

RAVN Manage transforms the Management & Monitoring of a Major European Central Bank's Search Infrastructure



RAVN Manage has successfully transformed the management and monitoring of the search infrastructure for a Major European Central Bank, allowing them to pre-empt issues in their mission critical Search system and ensure optimum performance at all times.

Situation

RAVN's client, a major European central bank, has a large HP Autonomy WorkSite installation along with some complimentary search components they run to provide their users with a valuable search experience. Users interact with the search system both through the traditional WorkSite interfaces such as FileSite, but also through a custom developed web interface to which they grant users access.

RAVN's client had a team in place that were tasked with both managing the operation of the system but also with developing further features and extensions for the solution. The team quickly became aware that in addition to their main expertise with integration languages, such as .NET for producing interfaces that leverage the search platform, they also needed to develop specialist skills in maintaining the underlying HP Autonomy components that constitute the search platform.

Challenges

RAVN's client found that content volumes and the size and complexity of the WorkSite Indexer and other components that make up the search infrastructure, coupled with additional intranet material, made the management of the environment very time consuming. The search team's time was being consumed by monitoring the platform and ensuring none of the many component parts failed to operate as expected.

Despite the resources deployed to manually monitor the search environment, it was not uncommon for one or more of the critical sub-components to fail silently and go un-noticed until an end-user complained that there was something wrong and, for example, they couldn't find a document. By that time, the exercise of finding the cause of the problem that had manifested itself in a user complaint, was often very arduous. The problem could have occurred several weeks prior to the consequences coming to light. After a notable passage of time, when the root cause of the problem was eventually identified, rectifying the problem, and the likely backlog often constituted a significant effort in itself.

The time and effort it took the team to monitor

and rectify entrenched problems diverted valuable IT resources and detracted from other feature driven projects. It also made it difficult to plan conventional development work due to the ad-hoc nature and unpredictability of problems occurring in the system.

Solution

RAVN's client realised they needed a method of discovering problems earlier and more accurately so they didn't have to rely on the manual efforts in monitoring their HP Autonomy search platform. They contacted RAVN Systems regarding the RAVN Manage product and were impressed with how the product could alleviate the problems of unpredictability, improve the speed at which they could react to issues but moreover, start to become proactive in their management of the environment. Using RAVN Manage, the client can now predict growth in content and measure trends in system resources, which enables them to re-architect the system ahead of hitting critical system limits. The RAVN Manage solution was installed and configured in two days with the help of a RAVN consultant who configured the product to conform to their specific environment.

The resulting installation of RAVN Manage monitors every component in their search environment, beginning with the data sources from which connectors fetch the data, the connectors themselves, components that manipulate the data on its way to the search engine and finally the search engines that drive the platform. In addition to this, a variety of complementary components are also being monitored, including security servers, for example.

RAVN Manage goes beyond the service level monitoring you might expect from a traditional services monitoring program in that it does not only check the status that the Windows Services Manager reports, but also checks the behaviour of each components it monitors and checks each responds correctly to the specific tasks and actions it is supposed to handle. This means RAVN Manage uses specific service knowledge rather than simply relying on the Services Manager. This has proven to be invaluable as components can fail in such a way that despite

the Services Manager reporting it as functional, it is no longer performing the task for which it is intended. Clearly this can have dramatic downstream consequences on the overall integrity of the solution.

Results

Instead of devoting a large amount of time, effort and manpower in ensuring the system is running smoothly, RAVN's client is now confident in the successful operation of their system, relying on RAVN Manage to monitor the system for them and proactively send email alerts should the system behave in a manner that requires attention. Not only are total software failures being tracked and reported, but also spikes in search activity, document index queues and index fragmentation ratios are monitored to enable the client to optimise overall system performance.

This frees up precious technical resources and also eliminates human errors when checking the platform. Service variables are being tracked and recorded, statistics are gathered and log output from relevant components is constantly checked.

If problems are detected and reported by RAVN Manage, the administrator can take action using the product's consolidated dashboard, making it unnecessary to have a large number of remote connections open to the server estate constantly.

Previously, RAVN's client had two resources dedicated virtually full time to monitoring and managing the platform, rising to three or four on occasions when a problem was detected. Once RAVN Manage was implemented, they now have one person who dedicates a small percentage of their time to responding to issues raised by the RAVN Manage software. This person can most often react and rectify the issues reported on their own, due to the early detection of issues (which previously could have remained undetected for weeks), making resolution of problems much less daunting but also due to the many years of experience built into the solution, which track and pre-empt known problem areas.

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