Netezza Afterlife Support Case Study

Large US Financial Institution

Introduction

In 2018 IBM announced the end-of-support (EOS) dates for three generations of Netezza / IBM PureData for Analytics appliances, which meant that they would no longer provide hardware or software product support for them - even if a customer wished to continue using their purchased appliances.

Background

Our client is a global financial organization with several Netezza appliances in multiple geographical locations. As soon as IBM announced they would no longer be selling new Netezza systems our client embarked on a multi-billion dollar rebuild of their data analytics capability which involved a gradual phasing out of their existing on-premises infrastructure and moving their operations to a multi-cloud, multi-vendor alternative. Due to the timescales involved in migrating to the new platform without causing undue risk to the business, our client sought to extend the lifespan of their existing Netezza systems by asking us to provide both hardware and software support whilst an orderly phasing out of their legacy Netezza systems occurred.

Objectives

The main goal was to receive the same if not better service than provided by IBM, with:

- Flexible SLAs - 24x7 or 9x5
- Improved access to Netezza specialists
- Proactive monitoring of database performance and hardware
- Reduced support fees

Approach

The Netezza Afterlife service from Smart Associates is like the break/fix style support service IBM has traditionally provided Netezza/PureData for Analytics customers to date, designed specifically for those systems that have reached end of life or are no longer supported by IBM directly. It satisfies all the above four key objectives.

Smart Associates has access to an inventory of spare parts either from existing customers we've helped migrate off their old Netezza platform, or from trusted third-party suppliers and resellers.

We can remotely investigate and diagnose the cause of performance or stability issues and help resolve these without the need for software updates in the vast majority of cases. Where a software or firmware update is required, we can perform this remotely (provided the customer has already downloaded the fix packs to do so before their support agreement with IBM has ended).

We use Jira Service Management for the reporting and tracking of tickets, to ensure Service Level Agreements are met, and generally communicate with customers either via email or the customer's preferred remote desktop sharing/conferencing tool when needed.

Scope

Examples of the scope of activities provided under our Netezza Afterlife Support Service include:

- System health checks (typically performed either monthly or quarterly according to customer need) and remediation plan recommendations
- hardware, software, performance, or workload management problem investigation, determination, and recommendations
- best practise guidelines and advice in response to technical questions
- housekeeping activities, and software/firmware upgrades (which must have been previously downloaded from IBM Fix Central prior to commencement of the service) as necessary

Results

- To date we have supported the following separate systems on behalf of this customer:

  - N2001-040 from 01/05/2021 to 30/9/2022
  - N2001-040 from 01/05/2021 to 30/9/2022
  - N2001-020 from 01/02/2022 to 31/12/2022
  - N2001-020 from 01/03/2022 to date

- Over 61 distinct incidents with these systems have been resolved during this time period, requiring hundreds of replacement parts and a similar number of hours of remote/on-site technical assistance.

- The customer has never had a single critical/severity 1 outage on any system for the entire duration of the support relationship.

- Whilst investigating a large number of failed disks due to thermal alerts, we identified a problem with the air conditioning in the customer's data centre that resulted in a dramatic improvement in the overall reliability of the system components.

- We remotely assisted with the complete secure erasure and decommissioning of all the systems that we ceased supporting in 2022.

- Due to the successful delivery of support services to date, and the client's satisfaction with the service provided, Smart Associates was invited to provide ongoing support cover (for 36 months) on the remainder of the client's Mako generation Netezza systems from April 2023.