



Bentley University Gains Deep Insights with Wire Data Analytics



CUSTOMER

Boston-based Bentley University is one of the nation's leading business schools, with roughly 6,000 students and 500 faculty.

CHALLENGE

For years, Bentley tried unsuccessfully to gain visibility into its Banner database, which undergirded nearly every other application at the university.

SOLUTION

ExtraHop enabled Bentley to see real-time performance of the Banner database, the MyBentley portal, Blackboard, and other applications without requiring agents.

BENEFITS

- **Reduced IT troubleshooting times by half**
- **Better support for diverse technologies**
- **More efficient use of university bandwidth**

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—Todd Marsh, Senior Manager of Network Infrastructure Services, Bentley University

Challenge

Bentley University's 50-person IT organization supports a patchwork of departmental applications, as well as web-based services such as email; the MyBentley portal for students, faculty, and applicants; and a Blackboard online learning management system.

Nearly every service and application at Bentley ties back into a central administrative system based on Banner software, which stores student, alumni, financial, and personnel data in an Oracle database. If one application uses that database inefficiently, such as with poorly written queries, it can impact the performance of other applications that also rely on the database. But understanding how applications interacted with the Banner system was a major challenge for Bentley.

“Over the years, we had tried to install monitoring software for Banner, but none of them ever made it past the testing stage because either the agent caused an issue or there was a fear that they could cause an issue in production,” says Todd Marsh, Senior Manager of Network Infrastructure Services at Bentley University.

Solution

When Marsh heard about ExtraHop, he jumped at the opportunity to gain visibility into the Banner application without invasive agents. “The big selling point for me was that ExtraHop did not require any agents,” says Marsh. “We installed the ExtraHop appliance and within 30 minutes I was able to show the DBAs which tables were being used, by which applications, and which ones performed most slowly. Getting deep visibility that quickly was phenomenal.”

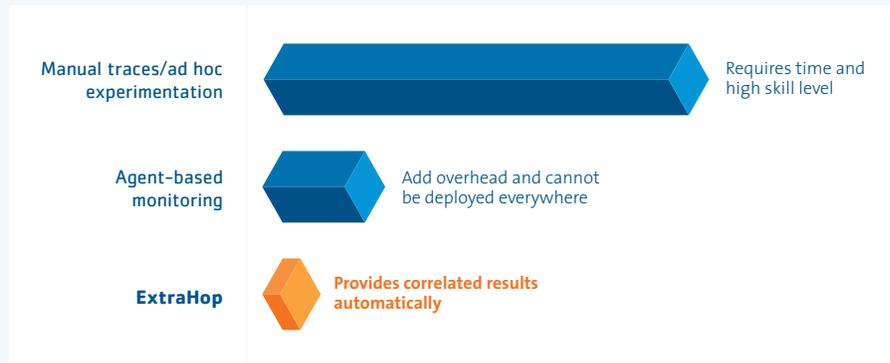
Correlated Visibility Across Tiers

With ExtraHop, application support teams at Bentley have real-time visibility into all wire data—that is, all L2 to L7 communications between systems—so they can see how their applications are using the Banner database, as well as network services such as DNS and the network itself at the TCP layer.

“ExtraHop provides value to multiple groups at Bentley. I have developers who are using it, I have email administrators, the Blackboard administrator, the database administrator,” says Marsh. “Equipped with ExtraHop, these constituencies know how well their applications are performing across all tiers and they can troubleshoot problems themselves, without immediately blaming the network.”

How many students does it take to crash a registration system?

Bentley University has to be prepared for frequent, high-traffic events, such as ticket sales for student activities and intense class registration periods. Recently, the online registration was crashing every time a certain number of students tried to register simultaneously. Troubleshooting complex problems is much faster with ExtraHop than with traditional methods.



Benefits

In addition to dramatically increasing troubleshooting efficiency, ExtraHop is helping the wider IT team become more effective and ensure better use of university resources.

Troubleshooting Reduced by Half

ExtraHop has been able to cut the time Bentley IT staff spend troubleshooting complex problems by 50 percent. IT teams have the context and insight to quickly identify and resolve problems in Bentley's interconnected environment.

ExtraHop is the global leader in real-time wire data analytics. The ExtraHop Operational Intelligence platform analyzes all L2-L7 communications, including full bidirectional transactional payloads. This innovative approach provides the correlated, cross-tier visibility essential for application performance, availability, and security in today's complex and dynamic IT environments.

To learn more, visit www.extrahop.com or call +1 877-333-9872.

"The first week we had ExtraHop running, we saw there were over half a million database errors between Blackboard and Banner," says Marsh. "Blackboard was making a call to a database table that didn't exist. With that insight, we had a fix in minutes. ExtraHop helps us to identify and clear out the 'white noise' in our environment so that when serious problems or anomalies occur, they are easier to diagnose."

Proactive IT Support

"We had an issue with the Blackboard where the system would crash if uploads were too large," says Marsh. "I set an alert in ExtraHop to identify uploads above the threshold by file and by user. Then the Blackboard administrator can talk to that professor or whomever it may be, and help them do what they're trying to do without bringing everything down."

Support for Diverse Application Types

"One unique aspect of higher education is that while we have to ensure that everything is running smoothly and efficiently, our users are allowed to run any applications they require," says Marsh. "So we don't have the same control that a private sector company would."

ExtraHop helps Bentley support departments that want to quickly deploy new applications.

"We're more intelligent with ExtraHop. People can learn how to fine-tune their applications to work well within our environment and tackle issues proactively," says Marsh.

