



CASE STUDY | RETAIL

# Getting a complete view of SQL Server estates using SQL Monitor and Slack

# “We were administering our monitoring tools as much as we were our SQL Server estate.”

**Mamas & Papas (M&P)** is a UK-based retailer and manufacturer supplying strollers (prams and pushchairs), baby products, furniture, and maternity wear. It was established in Huddersfield in 1981 and has grown as a family business to become one of the top nursery brands.

M&P has over 35 stores in the UK & Ireland with a growing number of franchise stores in the Middle East, Far East, North America, South America, and Taiwan. With a turnover of \$133m, it employs nearly 1,000 employees in its head office and across its retail stores.

Matt Haigh is the Senior Database Administrator with the infrastructure team. His team look after 65 SQL Servers across both the head office and the stores, which run Electronic Point of Sale (EPOS) systems.

Matt's main challenge is how to balance the day-to-day requirements of maintaining the SQL Servers with the need to add value to the company through project work. To monitor the servers, his team built their own set of tools using Excel Power BI features and PowerShell scripts.

Rather than helping them, however, the tools held them back. As Matt explains: “It turned into a bit of a nightmare. We had issues installing the tools on new servers, and trying to add new metrics, and we could only get information about the servers when we clicked refresh. But probably the biggest problem was that our inbox was filling up with emails that we had no way of filtering or prioritizing. In the end I just wanted my inbox back!”

As well as improving the monitoring position, Matt wanted his team to perform DBA work rather than develop a SQL Server monitoring tool themselves. They were spending 60% of the day doing routine checks and administering the tool. As a consequence, lead times for internal IT projects were suffering and staff motivation was low because the team weren't doing work that interested them.

# “We wanted a tool that could give a very quick overview of what was happening with our SQL Server estate.”

Matt knew the situation couldn't continue so he looked to see if there was a third party tool that could help. He had previously used two other tools from Redgate, SQL Backup Pro and SQL Prompt, and was impressed not only with their use and simplicity, but with the levels of post-sale support he received from Redgate.

“Redgate was the first place we started looking and SQL Monitor became the benchmark tool that we judged all others against. It had to be simple to set up across our stores and most importantly, make our lives easier.”

After considering several options, Matt decided on SQL Monitor because it was hugely powerful and configurable, and also easy to use. He was pleased he did so. “The people at Redgate were brilliant during the whole setup process and gave us a lot of support and advice to make sure we were getting the most out of SQL Monitor.”

Thanks to the intuitive interface, everyone in the team was also able to make the most of the many features of SQL Monitor very quickly. Having installed SQL Monitor across the SQL Server estate, however, Matt decided to try something radical that would also dramatically improve the way they worked.

“SQL Monitor exceeded our expectations. It gave us the overviews and insight we were looking for but it also helped us free up the inbox. We decided not to have any email alerts sent from SQL Monitor but instead use the built-in integration with Slack to send any alerts to our Slack channel. Rather than constantly checking emails, we wanted a more visual approach to monitoring. I also got my inbox back.”

# “SQL Monitor has changed the culture of the team and made our jobs more enjoyable and productive.”

The move to Slack notifications was a big shift for the team and the effect was immediate. There are no longer any mandatory checks to run in the morning, because SQL Monitor monitors everything constantly. Instead, Matt can simply check the Slack channel and, via the screens showing SQL Monitor in the office, see if any issues have occurred and schedule them into the day's workload.

“We've also given the rest of IT access to the Slack channel,” continues Matt. “So if there is a problem they can check what's happening, see that we're working on it, and know when the issue has been resolved. We don't have anybody phoning us up or sending us emails because everybody knows exactly what's going on.”

Importantly, the move to SQL Monitor and Slack hasn't just had an impact on the DBA team but the wider IT department.

The CIO can look at the SQL Monitor screens and see at a glance if there are any issues and also know which stores are busy that day. The developers, who are always keen to understand the impact of any new software releases, can use the new SQL Monitor reporting module to take benchmarks and instantly identify any problems their latest release has caused, or any increase in performance they have achieved. Everyone can directly see the impact of database or application changes.

“Now we have SQL Monitor,” Matt concludes, “we arrive in the morning, grab a coffee, check for any problems, and then get stuck into the project work that's going on to benefit the business. It's saved us a least two hours a day in just monitoring the systems, probably more if you add how it's enabled us to change the way we work. For me, that's been the biggest benefit.”



SQL Monitor is a SQL Server monitoring tool that transforms the way you look at your database. With a web-based overview of all your SQL Servers, it cuts your daily checks from hours to minutes.

The result? You can do more of what you need to and spend less time monitoring, stop performance problems spoiling your day, and always have the answer to any question about your SQL Server estate.

The new reporting module also lets you create customized reports which combine the performance metrics available in SQL Monitor's analysis view with summary information on factors like server uptime, the numbers of alerts being raised, or the disks which are filling up fastest.

To find out more, visit [www.red-gate.com/sql-monitor](http://www.red-gate.com/sql-monitor), where you can download a 14-day, fully-functional trial.