Tableau Software Uses SentryOne to Optimize Database Performance

Data visualization company uses SentryOne performance monitoring and alerting to streamline database triaging

SentryOne®
Monitor • Diagnose • Optimize

Challenge

Tableau Software DBA Nick Duckstein and team members were forced to sift through thousands of emails documenting performance problems with SQL Server data that is replicated to a series of clustered reporting servers being constantly hit with ad-hoc queries.

Solution

Duckstein's team used **SentryOne SQL Sentry** to significantly reduce time spent triaging database alerts.

Results

SentryOne performance monitoring and intelligent alerting capabilities gave Tableau a **90 percent reduction** in time spent responding to database alerts, without adding performance overhead.

> *"We needed knowledge and experience with alerting intelligence, and we got that with SentryOne."*
>
> —*Nick Duckstein,
> Tableau Software DBA*

+ +tableau

Tableau Software is a Seattle-based data visualization company recognized as a Leader in the 2017 Gartner Magic Quadrant for Business Intelligence and Analytics.

SentryOne Provides Critical, Intelligent Alerting

As a DBA at Tableau Software, a company that helps people "see and understand data," Nick Duckstein was overwhelmed with managing alerts on SQL Server systems that replicate data to a series of clustered reporting servers accessed by business users.

"The workload that hits those servers is ad-hoc queries," Duckstein explains. "Everyone is an analyst at Tableau. Everyone has read-only access to those databases. Anyone can open up Tableau, do a bunch of joins, and write crazy queries. That makes a DBA's life kind of wild."

As Duckstein pointed out, queries that run in typical production environments are carefully tuned. But in Tableau's case, the "randomness" of the querying process is the mechanism that yields insights. The challenge for Duckstein's team was managing alerts on the SQL Server systems.

"I fished through the pile of 10,000 alert emails a day to find what was actionable. This approach was not really all that interesting, scalable, or feasible. I started looking at our need for more intelligent alerting, not something that fires every time something goes wrong."

Duckstein needed a solution that would handle the company's specific alerting needs for an ETL system pulling structured-schema data from a cloud source. Each time a SQL Server Agent job failed, whether because of an ETL error or a database connectivity problem, Duckstein's team would receive an email notification. The barrage of emails prevented his team from completing strategic projects and made discovering truly actionable database problems—such as failed database backups or full databases—nearly impossible.

SentryOne Cuts the Clutter for Tableau Software

Duckstein investigated several solutions on the market to help manage alerting, and chose SentryOne because of its intelligent alerting system, which allows DBAs to build alerts specific to the organization's environment, using metrics retrieved from multiple sources and subsystems. SentryOne also met Duckstein's requirement of having low overhead impact on database performance. Another bonus: SentryOne did not require a significant training investment from Duckstein and his team.

Duckstein says it's hard to measure the difference SentryOne solutions have made for his team. "I previously had to triage thousands of emails to figure out whether there was something important going haywire," says Duckstein. "Now, literally, most days I don't get paged. I don't know how to quantify that—it's priceless."

About SentryOne

SentryOne (sentryone.com, info@sentryone.com) is a Charlotte-based tech company whose award-winning solutions empower Microsoft data professionals to achieve breakthrough performance across physical, virtual, and cloud environments. The team shares its expertise at **blogs.sentryone.com** and **sqlperformance.com**.

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