



Softrax Corporation

Softrax Increases Staff Efficiency by Improving Problem Resolution with BMC AppSight Application Problem Resolution System



Geography

North America

Industry

Information Technology

Business Need

Softrax was looking for a way to enable its development and testing teams to expand and enhance the company's product line; empower its support organization to handle the rapid growth of its customer base; and optimize workflow among stateside and offshore teams.

Solution

The company deployed BMC AppSight Application Problem Resolution System to increase staff efficiency by dramatically accelerating and improving problem resolution throughout the product lifecycle.

Results

- > Enabled development and testing teams to document and resolve significantly more issues per person-hour, creating time to develop extra product features within a given schedule
- > Increased support team productivity
- > Eliminated the need for lengthy, multi-session, hard-to-schedule conversations among end users, support, and development
- > Slashed root cause identification time for eight problem scenarios from a total of 34 hours to just 45 minutes (during proof of value testing)

Softrax uses BMC AppSight Application Problem Resolution System to accelerate and improve problem resolution throughout product lifecycles, enabling development, testing, and support teams to support business growth, improve product quality, and enhance product content — all without runaway head count.

Softrax, a leading provider of enterprise revenue management and billing software solutions, was looking for a way to enable its development and testing teams to expand and enhance the company's product line; empower its support organization to handle the rapid growth of its customer base; and optimize workflow among stateside and offshore teams.

"We've been growing at such a rate that we had to either raise head counts or raise our productivity," says Don Sweitzer, director of Development at Softrax. "BMC AppSight Application Problem Resolution System has made us significantly more productive. It is a very cost-effective approach compared with increasing staffing levels and having to train a lot of new people."

CONVINCING PROOF

Analogous to a black box flight recorder on an aircraft, BMC AppSight Application Problem Resolution System offers patented Black Box software technology that captures a synchronized, real-time log of user actions, system events, performance metrics, configuration data, and code execution flow when a problem occurs. By recording the actual application execution, the system eliminates the need to document and reproduce issues before resolving them, thereby providing a significant efficiency gain for development, testing, and support teams.

Intrigued by the premise and promise of BMC AppSight Application Problem Resolution System, Sweitzer arranged a "proof of value" exercise pitting the BMC solution against eight historic Softrax problem scenarios, which ranged from an unlaunchable application client to an administration page that wouldn't come up when requested. Without the BMC solution, each problem required from two hours to several days to resolve. By analyzing BMC AppSight Black Box recordings, the BMC team dramatically accelerated and streamlined the root cause analysis process, slashing total resolution time from 34-plus hours to an astounding 45 minutes.

"These weren't necessarily difficult problems to solve," notes Sweitzer, "but they were difficult to find. The BMC proof team members — who knew the BMC system, but didn't know our product — found the problems significantly faster than our people who knew the product, but had not been using the BMC solution."

MAKING MORE PROBLEMS SOLVABLE

The time saved — coupled with the system's ability to aid development, testing, and support alike — made rolling out the solution an easy decision for Softrax.

For development and testing, reports Sweitzer, BMC AppSight Application Problem Resolution System not only shortens problem resolution times as dramatically as it did during the proof of value, but it enables the teams to solve problems that previously defied resolution. "Many times, QA would report that they found a bug that they couldn't reproduce, but that they knew was there.

Now, they just press a button and the system automatically captures a defect log with all operations at the system level, and attaches it to the problem report so development can get right to work on the resolution.”

By expanding the number of solvable problems in development, BMC AppSight Application Problem Resolution System improves initial product quality, something that customers participating in the most recent Softrax product beta test noted with appreciation. Even while lengthening the list of pre-release issues, the system still saves Softrax enough time that the development team is able to create more feature-rich products within the same release schedules.

ACCELERATING CUSTOMER SUPPORT

Just as it does for development and testing, BMC AppSight Application Problem Resolution System helps the company’s support team resolve more problems more quickly. Perry Seigle, manager of Customer Support at Softrax, notes that before the BMC solution, “getting all the details necessary to replicate a problem was difficult because end users are typically not able to provide the system-level information necessary to reconstruct the events and conditions leading up to a problem.”

“When we first describe the BMC AppSight Black Box to customers, sometimes they’re a bit taken aback,” Seigle continues. “They take the attitude, ‘You’re not going to install something on our machines.’ However, once they use it and experience the time-savings for themselves, they overwhelmingly say, ‘This is just fantastic!’ After all, their job is not tech support. BMC AppSight saves them from trying to answer a bunch of questions they can’t really answer. Using the BMC solution has significantly reduced the time involved for both our customers and our support team.”

ENHANCING OFFSHORING

In passing escalated problems on for resolution, the BMC solution addresses another coordination challenge. “At Softrax,” explains Sweitzer, “Our stateside support team sends problem reports to offshore maintenance and development teams, who create fixes overnight. Having BMC AppSight logs that completely track each problem gives our offshore teams everything they need to proceed, without losing a whole day of work waiting to ask us ‘one more question’. This is a huge time-savings and efficiency gain for us.”

Seigle continues, “With some team members offshore, inevitably there are going to be communication issues. It’s really hard to work out some of these problems with words alone when you’re splitting the work among people who use different words to begin with. BMC AppSight gives you a visual record of the problem; so a picture really is worth a thousand words.”

The BMC system also ensures the capture of every aspect of application behavior. In the past, Seigle says, resolutions may have been delayed because someone would make assumptions about what was important or fail to mention some critical factor. “By definition, the BMC solution contains the information you need because it’s a visual representation of everything going on, at every level.”

SUPPORTING CONTINUED BUSINESS GROWTH

Overall, Seigle credits BMC AppSight with enabling the Softrax support team to handle more issues as its customer base grows “without just throwing more people at the problems. Compared with hiring, BMC AppSight gives us a much more cost-effective way to keep up with our growth,” he says. “We recently initiated a rule that all reported defects require a BMC AppSight log. Through policy, and the natural course of people gaining comfort with the solution and discovering its value, we see BMC AppSight weaving itself into our culture. It simply works.”

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Don Sweitzer
Director of Development
Softrax Corporation

Key Products Used

> BMC AppSight Application Problem Resolution System

About Softrax Corporation

Softrax Corporation (www.softrax.com) is a leading provider of enterprise revenue management and billing software solutions that fundamentally change the way companies manage, analyze, report, and forecast their revenue. Softrax solutions automate the entire revenue cycle, from revenue recognition, reporting, and forecasting through complex billing and contract renewals.

About BMC Software

BMC Software delivers the solutions IT needs to increase business value through better management of technology and IT processes. Our industry-leading Business Service Management solutions help you reduce cost, lower risk of business disruption, and benefit from an IT infrastructure built to support business growth and flexibility. Known for enterprise solutions that span mainframe, distributed systems, and end-user devices, BMC also delivers solutions that address the unique challenges of the mid-sized business. Founded in 1980, BMC has offices worldwide and fiscal 2007 revenues of \$1.58 billion. Activate your business with the power of IT. www.bmc.com.

In May 2006, BMC acquired Identify Software, creators of the AppSight Application Problem Resolution System. For more information about the BMC AppSight Application Problem Resolution System, visit www.appsight.com or call (800) 364-5467 or +1 (919) 388-3333.



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