Event Management: A Catalyst for Retail Success

Transform event management to keep shelves stocked and sales fast
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Executive Summary

Point-of-sale, inventory, supply chain, and other systems play a vital role in driving revenue and profitability in the retail industry—especially during the critical U.S. Thanksgiving holiday weekend. So savvy retailers are reinventing their event management strategies to monitor these crucial systems more effectively and detect and resolve issues before consumers are negatively impacted. The company attributes the success of its multiyear transformation project to the advanced capabilities of BMC TrueSight Operations Management combined with expert help from BMC Software Consulting Services in planning and implementation.

This paper profiles one Fortune 500 company’s efforts to create a world-class event management environment that:

• Processes events and turns them into actionable alerts
• Helps IT teams instantly pinpoint and resolve critical events to eliminate disruptions
• Delivers dramatic gains in event reception, event routing, and auto-ticketing success rates
INTRODUCTION

Consumers have high expectations for selection, service, and quality. Retailers that don’t live up to those expectations are at risk of losing customers to the competition. In particular, retailers need to keep the right items on hand and ensure that delays or disruptions never occur at checkout—whether the customer is shopping in a store or online.

Achieving those goals is no easy task, and it’s especially difficult for a retailer that has nearly 2,000 stores, each of which stocks an average of 36,000 home improvement and hardware items. The IT staff at this Fortune 500 company is stepping up to the challenge by transforming its event management environment to ensure that all areas of the business that IT touches, such as point-of-sale (POS), inventory, supply chain, and any other critical applications, are monitored effectively and issues are detected and resolved before customers are negatively impacted.

The multiyear transformation project involves upgrading both the hardware and software that comprise the monitoring environment. In the past year, the staff completed the first phase of a comprehensive event management approach that processes events and turns them into actionable alerts that the operations, solutions, and engineering teams can leverage to eliminate disruptions and ensure high performance. BMC TrueSight Operations Management is the company’s software of choice. TrueSight Operations Management prioritizes events according to business impact, enabling IT to quickly zero-in on issues that might disrupt or degrade the performance of crucial applications.

To accelerate implementation and ensure success, the monitoring staff has partnered with BMC Software Consulting Services for assistance in planning and implementing the upgrade, integrating event feeds from diverse sources, and presenting them in the TrueSight Operations Management console.

STRUGGLING WITH A “SEA OF RED”

The company’s event management environment is large and complex, with events generated by disparate monitoring tools as well as from applications with self-monitoring capabilities. Prior to upgrading to TrueSight Operations Management, the company was using an older BMC Event Management tool running on obsolete and outdated hardware. All event feeds were routed to a central console, which meant operators could review events on a single screen. However, virtually all events were categorized as critical, so operators constantly faced a “sea of red.” They had no way to prioritize events based on business impact, which slowed response times and unnecessarily increased outage durations. The staff determined that it needed to upgrade to a modern solution with holistic, end-to-end monitoring capabilities that support today’s IT demands.

The staff selected BMC TrueSight Operations Management as the foundation for an excellent event management environment that correlates and filters events based on business impact, reduces event and incident noise, provides a common event model, and allows the staff to create service models mapped to critical business applications.

TrueSight Operations Management also supports the next phase of the transformation plan, which involves building full-service impact models and leveraging TrueSight integration with the BMC Remedy Service Management Suite, BMC Atrium Discovery and Dependency Mapping, and the Configuration Management Database.
GETTING EXPERT ASSISTANCE

A critical success factor for the project was the decision to engage BMC Consulting Services to assist in the strategy, planning, and implementation of BMC TrueSight Operations Management. The multiyear service engagement started with a three-day workshop in which key stakeholders at the retailer met with BMC consultants to lay out a vision and establish goals for the transformation project. The consultants’ experience with hundreds of event management implementations at diverse customer installations combined with robust expertise in monitoring technology, best practices, and integrations helped ensure project success and accelerated completion of the first phase of the transformation.

“Working with the people from BMC Consulting Services was critical to defining our rollout strategy. They were excellent internal advocates, helping our team communicate a clear vision within the company.” – Director of I&O, performance monitoring

STABILIZING THE ENVIRONMENT

In the initial phase, the team upgraded the monitoring environment, replacing seven-year-old servers running Windows 2003 with Linux Red Hat 6.4 servers that have 50 percent more CPU capacity and 200 percent more memory. The upgrade provided a fourfold increase in the capacity to receive SNMP traps, which eliminated the 10 to 15 percent of traps that were dropped in the past due to over-capacity.

TrueSight Operations Management receives more than 25 different event feeds from diverse sources, including enterprise monitoring tools such as CA® Wily®, System Center Operations Manager, and BMC Patrol/Portal as well as applications that have a self-monitoring capability such as Teradata, IBM® DataPower®, ESB, EMC, and UPS devices.

UNLEASHING THE POWER OF ENHANCED FUNCTIONALITY

New and enhanced capabilities available with TrueSight Operations Management are delivering tangible results in a number of areas. In particular, data tables provide a standard and predictive method for determining the severity of any kind of event based on an application tier structure. As a result, the “sea of red” in the operations center console has been replaced with an easy-to-read presentation that permits the staff to immediately address events that could impact the business.

Modelling capabilities are enabling the staff to create simple service models that graphically present the relationships of an application with the underlying components that support it. The Graph view in the Operations Console displays a graphical representation of the objects that operators can select in the navigation tree. It shows how those objects relate to each other. A color-coded heat map view shows the alarm stages of the nodes selected in the navigation, making it faster and easier for operators to identify critical issues. The staff has already created more than 200 simple service models.
The new event management approach proved to be particularly valuable during the most recent Thanksgiving Day holiday weekend, which kicks off the holiday shopping season in the retail industry. During the lead-up to the holiday, a team comprising people from BMC Consulting Services, Operations Center, IT Service Desk, and Engineering implemented application health checks and end-user experience management, refined alert thresholds, and applied advanced correlation techniques to eliminate duplicate events. The team also added and refined monitoring of key applications from the infrastructure level through the transaction level.

The new approach clearly identified the very small number of events that were critical. As a result, the operations team didn’t lose time searching through a list of hundreds of events to track down and resolve the critical issues that required immediate attention.

### EVENTS CATEGORIZED AS CRITICAL, Y-O-Y

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Before Upgrade</th>
<th>After Upgrade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanksgiving</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### BOOSTING PRODUCTIVITY

The IT staff has seen dramatic gains in productivity due to TrueSight filtering, formatting, enrichment, correlation, and routing capabilities. The staff leveraged dynamic data tables, which eliminated the need for code changes and event cell outages.

The staff is also taking advantage of the TrueSight Event Management Framework, a consolidated set of rules that enable consistent, reliable integration of new applications. Simple Network Management Protocol (SNMP) integration build time has been reduced from an average of five days to four hours or less using the framework.
CUSTOMER’S CLOSING COMMENTS

“BMC Consulting Services is playing a vital role in our transformation,” the director of I&O, performance monitoring concluded. “By taking advantage of the knowledge and expertise of the BMC team, their insights into event management best practices, and the optimized methodology for implementation and integrations, we’ve avoided the setbacks that occur when people are learning as they go. As a result, we’re seeing successes at every phase and making significant progress toward our ultimate goal.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about BMC TrueSight Operations Management, please visit bmc.com/it-solutions/truesight-operations-management.html