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The Daily T1R	19 November 2010

Belgacom teams up with AccelOps to achieve end-to-end monitoring

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Belgacom, the largest telecom provider in Belgium, is on its continued quest to provide enterprise customers with a wide spectrum of ICT services. From securing business applications, to managing end-to-end ICT services, to enabling infrastructure as a service, Belgacom ICT, which is the ICT arm of Belgacom Group, has tightened up its business model and delivered on its promise of service performance to corporate businesses. Managing over 1,000 servers (physical and virtual) and a slew of network infrastructure devices within Belgacom ICT's three datacenters for more than 200 managed hosting customers, service resiliency and responsiveness has always been at the forefront for Belgacom ICT's datacenter management team.

On the flip side, the responsibility for managing and monitoring service components within Belgacom ICT's datacenters is daunting and customer requirements keep on piling up. In a deliberated effort to close the gap of datacenter management and monitoring, Belgacom ICT's datacenter management team was on the lookout for integrated monitoring approaches. After a vigorous vetting process, Belgacom ICT picked **AccelOps**, which is a newcomer in the datacenter and cloud monitoring space, to deploy an integrated infrastructure monitoring product within its datacenters to support conventional managed and cloud-based hosted services.

Building end-to-end visibility and control for hosting services and cloud offerings

Anecdotal evidence suggested that the partnership with AccelOps to enable integrated monitoring across a multitude of services did pay off in several ways. Gaining full visibility into various IT components and service layers (network layer, security layer, virtual layer and middleware layer) has helped Belgacom ICT to proactively respond to customer needs. This in turn enabled the operator to achieve operational efficiency and enjoy optimal use of resources while reducing mean time to repair (MTTR) by 10%. Considering the maturity of Belgacom ICT operations, a 10% reduction in the MTTR is a moderate improvement.

The ability to have a one-click customer view for services (traditional managed services, hybrid products and cloud offerings) that reside within Belgacom ICT's datacenters has not only allowed the ICT provider to quickly drill down issues through conducting root-cause analysis, but more importantly, it can deliver on its promise of service performance, which is key in improving customer stickiness.

As stated by Belgacom ICT, managing and monitoring various services offered to customers, including new cloud offerings and on-premises hybrid offerings, is instrumental in building customer trust. In the case of cloud service, Belgacom ICT suggested that the functional depth and breadth of the monitoring platform, for real-time oversight and historical analysis, has been critical from a capacity management standpoint.

Using the new monitoring platform, Belgacom ICT is now able to dynamically monitor the capacity process, changes, usage and potential issues across the hardware layer from virtual machines and OS to the middleware layer. Belgacom ICT believes that this is the right approach to provision monitoring tools from the perspective of cloud service management.

As far as internal resource management is concerned, Belgacom ICT wanted to have a unified monitoring tool, giving the operational team a better and more user-friendly (in graphical view) diagnostics tool to address customer issues while freeing up skilled resources for strategic projects. Using the new monitoring tool, Belgacom ICT was able to provide committed SLAs, with an average service availability of 99.99 %. Of course, the design of the network did have an impact on service availability. The Belgacom ICT – AccelOps relationship went far beyond technical collaboration. AccelOps' engineering team worked closely with Belgacom ICT to extend the platform to support items that mattered most to Belgacom ICT's datacenter management team. For example, Belgacom ICT was able to send notifications (which are in a specified format to support third-party applications) to **IBM's Netcool** as part of the feature enhancement.

Why AccelOps?

Just like any ICT company, Belgacom ICT was seeking a highly dynamic and innovative partner as it was heading down to the transformation path to support changing business requirements and IT delivery models. This immediately ruled out a number of big players due to their inherited legacy operations and high price tags. With that in mind, Belgacom ICT shortlisted a few potential partners based on four basic requirements: the features and functionality of the monitoring tool, flexibility in operational and customer reporting, the availability of proactive management and transparent repair, and enabling personnel to optimize technical call center resources.

Weighing AccelOps against its competitors, including **Nimsoft**, **Hyperic**, **Zenoss** and **Zabbix**, AccelOps outranked the competition based on four determining factors. First and foremost is pricing (and total cost of ownership), which is still influential in scoring a run in today's economy. In the case of Belgacom ICT, AccelOps' product was far more cost effective than its credible competitor Nimsoft's. Also, the product was considered highly flexible and customizable in leveraging UI integration (rule, dashboard and reporting). Third, it was simple to use and implement, with fewer operational components and no need to install agents. Finally, AccelOps' product is designed with datacenter requirements in mind, such as multi-tenancy and service mapping, which is deemed valuable for Belgacom ICT to grow with its cloud hosting businesses. Belgacom ICT has yet to provision any monitoring capability at the application layer, but the ICT provider is likely to work with AccelOps as demands arise.

T1R take

The demand for automation and unified computing and monitoring is on the rise in the service provider world as business transformation shows no sign of slowing down. As the Belgacom ICT case study unfolds, telecom providers can turn to innovative technology approaches for operational efficiency and service performance.

The Belgacom ICT story is a testimony to AccelOps' capability to deploy a carrier-grade integrated monitoring offering. But still, it is the flexibility to adapt to customer requirements, beyond technical merit, that enabled the startup to earn high marks from Belgacom ICT. When asked about lessons learned from this service experience, Belgacom ICT reckoned that a time-consuming integration process could dilute the value proposition of the product. Therefore, an early involvement in understanding business requirements and expectations is vital for any technology partner to shorten the release cycle and ensure service expectations and requirements are matched.

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