

Jack Henry & Associates safeguards services to 1,400 companies with CA Service Assurance.

Benefit Summary



Customer Profile

Industry: IT services
Company: Jack Henry & Associates, Inc.®
Revenue: \$745.6 million (2009)
Employees: Over 3,800

Business Overview

Jack Henry & Associates, Inc.® provides core information processing solutions for US financial customers. The company processes transactions, automates business processes and manages mission-critical information for more than 8,700 financial institutions and corporate entities through its business units Jack Henry Banking™, Symitar™ and ProfitStars®.

Challenge

Jack Henry's services support six million end-users across large banks and credit unions, and underpin key financial processes, such as credit card transactions and the distribution of customer statements. The company had no consistent means of monitoring end-to-end performance across its network and applications, which made it difficult to safeguard service levels and manage capacity.

Solution

Jack Henry deployed the CA NetQoS® Performance Center, part of the CA Service Assurance portfolio of solutions, which enables its IT team to evaluate how application traffic is impacting network performance, carry out root cause analysis, and capture important metrics for improving the company's network infrastructure, IT devices, and applications. The solution has helped to reduce problem resolution times from days or hours to a matter of minutes.

Benefit

Jack Henry has a finger firmly on the pulse of its customers' business-critical applications, furthering its commitment to industry-leading client satisfaction and retention rates. As a result, the company is already benefiting from improved service, more cost-effective support and greater business agility.



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Josh Bovee
Senior Network Engineer,
Jack Henry & Associates

Business Overview

A core solution provider to the banking sector

Jack Henry & Associates, Inc.® ('Jack Henry') was founded in 1976 as a provider of core information processing solutions for US community banks. Today, the company processes transactions, automates business processes, and manages mission-critical information for more than 8,700 financial institutions and corporate entities.

The company delivers its products and services through three business units: Jack Henry Banking, which provides enterprise-wide automation for the banking sector; Symitar, which provides core processing solutions for credit unions; and ProfitStars, which provides best-of-breed products and services assembled through Jack Henry's focused diversification acquisition strategy.

Jack Henry's primary source of competitive advantage is its commitment to provide service levels that consistently exceed its clients' expectations, and generate industry-leading client satisfaction and retention rates. Its success has helped the company grow strongly over the past few years, with revenues growing from \$535.9 million in 2005 to \$745.6 million in 2009.

Challenge

Maintaining service levels during period of extensive growth

Jack Henry supports around six million end-users across large banks and credit unions that depend on the company's data centers and network to run its business-critical applications. These cover a wide range of functions, from e-banking and credit card transaction processing to customer statement production.

Jack Henry relies heavily on the network to conduct business, especially since little confidential financial information is kept on the company's servers, but accessed via the network. With data doubling every year due to rapid growth, a reliable network is crucial for application performance.

As Josh Bovee, Senior Network Engineer at Jack Henry explains, "The network is absolutely vital to our business because we are providing our customers real-time access to data. That means we need a reliable, always-on connection back to the customers' IT environments. If banks' and credit unions' customers can't access our services, or if performance is slow, it can have a direct impact on the reputation of these financial institutions as well as Jack Henry. When things do go wrong it's very high profile, affecting not just our customers but their customers too."

Safeguarding network performance levels

To handle the company's growth, Jack Henry's network team realized its focus on fault and availability management was not enough. The company had no consistent means of monitoring network and application performance and limited insight into the composition of traffic across the network. This made it challenging to quickly isolate and solve performance issues and plan for future growth.

"We started the POC at 8am and by 1pm we were capturing more meaningful data with CA NetQoS SuperAgent than after six months work with the competitive product."

Josh Bovee

Senior Network Engineer,
Jack Henry & Associates

"We have to prove every single day that our performance is meeting customer requirements, which without end-to-end monitoring was challenging," said Bovee. "We needed to focus on application performance from the end-user perspective and create a baseline of how well we were serving those customers so we could understand when performance degrades and what impact things like infrastructure changes might have."

The lack of an enterprise-class performance monitoring solution meant that identifying the source of degradation in performance could tie up precious time and resources. As Bovee comments, "We were reliant on getting all the IT groups in the same room, and then putting our heads together until we located the source of the issue. With limited insight into network and application performance metrics, this would often take days."

The real-time environment and lack of any historical performance logs also meant that problems could only be addressed while they were occurring, as Bovee's colleague, Senior Systems Administrator Cooper Van Valkenburgh, explains: "Often by the time we noticed there was an issue it was already too late to do any analysis, so we had to watch for the next time it happened and hope we could identify and fix the problem then."

Jack Henry recognized it needed to take a more proactive approach to managing its business-critical banking applications, which would not only simplify incident management but also help them improve the network to best serve its customers.

Solution

A holistic view of performance

The company had previously attempted to deploy a solution to address its performance management challenges, but the product proved difficult to fine-tune to its requirements. After six months, says Bovee, the product was still no closer to being successfully deployed.

"The product was server agent-based and unwieldy to configure," he reflects. "After lots of hard work and little result we did a proof of concept (POC) with CA NetQoS SuperAgent® instead. We started the POC at 8 a.m. and by 1 p.m. we were capturing more meaningful data with SuperAgent than after six months working with the competitive product. SuperAgent was also easier to implement. We didn't need to install an agent on the server or re-architect our infrastructure, which was something we very much wanted to avoid."

CA NetQoS SuperAgent is the infrastructure performance monitoring module of CA NetQoS Performance Center, which enables companies like Jack Henry to capture, store and analyze data from right across the infrastructure — including applications, devices and the network itself — in order to better manage true performance as experienced by users.

"We can now identify problems at any of our data centers on a single dashboard, and often isolate and identify the root cause of a problem in minutes, rather than hours or days."

Cooper Van Valkenburgh
Senior Systems
Administrator, Jack Henry &
Associates

Having made the decision to deploy CA NetQoS SuperAgent, Van Valkenburgh says the advantages of an integrated performance tool suite were hard to ignore. The company therefore decided to implement the following additional modules of the CA NetQoS Performance Center, which is a key component of the CA Service Assurance portfolio of products:

- CA NetQoS ReporterAnalyzer™ for network traffic analysis
- CA NetQoS NetVoyant® for device performance monitoring
- CA NetQoS GigaStor™ for long-term packet capture and analysis.

Integrated in the NetQoS Performance Center, this powerful combination of products enables Jack Henry to address performance problems faster, improve service levels, and mitigate the risk of changes such as new application roll-outs.

"CA NetQoS Performance Center is enabling much more effective performance management," comments Van Valkenburgh. "We can now identify problems at any of our data centers on a single dashboard, and often isolate and identify the root cause of a problem in minutes, rather than hours or days."

Benefit

Ensuring industry-leading customer satisfaction and retention

Thanks to the CA NetQoS Performance Center, Jack Henry has a finger firmly on the pulse of its customers' business-critical applications, furthering its commitment to industry leading client satisfaction and retention rates.

For example, a critical daily FTP (file transfer protocol) transmission from one of its largest banking customers started repeatedly failing exactly 15 minutes after initiation. The integration between CA NetQoS SuperAgent, which provides an enterprise view of the network to isolate when and where application performance degradations are occurring, and CA NetQoS GigaStor, which provides a more detailed, packet-level view of how and why that degradation occurred, helped the network team determine that a load balancer was the cause of the problem.

"Formerly the only performance analysis we could do was live as the incident was happening or wait for the incident to happen again, which was time-consuming and inefficient," comments Bovee. "With CA NetQoS Performance Center we were alerted to the problem and could inspect the relevant data packets after the incident had occurred. This revealed a load balancer was timing out, re-sending and failing. We were able to identify and correct the problem, which if left unresolved could have prevented our banking customers from emailing customer statements — a critical service."

According to Bovee, time saved in troubleshooting is by far the biggest benefit of the CA NetQoS Performance Center. "The old-school meetings where we pointed fingers at each other and tried to figure out the cause of performance problems with limited information don't happen anymore. We now have objective data that lets us know how the network is performing and where our focus should be. We've gone from spending hours or days in troubleshooting mode to minutes, and that improves our service levels to our banking customers."

"We now have a great foundation on which to continue to improve our service levels and customer satisfaction."

Josh Bovee
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CA NetQoS SuperAgent is also enabling Jack Henry to be more proactive in addressing application performance issues before they become major problems. A report showing all remote hosts sorted in descending order based on overall transaction time is sent to support and management staff every day in order to proactively address potential slowness issues with remote banking customers.

Beyond troubleshooting, Jack Henry now has the data to make more informed decisions about capacity planning and growth. For instance, if a banking customer suddenly sees more demand for one of Jack Henry's products, the network team can use CA NetQoS ReporterAnalyzer to determine how much bandwidth is needed to serve those customers and make the right investments in additional bandwidth if necessary, to maintain high service levels without wasting resources.

The solution is also helping Jack Henry address a major concern of banks' customers: online fraud. As Van Valkenburgh explains, "If we see suspicious activity we can isolate and decrypt the packet and see exactly what happened. With the well-publicized dangers of Internet security issues, such as phishing and identity fraud, of mounting concern to banks' customers, it provides a level of reassurance that's extremely valuable to our clients."

Overall, CA NetQoS Performance Center is helping Jack Henry streamline and grow its business through:

- More cost-effective and efficient operations, with less time and resources devoted to identifying, analyzing and correcting performance problems
- Improved customer service, including faster problem resolution and proactive performance management
- Greater business agility, with improved capacity planning helping the company scale network resources in line with business needs.

Internal service level agreement (SLA) reporting is also helping the company to drive ongoing improvement, and, with the baselines established with the CA NetQoS Performance Center, some of the reporting functionality may eventually be made directly available to customers.

"We now have a great foundation on which to continue to improve our service levels and customer satisfaction," concludes Bovee.

To learn more and see how CA software solutions enable other organizations to unify and simplify IT management for better business results, visit ca.com/success.