

CASE STUDY: Service Corporation International



AT A GLANCE

Challenge

As SCI moved to virtualization within its dynamic and growing computing environment, the company needed a solution to manage and optimize performance of the virtual infrastructure as well as demonstrate value to company management.

Solution

Akorri's BalancePoint enabled SCI to realize a Return-On-Investment with the proper visibility and management of infrastructure performance, capacity and utilization. BalancePoint's holistic, cross IT domain view of both virtual and physical server and storage infrastructure, combined with advanced visualization and analytics, helped SCI maximize their move to a virtualized environment.

Environment

- 270 independent Windows operating systems, with 170 of these virtual
- Virtualized test and production applications, with a staging and development environment
- Applications: PeopleSoft, PAS and HMIS, SQLserver, SharePoint, SQL, Business Objects, Crystal Reports, Documentum, ASP.net, Hyperion, Test Partner
- 150 Terabytes of Storage - HP EVA/MSA and IBM Shark/DS

SCI Slashes Costs with Akorri BalancePoint

Service Corporation International (NYSE: SCI), headquartered in Houston, Texas, is North America's leading provider of funeral, cremation and cemetery products and services. The company owns and operates more than 1,300 funeral homes and 350 cemeteries (of which over 200 are combination locations) in 43 states, eight Canadian provinces, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

Company growth and consolidation had led the company to inherit VMware solutions, forcing Infrastructure Manager Kevin Brown to fully examine virtual machine technology and the benefits of virtualization. Brown was initially a skeptic, but once he and the company made the decision to virtualize they have never looked back and are now virtualizing "everything we can". Through virtualization, the company has been able to save \$1.5 million in IT cost savings both in hardware and maintenance and cut their budget by 50 percent.

SCI attributes Akorri's BalancePoint software with proving and justifying the cost savings and technology needs along the road to virtualization. "As we continue to virtualize applications and consolidate more servers, we look to BalancePoint to monitor and analyze both production and test versions of virtual machines, storage and other technology such as databases to learn how they impact each other and how we can optimize their capacity and utilization. BalancePoint has been invaluable in providing visibility into the back end of VMware and its impact on storage performance, helping us determine how to allocate drive usage to avoid overload. And BalancePoint's easy to read topology maps and charts have made managing our data center much less difficult and time consuming, helping us to significantly reduce data center administration resources," said Brown.

Results

Faster Troubleshooting/Problem Resolution

- Allowed SCI to view what was going on behind the scenes, helping to determine how to allocate and balance drive systems and learn where there were overloads.
- Gave SCI visibility into the back end of VMware and its impact on storage performance, providing insight on how storage solutions would respond to a load used for the first time.
- Provided insight into non-virtualized systems such as databases to learn that what they thought was a slow database drive was actually a problem of running four processors on one drive, and a slow backup was caused by doing indexing at the same time.

Improved Justification of New Technology Requirements/Purchases

- Enabled SCI to deploy new systems quickly – moving from providing a new operating system from 3 weeks to 3 days - without impacting the availability or performance of the existing systems.
- Eliminated unnecessary technology purchases due to guessing at how to solve problems or needing to purchase new technology on short notice.

Reduced Data Center Administration Needs

- Enabled junior desktop IT management personnel to perform advanced server management tasks without more skill or knowledge.

"As a result of using Akorri BalancePoint, SCI is planning to reduce administration costs by \$400 thousand, and cut resources in half by moving from a 50-to-1 to a 300-to-1 servers-to-administrators ratio this year."

Kevin Brown
Infrastructure Manager, SCI