

Macro 4 helps Amethyst Group gear up its IT for annual Christmas online shopping frenzy

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Performance Management software highlights need to invest in new IBM POWER7 servers

Crawley, UK – 30 November 2011 - Amethyst Group, which provides fulfilment services to the online retail arms of many high street fashion stores, is relying on Performance Management software from Macro 4 to ensure it has the computing power to handle increased sales activity in the Christmas shopping season.

In preparation for the festive season, Macro 4's performance solutions highlighted the need for Amethyst to boost processing capacity, which led to the company investing in new IBM POWER7 (<http://www-03.ibm.com/systems/power/hardware>) system servers.

Chris Salkeld, Operations Manager at Amethyst Group (<http://www.amethystgroup-uk.com>), whose customers include New Look, Jane Norman and Burberry, as well as companies in the consumer durables and automotive sectors, explained:

"The extra power delivered by the new POWER7s, together with the Macro 4 Performance and Systems Management tools that we use to support them, will enable us to comfortably manage the increase in activity in the Christmas run-up when we have to process around three times as many orders. We are also confident that we can support long term growth in customer transactions as our business expands over the next few years."

Amethyst, which operates over 1.2 million square feet of warehousing space, with around 550 employees in six distribution centers, was alerted to the need for a server upgrade through Macro 4 (<http://www.macro4.com>)'s Performance Management software which provides real-time performance monitoring and assists capacity planning for IBM i servers.

Amethyst has been using a number of Macro 4 Performance and Systems Management tools to optimize performance on the IBM i servers hosting the company's core warehousing and distribution systems. These systems drive activities in Amethyst's distribution centres, ensuring thousands of daily retail orders are packed, labelled and delivered correctly and on time.

"The performance data from Macro 4 showed that we were using 85 per cent of the available CPU capacity on our servers. Previously we'd maintained 60 per cent CPU consumption and as we were nearing our busiest time of year, it was clear we needed to address the issue and we swiftly made the decision to invest in greater processing power."

Amethyst switched to two IBM POWER7 720 servers, including a backup server at a mirrored site. The POWER7s run four times faster than the old servers and continue to host the IBM i operating system.

The Macro 4 solutions have been migrated to the POWER7 servers to help Amethyst maintain high service levels throughout the busy Christmas season and beyond. In addition to SUPERMON® for iSeries v100 which

helps Amethyst monitor performance and minimize CPU consumption, the company is using Macro 4's AUTOMON® for iSchedule v100 for Job Scheduling, SUPERMON® for iDisk v100 for Disk Management; and AUTOMON® for iSpool v100 for Print and Output Management.

Macro 4's Job Scheduling software helps Amethyst's operations team manage its workload by automating a wide range of daily, weekly and monthly processes and run a lights out operation out of hours. Mr Salkeld explained:

"Macro 4's job scheduler performs a key function for us by helping us define and configure regular jobs to happen automatically. Our business runs 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with hundreds of scheduled jobs occurring each day. These can be essential tasks such as collecting customer order data or sending order confirmations to customers. Some key jobs must happen at a specific time every day without fail - often out of hours - and it would be uneconomic to have someone manually managing each one."

Macro 4's Print and Output Management solution helps drive activity in Amethyst's warehouses by ensuring that important order information such as pick lists, despatch notes and shipping labels end up at the right printer, in the right warehouse in good time.

"We generate 5000 separate print spool files a day, mostly despatch notes relating to orders that need to be processed for next data delivery. Macro 4's Output Management software is essential in helping us process customer orders. We rely on it to make sure there are no printing mistakes or delays which could cause work bottlenecks and stop us meeting the strict fulfilment targets agreed with customers. This is all the more important when we have to cover seasonal increases in activity," said Mr Salkeld.

The Disk Management solution is helping Amethyst to manage disk space utilisation, control storage growth, keep backup runs shorter and easier to schedule and improve overall system performance.

"Macro 4's software is intuitive, straightforward and easy to use. It's extremely reliable so we know that things will always happen when they're supposed to – which is very important in a fast-moving business like Amethyst. It's helped us maintain high levels of customer service and keep our overheads low. And it's given us the confidence to know that our systems and our operations team will cope with the increasing workload as our business expands," concluded Mr Salkeld.

About Macro 4

Macro 4 is a global software and services company that helps organizations to improve the performance of their business-critical applications and processes. The company's solutions for Document and Data Management, Fault Analysis and Performance Management are easy to use, fast to implement and deliver value quickly in even the most complex IT environments. Macro 4 is a division of the UNICOM Group of Companies, which operates in every major market worldwide via US and European subsidiaries and a network of international business partners.

Macro 4's Application Performance solutions help companies to increase employee productivity, postpone hardware upgrades and improve customer service by quickly detecting, diagnosing and resolving application performance problems such as slow response times and inefficient use of processing capacity.

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