

# Bridging the IT to Business Gap

## *Akorri delivers application service level management*

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**Abstract:** Akorri enables companies to best align IT resources with applications, dramatically improve infrastructure visibility and significantly accelerate problem resolution. Akorri's cross domain software solution, BalancePoint is their official entry into the market.

Enterprises rely on applications to fuel their business. In turn, those applications rely on infrastructure to keep the processes running. In order for an application to run effectively, specific resources are required (e.g., CPUs, storage capacity and redundant connectivity). In most companies, a waterfall effect is usually encountered during the provisioning of resources for new applications. Requirements are passed from the business unit, over to the apps team, then to the server team, the networking team and eventually the storage team with each group adding on their own "fudge factor" to the requirements, not wanting to be the weakest link. This process usually causes over-provisioning and can potentially bring about contention issues with other applications. Yet, however bad the results of that sounds, under-provisioned applications can cost a company far more. When an application becomes resource-constrained, bad things are bound to happen. If mission critical software degrades and fails, companies lose money and in some cases, employees lose their jobs.

This segmentation in the data center not only creates a problem when provisioning, but also in the process of problem resolution. The issue is centered on the fact that most tools that are currently deployed only see certain devices (vendor specific) or single domains (like the Server domain, Storage domain etc). So when a problem arises and sympathetic alarms race through the entire infrastructure, everyone begins pointing fingers. There is simply too much time spent just trying to find the root of the problem. It is even more difficult when the problem is more subtle and nothing has actually crashed yet, but there is a brown-out due to contention or congestion. In some of these cases, the degradation may only be 10%, perhaps not even enough to be noticed. Yet this is the type of problem that can end up costing the company far more money as the condition could exist for months. In these cases, it is critical that companies not only see which applications are affected, but also have the ability to prioritize and decide which applications should get fixed first. This lack of visibility can cause timely delays in repairing the problems and can cost a company a great deal of money.

In order to solve these problems, you need software capable of covering multiple domains, providing visibility and insight from application server to disk.

Akorri, a company just coming out of stealth mode with its first GA product BalancePoint, was built from the ground up to solve these problems. Akorri develops software that helps bridge the visibility gaps between business applications and the resources that support it.

### **Analysis**

Akorri's product, BalancePoint, is an appliance-based software product designed to quickly integrate into a data center environment. It is agent-less and out of band. An intuitive user interface, requiring minimal training, accelerates the time to proficiency. Simply unpack it, plug it in and provide it with some basic information. It will begin collecting vital information on each application and their data paths across the data center. This information provides details on topology, performance health and has the intelligence to correlate the infrastructure to business applications. BalancePoint has the unique ability to provide an Application Fingerprint™, which contains a

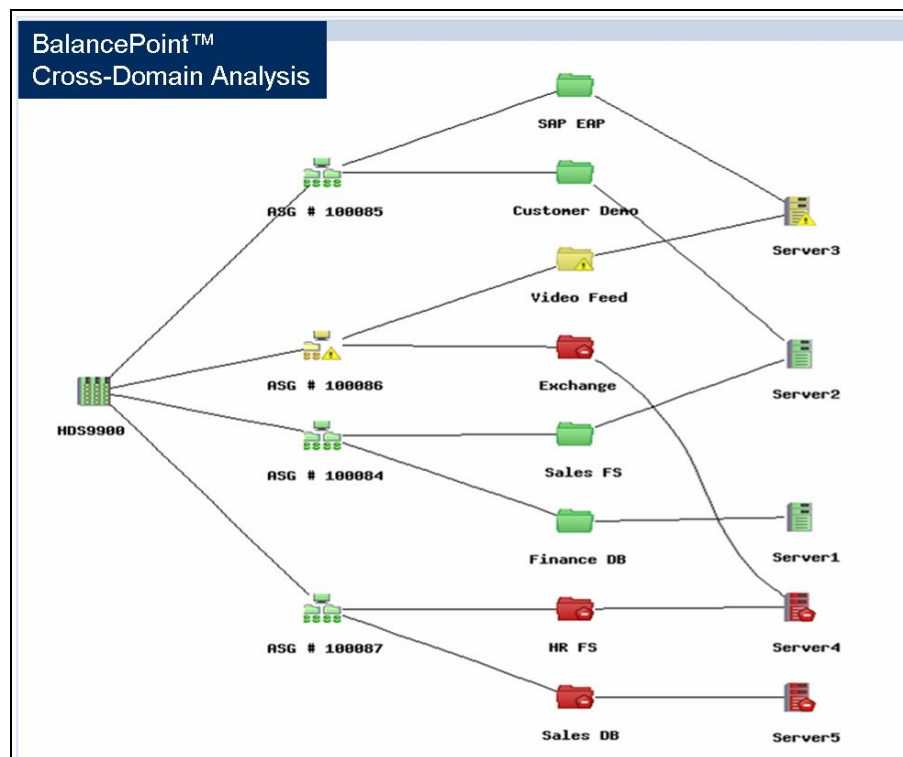
performance profile. This profile is important because it provides the basis for the entire analysis. All of this information is collected and stored in a central database.

In one easy to understand display, a user can view all their applications and see the underlying infrastructure that supports it. The view includes the application, logical volumes, storage array and an application service group. The application service group is a “managed virtual object” that can include disk arrays, FC switches etc. It is mainly used to help identify any possible problem areas. Consider how long it would take you to manually map the dependencies of an application down to the disk drives it uses. Typically this process might take about three days of leveraging several experts - only to be obsolete once a change is made. BalancePoint can accomplish the same results in a few hours and will then constantly monitor the environment for changes and update accordingly. This is tremendous day one value. BalancePoint allows you to quickly and easily map the applications through the infrastructure and identify potential problems like contention of multiple volumes on the same RAID set.

### Analytics engine provides unique value

However, the real value is not in the topology, but in the analytics that occur behind the scenes and eventually roll up into the topology. The analytics engine utilizes the performance information collected in the database, color codes the items based on their health and inputs them into the topology. This simple yet powerful view shown in Figure 1 enables users to quickly determine points of contention or performance degradation and narrows down problems to a specific domain. In this screen shot we can quickly determine that the Exchange and HR file share applications are affected by a problem in server4 (as indicated in red). It also indicates that Exchange has some storage contention problems (in this view an ASG is a RAID group in the SAN) with another application (as indicated in yellow) that are degrading its performance and should be addressed.

Figure 1. The cross-domain performance map enables users to quickly spot sources of contention or performance degradation.



In addition to the color coding, BalancePoint will also provide a textual description of the problem. Once the problem area is identified, device or domain specific tools can be used to drill down to determine the root cause. Akorri's software doesn't replace existing device and domain tools, but rather provides a higher level view across multiple domains. Delivering that cross domain view enables operations staff to rapidly pinpoint the area that needs further investigation.

**BalancePoint measures application response times**

Many customers want to measure their applications in terms of latency when they discuss performance. They want to know how fast an application is responding. BalancePoint has the ability to roll up application response time by tracking I/O throughput in the data path. This information can be particularly useful when setting up business continuity and disaster recovery environments where applications are synchronously mirrored across multiple sites. Having the ability to verify application performance both before and after, or the ability to determine the performance hit if you had to run your applications from data at the secondary site can be crucial elements to help build a successful DR solution.

One of the first function modules Akorri is rolling out for BalancePoint is a performance-based provisioning tool. Given its unique ability to have visibility from the application right through to the disks, the software can determine the best storage match for each application. Essentially, this software will show the top five matches for storage allocation based on knowledge of the existing environment and specific information regarding the new application. This process will eliminate any possible contention at the storage level for all applications.

**The Bottom Line**

Akorri is an up and coming company with a fresh outlook on the business world and has an experienced executive team ready to lead them on the path to further success. Their technology is innovative and customers are enthusiastic about the BalancePoint product. The fact that Akorri actually has customer references is an important element for any business. This is not slide-ware, but real working software that customers receive real value from. Akorri will continue to develop their software and build their go to market channels and, as a result, their growth in the marketplace is sure to accelerate in the near future.

As data centers continue to evolve, there is a strong need for solutions that span multiple domains. As IT initiatives like virtualization, ITIL/ITSM continue to influence the way we look at IT and more specifically how we deliver IT as a service, applications like Akorri's BalancePoint will become mandatory. The only way to effectively manage large, complex environments is with tools that not only have visibility up, down and across multiple domains, but also have the intelligence to analyze the environment and provide actionable recommendations.

Does this mean that BalancePoint will replace all tools in the data center? Not at all. Akorri's software fills a critical need to tie applications to the underlying server and storage that support them to ensure peak performance. Akorri's current customers are quick to point out the ease with which the software is deployed and the value gained by allowing the visualization of applications mapped through the infrastructure. The fact that BalancePoint can quickly identify underperforming applications and help rectify those situations should more than justify the cost of the product.

Is it a guaranteed success? No, but Akorri has some significant advantages outside the obvious listed above. A tool which can provide depth and visibility through complex network infrastructures, both physical and virtual, can significantly enhance previous IT investments. Companies that spent millions on higher level tools such as Mercury Interactive or SAP will suddenly be able to see not only at the application layer, but all the way down through the infrastructure to the disk. This can only help operations people make better decisions based on a far more complete picture.