



Swiss Mobiliar

Swiss Mobiliar takes application performance to new heights with BMC Software

Geography

Switzerland

Industry

Insurance

Business Need

Swiss Mobiliar depends on DB2 for z/OS to support its application infrastructure, but they experienced emergency performance problems following an application deployment. Swiss Mobiliar needed a water-tight DB2 performance tuning solution to avoid problems — and the related costs.

Solution

Swiss Mobiliar deployed BMC APPTUNE for DB2 to support the business in three vital areas:

- > To detect exceptional queries and alert the team to them
- > To conduct regular trend analysis
- > To trigger RUNSTATS executions to collect and calculate statistics.

Results

- > Saved CPU resources by eliminating performance problems introduced by new application launches
- > Maximized DB2 object efficiency, and optimize application performance and stability
- > Identified SQL statements consuming too much resource
- > Eliminated emergency performance problems altogether, saving time and money
- > Compiled detailed and extensive DB2 performance and usage data without impacting system resources
- > Enabled the firm to view information for all subsystems from a single point of control

Faced with a regular cycle of new application launches, how do you ensure these new insurance and pensions solutions operate at peak performance — around the clock? That was the challenge facing Swiss Mobiliar, one of Switzerland’s leading insurance and pensions providers. For the last 10 years, it hasn’t been an issue, because the firm has relied on BMC APPTUNE for DB2 to maximize DB2 object efficiency, optimize application performance, and ensure stability. And whilst this world-class tuning solution has totally eliminated emergency performance problems, Swiss Mobiliar is also impressed by the latest version of BMC SQL Performance for DB2 solution. Offering the additional advantage of Performance Advisor technology, this next-generation technology can help reduce the number of reorganizations and cut the total cost of ownership.

SWISS MOBILIAR DEDICATED TO CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND SERVICE

The global financial crisis of 2008 sparked fundamental change throughout the financial sector. New regulations, inter-bank lending, even temporary nationalization are bringing sweeping change across the system. But among all this turmoil, one thing doesn’t change—and that’s the focus financial institutions place on customer service and satisfaction. This is true of Swiss Mobiliar, a leading Swiss insurance company. Every third household in Switzerland is insured by Swiss Mobiliar and the firm is committed to ensuring its 1.3 million policyholders receive a consistent, rewarding service experience during their insurance negotiations with the company.

In recognition of this customer-centric focus, Swiss Mobiliar launched a project to provide its sales teams with online access to customer accounts. Replacing an existing batch system, it allows sales teams, for example, to insert new contract data, adjust the values associated with insurance policies, calculate payments and perform other productive tasks in real time. The system has also been opened up to other insurance intermediaries, such as travel agents and end-user customers who can perform certain self-service actions.

But as almost every DB2 administrator will testify, launching new application functionality typically brings with it new challenges. In particular, Swiss Mobiliar’s DB2 applications became more complex as the online sale system and other applications were introduced. The data within the DB2 for z/OS database was also experiencing rapid growth, and there were concerns about whether these DB2 applications would meet the company’s stringent performance goals. Not only that, Swiss Mobiliar needed to be able to immediately pinpoint the root cause of any application performance degradation.

BMC APPTUNE FOR DB2 OPTIMIZES APPLICATION AND OVERALL SYSTEM PERFORMANCE

However, Swiss Mobiliar has BMC APPTUNE for DB2 on its side. This world-class DB2 performance tuning solution is helping to maximize DB2 SQL efficiency, and optimize application and overall system performance. The firm has been a BMC APPTUNE customer for the last 10 years, and for Thomas Baumann, Team Leader on the Data Management Team at Swiss Mobiliar, the tuning solution feels like part of the family now.

“Swiss Mobiliar typically deploys applications four times each year and prior to using BMC APPTUNE we used to experience highly volatile response times,” he says. “With BMC APPTUNE we can rapidly identify SQL statements that are consuming too many resources and undermining performance. Over the years, BMC APPTUNE for DB2 has played a critical role in stabilizing those response times and ensuring the successful performance of customer-facing applications.”

Thomas Baumann has seen the success of the solution at first hand. Until recently, the team were experiencing as many as 10 emergency performance problems following an application deployment. These problems might be a very high CPU usage rate, an I/O system close at the limits, buffer pools which do not reach their performance goals, or locking problems. Some of the emergencies might involve quickly changing a query over a two day period—a very risky approach; less urgent performance problems might take several months to resolve, including time for re-testing and re-deployment. And of course each problem demanded significant resources and overhead to complete. That’s not the case now. “Once we began using BMC APPTUNE, the number of emergency performance problems fell to two or three; now we don’t get any at all when we launch a new application,” he explains.

Swiss Mobiliar is using BMC APPTUNE for DB2 in three vital areas:

- > to detect exceptional processing database queries and alert the team to those which are running slower than expected
- > to conduct regular trend analysis: for example, calculating monthly metrics surrounding CPU usage and query ratios
- > to trigger RUNSTATS executions to calculate DB2 statistics. Here for instance, Thomas Baumann and the team would use BMC APPTUNE for DB2 to compare the performance figures calculated by the DB2 Optimiser against the query run-time; and where there was a disparity, RUNSTATS and REBINDs would be executed.

BMC SQL PERFORMANCE FOR DB2 SAVES EVEN MORE TIME AND MONEY

The company is currently using BMC APPTUNE for DB2 as a stand-alone solution, although it is actively interested in the overarching solution, BMC SQL Performance for DB2. This provides all the capabilities found in BMC APPTUNE for DB2 and BMC SQL Explorer for DB2 (an SQL plan analysis tool), but adds additional solution-only components like the Index component, which provides index usage analysis and ‘what if’ index simulation. It also includes Workload Compare technology which shows the impact on access paths of proposed application changes. And last, but not least, it includes Performance Advisor technology which can show, for example, which applications will benefit from reorganization. By eliminating unnecessary reorganizations using BMC SQL Performance for DB2, Thomas Baumann and his team see the potential for saving time and money.

“Reorganizations are expensive—both in terms of the outage and CPU resources needed for the reorganization and the time that DBAs spent submitting reorganization jobs,” says Thomas Baumann. “The Performance Advisor technology in BMC SQL Performance for DB2 highlights which databases will perform better after reorganization and which ones will not. By determining ahead of time which databases yield performance improvements, we would save substantial CPU cycles and time. Efficient and effective index management can also reduce peak-time CPU utilization, reducing total cost of ownership for the entire DB2 environment.”

Swiss Mobiliar is keeping a watchful eye on BMC SQL Performance for DB2 and may begin examining it more closely soon. For now though, BMC APPTUNE for DB2 is the master: helping this leading Swiss insurance and pensions provider to improve application performance and stability and help keep its customers satisfied with the service they receive.

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— Thomas Baumann,
Team Leader, Data Management Team,
Swiss Mobiliar

Key Products Used:

- > BMC APPTUNE FOR DB2
- > BMC SQL Performance for DB2

About Swiss Mobiliar

In a crowded market, Swiss Mobiliar stands out as one of the leading providers of insurance and pensions in Switzerland. The company has an annual premium volume of over CHF 2.7 billion. More than 80 independent general agencies with their own claims service guarantee proximity to its 1.3 million customers. Swiss Mobiliar employs some 3 400 staff members and over 275 trainees in its home markets of Switzerland and the Principality of Liechtenstein. It is Switzerland’s oldest private insurance company and has operated on a mutual basis since its founding in 1826. Visit www.mobi.ch for more information.

About BMC Software

BMC Software is a leading global provider of enterprise management solutions that empower the world’s largest and most sophisticated companies to automate their IT and increase its business value. Delivering Business Service Management and BMC Service Automation, BMC’s solutions span enterprise systems, applications, databases and service management. For the four fiscal quarters ended June 30, 2008, BMC revenue was approximately \$1.78 billion. Visit www.bmc.com for more information.



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