



Sun {City} Software

CASE STUDY

Monitoring more, with less, with Redgate Monitor



Contents

The Customer

Based in Budapest, Hungary, Sun City Software is an IT consulting company and MSP focusing on Microsoft SQL Server and Azure, with more than 100 international customers across a range of sectors.

The Challenge

With a small but dedicated team, it was becoming difficult to guarantee and maintain the high level of service offered using only native monitoring tools and custom scripts to identify issues and resolve them.

The Solution

By letting the team manage entire SQL Server estates from a single screen and giving customers access to insights with its web-based interface, Redgate Monitor highlights issues, enabling them to be resolved...

The Results

The team now use Redgate Monitor for their daily and monthly monitoring checks, and receive email notifications on their mobile phones the moment an issue arises, enabling them to respond before customers know about...

“We used Microsoft's System Center Operations Manager (SCOM) but the value was really low because the observer overhead was much higher than the workload itself.”

János Berke, CEO & Principal Consultant

The Customer

Based in Budapest, Hungary, Sun City Software is an IT consulting company and Managed Services Provider that focuses on Microsoft SQL Server and Azure, and the .NET Framework. Its small team of database experts has worked for more than 100 international customers, across a range of sectors from healthcare to manufacturing, financial services to logistics.

The team offer advice and help on everything from SQL Server infrastructure planning, consolidation, management, performance monitoring and query tuning, to the migration of on-premises SQL Server databases to Azure SQL Database and Azure SQL Managed Instance.

Headed by the CEO, founder and Principal Consultant, János Berke, an IT professional with more than two decades of technical and management experience, the team of DBAs include many Microsoft MVPs and are specialists in the SQL Server platform.

As János says: “SQL Server is in the middle of everything we do, so we need to know about authentication certificates, name resolutions, networking, storage issues – everything more or less, because it can all affect the performance of SQL Server databases.”



Concentrating mainly on SQL Server on-premises, Sun City Software commits to five-nines availability service level agreements (SLAs) for its high-value customers, whose databases must be up and running 24/7/365.

100+

INTERNATIONAL CUSTOMERS

100+

SQL SERVERS PLUS HUNDREDS OF INSTANCES

24/7/365

SLA EXPECTATIONS

“With the right tools at the right time in the right place, like Redgate Monitor, we are able to handle a huge amount of SQL instances and applications with only 7 people.”

János Berke, CEO & Principal Consultant

The Challenge

The small but dedicated team at Sun City Software manage over 100 servers, with hundreds of SQL Server instances on those servers. Prior to using Redgate Monitor, they tried SCOM, Microsoft's data center monitoring system, to show the state, health, and performance information of the servers being monitored.

They found, however, that the value they gained from SCOM was minimal. It was complicated to configure, it produced a lot of alerts that needed to be sifted through to find those that needed attention, and it was time-intensive to maintain and fine-tune. As a consequence, they turned instead to writing custom scripts to gain the metrics they needed, along with using some open source software.

The limitations of this approach were tested when they had a major incident with a customer which they had to overcome quickly to maintain their five-nines SLA. János did so, thanks to his long experience, by writing his own scripts to collect the data that was needed in a time series of multiple metrics.



This indication that they needed more robust monitoring policies and procedures in place was amplified further when they needed to provide a complex monitoring solution for a customer, including the monitoring of the infrastructure.

This was the point when János realized they needed to bring in a third party monitoring tool to guarantee their high level of service and be absolutely sure their customers would always be able to work normally.

“If we didn't have Redgate Monitor in place with our customers, we wouldn't be able to manage the environments, or provide SLAs to customers.”

János Berke, CEO & Principal Consultant

The Solution

The team reviewed around six products which focused on SQL server monitoring and found wide differences between them. One was low cost, for example, but the user experience was really poor. Another had rich features but 70% of the DBAs could not understand its measures and metrics and the user experience was again an issue.

Redgate Monitor was different, as János states: “Each product had benefits, but Redgate Monitor was far beyond the others in terms of price, value, and comparison.”

The major advantage of Redgate Monitor, and one of the major reasons for choosing it, was its simplicity, which was much better than other products that were reviewed.

Firstly, it lets users manage an entire SQL Server estate from a single screen. Every database and instance can be seen at a glance, along with its current status based on a traffic light system and, when there is a problem, it makes it easy to deep dive to the cause of the problem and resolve it quickly. Secondly, rather than being a Windows desktop application, it uses a web-based interface, so customers can access it wherever they are, whatever operating system they use.



This second advantage is important for János because Redgate Monitor provides insights that are of as much value to application support teams and developers as they are to DBAs. They can track the quality of their code, for example, by seeing the impact releases have on database performance, and immediately address problems with issues like index usage.

This adds value for the DBAs at Sun City Software as well as their many customers, who can share the insights Redgate Monitor provides to improve their own internal processes.



The Results

The team at Sun City Software are now heavily reliant on Redgate Monitor, using it for their daily and monthly monitoring checks, alongside the alerting it provides when problems come up. Thanks to Redgate Monitor's webhook functionality, they receive email notifications on their mobile phones the moment an issue arises, enabling them to respond quickly, often before their customers even know there is a concern.

János initially decided to trial Redgate Monitor for a year to see what the team could achieve with it. He soon discovered it would be their monitoring tool for the long term. As he says: "Redgate Monitor simply works the way we expect, letting us work smarter, not harder."

He likes to measure the value Redgate Monitor brings by the increased efficiency it provides to the team. Less experienced DBAs on the team, for example, can manage and monitor the same number of instances as their colleagues because, with Redgate Monitor, it's much easier and it saves a lot of time.



János is now looking at how his customers can take advantage of SQL Server 2022, which brings cloud capabilities to companies that still need to run on-premises. Its compatibility and interchangeability between on-premises installations and Azure SQL Database promises to make it easier to migrate to the cloud – and move back again, if required.

But whether their databases are on-premises or in the cloud, Redgate Monitor will provide the same overview of every database and instance from a single pane of glass, along with the capability to spot potential issues and provide intelligent alerts.