MONEY MANAGEMENT INTERNATIONAL (MMI)

HOW IDERA HELPED MMI IMPROVE THEIR SERVERS PERFORMANCES

OVERVIEW

Money Management International (MMI) is the largest non-profit credit counseling organization in the USA, providing professional financial guidance, counseling, educational programs, and debt management assistance. For over 46 years, MMI has been helping consumers regain control of their financial lives and reduce their debt liabilities.

ORGANIZATON PROFILE

Industry finance   **Headquarters** USA   **Employees** ~1,000   **Website** www.moneymanagement.org

CHALLENGE

MMI leverages SQL Server databases for many mission-critical applications including their website. In the past four years, MMI has experienced tremendous growth and the use of SQL Server has grown accordingly – from 3 to over 30 instances. Keeping all these SQL servers running smoothly and efficiently and managing a large and complicated job stream using native tools became a significant challenge for the database administrator (DBA) team.

Don McGee, Senior Technology Director at MMI began looking for tools to help monitor and manage the performance and job scheduling of their SQL Servers. Because MMI is a non-profit organization, the tools had to be affordable.

"MMI has experienced a huge amount of growth in the last four years and it has been a challenge from an IT perspective," said Don. "Many of our critical business applications are based on SQL Server and were not designed to scale the way we needed them to. Our IT staff has spent a lot of time managing transactions on servers, managing throughput of the servers, and making sure that everything is running as optimally as possible."

"When I started at MMI about a year ago," continued Don, "My first job was to get the big picture of all of our databases. Job management and performance monitoring were especially painful. We just did not have enough tools or manpower to get the job done well and on time.

> We have been using SQL Diagnostic Manager
> and SQL Enterprise Job Manager for over a year now and they play
> a critical role in the day to day operations at MMI.
>
> Don McGee, **Senior Technology Director**
> **MMI**

SOLUTION

Considering the importance of SQL Server at MMI, we could not afford to have badly performing servers or failing jobs. So, I began the search for some tools to help us manage our SQL Servers more effectively. That is when I found IDERA."

GETTING SQL SERVER JOB MANAGEMENT UNDER CONTROL WITH SQL ENTERPRISE JOB MANAGER

"At MMI, we run a very complicated job stream that executes continuously from about midnight to 8 AM every day. Most of the jobs are interdependent and must run in a defined sequence. Before we got SQL Enterprise Job Manager, we spent many hours writing complicated scripts to get the jobs to run the way we wanted them to. It was very cumbersome to manage and if there was even a minor glitch, the whole system would get out of whack. If one job took too long, all of the jobs would be off schedule, if one failed there would be a domino effect. This often seriously affected our service to east coast customers. The tools that Microsoft makes available with SQL Server to support job management and alerting were just not sufficient enough to meet our needs."

"We implemented SQL Enterprise Job Manager about a year ago and it has made life considerably easier. Now we use SQL Enterprise Job Manager to monitor and manage our SQL Server jobs. Not only do we get a full historical view of actual run times, but we also get a projected view of anticipated run times. This helps greatly with planning our job workload. Also, to solve the complex job dependency issues, we coordinate all jobs through SQL Enterprise Job Manager using automatic chaining. Now Job 2 does not kick off until Job 1 is complete. It is so much cleaner, easier, and more reliable! Even better, SQL Enterprise Job Manager has excellent alerting capabilities and notifies us immediately if there is a problem."

"I have been really impressed with SQL Enterprise Job Manager's ability to record performance counters. I did not expect to get this functionality from a job scheduling tool. Now we can easily and quickly measure what the CPU and I/O utilization will be or were for a particular job. This is a huge benefit to us for planning purposes."

MANAGING SQL SERVER CONSOLIDATION WITH SQL DIAGNOSTIC MANAGER

"With the level of growth we are experiencing at MMI, we constantly have to balance the need for growth and the need to consolidate servers and databases. In fact, we are currently in the throes of a major server consolidation project. Since 2001, the number of employees at MMI has grown more than four-fold. It has been very difficult to keep an IT infrastructure up to date and running smoothly with that rate of growth and change. In the past, as we grew, our answer was to add more people, more servers, more disk space, and more SQL instances. Now we are looking back and trying to determine how we can consolidate and create a more effective design that is also easier to manage and maintain. SQL Diagnostic Manager helps us get a better understanding of how our SQL Server infrastructure is operating and where we have opportunities to consolidate. We know exactly what each database is doing, how much more they can handle, and where their weaknesses may lie. SQL Diagnostic Manager is instrumental in helping us to get random SQL Server instances consolidated and tuned so they are running optimally."

"Also, SQL Diagnostic Manager is helping us keep the SQL Servers that we have running efficiently. It gives us a centralized view of all instances in our production environment and has a powerful alerting subsystem that lets us know in real-time as soon as a critical event takes place. It even helps us more quickly identify why a database is experiencing problems. In fact, using SQL Diagnostic Manager we have been able to identify a list of common root

causes of database downtime or slowdowns. Now if any of these events occur, we receive an alert via email or pager. This allows us to plan around these events and prepare to do the maintenance or fixes that are needed. For example, if indexes begin to get fragmented, it is an indication that a performance problem will ensue. In fact, they may become so fragmented that the application begins to slow down or time out which is something we definitely want to avoid. We use SQL Diagnostic Manager to keep tabs on the health of our indexes. If any begin to show significant fragmentation, we make plans to update or rebuild them as necessary. With SQL Diagnostic Manager we are able to take proactive steps to keep our servers running smoothly and avoid downtime or performance issues."

"We have discovered an unexpected benefit in the amount of historical data that both SQL Enterprise Job Manager and SQL Diagnostic Manager collect. We knew that the products kept the data and we really did not think we would ever use it, but it has proven to be an invaluable resource. We have been able to go back in time to research performance trends, helping us plan better for the future."

"I estimate that we have reduced our management and administration workload well over 30% using SQL Diagnostic Manager and SQL Enterprise Job Manager. These tools have improved our DBA team's daily throughput. Now they have more time to focus on proactive tasks versus monitoring and worrying with servers day and night. It is hard to quantify, but I estimate that we get about 30% to 50% improvement inefficiencies by using these tools. Bottom line, they save us time, money, and are enabling MMI to do more with what we have!"

BENEFIT

MMI has gained control of their SQL Server infrastructure enterprisewide using SQL Diagnostic Manager and SQL Enterprise Job Manager, IDERA's performance monitoring and job management solutions.

SQL Diagnostic Manager and SQL Enterprise Job Manager enable MMI's Senior Technology Director, Don McGee, and staff to more effectively manage their SQL Server databases enterprisewide. Because MMI has several key applications that run on SQL Server, including their website that is accessed by thousands of customers daily, it is critical to MMI that SQL Server operates efficiently at all times. SQL Diagnostic Manager and SQL Enterprise Job Manager help MMI ensure that SQL Server is always running in top form and that jobs are performed on time and without errors.
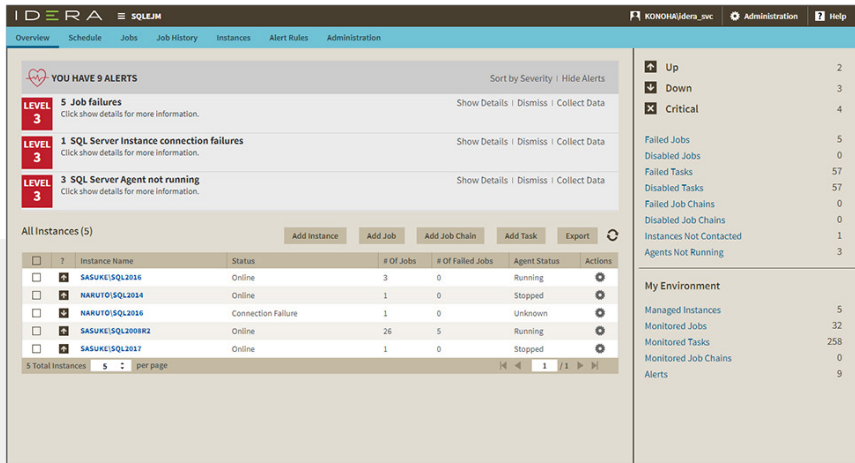
MMI now leverages IDERA products to centrally monitor and manage the performance of all of their SQL Servers, ensuring that they are running in top form. IDERA products have also helped MMI to streamline and automate the scheduling of a complicated overnight job stream, have reduced administration effort by over 30% and increased performance and availability of over 30 production SQL Servers.

SQL Enterprise Job Manager

TRY FOR FREE!

SQL Diagnostic Manager

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