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MDS updates server monitoring software

Keeping tabs on data centre kit.
By Tom Jowitt and Techworld, TechWorld, 06/23/2009

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Data centre specialist MDS Technologies has updated its server monitoring suite, as business continuity continues to be a vital issue for certain businesses.

MDS Technologies specialises in high availability co-location and managed services, and currently operates a tier 1 facility in Corsham, Wiltshire as well as tier 2 facility in Crawley, West Sussex. A tier 3 facility is currently undergoing testing in Newport, South Wales.

The company has now updated its AMAR II (Assessing, Monitoring, Alerting and Reporting) software, which is used in its facilities to monitor a number of variables including server temperature, fan speed and environmental humidity, as well as power usage, connectivity and bandwidth usage. Customers include Vodafone, HP, and Guys & St Thomas Hospital Trust.

"The principle of business continuity is at the hub of data centre management and AMAR II is at the hub of our operations," said Phil Dawson, MD, at MDS Technologies. "It is proprietary to our business, which is to offer a range of high availability hosting and collocation services."

Encoded within AMAR II is an alerting system with tiered priority levels based on the nature and extent of tolerance breaches. Alerts to IT engineers include pager, email and text message notifications.

"It can monitor the temperature at the row or rack level, or the temperature of the room itself," said Dawson. "The software's computational dynamics can help identify when potential issues are arising. For example, we can tell very quickly if certain components have become less efficient, and then we can do proactive maintenance rather than reactive maintenance."

According to Dawson, AMAR II is currently running on Microsoft, Linux and Solaris operating systems. The software also has the ability to monitor server specific issues such as fan speeds, the configuration of the operating system etc.

"On the security, AMAR II is integrated into the building management systems so we can see has entered the building etc," he said. "It also has bandwidth connectivity management, so that it can understand traffic patterns for the individual customer, such as if prepaid tolerances being reached. If the customer is exceeding their allotted bandwidth, it will notify the customer that they are reaching their bandwidth limit."

According to Dawson, the new version of AMAR has much improved tolerance and resilience. "AMAR I was pulled together as a number of different solutions, which was step 1," said Dawson. "Step 2 was AMAR II, with all these different solutions now integrated into a single solution, with one management interface that makes it much easier to reporting than the previous version as well as having a more-friendly user interface."



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"Step three is to offer AMAR II as option to our clients as an extranet access, so they can use it and access the solution themselves."

Pricing is contract dependent.

"With hindsight, we would not have been able to deliver the uptime to our customers without this solution," said Dawson. "It allows us to be more confident to deliver on the sometimes extremely tight SLAs (service level agreements) from our customers. It turns a reaction service situation into a proactive service situation."

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