



Sheffield Hallam University Lectures On Standardised Network Management

Emereo Solutions enrolls NetCrunch in seat of learning

About Sheffield Hallam University

Sheffield Hallam University is no ordinary higher education institution; in fact its growth is substantial on a number of different fronts.

Its development at the heart of Sheffield has been conducive to many of the redevelopment projects now underway in and around the steel city, and the University's 28,000 students boost the local economy. The University itself boasts an annual turnover of over £150m.

The University's teaching is supported by world-class applied research initiatives. The students are a diverse international group and benefit from a tailored approach that helps them to get the most from their studies. Sheffield Hallam offers top quality teaching and learning facilities, and the ability to learn flexibly that best suits their needs. A prime example of this is that Sheffield Hallam is one of the UK's leading universities in e-learning and offers a range of distance learning and part time courses as well as the more traditional full time courses.

Sheffield Hallam University's industry partners include Sony, BP, NHS, Network Rail, Cisco, SAP and Microsoft.

Indeed Sheffield Hallam University is one of the UK's most progressive and innovative universities. Its early adoption of e-learning means they have invested heavily in IT to ensure technological capability matches the cutting-edge approach of their teaching. Sheffield Hallam University is recognised as a Centre of Excellence for Teaching and Learning in three areas: e-learning, autonomous learning and employability.

Critical Network Management Ensures Effective Learning

In its adoption of e-learning, the University's IT department have recognised the need for a standardised set of support tools across disciplines such as desktop management and the help desk. For network management they are like many IT support departments where they have used a little free-ware, have acquired some proprietary tools, and have invested in a number of enterprise systems - yet critically none of these tools and solutions gave a single view across their entire network.

Dave Thornley, the University's Service Support Manager, explains why one single solution to fit



all was needed. "We have Novell NetWare, Unix and Windows servers with Linux to potentially follow, all are important to the University; Novell is used for file & print and identity management, whereas Windows runs email and several business & teaching applications. From a management perspective what we lacked was one single view of all IT based issues facing the business. In short without this view how could we claim to be in control?"

This is not to suggest that IT were not in control, yet dedicated support groups were largely working in isolation and management did not always have the full perspective on issues across the network - tactically the extent of the issues facing IT on a daily basis, and strategically, in being able to improve the services being delivered to the business by measuring availability and capacity.

Central to the University's decision to acquire AdRem NetCrunch, from Emereo Solutions, was the ease with which it was deployed out-of-the-box and within a short space of time it was mapping the IT estate in full.

Samuel Duckfield, the primary evaluator and system administrator of NetCrunch at Sheffield Hallam University explains further, "After

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reading some reviews for NetCrunch we began a short evaluation alongside competing products. Largely due to SNMP being universally enabled we quickly saw the results of the initial discovery providing logical mapping and good visualisation.”

In short what this meant to the University was the ability to discover, map and monitor devices, business applications and services. In the classroom this translates to ensuring availability of e-learning technologies, and the efficient delivery of teaching to the students. Yet it is much more comprehensive than this.

Currently the devices being monitored may only be servers, yet these host a range of applications such as SQL and Oracle which support business activities including Finance and Student Information, as well as the e-learning applications, conferencing and e-mail facilities used in the classroom. To ensure full availability of these elements there is a third tier of monitoring that looks at the underlying services such as DNS, SLP, SQL, SNMP and SMTP. With NetCrunch nothing is left to chance - devices rarely fail but applications and services do.

NetCrunch has been configured to allow monitoring on these three levels and send e-mail alerts to the dedicated support groups, determined by device type, application or service. Support staff can easily view details relating to network issues from anywhere on the University’s campuses by accessing NetCrunch’s web extension.

A Focus on Best Practice

Like many public sector organisations there is a move within Sheffield Hallam to begin adoption of ITIL, making the differentiation between incident and problem management critical to allocating appropriate resources to run-of-business requests or to recurring critical issues.

The desire to move from a reactive support area to a pro-active service provider is a key driver, and the use of NetCrunch in this respect should become an increasingly crucial element in both the provision of an available IT estate, and the ability to forecast future capacity requirements.

Services and Support

Emereo delivered training and implementation services to the University to enable a trouble-free and rapid adoption, particularly important given the need for high availability of IT. As Samuel Duckfield explains. “Currently we provide 99.2% availability of all applications and services demanded by faculties. The advantage of NetCrunch was how smoothly it was deployed through the consulting and training services provided by Emereo over a few days.”

The University has an annual service contract and to date has found Emereo’s support services able to resolve the few issues they have faced, most of which have manifested themselves as configuration issues.

Next Term’s Curriculum!

A significant advantage for any organisation deploying NetCrunch is the flexibility it offers. As Sheffield Hallam University have found, the solution is quick to deploy and as a consequence it is easy to do a tiered introduction; important when a network management project has many “stakeholders” (the dedicated support groups) and is replacing a range of tools so the need to manage change is critical in order to minimise IT service disruption.

With this in mind, “next terms” curriculum will start monitoring layer 2 and 3 communication devices such as switches, hubs and routers in order to complete the views needed for devices across the entire IT network. Additionally there is a drive to get better visibility of all incidents and problems occurring across the network as well as at the desktop, consequently data on both needs to be stored centrally; so consulting services will be provided to integrate NetCrunch with the Remedy service desk application.

Sheffield Hallam University is planning to acquire an additional server license of NetCrunch dedicated to the generation of a management reports pack. Dave Thornley, Service Support Manager said, “IT is a comprehensive part of the University’s backbone and curricula therefore it is essential to report to the business its status; in terms of classroom effectiveness and the ability to accurately forecast and budget future IT needs to the University’s Executive Group”.

About Emereo Solutions
 We provide rapidly-deployed software solutions for infrastructure management covering network management and monitoring, network behaviour analysis, end-point security and IT service management. Our solutions help organisations secure greater resilience of their enterprise networks so IT can provide better services to the business and operations it supports. Best-of-Breed products adhere to ITIL and COBIT best practices and ensure compliance with initiatives such as Sarbanes Oxley, FSA, GSI, e-Health and e-Government.

Emereo Solutions (UK) Limited (formerly AdRem Software UK) was founded in 2004. Its installed base serves a diverse range of customer types from Central and Local Government, the NHS, Education, Finance Services, Law firms and many more organisations where the goal is making IT effective and available. Emereo’s solutions have been deployed on over 15,000 servers across the UK and Ireland.



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