

UK energy firm exceeds end-user expectations by providing a seamless digital experience



EDF in the UK is the biggest generator of zero carbon electricity, generating a fifth of the UK’s power. The company wanted to improve its visibility into the actual end-user experience of its contact center employees, speed up response times, and ultimately enhance the overall customer experience.

With Riverbed® Aternity, EDF has gained visibility into the end-user experience of its business-critical applications on any device to inform remediation,

drive down costs and improve employee productivity and the customer experience.

EDF provides electricity to homes and businesses throughout the UK, through power generation assets comprising wind, solar, and nuclear energy. The energy company has an operational portfolio of 36 wind farms, including two offshore, with plans to enable investment in low carbon and renewable technologies in the UK worth over £50bn by 2035.

36 wind farms, including two offshore wind farms

In Brief

Challenges

- Lack of visibility into end-user experience
- Increased response times affecting customer experience
- Slow performance of applications

Solution

- Riverbed Aternity Digital Experience Management (DEM)

Benefits

- Fast and accurate network and application performance resolution
- Improved response times
- Proactive resolution of issues
- Visibility over applications and networks
- Empowered to make data driven decisions rather than anecdotal feedback

Challenge: Enhancing visibility to improve customer experience

EDF's consumer-facing business serves thousands of customers across the UK. However, agents required long lead times to service customer queries. They also lacked visibility of the actual end-user experience of their contact center system applications and identifying and resolving network and application performance issues was next to impossible. "We wanted to understand what was behind the latency we faced, whether we had bandwidth issues, or issues with our machines," explains Donna Lloyd, Senior Enterprise Product Manager, Platforms & Enablement, Enterprise IT, EDF.

Solution: Re-defining user experience with Riverbed Aternity

To address these contact center challenges, EDF started its journey with the End-User Experience Monitoring (EUEM) capabilities of Riverbed Aternity, beginning with a Proof of Concept (POC) for 300 end-users for one of its networks, intended for customers and corporates.

The value of Aternity was immediately apparent, as the solution provided a view of the digital experience and all of the devices, application and network metrics that affect it, onto a single view. "We gained visibility into a new data set that we never had visibility of before," says Chris Alford, Enterprise Product Owner, EDF. "Previously, we had a visibility gap between what our existing monitoring tools were telling us versus the feedback from end-users."

The visibility and transparency helped EDF speed up contact center application response times, enabling the organization to deliver better services to its end-users. The company then implemented EUEM for 15,000 end-users.

"The Aternity solution became instantly popular and was very well received amongst our teams, as it reduced our transaction times significantly."

Donna Lloyd
Senior Enterprise Product Manager, Platforms & Enablement,
Enterprise IT, EDF

"We had a real-time dashboard put up on the wall and it displayed the status of our apps and networks.

"So, if we noticed that something was slowing down the resources, we could look into it and find out what was wrong with any of our business-critical applications. It helped us see what our end-users actually experienced," adds Lloyd. "Improving observability was key, as it was important for us to gain insights that we could act upon. Since then, the use of our Aternity DEM solution has grown and evolved along with our business."

Benefits: Validating and managing change with Aternity

The benefits of moving to a new application release or upgrade won't matter if there is no way to validate that the end-user experience has improved. However, EDF found it was very easy to show the impact of the upgrades on end-user experience with Aternity.



“When we upgraded to Windows 10, we looked across our estate to see where our slowest machines were, so that we could target those replacements first,” explains Lloyd. “When we replaced them, we used performance statistics to assess and demonstrate the positive impact.”

In order to reduce the number of customer helpdesk tickets and improve user experience, EDF developed 29 different Remediation actions which helped to identify issues and fix them remotely before they escalated. “Based on the last 90 days, each remediation action that is automatically triggered helps save users 14 minutes of their time and saves the support team 15 minutes on average,” says Alex Brady, Enterprise Product Owner for Aternity, EDF. “This is obviously an extremely useful tool, so we’re constantly developing new scripts for remediation to continue improving the user experience further and become more proactive in our response”.

Transforming the face of IT internally

To bolster its issue resolution activities, EDF integrated Aternity with ServiceNow Incident Management. When a device triggers an alert, ServiceNow collects relevant real-time data from Aternity in ServiceNow. The company created 21 different alerts, including nine system alerts and eight application alerts for hardware. The range of alerts allows IT staff to quickly diagnose the root cause.

“We are receiving excellent feedback regarding the way we receive alerts and proactively handle issues,” says Brady. “Users aren’t even aware that there’s an issue because we solve it pre-emptively.”

Alford explains how it works, “If they have a system crash, battery wear issues, or low disk space which are proven to impact the users’ experience, Aternity raises the incident on the user’s behalf, rather than waiting for users to log the issues with our help desk,” Alford says.

“We have a dedicated team who works with our users to resolve these issues. We’ve completely transformed the way we service our employees from reactive to proactive to pre-emptive.”

Additionally, EDF has created PowerShell scripts, a task automation and configuration management program, and uploaded them to Aternity in order to run remediation actions on end-user monitored devices. “Some of the tasks that used to take us 30 minutes previously, now take literally 30 seconds because we have created scripts and remediation actions. We’re getting to the point where the scripts will be fully automated,” says Brady. The company uses remediation actions to enforce security and updates.

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“These automated remediations are also helping us in terms of security and updates,” explains Brady. “For instance, one remediation action detects when a computer hasn’t been rebooted for five days and triggers an alert for the user. If the user doesn’t reboot after seven days, the remediation action automatically restarts the device.”

Automated issue resolution at scale

Increased visibility has allowed EDF to discover the root cause of issues that affected multiple users. One example was the intermittent slow opening of bills in the CRM system.

“Thanks to Aternity, we identified that more than 1,000 machines had a version of Adobe installed which caused the machine to crash when a bill was opened,” says Lloyd. “If it was a single device, we could easily fix it, but imagine over 1,000 people receiving the same error or facing the same problem. With Aternity, we could search every device that needed an updated Adobe version and roll it out en masse.”

Another common problem was persistent memory issues that slowed down device performance. When the team pulled Aternity reports to view the system’s memory utilization, they found that 3,000 devices were using more than 70% of the physical memory. “This insight helped us take a different route for improving the memory of all our devices,” says Brady.

Riverbed’s technology has been a tremendous success at EDF. Their teams supported the EDF team every step of the way and have played a major role in their continuing success. “We started off using Aternity as a solution that helped us fix issues; it evolved into monitoring our machines and actively looking for problems, and then we took it a step further to actually take control with automatic remediation,” explains Lloyd.

“We’ve completely transformed the way we manage issues, moving from being reactive to proactive and now we can actually foresee and manage issues before they arise. Aternity has transformed the way we work and how IT is perceived as a department throughout the business,” concludes Lloyd.

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About Riverbed

Riverbed, the leader in AI observability, helps organizations optimize their users’ experiences by leveraging AI automation for the prevention, identification, and resolution of IT issues. With over 20 years of experience in data collection and AI and machine learning, Riverbed’s open and AI-powered observability platform and solutions optimize digital experiences and greatly improve IT efficiency. Riverbed also offers industry-leading Acceleration solutions that provide fast, agile, secure acceleration of any app, over any network, to users anywhere. Together with our thousands of market-leading customers globally – including 95% of the *FORTUNE* 100 – we are empowering next-generation digital experiences. Learn more at riverbed.com.