Penton Media Improves the Performance of Its Custom Drupal App

Company Background

Penton Media is the leading independent, business-to-business media company creating and delivering vital content that moves markets. Penton is where professionals turn to gain the critical insight, expert analysis, and relevant connections needed to compete and succeed. Through its custom web application, Penton Media delivers industry information to more than six million professionals.
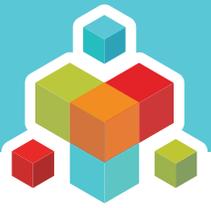
The Challenge

The Penton custom CMS platform is built using a Drupal multi-site install in a virtualized server environment. Its web applications are hosted using several coding languages, including PHP, Python, Java and Ruby within a distributed infrastructure. Also, the Penton systems engineering team deployed a set of 8-core, 10 GB virtual machines along with myriad of caching and database servers to host the custom CMS platform. Despite the large capacity of these VMs, Penton's development team stated that these machines were not powerful enough to support the business.

To prove that the virtual machines had the capacity to handle the workload, the systems engineering team required a third-party validation of the servers. After deploying several basic performance monitoring solutions, Penton installed New Relic. New Relic provided Penton with knowledge about how specific sections within its application were performing and proof that the standard VM was not the root cause of performance problems. However, beyond identifying these basic issues, New Relic did not provide Penton with an in-depth, detailed view into its web applications.

"I pretty much fell in love with TraceView as soon as I got it installed and running. And, with the TraceView Drupal module, I have gained a huge insight into our website's traffic pattern and user types."

Travis Crowder
Systems Engineer
Penton Media

The Solution

Penton turned to the Drupal community to find an application performance management solution that would monitor server capacity and provide complete visibility into web application performance. Penton found that the Drupal community strongly recommended AppNeta's TraceView APM solution. With the addition of the Drupal module, TraceView provides a comprehensive view of the causes of poor Drupal application performance and latency. In a few minutes, Penton was able to easily install TraceView and, upon reviewing the performance data, quickly realized how powerful TraceView really is.

The Result

With TraceView installed and monitoring the Penton web application, the systems engineering team now gathers more complete data about site usage, hardware allocation and web page performance metrics. The TraceView performance results showed the systems engineering team that a significant portion of traffic on its website was unauthenticated or anonymous users.

Using the TraceView Drupal module, Penton deployed role-based partitioning to improve the performance results of its web application for all users. TraceView also provided Penton with performance data on memory utilization per page load, server CPU requirements and which of its pages were the slowest to load. Using TraceView, Penton was able to resolve application bottlenecks that allowed its Drupal application to scale well within its existing server infrastructure.