VKernel Case Study:
Steria

"The VKernel vOperations Suite has given us the visibility we need into all of our resources, and we now use it as the primary capacity planning tool for Steria's growing virtualized environment."

– Kenneth Larsen, *Systems Consultant*, Steria

Industry
Hosting and Professional Services

Challenge
Gain visibility into virtual infrastructure to satisfy 99.999% service level agreements (SLA) with enhanced capacity planning and more effective troubleshooting

Solution
VKernel vOperations Suite

Results
- Enhanced ability to satisfy both internal and external service level agreements
- Achieved full visibility into the virtual environment's current utilization and growth trends
- Eliminated manual processes used previously for planning capacity
- Improved the speed and accuracy of solving VM performance problems
- Helpful VKernel support enables Steria to get the most from its investment

Steria

Steria (www.steria.com) delivers IT-enabled business services that help organizations in the public and private sectors operate more efficiently and cost-effectively. The hosting and development company combines in-depth understanding of its clients' operations with expertise in IT and business process outsourcing. Founded in 1969, Steria has 19,000 employees working in 16 countries in Europe, Southeast Asia and North Africa with 2009 revenues of €1.63 billion. Headquartered in Paris, Steria is listed on the Euronext Paris market (Symbol: RIA).

The popularity of outsourcing has benefited Steria's business, which has grown substantially. But that growth was also presenting some challenges. Kenneth Larsen, Systems Consultant at Steria, explains: "Our virtualized environment was practically exploding with the addition of new customers and new services, and we were struggling to maintain service levels."

The Need: Better Visibility into Virtualized Resources

Larsen and his staff lacked visibility into the current utilization and growth trends of key resources throughout Steria's data center. As a hosting company, this was a serious issue for Steria, which needs to ensure that available resources have the capacity to grow while continuing to provide high service levels. Some customers have service level agreements (SLAs) for 99.999% uptime, but Larsen was committed to maintaining good performance for all users—both the external customers and the internal development organization.

The lack of visibility into the virtualized environment forced Larsen and his staff to analyze trends and plan capacity manually. In a rapidly-growing business with demanding SLAs, a manual, error-prone process was unacceptable, and Steria's virtualized infrastructure was becoming almost unmanageable.

Full Visibility into the Virtualized Environment

VKernel's vOperations Suite has provided the full visibility into the virtualized resources that Steria previously lacked. Larsen and his staff are now able to visualize the entire environment at-a-glance in real-time, and drill down as needed to explore the utilization of specific resources in depth. Regularly-scheduled, automated reports of summary information have also proven useful for identifying trends that could impact adversely on performance.

One example of this visibility is VKernel's Business Views feature, which lets Larsen evaluate pooled resources. "Not only can we look at the individual virtual machine, we are now able to look at the entire pool of VMs associated with a specific customer or application," Larsen observes. "This is really powerful for a hosting business."

Robust Capacity Planning

The VKernel vOperations Suite now serves as the foundation for Steria's capacity planning efforts for both internal and external customers. Larsen utilizes the Suite's Resource Graphs on a routine basis to gauge growth in various resource areas, and to make adjustments on a proactive basis. For example, the graphs can show the load on entire clusters of VMs, which enables resources to be reallocated as needed to maintain appropriate service levels.

"We have also found that we can trust the recommendations made by the VKernel system for upgrades, memory allocation and other aspects of resource utilization," Larsen notes. "The VKernel system has essentially automated our capacity planning and is delivering great results."

"The combination of good resource planning and effective troubleshooting has helped us satisfy our service level agreements better than ever before"

Enhanced Troubleshooting

Proactive capacity planning in a hosted environment is necessary, but it is not sufficient. So Steria also uses the diagnostic capabilities of the VKernel vOperations Suite for troubleshooting problems in real-time. The depth of detailed information available for all resources enables Larsen's staff to accurately isolate and quickly remedy any VM performance anomalies before they become a serious problem. Should VM performance begin to degrade for a particular customer and/or service, the system is able to match an alert with the complaint to resolve it immediately.

"The combination of good resource planning and effective troubleshooting has helped us satisfy our service level agreements better than ever before," Larsen claims. "We simply could not be doing this without the insight provided by the VKernel solution."

Integration into the Data Center for Ease of Use

One of the features of VKernel's vOperations Suite that Larsen values most is its intuitive ease-of-use, which eliminated the steep learning curve typical of other solutions. According to Larsen: "The way it snaps into vCenter makes the Suite more useful in different ways for different users. This is a significant advantage for a staff of three managing over 200 machines on a 24x7 basis. The VKernel management system is really very powerful, so we're quite pleased that it's also very easy to use."

VKERNEL

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