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Nastel: the secret to APM is knowing what to quickly discard
By Dan Kusnetzky

Summary: Charles Rich, Nastel's VP of Product Management and Marketing, stopped by to talk about the company's products and development philosophy. The trick is knowing quickly what to discard and what is important.

I had an opportunity to chat with Charles Rich, Nastel's Vice President, Product Management and Marketing, about the veritable herd of different tools and approaches that have been called application performance management (APM). What Nastel is offering is designed to combine a sophisticated event processing capability with predictive analytics to create a "set it and forget it" management environment.

Rich pointed out that the management tools built into the operating systems, virtualization tools, application frameworks, applications, database engines and networking tools produce an overwhelming amount of operational data. IT administrators really don't have the time or the desire to wade through all of that data to discover what is important, that is what hints at potential problems. These IT administrators would prefer to be able to just do their jobs rather than being forced to monitor a dashboard just to see everything is "on the green." No, they'd rather be alerted when an issue is cooking, long before it has become a problem.

Nastel, Rich pointed out, developed a complex event processing system that can take in all of this data, compute metrics based upon what is seen in the operational data, and then present useful metrics to the IT staff.

I was forced to recall a conversation with RainStor in which we discussed the biggest challenge in Big Data is knowing what data to ignore while looking for what the user thinks is important. Nastel's event processing system is doing much the same thing. When I mentioned this observation to Rich, he agreed that the trick is being able to throw away unneeded data fast enough to keep up with what's important. Nastel's engineers worked a long time to give the event processing engine that capability.

Unfortunately, as often happens in my conversations, we took a turn from a serious conversation to being silly. Could it be me? Nastel believes it is offering "one tool to rule them all." I suggested that putting that slogan in Elvish on the side of all of their literature would attract the Lord of the Rings enthusiasts. He laughed, but thought that was going a bit too far.

Nastel appears to really understand the challenge of gathering and analyzing operational data and then being able to tease out the important from the mass of unimportant data that IT systems generate.