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Product Review

Orbitz Delivers Real-Time Business Activity Monitoring With SL's Enterprise RTView™

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SL Corporation - Enterprise RTView

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REVIEWER: Richard Alster, manager of Business Intelligence Architecture for Orbitz Worldwide.

BACKGROUND: Orbitz is a leading global online travel company that uses innovative technology to enable leisure and business travelers to research, plan and book a broad range of travel products.

PLATFORMS: Open source operating system and application server.

PROBLEM SOLVED: In 2007, our team at Orbitz implemented a unified technical and business operations management interface leveraging SL Corporation's Enterprise RTView to provide real-time information to our business analysts. This comprehensive business activity monitoring (BAM) solution created a standard method of generating and collecting events in order to correlate metrics - such as visitor activity, response time and latency - in real time.

PRODUCT FUNCTIONALITY: We are leveraging Enterprise RTView to provide real-time access to streamed processing data as well as to data from other sources such as SQL queries from databases. We make extensive use of RTView's real-time analytics functions and custom reporting, which give us on-the-fly views of current business activity, along with aggregation and breakdown across important dimensional lines. The product's historical baseline trend comparison functionality, which compares our current activity with historical averages, has been critical to the success of the project.

STRENGTHS: Enterprise RTView gives us multiple, cross-dimensional views into a broad array of business and technology performance trends within a single portal. By far, for Orbitz, the greatest strength of the product is its flexibility and customization. Our business analysts are impressed with the increased granularity of the performance metrics and love RTView's ability to render custom dashboards. Our development team realizes significant efficiencies in the tool's ability to "templatize" dashboards. Also critical to our solution was RTView's high-speed analytics. SL developed a memory-resident data cache specifically to handle the high-speed analytics processing of large quantities of real-time data in-memory for our application. RTView's historical trend comparison capability with a rules-based definition of upper and lower bounds of performance (scope banding) is user-configurable and has alarming capabilities when trends fall outside a defined band. We can define custom alerts and corrective actions, and automate the generation and delivery of custom reports.

WEAKNESSES: We found some of the most highly functional and customizable aspects of the platform required more BI development skills as compared to the core product, which requires minimal programming knowledge. Also, there were some limitations in the visual displays that were lacking certain Web 2.0 features. SL, however, included these Web 2.0 enhancements in their March 2008 product release.

SELECTION CRITERIA: Flexibility of our real-time intelligence platform was a top priority. Enterprise RTView offered greater flexibility and customization capabilities than the other products we considered. The solution needed to be able to access complex event processing streams as well as other data sources, and it had to be truly real-time.

Enterprise RTView
SL Corporation
240 Tamal Vista Blvd.
Corte Madera, CA 94925
(415) 927-8400
www.sl.com

Enterprise RTView is built from the ground up for real-time applications, which becomes apparent in how effectively they handle real-time analytics and in the real-time nature of their objects and displays.

DELIVERABLES: Our real-time intelligence system now has more than 30 Enterprise RTView dashboards - with one level of drill down - connecting to 17 event streams. The system has 1 to 2 million rows in-memory at any given time, with calculations performed every minute. Update time for the dashboards running all analytics is less than two seconds. The system provides alerts that signal when metrics are out of range, and automated PDF reports show activity on an hourly basis.

VENDOR SUPPORT: SL has provided excellent support throughout the implementation lifecycle, responding quickly and completely to our requests for information, guidance and even product enhancements. SL has also been extremely proactive, investing time and resources to fully understand the nature of our requirements and offering solutions to help us achieve the most meaningful visibility for our business.

DOCUMENTATION: SL's Enterprise RTView Builder provides both online help and traditional documentation. More detail in using the objects and functions would be helpful.