

Coradiant is the leading provider of equipment used to manage, optimize and troubleshoot web applications. Coradiant’s award-winning TrueSight products use customer metrics gathered from each web user visit as their primary data source for IT management. Coradiant End-User Experience Management products are deployed in hundreds of leading organizations and Fortune 500 companies including software as a service (SaaS), e-commerce, entertainment, finance, insurance, healthcare, and education. Coradiant is headquartered in San Diego with offices in North America and Europe.

For more information please see
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