



Scottish Life Recognized for Speed and Efficiency of Their IT Systems

SightLine is Core Component of IT Infrastructure

Business in the highly competitive financial services industry has always been about providing the customer with the best possible service to ensure their patronage. Scottish Life recently received recognition for the management of customer-facing IT systems and services.

Compass Management Consulting, a fact-based performance improvement consultancy, awarded Scottish Life a place in the Top 20 world group of best performing companies in 2001, based on the speed and efficiency of its IT systems development and networks.

"There is no question that financial services companies must rely more and more on highly efficient IT systems to help provide quality service to customers at minimum cost. Over the years, Scottish Life has invested prudently but significantly in this area, and we will continue to do so to help ensure that Independent Financial Advisors (IFAs) and their clients receive the kind of service they would want from us," said Brian Duffin, Chief Executive of Scottish Life.

How does Scottish Life continue to succeed?

Prior to a major strategic infrastructure enhancement, Scottish Life faced significant obstacles in maintaining service levels. When Scottish Life's original systems encountered service degradations, the resolution process began by users making a phone call to technical staff. Resolution of problems often resulted in significant delays as the technical staff waded through pages of figures. By the time the issue was resolved, the problem had often become much worse and the provision of service was greatly impacted. The lack of adequate measures to rapidly identify faults in the system led Scottish Life to seek greater reassurance in a resilient, structured solution.

Scottish Life viewed three competing systems' monitoring tools before selecting SightLine™. After installing SightLine for a trial period, the software detected a major glitch that enabled Scottish Life to solve a significant problem prior to launch of a major new system. In addition, the graphic interface of SightLine made fault diagnosis easier to identify than with the competing products. SightLine's performance quickly proved its value and was promptly installed across Scottish Life's infrastructure.



Approximately 200,000 financial transactions are processed daily throughout Scottish Life's IT infrastructure, with its primary service window operating between the hours of 8am and 8pm. At any given time, the system is capable of handling one thousand users, with the number stabilizing at between three to four hundred users at a time. Due to its advancements with SightLine, Scottish Life is now able to provide its computer users with service level agreements (SLAs) guaranteeing ninety-nine percent operational uptime.

"... companies must rely more and more on highly efficient systems to ensure maximum service to customers at minimum cost." – Brian Duffin, Group CEO, Scottish Life

A complex infrastructure

At the center of Scottish Life operations are two Unisys-based mainframe systems. The two mainframe systems contain complex information for the life and pensions financial service markets. Scottish Life predominantly conducts business with independent financial advisors who provide high-quality life and pension advice and services. The two key facilities are approximately one mile apart and connected by dark fiber. The first site contains production mainframes and network infrastructure. The second site contains the product development mainframe and network infrastructure, and additionally holds business continuity and disaster recovery facilities.

The production mainframe system is a monolithic Unisys LINC/DMSII application running on a Unisys ClearPath NX 6830. Performance and operation are supported with EMC Disk and ATL Tape Robots. As a regular winner of a '5-Star service to clients' award, Scottish Life requires a consistent service within the Production Environment, based on constant quality, speed of service and rapid fault resolution.

The Development Environment site maintains the mainframes to support rapid development and service support that is critical to business operations. To achieve maximum cost-efficiency, it is crucial that the systems development is efficient and robust both for new product development and to ensure that existing products keep pace with rapidly changing legislation.

"SightLine is critical to our overall IT strategy...It enables us to maintain a level of service that is satisfactory to our customers." – Neil Heydon-Dumbleton, IS Manager, Scottish Life

Scottish Life also uses web-based services to connect directly to its IFAs, which has added to the need to monitor performance in a more volatile and visible environment. The web-based reporting features of SightLine are used to improve incident management. Reporting to the web allows the monitoring of productivity data, general information, and the position of items being processed in a queue from anywhere. For example, internally the Helpdesk has access to performance information, so they can advise customers of the state of play without reference to technical staff. The outside web feature allows support staff to monitor workloads and diagnose problems remotely, which enables support staff to operate effectively at home during off-work hours.

"With everything running on one platform, superior service is crucial," said Neil Heydon-Dumbleton, Information Systems Manager at Scottish Life. "SightLine has been Scottish Life's primary means of maintaining high-quality service levels since 1992. Our business operation principles are: reliability, accuracy, speed, and clarity."

"SightLine is critical to our overall IT strategy," said Heydon-Dumbleton. "It is used not only at the information systems level, but on the customer level as well. SightLine enables us to maintain a level of service that is satisfactory to our customers."

He added, "We originally purchased the entry level product, then gradually upgraded and integrated [SightLine] products into the process of everything we do. The web interfaces are excellent and we are now considering the adoption of a third test machine which uses SLAs."

In 2001, Scottish Life employed Compass Management Consulting to conduct a cost of ownership survey to help determine if expenditure on information services had been worthwhile. Compass concluded that Scottish Life's UK Data Center is more efficient than a World Class Reference Group, "outperforms the reference group for service quality" and that "online transaction services experienced higher availability." Heydon-Dumbleton added that while high quality service arises from a number of sources and constant effort, it is his opinion that SightLine has remained crucial to Scottish Life's efficient service level operation.

About SightLine

SightLine Systems provides the only performance management solution to assure service-level management by all of the IT departments supporting the business value chain. Unique capabilities for real-time analysis, automated correlation of unknown processing issues, and advanced trending analysis assist a company's operations, systems engineering, systems management and planning functions to deliver and maintain business applications at optimum performance levels.

SightLine enables you to view end-to-end business flows and view service level indicators in real-time. An organization is able to maintain peak performance of its applications and the systems supporting them. SightLine offers 'end-to-end' management of the business critical IT infrastructure by:

- ◆ Helping isolate and determine the causes of problems affecting business systems processing.
- ◆ Gathering performance data from UNIX, Windows, OpenVMS, Unisys and other open systems environments and displaying it in customized real-time views integrated with the ability to alert IT when service levels are not being met.
- ◆ Providing a comprehensive solution for monitoring the health and availability of IT business services and transaction response times with the ability to quickly pinpoint the source of service degradations.
- ◆ Enabling an independent view to be modeled for current and future IT resource requirements without the need to be a platform expert.

Now organizations can easily identify trends and relationships in key business indicators as they are occurring, not after they have reached a critical threshold. Furthermore, SightLine can quickly and automatically determine the root causes which are contributing to any service level degradation and enable IT to address the issues before end-users experience any service interruptions.



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