

Ideal Stelrad Group gets proactive with Tivoli Monitoring from IBM



Overview

■ The Challenge

Ideal Stelrad Group uses SAP software to manage production at its five manufacturing sites, which operate 24x7. With a mixture of different monitoring applications used to maintain its multiplatform IT environment, daily maintenance was time-consuming and high availability difficult to guarantee – increasing the risk of production downtime.

■ The Solution

Ideal Stelrad Group worked with Celerity (www.celerity-uk.com), an IBM Premier Business Partner, to replace multiple tools with integrated IBM Tivoli Monitoring 6 to monitor the complete IT landscape. The software is fully integrated with the company's SAP applications, and provides advanced warning of most potential failures.

■ The Benefits

Out-of-hours email alerts enable fast response to emerging situations; better visibility of system performance helps identify bottlenecks and improves capacity planning; ability to deal with problems proactively before they arise helps increase system availability and reduce business risk.



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IT Services Manager
Ideal Stelrad Group*

Ideal Stelrad Group is a leading pan-European heating business headquartered in Newcastle upon Tyne. The company manufactures and markets an extensive range of domestic, commercial and industrial gas boilers in the UK, and steel panel radiators, towel warmers and decorative radiators across Europe. Leading brands include Ideal Boilers, Stelrad Radiators and Henrad Radiators. Ideal Stelrad has five manufacturing sites across Europe, with a boiler facility in the UK and radiator facilities in the UK, the Netherlands, Belgium and Turkey. Ideal Stelrad currently employs over 2000 people.

Ideal Stelrad Group’s production processes run 24 hours a day, 7 days a week – a schedule that is only possible with the support of advanced enterprise resource planning (ERP) software from SAP. All five sites are managed from a central SAP system based at the company’s data centre in Hull. The SAP software runs under IBM AIX on the IBM System p 520 platform, and is supported by a number of large Oracle databases.

“Our SAP systems are absolutely crucial to the business,” explains Andy Hayes, IT Services Manager at Ideal Stelrad Group. “If they go down, we have about four hours until the production line is affected. Maintaining availability is vital.”

Ideal Stelrad Group also has a number of other important systems – email, file servers and design applications among them – running under various

environments including Microsoft Windows. Because of this mixed environment, it had been difficult to find a monitoring solution which could cover the whole infrastructure, and Ideal Stelrad Group had deployed a number of small point solutions.

“Without a single centralized monitoring system, we were spending a lot of time on daily maintenance tasks,” says Andy Hayes. “It was hard to work out what needed most attention, so we had to check everything, and we found ourselves reacting to situations rather than taking preventative measures.”

Turning to Tivoli

Ideal Stelrad Group realised that a new generation of IBM Tivoli products could offer the functionalities it was looking for, and asked IBM Premier Business Partner Celerity to look into the best options.

We’ve been working with Celerity for three years now,” explains Andy Hayes. “They helped us with the upgrade to the IBM System p architecture, and we were really impressed with the way they quickly gained an understanding of our business. They convinced us that IBM Tivoli Monitoring was the best-of-breed solution, and would be able to meet our requirements.”

Ideal Stelrad Group next approached IBM, which demonstrated the software and delivered a successful proof-of-concept. Celerity then performed the implementation and customized the software for Ideal Stelrad Group’s unique environment.

Tivoli Monitoring provides a single customizable workspace portal through which Ideal Stelrad Group can manage its entire hardware and software environment – AIX and Windows systems alike. Most importantly, the solution is fully integrated with Ideal Stelrad Group's SAP and Oracle environment.

"We only have a small SAP Basis team to look after a number of large and important systems, so it was crucial that our new solution should help them spend more time on important issues and less on simple daily maintenance," says Andy Hayes. "The level of SAP integration offered by Tivoli Monitoring was the best we'd seen, and helps us deal with problems before they happen. In fact, we have set up predictive scripts which solve nine out of ten SAP-related problems without human intervention."

Reaping the benefits

If the system detects a potential or actual system failure – an underperforming disk drive or a database server running out of memory – it immediately alerts the relevant member of Ideal Stelrad Group's IT team, ensuring that prompt action is taken to prevent or minimise downtime. As a result, Andy Hayes expects to see an improvement in the availability figures:

"We're looking forward to seeing the first results of this new system," he comments. "I'm sure we'll see a noticeable difference in our quarterly report. Even without statistics, our IT

staff are definitely spending more time on improving the infrastructure and less on daily maintenance and fire-fighting."

By providing a more accurate picture of the operations and capabilities of Ideal Stelrad Group's various systems, Tivoli Monitoring is integral to the company's efforts to improve performance and reliability. The IT team can easily identify bottlenecks and undertake accurate capacity planning.

"When a system is running out of room, we know about it early on," says Andy Hayes. "We can plan our upgrade path ahead of time, so we have plenty of opportunities to research the best options and we don't have to rush into it. This could potentially save us a lot of time and money in the long term by avoiding bad investments and misguided projects."

He concludes: "We've been very happy with the performance and reliability of our IBM System p servers, especially as a platform for SAP. But as a large enterprise, we can't afford to run the risk of failure. The Tivoli Monitoring solution gives us peace of mind because we know that most problems can be dealt with before they start to affect the business.

"IBM and Celerity have delivered an ideal solution for our environment. Tivoli Monitoring gives us a single point of control with all the tools we need to repair, protect and optimise our systems."

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