

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Industry

Established in 1968, Alverno Information Services, the IT Division of the Sisters of St. Francis Health Services (SSFHS), is responsible for implementing, managing and administering all hardware, software, and networks used in the eight hospitals and other healthcare facilities within the St. Francis system.

Business Situation

SQL Server plays a mission-critical role at Alverno as the back end of the core financial, materials management, and health care applications used in the Sisters of St. Francis Hospital System. Because many of these applications are purchased, not developed in house, Alverno does extensive work with third party vendors to diagnose and resolve performance problems related to these products.

Business Scenario

If a problem occurred, the database administrators at Alverno had to set up time-consuming manual processes to diagnose problems, but many times were not able to determine the source of the problem. Also, before implementing Idera, Alverno used an enterprise monitoring product that did not provide the depth of information they needed to solve performance problems proactively.

Benefits

Alverno leverages Idera products to constantly track SQL Server performance and diagnostic data and uses this information to quickly research and resolve problems that may occur. Idera products also help Alverno keep their SQL Server infrastructure running smoothly throughout their environment.

Products

- SQL diagnostic manager

Idera Helps



Alverno Information Services

A Division of the Sisters of St. Francis Health Services, Inc.

IT Division of Sisters of St. Francis Health Services, keep mission-critical applications in top form

Established in 1968, Alverno Information Services, the IT Division of the Sisters of St. Francis Health Services (SSFHS), is responsible for managing the entire computing infrastructure of the eight hospitals and other healthcare facilities within the St. Francis system. To meet the growing IT needs of hospitals that service thousands of patients a day, Alverno has built an impressive infrastructure using state of the art information technology. Most of the core financial, clinical and management systems are third party applications, and the majority use SQL Server as a backend database. Alverno relies on SQL diagnostic manager from Idera to keep their SQL Server infrastructure healthy and their mission-critical applications performing well.

Tom Sawyer is a Senior DBA at Alverno. He and his team of four DBAs are faced with the challenge of keeping the key systems, especially SQL Server, healthy for St. Francis. "SQL Server plays a very critical role in our infrastructure, said Tom. It comprises about 75% of our databases and serves as the backend to many of the critical hospital applications we use including our financial, materials management, and medical applications. With these types of applications and information at risk, we have to keep our SQL Server systems running smoothly at all times." ▶

"The name "Alverno" comes from a mountain in Italy where St. Francis of Assisi had several visions regarding his life's mission and work."

CUSTOMER INSIGHTS

"SQL diagnostic manager has helped us become proactive rather than reactive in our performance troubleshooting efforts."

"Before we implemented SQL diagnostic manager, we were basically paying more for an inferior product!"

"We use a wide range of healthcare applications at St. Francis, almost all of which are purchased applications, so we don't own the code. My team spends a great deal of time working with third party application vendors recommending and implementing improvements to these applications. This is the primary reason that we needed SQL diagnostic manager. We were spending so much time doing investigative work, we decided that we needed a product that could monitor SQL Server proactively and help us more quickly find and diagnose problem code. Now we don't have to go to each box and set up individual SQL Profiler traces and Performance Monitor logs. We just add the server name in SQL diagnostic manager and the product does the rest."

"We recently used SQL diagnostic manager to quickly resolve a problem with a glucose monitoring application. End users reported performance problems. I opened SQL diagnostic manager and found a stored procedure that had been running for 40 minutes on one occurrence with other occurrences of the same stored procedure running at the same time as this long-running occurrence. That's when I realized that there was a problem with the application. We contacted the vendor. They discovered that the problem was related to a registry setting for their application, which they were able to change to correct the problem. This is one example of how SQL diagnostic manager has helped us to identify issues with vendor written applications."

"SQL diagnostic manager has helped us become proactive rather than reactive in our performance troubleshooting efforts. Before SQL diagnostic manager, if we had a problem, we had no way to know concretely what the problem was. We would spend a lot of time setting up manual procedures to track activity for the same time the next day, but more often than not, the same set of conditions would not reoccur. We have wasted a lot of time and effort doing reactive performance investigation. But now, SQL diagnostic manager allows us to be proactive. It is always on, always tracking, and it keeps extensive historical performance and diagnostic information, so we are able to determine the source of a performance problem, even if the problem occurred months ago." ▶

Here is a sample of some of the applications in use at Alverno/St. Francis that benefit from SQL diagnostic manager's real-time performance monitoring & diagnostics:

- Pathways™ Materials Management.
- Pathways™ Financial Management
- Horizon™ Surgery Manager
- Horizon™ Home Care
- Best™ Fixed Assets management
- Kaufman Hall™ Budget Advisor
- Quadramed™ MPI SPY™
- Gajema™ Specimen tracking
- Great Plains™
- Blackberry™ device management
- Citrix™ server management
- Physician credentialing
- Glucose analysis
- Problem tracking/Help desk
- Healthworks™

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"Here's an example. End users on a critical materials management application reported performance degradation. SQL diagnostic manager helped us determine that a specific stored procedure had been running for over an hour. We found that a report writer had been testing a poorly written report in a production environment. He assumed the code was ready for production when it needed further modifications. We were able to identify the report writer by the asset tag on his workstation. If we were not proactively monitoring, we would have never understood the cause of the problem."

"SQL diagnostic manager also alerts us immediately if blocking is detected. It gives us information about the process, who's running it, the code being used, and who is being blocked. We then alert the application team about the problem and work with them to resolve the issue. Typically, we can identify and resolve blocking issues before the end user knows a problem exists!

Before we implemented SQL diagnostic manager, we were using a traditional enterprise monitoring product, BMC's Patrol. It had an agent-based architecture that left more of a footprint on the server and was much more difficult to configure and use. But more importantly, it did not give the database administrators the depth of information that we need to diagnose and solve SQL Server performance problems. It gave us basic information like CPU and I/O, but it did not monitor the most critical part of SQL Server performance....the actual code being run by SQL Server! SQL diagnostic manager, on the other hand is agentless, leaving a much smaller footprint on our servers and it is always monitoring the code being passed to the SQL Server. Before we implemented SQL diagnostic manager, we were basically paying more for an inferior product.

"In a nutshell, SQL diagnostic manager makes our team more efficient and more proactive. With SQL diagnostic manager in place, we save hours of time each week and literally thousands of dollars a year! I recommend SQL diagnostic manager to any SQL Server shop interested in monitoring mission-critical applications."