



BORLAND CASE STUDY

20th Century Fox

FAST FACTS

COMPANY

20th Century Fox is a developer, producer and worldwide distributor of feature films and television programs, as well as broadcast and cable television network programming.

INDUSTRY

Media and Entertainment

GEOGRAPHY

Americas

CHALLENGES

- Simulate the anticipated load of 240 users with simultaneous online transactions and report generation activity
- Meet the growing demands of users, provide faster transaction processing and handle high volumes of report generation
- Load-balance report servers across operating systems and process types

SOLUTION

- Borland® SilkPerformer®
- Borland® SilkEssentials for PeopleSoft

RESULTS

- Improved OLTP performance by 50 percent
- Verified a bottleneck caused by an undersized system database
- Generated the data required to optimize load balancing on report servers, thus improving report generation functionality for users

COMPANY

20th Century Fox is a developer, producer and worldwide distributor of feature films and television programs, as well as broadcast and cable television network programming.

CHALLENGES

The company's talent for creating popular television programs and movies has made 20th Century Fox one of the world's most successful entertainment companies, generating revenues of \$11 billion annually. But success has brought challenges and produced a dramatic impact on Fox's PeopleSoft-based financial system. The existing system was pushed to its limits, creating bottlenecks and poor system performance, and was in need of an upgrade to meet increasing user demands.

In addition, the operating environment was not providing maximum efficiency for users during peak report generation cycles. The existing two-tier client/server environment was equivalent to having a CPU farm of more than 600 desktops in which users submitted ad hoc reports directly from their machines, which were dedicated to reports only. The company needed to transition from that dedicated processing environment to one in which a reduced number of report servers in a shared environment would allow users to submit ad hoc reports without having requests for reports/processes queue up and degrade the user experience.

To stay on track for reliable primetime computing, Fox chose to upgrade its PeopleSoft implementation. Taking the lead role in this application upgrade was Rajeev Diddee, director of information technology financial systems for 20th Century Fox. It was Diddee's responsibility to upgrade Fox from PeopleSoft 7.5 in a client/server environment to PeopleSoft 8 in a Web-based environment. A successful upgrade would give the entertainment giant greater flexibility in supporting its large and growing user base, the increased demands for faster transaction processing times, and the high volumes of Crystal and nVision report generation. While Diddee was optimistic about the upgrade, he had some concerns about the readiness of his current architecture—and moving from a client/server to a Web-based environment.

SOLUTION

Borland® SilkPerformer® was just the tool that 20th Century Fox needed to bring valuable back-end system analysis to the forefront, enabling a successful upgrade to the Internet-based PeopleSoft 8 system. Borland SilkPerformer was the answer for load testing and performance analysis of the PeopleSoft environment.

"We were pretty anxious to know whether the users who were currently using PeopleSoft 7.5 in a client/server environment could get onto the Internet environment," Diddee explained. Diddee also wanted validation that his current architecture was properly sized and that enough of the right hardware was in place.

With 650 registered users on his PeopleSoft system, Diddee had reason to be concerned—especially when monthly financial reports were due to 20th Century Fox's parent company, the

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News Corporation Ltd. At peak load times, Diddee estimated that as many as 2,500 to 3,500 financial reports were generated daily. “At the outset, I didn’t see how this was going to actually work. What if 200 users got onto the system and started running nVision reports? What would be the effect on the system?” he wondered.

RESULTS

Through load testing and performance tuning with Borland SilkPerformer and Borland SilkEssentials for PeopleSoft, Diddee was able to utilize scripted user transactions; randomize data to minimize server caching and simulate real-world user behavior; batch-test SQR, nVision and Crystal processes; establish maximum user load and site degradation; perform a long-term stability test for memory leakage; and identify resource management issues. It was during load testing that Diddee identified a major system bottleneck that was hampering his efforts to optimize system performance. He determined that his database server was undersized compared with the rest of his system hardware.

During load tests, Diddee also discovered an issue with journal-entry transactions: The create-bill transaction could not coexist simultaneously with journal-entry transactions. “When five or six users were making entries onto the system, there was no problem; but when 50 or 60 users tried it, the system crashed. Identifying that problem would have been so difficult—something we never would have caught had we not done a load test with Borland SilkPerformer,” explained Diddee. Additionally, a source of COBOL aborts in the journal edit process was resolved.

After replacing the database server and tuning the Web servers and application servers, Diddee was able to resolve the issues. He also observed a 50 percent performance improvement in online transaction processing, clearly making it a welcome system upgrade that greatly improves user productivity.

But technology was not all that Borland brought to the table for 20th Century Fox—it also brought a commitment to working with the company on every level of the project—from budget to outcomes. Fox embarked on this ambitious upgrade at a time when budgets had been cut and money was hard to come by.

While Diddee had researched several vendors that could provide load test capabilities, Borland was the only one that provided him with PeopleSoft and PeopleSoft Internet Architecture (PIA) expertise, along with a PeopleSoft-approved load testing solution right out of the box. “[Borland] understands what it takes to test the PeopleSoft Internet Architecture,” said Diddee.

ABOUT BORLAND

Borland Software Corporation is a global leader in platform-independent solutions for Software Delivery Optimization. The company provides the software and services that align the people, process, and technology required to maximize the business value of software.



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