



Quarles & Brady LLP Modernizes Data Center Monitoring With Uila



Customer Challenges

- Existing monitoring tools lacked visibility across virtual environment
- Some backups to its Phoenix data center were taking 4+ hours
- Upgraded virtual infrastructure needed new monitoring tools



Solution Results

- Full visibility into performance across the virtual environment
- Identified networking issue in Phoenix that was affecting backups
- Application teams can now see performance for their applications and underlying infrastructure

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Tim Kovars, Senior Systems Engineer

Background

Quarles & Brady LLP is a multidisciplinary AmLaw 200 legal services provider with about 1,100 employees, including 500 attorneys practicing at the top of the profession in Chicago, Indianapolis, Madison, Milwaukee, Naples, Phoenix, Scottsdale, Tampa, Tucson, and Washington, D.C.

The company’s systems are 90 percent virtualized on VMware vSphere, with over 500 server virtual machines (VMs) and 250 virtual desktops spread across roughly 65 hosts. A team of four people manages the company’s entire IT infrastructure, including virtualization, servers, networking and storage.

The Challenge

Although Quarles & Brady LLP had virtualized most of its applications, the company was using the same infrastructure monitoring tools it had used for years. It quickly became clear that the existing tools had blind spots, particularly when it came to application performance.

The IT team had surfaced periodic performance issue in its Phoenix data center, the company’s disaster recovery site. Virtual machine backups were slow for certain systems and causing performance issues. The traditional network and infrastructure monitoring solutions the company had been using couldn’t identify the root cause.

Even though it wasn’t affecting production systems directly, fast recovery in the event of an outage was crucial. “Backups were taking a long time -- over 4 hours in some cases -- and VMs were dropping out, but we couldn’t tell why,” said James Oryszczyn, Director of Security & Network Services. As the company upgraded from VMware vSphere 5.5 to 6.0, the time was right to revisit its data center monitoring capabilities.

The Solution

The Quarles team evaluated solutions from Turbonomic, Veeam, and its existing Solarwinds monitoring tools, along with Uila. The other tools either didn’t have the functionality they needed to monitor their heavily virtualized data center, were overly complicated, or too expensive.

“Uila’s hybrid application and infrastructure monitoring really open us up to a different mindset,” said Tim Kovars, Senior Systems Engineer at Quarles & Brady. “You’re not just looking at hosts, networking and storage separately. You’re looking at the applications, VMs, configuration, transport layer, data layer

and how everything is related.” With Uila’s Critical Resources tab, Kovars is also able to group critical infrastructure and see traffic between components.

The interface also really stood out for Kovars. “The dashboard really pops. You can instantly see how things are running,” he said. “It’s a little different than other monitoring tools, but it’s really intuitive. Once you see that you can drill down, it’s easy to find problems and find the underlying cause quickly.”

With Uila’s dashboard, alerts and analytics, Kovars was able to isolate the performance problem in Phoenix to a networking issue. “We’d been seeing disk latency on several VMs, but the hosts and storage appeared to be fine,” said Kovars. “Uila quickly identified the cause.” The culprit was 7 year old switches that were due to be upgraded. Although it primarily handles backups and replication as an alternate data center, it needed more robust networking for failovers or restores.

Uila’s Value to Quarles & Brady

Uila’s application-centric data center infrastructure monitoring gives the Quarles & Brady team peace of mind that everything is running smoothly. If it’s not, they can quickly identify and address issues. “Whenever there’s a performance issue now, we can go in to Uila and it’s much easier to find out why,” Oryszczyn said.

The team used to spend days or weeks looking into performance problems. Now it takes a few minutes to isolate most problems. Uila even identified rogue traffic to a misconfigured Exchange Server and gave the infrastructure team the information they needed to work with the Exchange administrator to resolve the issue.

For Kovars, Uila has turned into a non-traditional monitoring solution. It helps him communicate with other IT teams. Application and networking teams often view virtualization as a black box, but at Quarles & Brady, Kovars can share insights and real-time performance information with them that they can relate to.

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