

## With GroundWork Monitor, AutoTradeCenter Can Detect Network Problems Before they Affect Customers

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**Jorge Borbolla, CIO,  
AutoTradeCenter**

### CHALLENGES

- Detect system outages and slow network performance
- Detect network issues before they impact customers
- Improve ability to accurately plan for and allocate IT resources
- Handle more with limited IT staff

### RESULTS

- System uptime now over 99%
- More reliable service delivery for customers
- Ability to detect problems before failures occur
- Improved visibility into the IT infrastructure
- Ability to forecast the demands of a growing network

### INTRODUCTION

AutoTradeCenter, Inc. (ATC) provides Internet-based remarketing services to automobile manufacturers, finance companies, lease and rental companies, financial institutions and wholesale auto auctions. Companies like Ford Credit, American Honda Finance, Chase Manhattan Automotive Financial Corporation, Daimler Chrysler Financial Services, Porsche Finance and Nissan Motors Acceptance Corp rely on ATC for private label web sites that facilitate the remarketing of new and pre-owned cars.

With operations in Phoenix and Mesa, Arizona as well as Fremont and Menlo Park, California, the company currently manages a growing number of these custom sites. ATC's business is critically dependant on a reliable and highly available network to deliver hosted Internet solutions to its growing list of global customers.

### PROBLEM: POOR VISIBILITY INTO A GROWING NETWORK

In 2001, ATC did not have a solution in place to monitor its network, servers or applications. Instead, the IT team addressed network issues only after they became a problem. In some cases, customers provided the first notification to the team that the customer's site was down—and that meant the customer's car sales had come to a grinding halt.

To compound this problem, ATC was enjoying a rapidly expanding customer base. As the company added more customers, the IT infrastructure was taxed with a growing number of buyers, sellers, searches and orders. "A single new customer can mean 1,000 incremental network activities each day," says Jorge Borbolla, ATC's CIO. ATC's IT team didn't have adequate visibility into the network infrastructure, and they couldn't track usage trends and therefore couldn't plan well for anticipated future growth.

In early 2002, Borbolla determined that the company needed an effective network monitoring solution that would satisfy two objectives. "First, the system had to provide notification of any problems before they affected the customer," he said. "Second, it had to monitor service level agreements that stipulated 99% uptime."

### SOLUTION: GROUNDWORK MONITOR

Initially, Borbolla evaluated commercial monitoring solutions, but these were going to cost six figures just to get started. Because "every penny counted"—and given the team's positive experience with open source technologies—ATC began researching open source monitoring alternatives. After testing several open source solutions, the IT team turned to Nagios, a free, downloadable open source IT monitoring tool, and was impressed with its escalation and notification features.

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But Borbolla also understood the need for a smart installation, and elected to work with GroundWork Open Source Solutions to ensure accurate configuration and tuning. "IT monitoring tools are only as good as their deployment," said Borbolla. "The GroundWork team had the product knowledge and deployment expertise to turn the Nagios tool into an enterprise-ready solution," he explained.

GroundWork's expertise proved invaluable in the initial deployment phase. When the application was first configured, the team was getting up to 200 false-positive alarm notifications a day. "With careful tuning by GroundWork, we now receive just a handful of notifications each week, and these alarms inform the team about real network issues before they become a problem," Says Borbolla.

Today, GroundWork Monitor evaluates everything from network connectivity, CPU loads, database availability and the status of each custom Web site. And as ATC's network infrastructure expands to keep up with growth, so does GroundWork Monitor. "We're adding more servers to our network every week. We just email the support team at GroundWork and they make sure each new server is being monitored," says Borbolla.

In addition to deployment, configuration and support services, GroundWork also enhanced the stock Nagios tool to include detailed reports on performance. Working with ATC, GroundWork set up 200 different graphs showing detailed performance information and metrics related to ATC's network. These graphs and the statistics collected by GroundWork Monitor provide ATC with the information required to prevent overloads or outages.

### **RESULTS: HIGHER AVAILABILITY, STABILITY AND VISIBILITY**

ATC has realized significant results. While the company battled with outages and slow network response times in the past, ATC is now achieving more than 99% uptime, exceeding the company's service level agreements. This higher availability is also improving productivity within ATC because mission critical applications like email and file storage systems are more reliable.

GroundWork Monitor has also improved ATC's ability to detect problems before they happen. Before GroundWork Monitor was installed, the IT department would often hear about network outages from customers. Now they are able to detect and fix problems before they become serious enough to impact service.

Today, GroundWork is working to improve ATC's visibility into the company's IT infrastructure with a module that will collect and analyze real time server data, providing a baseline of information on issues like CPU, disk and memory utilization. This way, the team can better forecast future server requirements. "Now we're hungry for more information," says Borbolla. "We want to know as much as we can to provide excellent service today and brace ourselves for the needs of the future."

### **ABOUT GROUNDWORK**

GroundWork Open Source Solutions, Inc. provides open source-based IT infrastructure management solutions such as network and systems monitoring, service desk management and IT dashboards. GroundWork's solutions enable IT management to leverage the flexibility and low cost of open source tools to achieve enterprise-level availability, performance and operational efficiency for a fraction of the cost of commercial software.

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