

Idera and NetIQ Products Help 1-800-flowers.comSM Keep Blooming

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Industry

1-800-Flowers provides a wide variety of gifts through its web site, 1-800-flowers.com.

Business Situation

The company requires a high availability site to deliver great service to customers and stay competitive.

Benefits

Idera and NetIQ products have played a vital role in helping IT staff proactively identify issues that could result in downtime for the site and analyze trends so they can accurately project future requirements.

Idera Product

SQL diagnostic manager (SQLdm)

NetIQ Products

AppAnalyzer for Exchange, AppManager Suite

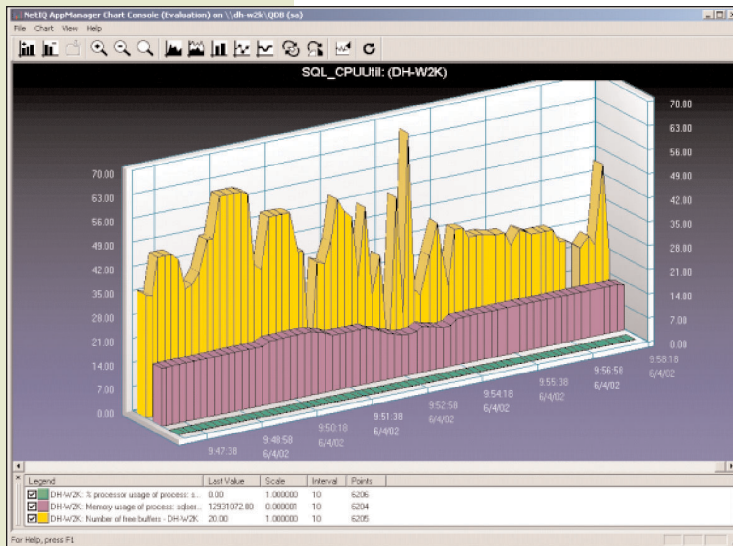
1-800-Flowers has grown into more than plants and flowers. Through recent acquisitions, the company has branched out beyond floral gifts to many reaches of gift giving — Plow & Hearth for home, yard and gardens, HearthSong and Magic Cabin for children's gifts and The Popcorn Factory for popcorn, candy and other edible gifts.

Their business relies on emotions—driving visitors to purchase gifts for birthdays, anniversaries, Mother's Day and the December holiday, among others. As a result, the IT organization is charged with a lofty mission—delivering perfect availability of their customer-facing web site and high quality of service to their growing number of customers.

Adding to the challenge is the fact that the company site experiences huge usage spikes during major

holidays. In the two weeks leading up to Mother's Day, order volume can increase to 10 times or more of non-holiday levels, with the majority of orders coming during a three-hour window around lunch time. To prevent degradation that can impact a positive customer experience, 1-800-Flowers requires a high-availability environment with redundancy in every piece of its infrastructure and robust management tools to help IT staff be proactive about identifying issues before they become problems.

Providing Real-time Data, Problem Analysis



NetIQ's AppManager for Microsoft SQL Server is the industry's most comprehensive solution for centrally monitoring your distributed SQL Server environment from an easy-to-use console.

IDERA CUSTOMER INSIGHTS

"In order to commit to a service level, you've got to know what's going on in your infrastructure and have a view into what's happening. Idera and NetIQ products let us understand how our Web site and database applications are performing today and over time. We use that information to continually raise the quality of service we deliver to our customers via our site."

Enzo Micali, Senior Vice President of IT and Chief Technology Officer, 1-800-Flowers

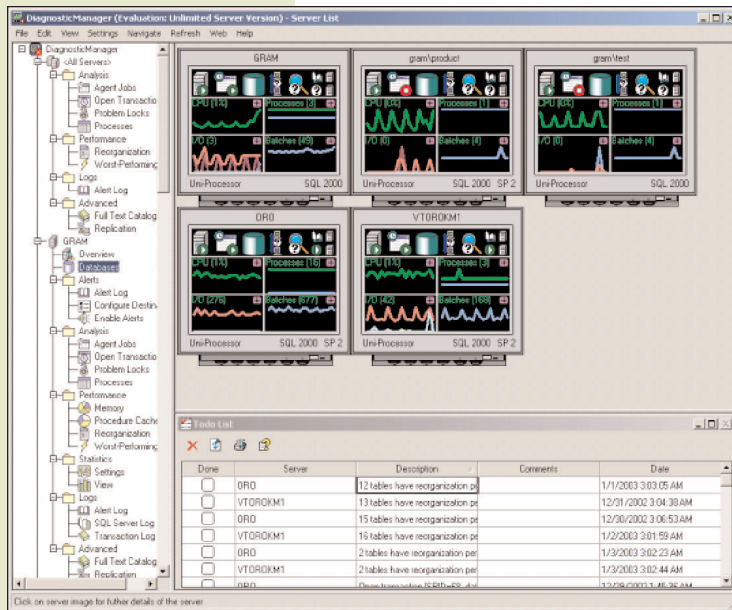
The companies rely on a mix of Windows and UNIX systems and applications to support their business. The 1-800-Flowers customer-facing web site is spread across three separate sites in the United States, powered by a multitude of Windows servers at each site running Microsoft IIS and Commerce Server with backend SQL Server databases. The company fills orders with a three-part system—its own distribution and warehouse facilities, their BloomNet network and, finally, third-party vendors. The fulfillment end of the business is built on the Sun platform using iPlanet. To keep 1-800-Flowers a blooming business, the infrastructure team relies on a variety of tools to manage the various components.

For their critical customer-facing site components, 1-800-Flowers relies on NetIQ's AppManager Suite (AppManager) and Idera's SQL diagnostic manager (SQLdm) for systems management, including performance analysis, troubleshooting, statistical data gathering and event management.

Using AppManager and SQLdm together helps the IT staff stay proactive, identifying issues that could cause problems and downtime on the 1-800-Flowers site. AppManager offers real-time monitoring and analysis while SQLdm is helpful in pinpointing problems and identifying resolutions for the backend SQL Server databases. For example, AppManager will identify when the amount of disk utilization on a production server is approaching a critical threshold and send a page directly to a SQL database administrator (DBA) who can take corrective actions using SQLdm before the database problem affects the company's site.

SQLdm has also enhanced the organization's efficiency in improving the performance of the database servers and the 1-800-Flowers site. "On the SQL Server side, we were challenged to deliver optimal performance as it relates to index tuning and some deep SQL stuff," said Doug Luke, senior DBA for 1-800-Flowers. "With SQLdm, I can tell you which tables and which indexes need to be rebuilt for optimal site performance with only two clicks of the mouse."

Being Proactive, Meeting Peak Demand



SQL diagnostic manager collects and displays real-time diagnostic data covering SQL Server, helping you quickly investigate and correct database problems.

IDERA CUSTOMER INSIGHTS

“With Idera and NetIQ, we’re now able to look at a holiday and say next year we’ll need these resources, projecting this growth. Hands down, it’s the most robust out-of-the-box solution we’ve found that met our price point and service requirements.”

Doug Luke, Senior Database Administrator, 1-800-Flowers

Enzo Micali, senior vice president of information technology and chief technology officer for 1-800-Flowers, said the ability to be proactive is imperative during their busy seasons. “During peak holidays, lunch is a convenient time to get online and buy a gift,” he said. “By tracking both user connections and CPU utilization, we can understand the performance impact of peak periods and make sure the site can handle the additional loads. It’s helped us in that regard.”

Analyzing peak periods also helps 1-800-Flowers forecast requirements for the next spike in activity, and charts and graphs make communicating these requirements to upper

management easy. “Even though we’ve been able to collect raw performance data in the past, before AppManager we haven’t had the ability to easily display it in graphical format,” Micali said.

Quick, easy access to data is imperative for his organization to predict where future problems might arise—problems that could cause the site to go down, resulting in a loss of customers and a decline in sales. They utilize Idera and NetIQ products to stay ahead of the curve, helping them meet the goal of quality service. “It would be extremely rare that we wouldn’t know of an issue before a customer,” Micali added. “In order to commit to a service level, you’ve got to know what’s going on in your infrastructure and have a view into what’s happening. Idera and NetIQ products let us understand how our web site and database applications are performing today and over time. We use that information to keep raising the quality of service we deliver to our customers via our site. And Idera and NetIQ help us get the information we need, without a lot of time and effort. That’s important because our lean staff needs to always be improving their effectiveness.”

The IT organization is in the process of deploying NetIQ’s AppAnalyzer for Exchange, implementing a pilot program to manage its e-mail usage. For an organization as distributed as 1-800-Flowers, managing that business communication is vital to its continued availability and success.

Sowing Robust Success Out of the Box

When customers visit 1-800-flowers.com to purchase a gift, they expect the site to work. The IT organization strives to maintain high availability on its customer-facing site, imperative to the company's goal of meeting its customers' needs. To provide that quality of service, the IT staff must be able to forecast problems they might encounter and keep all components of their infrastructure running at peak performance. Idera and NetIQ products offer them a level of assurance they need to successfully achieve their mission.

"The ability that Idera and NetIQ gives us is to do analysis after the given peak period and project forward what our resource requirements will be for the next Mother's Day," Luke said. "With Idera and NetIQ, we're now able to look at a holiday and say next year we'll need these resources, projecting this growth. Hands down, it's the most robust out-of-the-box solution we've found that met our price point and service requirements."

Idera and NetIQ products have delivered a wealth of benefits for the IT staff at 1-800-Flowers. With Idera and NetIQ, the organization can play its part in the company's continued growth and success.

- **Optimize staff resources** – With product features, such as a centralized console, Idera and NetIQ enable them to get the pertinent data without taking unnecessary time.
- **Proactively solve problems** – Before they become big problems, especially during a peak usage period. Idera and NetIQ help the organization stay ahead of the curve, solving problems before the customer-facing web site is affected.
- **Ensure IT supports the business** – Availability is key because they are selling to customers making emotional purchases. The company cannot afford to have anything go wrong. Idera and NetIQ deliver the high availability 1-800-Flowers needs to stay competitive.

CONTACTS

Idera Corporate Headquarters
802 Lovett Boulevard
Houston, TX USA 77006

Toll-free: 1.877.GO.IDERA
Phone: 713.523.4433
Fax: 713.862.5210

www.idera.com
Sales Information:
sales@idera.com
General Information:
info@idera.com

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