

How AlertSite is the American Red Cross' Lifeline to Uptime



"AlertSite is to the Red Cross what a heart monitor is to patients. It ensures our internal response sites are pumping mission-critical information on demand throughout our disaster relief network. We heavily rely on technology like AlertSite to help us save lives and be heroes to millions of people around the world."

—Michael Spencer, Technical Lead of Microsoft SharePoint Program

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Situation

The American Red Cross is a rapid-strike force and often is the first to mobilize volunteers, resources, and supplies to provide emergency assistance and disaster relief. The organization depends upon its internal IT resources, especially its Microsoft SharePoint system, to manage vital information used in relief efforts. Its SharePoint system is made up of 2,500 internal sites which the Red Cross uses constantly to transfer information between volunteers on the ground and officials at its Disaster Operations Center, the organization's nerve center in Washington, D.C.

In October 2009—following the devastating earthquakes, typhoon, and tsunami in Indonesia, the Philippines, American Samoa, and Samoa—the Red Cross needed to know more than if their sites were up. They needed to know how responsive each individual site component was and whether the data was deployed and available immediately. This is crucial when disaster strikes. Workers can't be held up by slow-performing intranet sites. The Red Cross also needed to know how its sites were performing from around the globe, since the organization's information-sharing network extends globally.



The Red Cross was using internal Web site “pinging” software to check the availability of the sites every 15 minutes from Chicago where its data center is located. The IT teams often got reports from users experiencing latency issues, but because they were only monitoring from the location where the data was being retrieved (Chicago), their internal software wasn't picking up any of those problems.

For instance, access to these sites from the country where a natural disaster takes place should not be slower than access from New York or D.C. When lives are at stake, and time is of the essence, the Red Cross didn't want to rely on volunteers and employees to report problems to its IT department as its line of defense against performance issues. They needed a way to monitor site performance in real time, with immediate alerts if an issue occurred, so the IT team could react immediately.

The Red Cross needed geographically-dispersed testing to monitor and measure its site performance from wherever volunteers were located. It also wanted to trace problems to the source and have real-time reports about uptime, availability, and other metrics. Lastly, the solution had to be easily and quickly deployed.

Solution

The Red Cross searched the Web site performance monitoring market for a solution, comparing several services. When they came upon AlertSite®, the

organization saw some products that really appealed to them. In particular, DéjàClick™—the first inside-the-browser Web performance monitoring system—would allow them to monitor the TrueUser® experience on their internal SharePoint sites.

Knowing how critical this information is to the Red Cross and how much they rely on the performance of these Web sites for disaster relief efforts, AlertSite set up monitoring services so they could immediately start testing.

After some training provided by the AlertSite support team, the Red Cross was able to easily deploy DéjàClick on three Red Cross Web sites and set up various test scripts to record actual users' click streams (such as logging in). These metrics are gathered by data stations in AlertSite's Global Monitoring Network. The Red Cross configured AlertSite to monitor every five minutes from three of its over 50 stations: Chicago, Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles. It set up the system so that whenever an error occurred or response time fell below its thresholds, AlertSite would immediately notify the responsible individual by email. The Red Cross also set AlertSite's reports to be generated every 24 hours and emailed to its IT team.

After two days of using AlertSite, the Red Cross knew it had found the right solution.

Benefits

AlertSite is now playing an integral role in supporting the Red Cross's disaster relief efforts around the globe by monitoring internal SharePoint sites that receive about 20 million hits a month. AlertSite gives the Red Cross a wealth of information about crucial performance issues undetectable by its previous software. For instance, the organization discovered its internal SharePoint system

was overloaded with traffic, which could have a crippling effect on the information feed. The Red Cross scaled its load to ensure that site performance does not degrade as more volunteers and employees pile on, desperate to access information.

AlertSite's real-time alerts let the Red Cross take immediate action to remediate performance problems and reopen whatever information-sharing channel was disrupted. This enables the organization to get right back to deploying resources and assisting victims. It would take the Red Cross longer to mobilize volunteers and supplies if it didn't know there was a problem with its SharePoint sites.

In addition, depending on the location of the disaster, AlertSite enables the Red Cross to change its monitoring configuration on the fly, so it can adjust where it monitors from. This gives the organization crucial insight into what volunteers on the ground are experiencing when they access and use the SharePoint sites. The Red Cross uses AlertSite's reporting for its growing network of SharePoint sites to manage future planning and architectural decisions to determine where it needs to bolster infrastructure.

AlertSite gives the Red Cross the comprehensive Web site monitoring and measuring it needs to help support its response network, aid disaster victims, and to ensure the internal sites that are so critical to disaster recovery are running at peak performance.

For More Information

AlertSite

877.302.5378

www.AlertSite.com

American Red Cross

www.redcross.org

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AlertSite® is a global leader in technology that improves the Web experience. The company's premier solution, DéjàClick, is the only Web performance monitoring tool that measures every action users take on a Web site—ensuring the fastest, most reliable Web experience. Over 2,300 companies rely on AlertSite comprehensive solutions to keep their Web sites running smoothly.



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