

I D E R A[®]

SQL Solutions Case Study

CHAUCER PLC

STREAMLINES SQL SERVER MONITORING AND REPORTS

OVERVIEW

Chaucer Holdings PLC is a specialist insurance and reinsurance group listed on the London Stock Exchange. It provides the capital and expertise required to write business at Lloyd's, the world's leading insurance and reinsurance market. The core of its business is underwriting marine, non-marine and motor insurance and nuclear industry insurance.

ORGANIZATION PROFILE

Industry Insurance

Headquarters United Kingdom

Employees 400+

Website www.chaucerplc.com

CHALLENGE

As a major reinsurance company in the United Kingdom, Chaucer PLC's IT group must keep its SQL Servers running at peak performance while also assuring compliance with industry regulations and complete backup of data. Robert Proudfoot, a senior database administrator, is responsible for managing the SQL Server database server production environment, as well as a development environment. "We need to be able to adequately determine whether a server has sufficient memory, is performing optimally or not, and where we need to look to address issues that affect our server stability and performance," Proudfoot explained.

Proudfoot further noted that "One of the standard problems for database administrators (DBAs) in the financial services industry is that we have day-to-day operations that utilize a fairly low percentage of our server's resources. Then, at month-end or quarter-close, all of a sudden our server utilization goes up significantly because we are running some quite large reports. Naturally, we try and put in server hardware that is going to cope with day-to-day demands but will also be able to manage an end-of-month performance surge. Too much capacity and you are spending more money than you need to."

The challenge for Chaucer's IT department involved finding effective tools that would enable the Senior Database Administrator to monitor a large number of SQL Servers and provide overview reports as well as exception reporting. The DBAs needed automated solutions—including an auditing system for servers for compliance/regulatory purposes—that would save time and enhance productivity.

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With IDERA tools, I have been able to gain more insight into SQL Server utilization for every day as well as peak or end of month demands.

Robert Proudfoot **Sr. Database Administrator, Chaucer PLC**

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SOLUTION

A combination of IDERA tools provides performance monitoring and diagnostics, auditing and alerts for server changes, and backup and recovery solutions to help proactively manage and troubleshoot the SQL Server environment from a central console.

“From that point of view, I have been able to gain more insight into server utilization for every day as well as peak or end of month demands. So I have been able to establish general usage and peak demand baseline landmarks. This allows me to balance the performance needs across servers and be more efficient when making decisions based on the information from IDERA tools.”

Proudfoot especially appreciates the email alerts from SQL Diagnostic Manager. “Once I have managed to baseline my servers and find appropriate levels or metrics, I am then able to instruct the diagnostic tool to send me an e-mail or in fact, it can page me—something I did not have before. I automatically get an e-mail when one of my metric thresholds is exceeded so I can immediately react to a problem while it is actually happening. Too often in the past, I would have to wait for my users to notify me that my application is not performing well. And then I would have to dive in and have a look.” Proudfoot noted that once he receives an e-mail he can use SQL Diagnostic Manager to look that up and resolve any issue and be far more proactive in the process. “So that is been the real gem there from that side of things.”

BENEFITS

Centralized, comprehensive compliance

Proudfoot initially purchased SQL Compliance Manager and then SQL Diagnostic Manager. “Until SQL Compliance Manager we did not really have a centralized system for auditing our servers,” he recalled. “We had procedures, obviously, though they were quite manual and time-consuming to run and look through reports. What I really wanted was to free up my time with a tool that would allow me to get exception reports, so I did not have to look through pages and pages of paper.” Proudfoot said that he can now get comprehensive compliance reporting that keeps both managers and auditors happy.

Easier recovery, backup and defrag

“One of the major surprises in using IDERA tools,” Proudfoot emphasized, “was in discovering that SQL Safe Backup was such a reasonable and accessible product.” IDERA’s SQL Safe Backup provides a convenient backup and recovery solution that significantly reduces database backup time as well as reducing backup disk space requirements, helping to ensure compliance with backup and recovery policies.

The biggest surprise for Proudfoot, however, was the time saved with SQL Defrag Manager. “Managing indexes is a massive task for DBAs that is so time-consuming,” he said. SQL Defrag Manager automates the labor-intensive process of finding and fixing database index fragmentation issues across multiple SQL Servers.

“A pleasure to use”

“Certainly when it comes to the day-to-day sorts of things, IDERA tools just make certain tasks really easy and simple,” Proudfoot noted. “That is quite nice because it does mean you can focus on the bigger picture and so forth without having to spend half your day every day preparing reports or having to go through some quite technical exercises to put performance data together.”

“For companies that do not have a dedicated SQL Server resource, or people who know less about SQL Server or specialists, IDERA tools would make it far easier for them to manage the servers.” “I know it sounds a bit corny,” he concluded, “but in actual fact, the IDERA tools are a pleasure to use. Most tools simply do not look good. But IDERA’s are actually quite nice to look at and I enjoy clicking through the reports and various dashboards.”

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I can balance the performance needs across servers and be more efficient when making decisions based on the information from IDERA tools.

Robert Proudfoot **Sr. Database Administrator, Chaucer PLC**

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SUMMARY

IDERA tools for SQL Server deliver these key benefits for Chaucer PLC:

- Eliminate time-consuming processes with centralized monitoring and auditing of servers.
- Minimize costly server downtime with real-time monitoring and customizable alerts for faster diagnosis and remediation of performance and availability problems.
- Audit virtually all SQL Server activity and data changes delivering customizable reports for compliance audits.
- Save money by reducing database backup time over native backups and reducing backup disk space requirements.

SQL MANAGEMENT SUITE

The Ultimate SQL Server Bundle to Improve DBA Efficiency

Save 40% on IDERA's top tools for managing SQL Server environments when you bundle.

With key features from performance and compliance to security and disaster recovery, bundling SQL Server database tools makes putting together a robust management and monitoring solution simple and easy. Key capabilities of SQL Management Suite include:

- Monitoring database availability, health, and performance
- Tracking sensitive data access and usage
- Viewing audit and compliance information
- Managing backups and disaster recovery
- Identifying security vulnerabilities

Save an additional 20% (for a total savings of more than 50%) when you purchase SQL Management Suite in the online store.

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