

Retailer Assures E-Commerce Website Performance with NETSCOUT

Smart Edge Monitoring Delivers Quality Digital Experience to Millions of Online Customers

OVERVIEW

The Challenge

- Increased reliance on e-commerce led to expanded visibility and monitoring demands
- Blind spots in multi-vendor tool environment introduced monitoring and troubleshooting challenges

The Solution

- nGeniusONE® Service Assurance virtual platform
- InfiniStreamNG® smart visibility appliances
- nGenius®PULSE with nPoint sensors
- NETSCOUT® Premium Support Engineers

The Results

- Sustained e-commerce sales, with real-time views and proactive monitoring of company website performance
 - Closed IT blind spots in data center, remote client, and network edges to improve monitoring and troubleshooting
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Customer Profile

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has likely forever changed “how, when, and where” consumers shop, and that has represented a boom-or-bust scenario for global retailers. This company’s financial success during this transition serves as a prime example of how to successfully pivot from a retail business model reliant on a brick-and-mortar presence to one that also emphasizes a prominent e-commerce platform.

During this transition, the millions of consumers who had formerly made in-person purchases instead frequently accessed the company’s website to order the same essentials they had been buying for years.

As part of this successful change in retail operations, the company’s reliance on their information technology (IT) operations was such that their Annual Report described this business unit’s success as essential to overall growth. In sustaining IT excellence, the company has for years relied on NETSCOUT’s service assurance solutions and Premium Support Engineering (PSE) resources for visibility into their redundant data center operations.

The Challenge

The move to a predominantly e-commerce model was not a fully “overnight” business transition, but the speed and scale of their customers’ adoption of the company’s website presence certainly made it seem that way for the IT team.

All told, daily website traffic doubled in the early stages of the pandemic, and that resulted in e-commerce business volumes reaching millions of dollars in hourly transactions. Understanding the company’s financial dependence on e-commerce was not going to subside, leadership approved a plan to move forward with what were deemed critical visibility upgrades into their infrastructure and data center operations.

In the face of advancing this project, there were several nagging visibility and performance issues that had consumed IT's operational cycles, including:

- Relying on a multi-vendor tool mix that had been deployed for monitoring applications and network services, including one partner whose installed platforms had become oversubscribed by increased traffic volumes, which in turn led to dropped packets and data loss. In addition, that vendor's tool limitations frustrated many IT users, just as ongoing support issues had annoyed members of the leadership team.
- Emerging "blind spots" that made for difficult real-time monitoring and troubleshooting of everyday IT issues, including database authentication problems, user-experience challenges with cloud-based Google Workspace collaboration services for remote employees, and outages in the data link network layer.
- Building out internal lab environments designed to test the impact of network performance associated with introducing new applications in the production environment. Completion of this effort was delayed due to the unavailability of "before, during, and after views" necessary for this type of forecasting analysis.

These collective factors, as well as other vendors pitching solutions to these issues, had company leadership contemplating a competitive Request for Proposal process. While time-consuming and costly, it was hoped this competitive procurement cycle would reveal a partner best-equipped to address the full tactical and strategic challenges facing IT operations.

Solution in Action

As they surveyed the potential vendor tool approaches available to them, executive leadership instead adopted another tack by conferring with the IT Operations teams that had experienced ongoing visibility and monitoring successes by using solutions already in production at the company. That review process, discussions with

their IT Tools and Architect teams, and project-related dialog with their contracted PSE resources led them to extend their commitment to NETSCOUT. By taking this approach and avoiding a protracted RFP vendor analysis cycle, the retailer met their growing e-commerce business monitoring demands and addressed other visibility and troubleshooting challenges that faced them by incrementally expanding their NETSCOUT footprint as follows:

- Upgrading their nGeniusONE Service Assurance platform licensing to accommodate deployment on Linux virtual environments.
- Instrumenting NETSCOUT Certified ISNG software appliances to visualize critical data center and e-commerce environments, improve their lab environment views, and support 100GB network speeds.
- Deploying the nGeniusPULSE infrastructure monitoring platform and nPoint hardware and virtual sensors to conduct synthetic testing that assessed remote user experience, which helped visualize and resolve issues related to both their Google Workspace environment and database authentication problems.
- Adding PSE consulting resources to further augment the IT Operators responsible for managing the nGeniusONE, ISNG, and nGeniusPULSE environments.

Using this incrementally expanded solution, PSE resources collaborated with the IT team to both take advantage of the improved visibility in their data center and e-commerce environments and use already-familiar nGeniusONE Service Dashboard and Service Monitor workflows to visualize performance of the e-commerce platform. By using dedicated nGeniusONE Service Dashboard views to provide real-time performance snapshots into the e-commerce platform environment, the PSE and IT team proactively monitored website traffic, with nGeniusONE service alerts generated for emerging capacity performance issues. These capabilities helped assure reliable e-commerce platform performance, even during high traffic periods such as "Black Friday" and throughout the holiday season.

The NETSCOUT solution has also enabled the IT team to assure end-user experience by monitoring remote employee network traffic traversing the redundant data center configuration to alert whether traffic volume needs to be re-balanced across another location to assure performance.

The Results

In many respects, the company's successful response to COVID-19 service delivery challenges provided an invaluable reminder to the Executive Team that sustained, reliable e-business platform operations represented the largest front door to their retail business. In retrospect, there's no telling how many millions of revenue dollars would have been jeopardized by extended downtime or reliability issues, not to mention damage to the company's reputation if those issues were broadly reported in the news or social media.

By incrementally expanding their NETSCOUT smart visibility and monitoring solutions, the Executive Team was able to realize the benefits of a single-vendor approach from both cost containment and IT tool reduction perspectives. From a daily business perspective, the partnership with NETSCOUT has enabled the company to satisfy customer demands, optimize capacity requirements and performance of their e-commerce digital experience, while also assuring their employees have reliable access to the applications and services that are critical to their success.

LEARN MORE

For more information about Assuring Availability and Performance of Retail Networks with NETSCOUT, visit:

www.netscout.com/solutions/retail



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