Quest Boosts Savills' SQL Server Performance, Reduces Storage Needs, and Speeds Up Backup Process

Savills is one of the world's leading global real estate service providers with more than 17,000 employees around the world. The company runs a number of custom applications in the UK utilising approximately 300 SQL Server databases, which are accessed by up to 3,000 users. The most popular application, Savills' CRM system, is used by approximately 1,600 people at any given time. Savills turned to Quest Software for help with performance, troubleshooting and analysis of its SQL Server environment.

The Challenge

Savills has one in-house DBA to manage the performance and security of all 300 databases, which grow according to the needs of the business. The DBA was using SQL Server's native monitoring tool to track performance, but it was not capable of monitoring all databases at once. This made keeping track of disk space challenging.

Savills knew that if a server were to run out of disk space, due to a build up of log files for example, the result would be server failure. This would prevent users from accessing the applications - including the CRM system, which is pivotal to Savills' business. With no access for users, income could potentially be lost.

Savills knew that a proactive approach was required to avoid a shortage of disk space as well as calls to the help desk from frustrated users. "We wanted to ensure that our servers were used as efficiently as possible, with high availability and no dips in performance," explained Steve Brooks, technical operations director, Savills plc. "More importantly, it was imperative that our business-critical CRM system did not suffer from unplanned or unnecessary downtime."

Savills also felt that a historic performance analysis on a daily, weekly and monthly basis would enable more efficient use of the servers' resources at certain points in time, especially at month end. However, the SQL Server's native monitoring tool did not provide an historical view of performance levels.

In addition, Savills wanted to reduce the length of its daily overnight backup process, before it exceeded the available backup timeframe. If the process were to take too long, there was the chance that it would impact system performance during working hours.

Savills recognised that a best-of-breed solution was required to help with SQL Server performance monitoring and analysis. The company also needed to reduce the storage space and time required to backup and restore the databases.

The Quest Solution

A positive review of LiteSpeed in an IT publication influenced Savills to use the product for a trial period. The company also tested Quest Central for SQL Server, a powerful performance management solution. On the basis of a successful trial period, Savills invested in the solutions from Quest to help manage a large portion of its SQL Server environment.

LiteSpeed is a low-impact, high-performance back-up and recovery solution for Microsoft SQL Server. It provides integrated compression and encryption in the back-up process, for significant savings in storage costs. It can cut hours off back-up and restore times, dramatically reducing maintenance windows.

Quest Central® for SQL Server is a suite of integrated products which enables database administrators (DBAs) to predict, diagnose and resolve even the most difficult database performance issues. It provides detailed historical performance metrics, capacity management and automated SQL tuning.

Savills implemented the Quest solutions in May 2007. "The implementation was straight- forward and methodical," said Brooks.

Overview

Headquarters

London, England

Services

Property services

Critical Needs

A solution to improve management of a SQL Server environment

Solution

LiteSpeed™ for SQL Server and Quest Central® for SQL Server

Results

- Decreased performance-related calls to help desk

- Reduced storage needs for significant cost savings

- Decreased database backup size by about 70 percent

- Reduced database backup time by 70 percent and restore times by 50 percent

- Reduced time to solve code-related problems from days to minutes.

The Bottom Line

Quest Central has enabled Savills to adopt a proactive approach to managing its SQL Server environment, resulting in improved database performance. Further, help desk calls were reduced significantly, freeing up the DBAs to spend more time on other important projects. "We identified a high risk to performance levels on our SQL Server databases, which would have severely impacted the business," noted Brooks. "The Quest solution has helped to significantly reduce the risks, with the added benefit of potentially reducing ongoing resource costs."

Quest Central also provides Savills with information on performance bottlenecks and usage trends. "The alerts help us to ensure that any issues are resolved before they affect the users, and the analysis assists in allocating appropriate resources at busy times," explained Brooks. "The real value of this investment is the overall improvement in the service experienced by the users."

LiteSpeed and Quest Central have provided Savills with significant cost savings, by providing detailed performance statistics and potentially reducing the numbers of servers the company needs. "Database backup size has decreased by approximately 60 percent," said Brooks. "For instance, one database backup dropped from 200 GB to 88 GB, and another from 45 GB to 15 GB. "And, Quest Central's analysis has driven a reorganisation of storage based on actual usage."

LiteSpeed for SQL Server has also shortened the company's backup time by 70 percent. "For instance, a backup of a 50 gigabyte database now takes about 12 minutes compared to a 25-minute native backup time," said Brooks. "The whole process is complete well before the start of the working day, ensuring that it doesn't impact on database performance or the users' experience."

Restore times for Savills have also decreased by about 50 percent through its use of LiteSpeed. "It previously took us 45 minutes to restore one of our databases and with LiteSpeed it now only takes 20 minutes," said Brooks.

Brooks summed up the value of Quest's solutions. "LiteSpeed and Quest Central have provided us with greater fluidity and flexibility to manage our SQL Server databases," he said. "Having a centralised area to view our entire environment saves us time, speeding up problem resolution and adding value as systems are configured dynamically in-line with the requirements of the business."

About Savills

Savills is a leading global real estate service provider listed on the London Stock Exchange. Established in 1855, the company has a rich heritage with unrivalled growth. Savills is a company that leads rather than follows and has more than 180 offices and associates throughout the Americas, Europe, Asia Pacific, Africa and the Middle East.

About Quest Software, Inc.

Quest Software, Inc. delivers innovative products that help organisations get more performance and productivity from their applications, databases and Windows infrastructure. Through a deep expertise in IT operations and a continued focus on what works best, Quest helps more than 50,000 customers' worldwide meet higher expectations for enterprise IT. Quest Software helps organisations deliver, manage and control complex database environments through award-winning products for Oracle, SQL Server, IBM DB2, Sybase and MySQL. Quest Software can be found in offices around the globe and at **www.quest.com**.

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