

# SURVEY LEADER RESEARCHES PERFORMANCE MONITORING, SELECTS APPDYNAMICS



Survey Sampling International

## INDUSTRY: SOFTWARE-AS-A-SERVICE

### KEY BENEFITS

- Streamline problem diagnosis from hours to minutes
- Enable operations staff and developers to collaborate in finding and fixing performance issues
- Gain a dashboard view of application performance across the enterprise
- Use intuitive graphs to communicate effectively with non-technical staff

### WHY APPDYNAMICS?

- Speed of identifying and resolving performance issues
- Ability to graph historical data for assessing performance over time
- SaaS delivery model offers speedy implementation and a predictable total cost of ownership
- Ability to drill down to the code level to find hidden problems

Survey Sampling International (SSI) seeks to be the premier provider of sampling solutions for survey research. The company provides access to more than 6 million research respondents in 72 countries. SSI serves more than 2,000 marketing research clients, including 48 of the top 50 research organizations worldwide. Headquartered in Shelton, Connecticut, SSI has an international staff of 400 people representing 50 countries and 36 languages.

Eager to gain greater visibility into the performance of its survey engine, SSI recently replaced a homegrown performance monitoring tool with AppDynamics. The company's IT staff can now easily create graphs of the performance of various applications and then overlay them to find outliers. These intuitive graphs also help IT communicate with non-technical employees across the organization. SSI now identifies performance issues within minutes—rather than hours—and has enabled its operations staff and developers to collaborate in finding and fixing problems.

### RAPID DEVELOPMENT CREATES A NEED FOR ROBUST PERFORMANCE MONITORING

As Survey Sampling International (SSI) continues to grow, so do its applications. The company now has offices in 15 countries and partners with 30 market research associations around the world. After a two-year period of intense development on its survey engine product, SSI realized it needed a way to monitor the application's performance and ensure that it would deliver the responsiveness SSI's global customer base demands.

"We had been using a homegrown performance monitoring tool, which had worked fine in a smaller environment," says Chris Renda, Manager of Infrastructure Scalability, SSI. "But as our applications grew, more opportunities for performance issues crept in. We needed a monitoring solution that was as robust as our products and could provide the visibility we needed to troubleshoot and isolate problems."

### SAAS DELIVERY MODEL ENSURES PREDICTABLE COSTS

Renda found his solution when he signed up for a 30-day trial of AppDynamics and began building a proof of concept.

"I was amazed at how quickly we could identify problems and get to a resolution," recalls Renda. "But one of the most valuable things about AppDynamics was the ability to create graphs of historical data. I knew this would give us a much better idea of what was really going on with a specific application and which problems were recurring over time."

By choosing AppDynamics' software-as-a-service (SaaS) delivery model, SSI not only went live in just one week, but also set itself up for a lower total cost of ownership.

"We crunched the numbers and figured the SaaS delivery model would be more cost-effective than running the solution in-house," says Renda. "With the SaaS model, we don't have to allot extra disk space for storing historical data. Also, our IT staff has one less thing to manage."

### INTUITIVE GRAPHS OFFER A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON PERFORMANCE

SSI's main infrastructure consists of a large-scale survey engine that's centralized in one database but is fed by various small applications. With lots of moving parts, the company uses AppDynamics graphs to gain insights into current performance levels and identify where bottlenecks may be forming.

"With AppDynamics, we can easily turn vast amounts of data points into relevant, insightful graphs within minutes," Renda remarks. "For example, if we want to compare the performance of four machines in our back-end system, we can simply create graphs of each machine's response times and then overlay them to see which machines are specifically affected."

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Although AppDynamics graphs provide SSI with a tremendous amount of granular detail – even allowing the company to see how applications are performing on individual servers – they also provide a clear enough high-level picture to make sense to non-technical stakeholders across the organization.

“The graphs are very useful for illustrating points to non-IT people,” Renda explains. “Rather than trying to explain a problem in heavily technical language, we can provide a visual that tells the story in seconds. That really helps us get on the same page with our business partners.”

In addition, AppDynamics’ dashboards help SSI assess how its applications are working together. Engineering staff can drill down through any diagnostic snapshot to look at the code itself and locate hidden problems. They especially appreciate being able to use AppDynamics to check the previous day’s code for issues so they can fine-tune as needed.

#### OPERATIONS STAFF AND DEVELOPERS WORK TOGETHER TO FIX PROBLEMS

With AppDynamics in place, SSI has streamlined and enhanced its application performance monitoring. Its IT team can now find problems within a few clicks.

“AppDynamics has dramatically reduced the time it takes us to identify a problem,” says Renda. “What might have taken us hours of searching and sifting before now takes us minutes. We can easily confirm or deny our hunches by going right to the source of a problem.”

AppDynamics also helps SSI’s operations team and engineering staff collaborate to resolve problems and tune performance. Although operations staff typically lack a deep familiarity with the code, they can use AppDynamics to identify obvious performance problems, and then enlist the help of developers to address underlying issues.

“With AppDynamics, we can let our operations team and engineering staff focus on their respective duties without the need for overlap,” says Renda. “Our operations people can quickly identify problems without having to know how the code is actually written. Our developers can focus on writing and fixing code, rather than spending hours looking for performance issues.”

When SSI was recently experiencing sporadic poor performance among several of its applications, the intermittent nature of the problem made it virtually impossible to diagnose on the fly. AppDynamics’ historical data gave SSI’s operations staff the information they needed to figure out what was going on.

“Using historical data from AppDynamics let us not only see exactly how many applications were affected by the problem, but also dig down to the database level to figure out that we were maxing out our database connection pools,” says Renda. “I don’t know of any other way we would have been able to identify that problem without hours of digging – and even then, it would have been nearly impossible to correlate the problem back to specific applications. That’s the value of AppDynamics.”

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#### Chris Renda

Manager of Infrastructure Scalability  
SSI

#### APPDYNAMICS AT WORK

1. AppDynamics installed quickly and began working within SSI’s code, enabling developers to test the performance of their code before releasing it into production.
2. Application mapping lets SSI’s operations staff visualize application performance in production and identify problems to be passed on to the development team.
3. Deep diagnostics help SSI’s engineering staff zero in on problematic lines of code in minutes, rather than hours.

#### HOW TO GET STARTED

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