Virginia Department of Social Services cuts downtime and saves $500,000 a year with Applications Manager

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About the VDSS

- The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) is one of the largest commonwealth agencies, partnering with 120 local departments of social services, along with faith-based and non-profit organizations, to promote the well-being of children and families statewide.
- The department's mission is to promote the well-being of individuals and families in Virginia by providing financial, medical, and social services.

Industry: Government Administration
Location: United States

Customer favorites
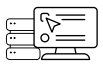
- Application performance monitoring
- Digital experience monitoring
- Root cause analysis
- Advanced analytics

Outcomes after implementing Applications Manager

50%
reduction in
alert noise

$500,000
saved yearly
on downtime

Fewer
troubleshooting
issues and outages

> "Before implementing Applications Manager, we were constantly in a reactive mode, addressing outages and issues only after our customers had already experienced them. It was frustrating to be unaware of problems until they were reported to us. However, since deploying Applications Manager, we have experienced a significant shift in our approach. With real-time monitoring and proactive alerts, we now have the ability to detect and address potential outages before our customers even notice them. This has greatly improved our service reliability and customer satisfaction."
>
> — **Ronald Lee, system administrator, Virginia Department of Social Services.**

Business challenge

The VDSS offers a wide range of social services programs designed to support Virginia residents who are experiencing financial, medical, or social challenges. Some of the services offered by the VDSS include Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and child welfare and foster care services. To access these services, Virginia residents can use the Virginia CommonHelp web portal, which provides a central location for applying for and managing benefits.

The VDSS's application infrastructure includes several critical technology systems and applications, including its child welfare case management system, child support enforcement system, and financial management system. These applications are essential to the VDSS's ability to deliver social services effectively and efficiently.

"The applications underlying our child welfare case management system are essential to ensuring that children who are at risk of abuse or neglect receive the necessary support and services. If this system were to experience downtime or data loss, it could result in delays in responding to cases, incorrect or incomplete information being shared among social workers and other stakeholders, or other

negative outcomes that could put children at risk," says Ronald Lee, system administrator at the VDSS. To mitigate these risks, it was essential for the VDSS to invest in an application monitoring and observability solution.

Streamlining issue remediation and optimizing the citizen experience

The VDSS IT team evaluated various application monitoring tools, including AppDynamics, but ultimately decided against it due to its cost. "We were primarily looking for a cost-effective solution that aligns with our ITIL strategy. Compared to other tools in the market, Applications Manager was rich in features while being affordable. So, we had the best of both worlds," says Lee.

After gaining full-stack observability, VDSS continued to uncover other capabilities that Applications Manager could bring to the table, including other modules like digital experience monitoring. "Within a year, we tripled the investment we made in Applications Manager and this gave us [an] edge, as we no longer [have] to guess the impact application performance has on our user experience," says Lee.

Before when facing issues, VDSS team members had to wade through information manually and it would take a lot of their valuable time. Applications Manager's real-time dashboards provide alerts that have helped them cut the remediation process down from days down to minutes. Lee vividly recollects when Applications Manager helped prevent a major incident in the Department of Child Support: "We were facing performance issues with our Department of Child Support Enforcement (DCSE) application and wanted to understand what was going on. Applications Manager helped us gain visibility into specific errors occurring within the DCSE application. We were able to analyze the error patterns, trace the flow of transactions, and identify the underlying issues causing the errors."

Additionally, the team leveraged the product's digital experience monitoring capabilities to boost the impact of its other social welfare programs. The applications were experiencing intermittent issues such as unexpected errors and disruptions. With the help of the tool's real user monitoring capabilities, the VDSS was able to understand how real users were engaging with its applications and capture interaction metrics like page load times, form submission rates, overall response times, and more. This allowed the IT team to proactively identify and address performance issues, optimize user journeys, and swiftly resolve errors or disruptions. As a result, the applications remained highly available, reliable, and user-friendly, ensuring timely financial assistance to families in need.

> "Applications Manager provides full visibility across our application environnment and the actionable insights have enabled us to make smarter decisions and provide stable operations around the clock."
> — **Ronald Lee, system administrator, Virginia Department of Social Services.**

Key benefits

Instant insights: Applications Manager's auto discovery and instrumentation capabilities enable the VDSS to maintain continuous observability across its hybrid environment with minimal effort. This removes the need for manual configuration, freeing up its IT team to focus on other more value-adding tasks like fine-tuning its applications and innovation.

Proactive resolution: Previously, many faults remained undetected until citizens reported issues they had when accessing a particular system. This reactive approach often led to delays in issue resolution and increased citizen frustration. However,

with Applications Manager, the IT team is able to receive alerts and proactively avoid potential issues. This has freed the team up from repetitive, manual workflows so it can focus on more strategic initiatives and serve citizens better.
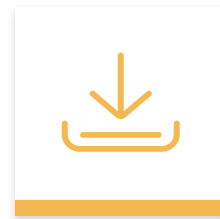
Improved citizen experiences: The precise answers from the tool has enabled the VDSS to serve citizens better. "The product enables us to do more with less. We are able to meet all our SLAs and deliver seamless services. With Applications Manager, we are confident that we can meet the needs of citizens and provide them the services they deserve," says Lee.
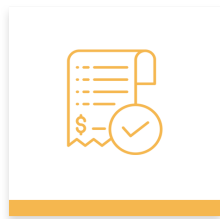
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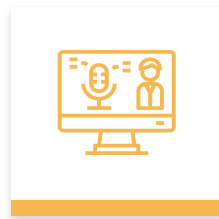
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