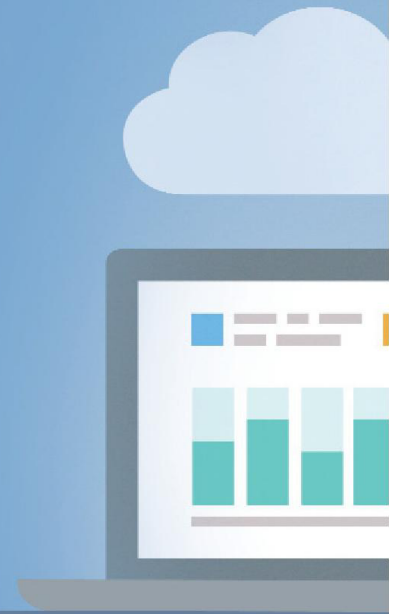


THE GOOD



MONITOR

By switching its site monitoring tool from Monitor.us to Site24x7, Sastra Technologies got a better handle on latency the way it wanted

BY KTP RADHIKA



A startup founded by two partners in 2010 in Chennai, Sastra Technologies Pvt Ltd provides web solutions and enterprise data integration on the cloud. It has two solutions: one for the hospitality industry and the other a generic document display and payment collection application; both are being sold as a service.

Being a cloud-based solution provider, Sastra uses hosting services predominantly from Rackspace, DigitalOcean and Amazon.

Sastra has close to 20 clients most of which are looking at actually collecting payments. “So apparently any recurring payments that you would want to collect, you want to put your existing debtors on the web so that the debtors can log in and pay up,” says Sridhar Pandurangiah, Director of Engineering at Sastra Technologies.

Unlike a payment aggregator such as PayPal, Sastra’s focus is to provide solutions so that even a small company or an SME can afford it. “We provide a gateway to the aggregator,” explains Pandurangiah.

According to Pandurangiah, for its IT needs, the company follows DevOps, as it doesn’t have a large IT team. “Most of our servers are either on Rackspace or DigitalOcean and some on Amazon. We predominantly write Shell Scripts in Unix or we use one of the provisioning software like Vagrant so that things are automated. At the fastest, we put up a site in 7½ minutes from the time we get an order. From URL registration to the time, the solution is up is just about 7½ minutes because it’s automated,” he says.

The challenges and the solution

So, what were the challenges Sastra was

facing that made it choose ManageEngine’s Site24x7 solution?

“We don’t do a simple website,” says Pandurangiah. “If you see our site, it might appear a simple website, but the site itself carries a lot of functionality, in terms of displaying the documents, collecting payments, changing addresses, displaying loan details. We don’t call it a site; we call it a web solution. So when you have large functionalities residing on the cloud, the biggest challenge is the response time at the last mile. The biggest response time happens only if the latency between the last mile connectivity and the server is very low. Our challenge was to keep the latency figures as low as possible and to do that, we needed to measure the latency in the first place.”

Before using Site24x7, initially, Sastra used simple tools such as Pingdom. “It’s a



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Product Manager for Site24x7,
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tool that gives you a waterfall of where your delay lies but very little information about the network; it talks more about the page that is being served. We actually wanted a solution that talked about the connectivity between the servers and the last mile. Then we moved to Monitor.us, which gave us some information on the last mile connectivity but the way they presented the information was very confusing; it was not an absolute figure. We didn't want a trend analysis but an absolute figure. Then we saw a Site24x7 ad and clicked it and looked at it. They offered us an absolute figure that would pop up right next to the server to what is the latency of the page load and so we signed up," says Pandurangiah.

Site24x7 gives Sastra the information about exactly where the bottlenecks are, he avers.

Talking about the other features and capabilities of the solution, Srinivasa Raghavan, Product Manager for Site24x7, ManageEngine, says that Site24x7 offers cloud infrastructure

monitoring for IT, which includes unified website monitoring from a user's perspective, application performance monitoring, server monitoring and public and private cloud monitoring.

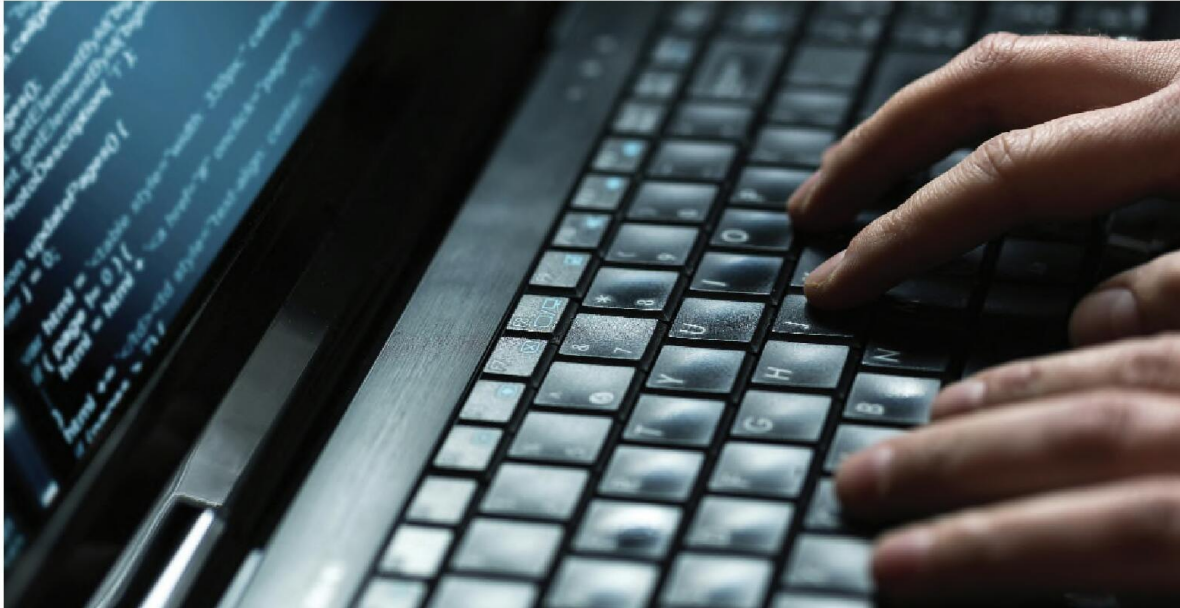
"Site24x7 supports various protocols like HTTP, HTTPS, SMTP, POP, DNS, TCP, Mail Server RTT, IMAP, SSL, Ping, etc. The web application monitoring capability simplifies multi-step web transactions," says Raghavan.

Sastra shifted from Monitor.us to Site24x7 in April 2013. Talking about the implementation, Pandurangiah says that it's been quite straightforward. "You just sign up and then start creating the monitors that you want on the site. It's the most cost-effective solution that I have come across."

The benefits

The solution from ManageEngine is very cost-effective, according to Pandurangiah. "It's probably about 10% of the cost of a similar solution. If





you look at WebTrek or NewRelic, we can call them the Rolls-Royce of pricing, offering the same services. In terms of the performance to price ratio, I would rate Site24x7 very very high," he says.

Pandurangiah says that the solution did improve site performance—though he adds that the tricky thing about performance is that “you cannot optimise a site before you actually build it.”

“First we build it, load the users on a live environment and then keep making changes to the various components so that the performance actually improves,” he says.

To do that, he says, one first needs to measure the performance from the time the visitor actually loads the URL on their browser. “Site24x7 tells you the performance figures that you are getting from a location, in this case, India,” he says. “So let us say I have a performance of 5214 ms on one of my sites; I can go and figure out why it’s taking such a long time. I can check the server logs and go on to reduce the time. So to do any optimisation, first I need to know the figures and Site24x7 gives me that, which is critical for me.”

On quantifying the benefit,

Site24x7 offers cloud infrastructure monitoring for IT, which includes unified website monitoring from a user’s perspective, application performance monitoring, server monitoring and public and private cloud monitoring

Pandurangiah says, “We had two servers in the US hosted at Rackspace. For half the amount of memory, we got better performance out of the Netherlands than from the US. So we moved all our sites from the US to the Netherlands. The performance is actually a key decision maker. In the US I had 3800 ms for one of my heavy sites and when moved to the Netherlands, it became 802ms without any changes in the site.

So, did it improve Sastra’s business? Pandurangiah says that anybody who loads a site would like to see it appearing immediately. “Though we do all these measurements, it’s finally the perspective of the visitor which matters and these figures actually help improve that perspective. So when we have a scientific measurement, we always show the customer how fast we load a page in such

a short time, and we compare it with the other competitors.”

Going forward, Sastra’s goal is to reduce the cost of honing an IT solution. “The main aim is to reduce the capital expenditure and make it an operational expenditure. Today, we have got two products; the third one might be for the financial industry wherein we offer it on a subscription model and we are targeting the lending industry, because they have a lot of pressure considering their margins—and the fact that interest rates are rising very high,” says Pandurangiah.

So Sastra is looking at a business intelligence solution that could be offered as a service on a subscription model to financial institutions using which they will be able to predict the probability of default for each customer.