FUJITSU

BRITISH AIRWAYS

SOFTEK ENVIEW PUTS PROOF INTO SERVICE MONITORING FOR
BRITISH AIRWAYS

BUSINESS NEED

High profile
international airline
British Airways
wanted to know how
its applications
responded — from
the users' points
of view

ISSUES

Lack of end-to-end
service management
monitoring based on
factual information

SOLUTION

Softek EnView
measures the
performance,
availability and
responsiveness
of applications
across an
enterprise's entire
IT infrastructure,
including e-working/
commerce, from a
user's perspective

BENEFITS

Softek EnView
has given British
Airways a way to
understand and
prove e-working/
commerce
infrastructure
performance,
helping the
airline improve
quality of service

For global airline British Airways, improving the quality of customer service is an ongoing drive. The introduction of e-working/commerce created new systems-based interfaces — externally, with the airline's actual and prospective customers, and internally, with "customer" colleagues. In turn, this raised questions for the airline's IT providers: how to assess, manage and if necessary adjust the levels of service provided at these interfaces?

In the late1990s, British Airways began moving towards end-to-end service management monitoring because rising volumes of passengers and freight were increasing pressure on the airline's administrative processes and IT systems.

Infrastructure Delivery, part of Information Management, British Airways' core IT department, wanted to start measuring applications availability, performance and responsiveness specifically in terms of end user experience.

British Airways placed a high value on the detailed histories and trend analyses — effectively, the facts of ongoing quality of IT service provided by Softek EnView. Smith commented: "The airline's business depends on the ready service of these absolutely key operational customer systems."

Softek EnView had proved its worth. Infrastructure Delivery went on to deploy robots to monitor certain e-working/commerce applications which were occasionally "troublesome."

Previous availability measurements had been made looking out, as it were, from the center; from users had come only subjective opinions. The precise measurements provided by Softek EnView — of availability, performance, responsiveness — were all from users' points of view. The reports formed solid evidence for analysis, greater understanding, and action where appropriate by the operations teams.

"Softek EnView has helped us understand and prove our e-working/commerce infrastructure performance."

The means to achieve this was offered by very few products. Of these, Dave Smith, manager of Infrastructure Delivery, selected just two for trial. He explained that he needed to feel very confident about what he chose: "If our team could supply people with end user application response time information, it would help them to manage service levels — but for this to work effectively, the product had to have the right functionality, and really had to deliver the goods."

In 1999 British Airways became the first United Kingdom customer to acquire Softek EnView from Fujitsu Softek. Early-warning system Softek EnView enables organizations to simply measure performance, availability and response to end users of critical business processes, whether legacy, client-server, e-commerce or web-based. Its measurement work is carried out by robots, completely non-intrusively — a very important point for the airline.

Infrastructure Delivery first used Softek EnView to monitor and report user experience of three all-important applications:
• Departure Control Systems (DCS)
• Reservations
• And a large part of Cargo Systems

New Service Level Agreements (SLAs) were built around the factual foundations presented in the reports. Over time, Softek EnView was used to report ongoing levels of service.

The third deployment of Softek EnView has been with services of shared provision, such as Internet browsing and e-working/commerce. Here, even subjective user opinions are scarce or non-existent. "If someone uses an application all day and it doesn't work, they generally ring up, so that you get feedback even if your own internal mechanisms haven't shown a problem. But if a shared service fails, or isn't working well, because they don't own it, people tend to just go and do something else. Your user base intelligence as to how these services are performing is often very weak or delayed," noted Smith.

Softek EnView robots are positioned at various end user points around the British Airways network. Softek EnView scripts — effectively, transaction stand-ins — regularly make access requests for websites both on the Internet and on the airline's own web server. (Diagram on back page shows details of request routes through British Airways' proxy servers.)

The results help the team home in on an area causing a problem — a specific part of the network, the Internet Service Provider (ISP), the British Airways web server, a particular proxy server — helping detection and providing a factual basis from which further investigation, as well as action if necessary, can proceed expeditiously.

Smith summed up Softek EnView's reflection of user experience with factual data as having brought real improvements to British Airways' end-to-end service management. "It's like the car's fuel gauge — the basis of an informed view on whether you need to do something."

HOW SOFTEK ENVIEW MEASURES SERVICE LEVELS AT BRITISH AIRWAYS

Each Softek EnView robot requests websites on the Internet and on the British Airways web server. The Softek EnView requests go alongside normal web traffic through each proxy.

When there are problems, the Softek EnView measurements help detection — for example:

• failure to access websites from a particular robot when all others are successful suggests network problems in the network area of that robot;

• success by all the robots in accessing the British Airways server but not the Internet suggests a problem with the Internet Service Provider (ISP); this scenario in reverse suggests a problem with the British Airways server;

• failure by all the robots to access all websites through a certain proxy suggests a problem with that proxy.

So the measurements help speed problem detection, understanding, resolution or action if needed. Result: improved service for users.
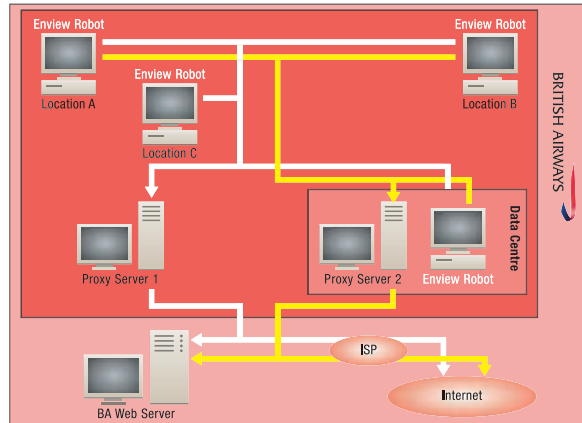
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