Tier1Research

Gomez pushes out its winter platform update

Internet Software and Web Applications

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Gomez has carved itself a nice niche in the Web monitoring and measurement world, acting as a valuable tool for CDNs and higher-end hosting providers alike for enhancing value to customers as well as for a little competition. The latest platform update pushes further into the end-user experience. The evolution from Web monitoring to Web application monitoring means that Gomez's value along all points of the Internet infrastructure chain is growing.

How we use and access the Internet has drastically evolved. The world gets SaaSier and the way end users access it all is no longer relegated to the desktop. How something looks on an iPhone often differs drastically from on a laptop using a different browser. This piece – how an end user experiences something – plays just as an important role in analytics as reporting inside the firewall. The latest platform update from Gomez further addresses the increasingly complex needs of Web applications as well as cloudier infrastructure, figuratively as well as literally, that sees more third parties dipping their hands into the pot.

Where along the chain do analytics hold value?

The advances of Internet applications have been tough to keep up with, and so has getting insight into how these applications are acting beyond the traditional zone of control.

Gomez's value has been extending in opposite directions: the Vantage integration (adVantage) was the result of the **Compuware** acquisition, delving analytics capabilities deeper into the datacenter trenches. At the other end of the spectrum, capabilities providing actionable insight based on how end users experience an application, right down to the browser they're using or the mobile platform they're viewing it on, have been pushed further. More third parties are playing a role in the overall experience, and application functionality is increasingly complex.

The sell on the datacenter and delivery performance side of things is easy. It's been properly addressed, and the value of these analytics is widely recognized. Display analytics – taking into account the final experience, and how other pieces affect the end-user experience, don't have the cachet of the other two pieces. It's because this part of the chain is a harder sell, generally considered out of the scope of control for providers. The new platform upgrade pushes further in this direction, and shows that these analytics cannot only be properly captured, but provide actionable insight. The trick for Gomez will be positioning these services – which greatly appeal to SaaS providers more than infrastructure providers – in a way that infrastructure providers will see the benefit of empowering their customers.

Mobile and the cloud figure into the Gomez platform expansion

The platform-wide update expands Gomez's capabilities deeper into multi-browser monitoring, and tackles load testing to push it further toward the actual end user. Two of the key elements of the update address the growing role that cloud and mobile pieces play in the Web experience.

On the user side is support for load testing of mobile applications. The platform supports analytics for smartphone applications, SMS and browser applications – over 5,000 mobile device profiles are supported. Customers can now test a combination of mobile and regular Web traffic from the Gomez network.

On the datacenter side of the equation, Gomez's load testing accounts for a geographically dispersed audience by using cloud computing resources. We're intrigued by Gomez' move to put test applications in provider clouds to monitor provider performance on **Amazon** EC2, Amazon S3, **GoGrid**, **Google**, **Rackspace** and **OpSource**. Users can drill down further into any of those providers' performance results while simultaneously looking at results from a single provider across multiple geographies (Amazon EC2 instances in the US versus Europe, for example).

The multi-browser analytics have expanded, addressing the problem of the disparity between raw page load time and perceived page load time. There's a gap between the raw load and the experienced load time, something that is missed when not taken from an end-user perspective. Cross-browser testing now includes over 500 browser/OS combos, with support for IE8 coming with a platform release in the summer of 2010.

Finding and analyzing performance problems

There are three major components to the Web application delivery chain – the datacenter, the delivery and the display. Many analytics providers cover only one segment of this chain, or don't provide the causal connections between these pieces. Furthermore, the problem is often addressed strictly from the Internet infrastructure provider perspective, which provides a limited view of performance, given the interaction between feature-rich Web applications running on an increasingly diverse range of devices. Capturing a user's perspective on performance is a key element to have, but it's getting more and more difficult for enterprises to do the necessary regression testing themselves – that's where Gomez's testbed, with its geographically dispersed test platform and new support for mobile sites and applications, comes in.

On the other hand, the risk of extending analysis to include the whole delivery chain is that application developers and site owners have too much data. Intelligence failures are often the result of failure on the analysis front, not on the amount of information.

What T1R sees Gomez improving with each platform update are the dashboards, which not only help present this test result, but also help visualize data in a way that's more actionable. What specific browser caused a problem? What particular element on a page caused the biggest performance hit? Is there a particular page that's having a problem? These are the kinds of issues that Gomez's platform continues to help customers with.

T1R take

Gomez's latest platform update continues its evolution into becoming an Internet application monitoring and measurement service for everything from development to deployment to continued operations. The company is doing a good job of keeping up with trends on the application front and putting a stake in the ground for new (can we say greencloud instead of greenfield?) territory with cloud-based performance testing.