

California Department
of Health Care Services

The California Department of Health Care Services Cuts Problem Resolution Time in Half with Idera's SQL diagnostic manager

Idera products

SQL diagnostic manager

Idera's SQL diagnostic manager delivers these key benefits for the California Department of Health Care Services:

- Provides comprehensive, at-a-glance summary of entire SQL Server environment
- Eliminates time spent checking every server
- Reduces firefighting to allow easy diagnosis of performance problems
- Pinpoints common performance issues and trends using historical metrics
- Allows mobile management of real-time SQL Server performance data

INDUSTRY The California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) works closely with health care professionals, county governments, and health plans to finance and administer a health care safety net for California's low-income and disabled residents. Headquartered in Sacramento, CA, the department's 2500 employees are dedicated to ensuring quality health care in underserved areas. With a budget of more than \$40 billion annually, the state's Medi-Cal program, a version of the national Medicaid program, provides comprehensive health care services for more than seven million Californians annually—one of the largest such public programs in the nation.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE In 2005, Senior Database Administrator Mitch Bottel was looking to replace the DHCS' third-party SQL Server tool and strengthen his small team's ability to monitor and manage their large Microsoft® SQL Server® environment. They were seeking an easy-to-install, affordable solution to help them proactively troubleshoot, manage, and maintain their 175 SQL Servers and 600 hosted databases.

IDERA SOLUTION Idera's SQL diagnostic manager has allowed the DHCS to reduce by 50 percent its time spent managing and monitoring SQL Server databases. By leveraging SQL diagnostic manager's monitoring and reporting capabilities, the department's DBAs can now pinpoint their worst performing code and drill down into its extensive historical metrics for in-depth trend analysis.

Like most organizations, the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) relies on its SQL Servers to support business-critical applications. Server downtime or poor performance can have an immediate impact on the public agency's ability to provide healthcare services to the citizens of California.

In 2005, DHCS Senior Database Administrator Mitch Bottel was unhappy with the third-party tools he had available to effectively manage and support their department's growing SQL Server environment. "They were hard to use and overpriced," he said bluntly in describing the situation. As he evaluated other possible tools, he stumbled across Idera's suite of SQL Server tools and struck on a perfect solution. "We started to look at price comparison and realized we got a ton more bang for our buck with Idera. Since we were really getting more than we expected, we bought a full suite of monitoring tools," he explained. Compared to their previous third-party vendor's tools, Bottel was thrilled that Idera's worked so seamlessly and scaled to meet their needs. "Ever since then, we've been using Idera's tools and it has been great," Bottel said.

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Mitch Bottel,
Senior Database Administrator,
California Department of Health Care Services

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Specifically, the DHCS relies on SQL diagnostic manager to alert Bottel and his team to performance issues and monitor database space on a daily basis. “We try to be as proactive as possible, so we rely heavily on SQL diagnostic manager. It saves us a lot of time with its warning alerts. We know if we're running out of disk space and find out about job failures quickly,” he added.

Alerts You to the Real Issues

Arriving for work each day, Bottel depends on SQL diagnostic manager's central console to provide real-time alerts to job failures, server space issues, performance problems, and any other database fine-tuning issues that might have occurred over night. “We try to be as proactive as possible, as well as reactive, and act on alerts and warnings quickly,” he said.

Now, instead of chasing down false positives and “issues that weren't really issues,” Bottel said his team can rely on the morning alerts to prioritize their day. “We use SQL diagnostic manager as our crutch. We check alerts and To-Do's and act on them as needed,” he said.

With 600 databases ranging in size from 5MB up to 1TB, Bottel said a constant concern is managing the space available on servers. “Now, we can quickly discover whether there are log files that are growing too fast, old backups that didn't get deleted, or data that didn't get truncated,” he said. With Idera's SQL diagnostic manager, his team can prevent bottlenecks before they occur. “We use to spend hours in the morning trying to figure out what issues were causing problems. Now, with SQL diagnostic manger, we can drill into the console to see where issues are arising and get resolution more quickly,” he said.

Empowers Self-Serve Reporting

Another key feature for the department is that SQL diagnostic manager empowers other IT team members to pinpoint and resolve their own problems. “People can troubleshoot their own connectivity issues or slow performance if they aren't getting responses quick enough from the databases,” he said.

By leveraging the tool's reporting features, Bottel can drill down so developers and other groups can see how their servers are running and create historical analysis of their servers' performance. “We can grant rights to certain groups of developers so they can access reports to see performance statistics for their particular servers. Then, they can make sure the server is performing the way they expect it to. For us, it is really helpful, especially when we need to prove an issue isn't with our server's performance,” he added. Another popular feature of SQL diagnostic manager is its ability to leverage fragmentation statistics to help identify indexes that may need attention.

About Idera

Idera provides tools for Microsoft SQL Server, SharePoint and PowerShell management and administration. Our products provide solutions for performance monitoring, backup and recovery, security and auditing and PowerShell scripting. Headquartered in Houston, Texas, Idera is a Microsoft Gold Partner and has over 5,000 customers worldwide.

More information

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Saves Time with At-Your-Fingertips Console

With SQL diagnostic manager running on each new server and handling the legwork for his team, Bottel said valuable time is now freed up for strategic planning. "Now, easily 50 percent of my day is spent not researching issues and trying to solve problems anymore," he said. The advantage of a single comprehensive console means Bottel can "rely on SQL diagnostic manager to alert me if there are any warnings or issues arising. I can look at reports now and I don't have to log onto each server and go through event logs," he said.

Instead of using SQL Server Management Studio, the DHCS can use SQL diagnostic manager's single console for at-your-fingertips monitoring and maintenance. Bottel is especially thrilled with his ability to remotely view real-time SQL Server performance data without having to use Citrix or VPN. "It's a huge time saving for us. With the tool's mobile management feature, you could manage everything from home with a BlackBerry," he said. At the office, his life is simplified since he can "run the console from my Desktop without having to walk down to the server room or remote into a server," he said.

Valuable Customer Service

While Bottel and his team have seen their time spent fighting problems cut in half and their jobs made more manageable, he also truly values his relationship with Idera in terms of Support and Product Development. "Customer Support is outstanding with Idera. If I put in a call at 4:45 pm Pacific Time, I get a call back in 10 minutes," he said. Specifically, Idera's willingness to incorporate customer feedback into frequent product updates has proven invaluable.

"They're very customer-oriented. It's very impressive ... they also take customer opinions very seriously. They're very reactive and responsive and try to incorporate our feedback," he said.

In conclusion, Bottel is excited thinking about what he could do with SQL diagnostic manager as he says his team has really just scratched the surface. He explained: "We're not using it to its full capability—we're just scratching the surface of its capabilities. There's a lot more features we could be utilizing with SQL diagnostic manager that can help us increase our productivity and preparedness."



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