



Symantec i3v8: Application Performance Managers Get Faster Problem Resolution and Problem Prevention

The latest version of Symantec i³ extends application performance monitoring and management to new platforms, improves troubleshooting analysis, and simplifies solution deployment and administration. Let's take a look at how these new capabilities benefit IT managers under pressure to improve availability and performance business services, applications and transactions.



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Expanding the end-to-end view

The underlying technology of i³ SmartLink speeds problem resolution by tracing transactions as they flow across complex datacenter infrastructure in real-time. This knowledge of and data about the transaction path allows the product to dynamically breakdown transaction times to quickly identify problematic application tiers. This latest version has been expanded to include .NET and MS SQL applications. Symantec is also releasing an SDK to simplify the creation of new monitoring capabilities for custom as well as legacy applications and infrastructure.

Also with this release, Symantec bundles the Symantec Application Service Dashboard for all i³ solutions. In addition, the dashboard has been integrated with Insight Inquire for synthetic transaction monitoring. Thus i³ users can have a comprehensive view of application performance through a customizable, portal-based dashboard without needing to access multiple data sources separately.

Because of the scale and variety of technologies used in operations, for most IT organizations, obtaining an end-to-end view of complex business applications and transactions is the functional equivalent of the never-ending quest for the Holy Grail. This is true because – for the sake of efficiency and following the maxim ‘if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it’ – many enterprises will choose to wrapper functioning legacy custom code (often residing on equally legacy systems) with new integration interfaces for reuse in the delivery of new services or transactions. The legacy technology still must be monitored if IT is to proactively manage the service or transaction. Often the decision would be to monitor with an existing

end-to-end management solution, rather than undertake the expense and effort of a tailored solution. The result was less than optimal monitoring. Ptak, Noel & Associates (PNA) expects that the reuse of legacy technology will only continue and may even grow with the increasing adoption of service-oriented architectures. In this release, Symantec introduces a solution to the problem of enabling adequate monitoring.

Symantec new i³ SDK provides an easy way for users to extend i³ monitoring capabilities to legacy and other custom applications. It can serve as the basis for a partner-driven extended ecosystem of value-add solutions. Symantec is now positioned with a real opportunity to become a more significant player in enterprises with high levels of legacy technology reuse. PNA believes the next step for Symantec will be to offer extended support for a community that can share solutions and best practices for managing legacy technology.

Improving problem resolution analysis

SmartTune capabilities allow enterprises to describe automated actions to resolve specific problems. This release adds these capabilities for Microsoft SQL Server and .NET and expands the capability within J2EE environments. Symantec further includes the ability for administrators to do what-if simulation analysis on suggested changes. This ability allows administrators to see in advance the impact on performance of a suggested change without affecting the production environment. Thus when administrators have multiple resolution options, they can make a quick comparison of the performance impact of each alternative proposed option.

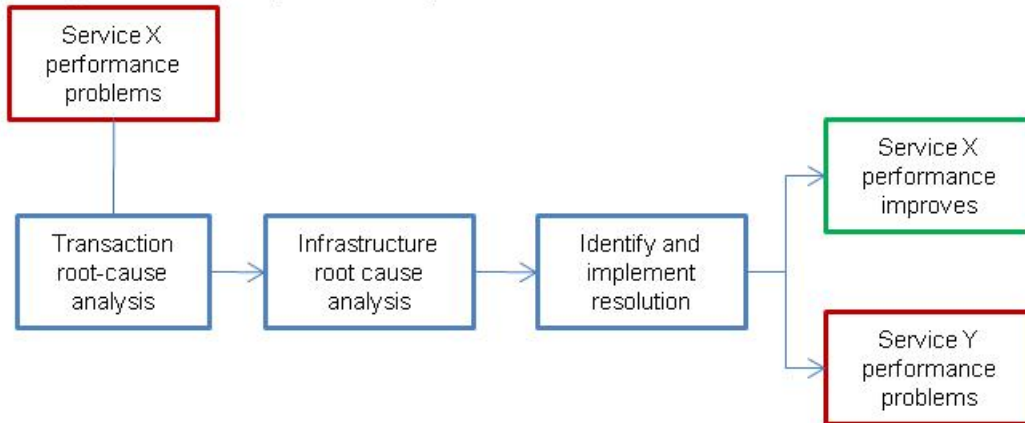
Most application performance management solutions that speed resolution times have some level of transaction tracing and application relationship discovery. This capability allows application support staff to identify problematic application tiers. Differentiation at this level has been established mostly based on the breadth of technology supported and the sophistication of the transaction identification. Symantec has a good story in this regard, but PNA believes it is not a unique story. However, what is unique to Symantec's i³, in our opinion, is the real-time what-if analysis embedded into the troubleshooting process.

Real-time what-if analysis allows application managers to preview how the planned resolution will impact not only the performance of the problematic transaction but how it will impact all other concurrent workloads. This is significant because individual applications and infrastructure are supporting multiple business applications, services and transactions. Implementing a resolution to a problem with one service may negatively impact the performance of other important services. Without getting a preview of the performance

impact on other workloads, it could be that IT will be shooting itself in the foot (see Figure 1) in its attempt to solve a problem.

Yes, there are several workload and performance modeling solutions on the market that can perform what-if analysis. However, these solutions are most frequently designed for use in off-line scenarios, such as capacity planning or detailed performance optimization of a particular technology. Symantec's implementation promises to change this to a dynamic analysis capability applicable for any monitored application. In addition, by bringing this capability into the fast-paced world of application problem resolution, Symantec not only speeds resolution of existing problems but also prevents the occurrence of future problems. PNA believes problem prevention is something every harried application manager can use more of and will happily embrace!

Implementing a resolution may cause other problems



Symantec i3 resolution impact analysis prevents problems

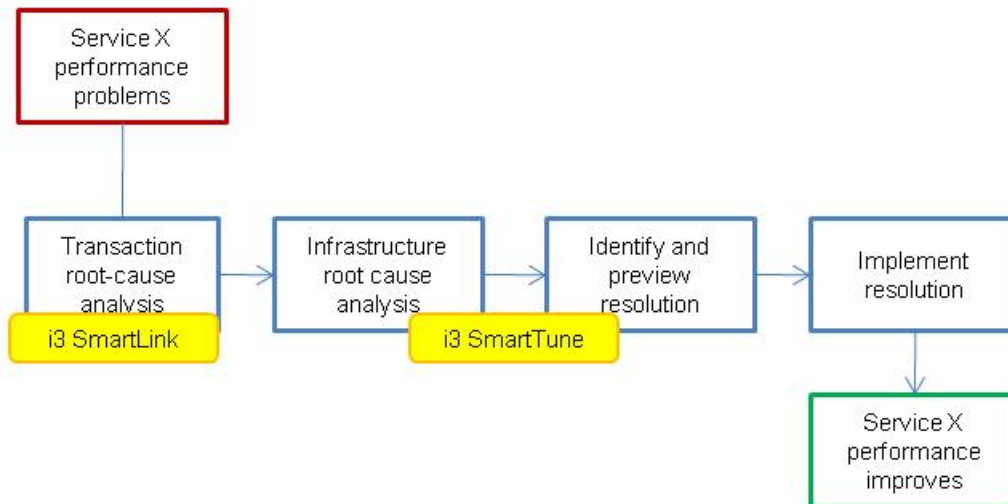


Figure 1: Symantec improves problem resolution

The Final Word

Last year PNA said that Symantec had its work cut out for itself with its goal and efforts to reestablish its Application Performance Management (APM) solutions in a highly competitive market. What has changed in the last year? The answer is: Quite a lot! In addition to adding new management capabilities, Symantec now provides a solution that has become more enterprise-oriented with improved scalability, the SDK for legacy technologies, and improved role-based administration.

Beyond the technology features, Symantec continues its shift from a purely product company to a true solutions company. APM has done a lot to simplify its solution bundles and pricing, for example, including ASD in its i³ packages. It has also formalized its consulting packages – to focus not only on technology installation but on the methodology of managing performance of n-tiered applications and cross-silo business transactions. As each enterprise is different, so are its applications and transactions. Symantec's team works with enterprise IT to determine the right management approach, metrics and solution architecture to ensure success.

These are indicators of a company dedicated to moving aggressively forward to develop and deliver solutions that address pressing operational problems in a direct and prompt manner. Symantec is clearly listening to its customers and hearing their challenges, problems and frustration. But Symantec is not simply listening; it has demonstrated its willingness, and ability to undertake the steps – major, aggressive, innovative and somewhat risky, – necessary to deliver successful, implementable, and effective solutions.

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With a belief that business success and IT success are inseparable, Ptak, Noel & Associates works with clients to identify, understand and respond to the implications of today's trends and innovations on the future of IT Operations.

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About the Authors

Jasmine Noel has 10 years experience helping clients understand how the adoption of new technologies affect IT management. Noel served previously as director of systems and applications management at Hurwitz Group, where she formulated and managed the company's research agenda. She was also a senior analyst at D.H. Brown Associates, where her responsibilities included technology trend analysis in the network and systems management space. Noel is regularly quoted in publications such as CIO Magazine, eWeek, InformationWeek, InfoWorld, and NetworkWorld. She also has contributed articles to several leading publications on various IT management topics. Noel holds a bachelor of science from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a master of science from the University of Southern California.

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Richard Ptak has extensive experience working closely with Fortune 50 companies in developing product direction and strategies at a global level. Rich has held positions as senior vice president at Hurwitz Group and D.H. Brown Associates. He has held engineering and marketing management positions with Western Electric's Electronic Switch Manufacturing Division and Digital Equipment Corporation. He is frequently quoted in major business and trade press such as The Wall Street Journal, New York Times, AP, Business Week, eWeek, InformationWeek, and Computer World. He is author of "Manager's Guide to Distributed Environments," (John Wiley & Sons, 1998). In addition, Ptak was technical editor of "Cisco Internet Architecture Essentials Study Guide: Cisco Internet Solutions Specialist" by Recore, Laurenson, and Herrmann (Cisco Press, 2002). Rich earned his MBA from the University of Chicago, and his MS in engineering from Kansas State University.

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