

## Scotts/Miracle-Gro load test at Platform Lab

**When your business is expected to grow like a weed – or a beautiful garden, how do you know your business applications can sustain that growth? For Scotts, the way to find out was to use Platform Lab.**

The bread and butter of the Scotts Miracle-Gro Company is its manufacturing arm. But from a service standpoint, the company did a brisk online loan servicing business. That business was supported by an application and was growing 18% to 22% per year. The problem was that the application was getting older and the company wasn't sure it could continue to handle projected growth: Where was the breaking point? Did Scotts really want to wait and find out?

"We had to do something," said Venky Iyer, Manager of Global Business and Operation Services for Scotts Miracle-Gro. "We had to find a solution that would handle the growth and the load."

So they met with their vendor, identified a new application, but again were faced with some uncertainty that the new technology would work as they needed -- now and in the future. They then did what any smart company would do: pre-test the vendor's solution to ensure results.

Enter Platform Lab -- Ohio's non-profit IT testing and training facility.

According to the Scotts' growth projections, the application needed to sufficiently handle up to 700,000 transactions per hour; no small number by any standard. And Scotts soon realized that this was no "small Mom and Pop test," but that they needed a capable provider who could help organize, service and support their load test requirements.

"We knew what it was going to take to prove this application could sustain business growth," said Iyer. "We looked at Microsoft to be an option, but they were too expensive. Then an IT admin mentioned Platform Lab. When we started talking to them, we were pleasantly surprised to find that they were located here, had everything we needed, and comparatively were inexpensive. And after the first time I went there, I was again pleasantly surprised that they were so well equipped."

The 4-week engagement Microsoft based .NET platform application all the latest and greatest elements: SQL Server 2005, Windows Server 2003, Mercury Load Runner and 27 servers to run them on. Scotts also utilized OSCnet, with a 4 Megabit VPN connection.

As with most IT projects, the first few weeks were eye-openers. Soon Scotts realized the effort would take more than expected. Instead of 4 weeks at Platform Lab, it would take 6 weeks.

"Steve [Gruetter, Platform Lab's Director] had no problem with it," said Iyer. "Which was critical for us, because if we had to run into big time issues and couldn't use those last 2 weeks, we would have been in bad shape. But Steve was very accommodating which gave us great peace of mind." Adds Gruetter, "We understand that testing is difficult and test plans do not often proceed as scheduled. We built in a

resource allocation contingency into our hardware reservation schedule, insuring that Scott's would have their configuration as long as they needed it."

With the ability, resources and flexibility of Platform Lab, Scotts performed their test smoothly and as a result, from a business perspective, everything fell into place. From Platform Lab's perspective, it was all in a day's work when helping a growing company.