

Ipswitch WhatsUp® Gold vs. SolarWinds Network Performance Monitor

Understanding the Business Case for Ipswitch WhatsUp Gold Network Management

Tolly Report #217129
Commissioned by
Ipswitch, Inc.

November 2017





Ipswitch, Inc.

WhatsUp Gold vs. SolarWinds NPM

Business Case For Ipswitch Network Monitoring



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THE BOTTOM LINE

Ipswitch WhatsUp Gold provides:

- 1 Broad range of network management functionality
- 2 "Point-based" licensing system that maximizes value and flexibility for customers
- 3 Device-based pricing to facilitate a "no compromises" approach to port monitoring
- 4 Straightforward and transparent pricing

Executive Summary

Network management means different things to different people - if only because different people run different networks. Networks are not all the same and network management solutions are not all the same. Period. While we all love simplicity, business networks are not simple. However, Ipswitch is dedicated to making monitoring simple. What's important? Matching your network management solution to your needs - rightsizing the functionality you need now with appropriate options for future growth. What should be simple? Well, simplified licensing and transparent pricing are a good place to start. It is important to know not only what you are getting, but how much it is going to cost today and three years from now.

Ipswitch has built its WhatsUp Gold offering to address what it views as core concerns and requirements of today's business communications networks.

Ipswitch commissioned Tolly to analyze its approach to providing business value and compare that with a similar network management offering from SolarWinds. Analysis was conducted by reviewing product documentation.

Functionality

"Right-sizing" required functionality is an essential part of building a business case. Neither too much functionality at too high a price nor too little at a low cost make good options. Based on extensive customer experience, Ipswitch notes that the WhatsUp Gold edition is built to provide extensive network monitoring capabilities across a range of important IT resources.

WhatsUp Gold edition includes monitoring for your network, servers and applications. Configuration management and network traffic analysis capabilities are also bundled into this edition. By contrast, with SolarWinds a customer would need to purchase several additional modules to get a similar feature set.

Feature Set

This will be explored in detail in the body of the report but here are a few of the features that you will find only in the Ipswitch offering:

Network Monitoring & Management: Automatic L2/L3 dynamic mapping; automatic wireless LAN mapping; integrated server monitoring and cloud monitoring.

Network Traffic Analysis: Flow aggregation and dashboard consolidation.

Application Monitoring: Critical component classification; critical component groups, integrated "action" & "blackout" policies and integrated end-user response time monitoring.

Polling Scalability: While not a feature per se, it is noteworthy that Ipswitch includes polling licenses that can support from 80,000 to 100,000 monitors. SolarWinds includes support for 8,000 and increasing that to 100,000 can add \$200,000 to the list price of the SolarWinds solution.



Licensing Flexibility

Ipswitch recognizes that the number and types of network management elements will necessarily vary across companies. SolarWinds requires minimum purchases in each area that can cause customers to pay for licenses that will remain unused forever. Ipswitch has designed its licensing strategy to insure that its customers receive full value for licensing investments. Ipswitch offers a flexible “point-based” system where licensing costs can be applied where needed - and can be re-assigned should a customer’s needs change.

Furthermore, SolarWinds pricing model essentially forces customers to choose which network ports are “important enough to monitor” because it charges separately for each network port. Ipswitch, by contrast, licenses “by device” so that every port can be monitored and managed appropriately. The Ipswitch approach eliminates guesswork and possible “black holes” of unmonitored ports. SolarWinds’ “per port” pricing can make comprehensive monitoring cost prohibitive.

Pricing Transparency

While the bottom line certainly matters, Ipswitch believes in clarity up front as well. Thus, the pricing presented by Ipswitch during the sales process is meant to represent realistic and actual prices. Some companies take a different approach where the “list prices” might be discounted as high as 70% during the sales process. In such cases, one wonders what the list price really represents and if a “good deal” can only be had after much haggling.

Fast-forward a year when it is time to renew. Might those apparently-inflated list prices show up again on renewal forms? If there is one thing worse than “sticker shock” during the initial purchase process it is “sticker shock” when it comes time to renew and your company is already a committed customer. Ipswitch pricing transparency means that there will be no surprises when renewal time arrives.

Overall TCO & Pricing Simplicity

When pricing options are complicated, it is hard to figure out what is right for your environment. The SolarWinds pricing web page contains over 130 line items. These represent different licensing levels for more than 25 different components. In some cases there are six to 10 licensing levels that one must choose from. In at least one case, the annual cost of just a single component can range from \$4,495 to \$99,995, so making the wrong choice with SolarWinds can be a costly mistake.

Ipswitch bundles key functions in WhatsUp Gold dramatically reducing the need for extra cost add ons.

End of Executive Summary.



Solution Analysis

Delivery - Integrated vs Modular

Ipswitch believes that network managers are better served by deploying a solution that includes all important elements. Thus, Ipswitch WhatsUp Gold includes monitoring functions that span servers, applications and networks and includes traffic analysis and configuration management. SolarWinds, by contrast, provides most of those functional areas as optional modules that are licensed separately. See Table 1.

Functionality Summary: Ipswitch WhatsUp Gold vs SolarWinds

| Functionality | Ipswitch WhatsUp Gold | SolarWinds NPM |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Network Monitoring | Included | Included |
| Server Monitoring | Included | Optional - add on (SAM) |
| Application Monitoring | Included | Optional - add on (SAM) |
| Network Traffic Analysis | Included | Optional - add on (NTA) |
| Configuration Management | Included | Optional - add on (NCM) |

Source: Tolly, October 2017

Table 1

Features & Functionality Comparison

Within each of the areas referenced above, Ipswitch provides features and functions not offered by SolarWinds. Each of the areas will be reviewed and analyzed in turn. As one would expect both solutions have core features in common. Thus, this analysis will focus on features that differentiate the Ipswitch and SolarWinds solutions.

Network Monitoring & Management

Automatic Layer 2/3 Dynamic Mapping with Dependencies

Networks are never static. Period. A static network map is guaranteed to be out of date the very first time it is needed to troubleshoot a network problem. WhatsUp Gold provides layer 2/3 discovery to furnish you with a network map that is always up-to-date. Additionally, the map displays hierarchical dependencies of devices.

Benefits: More efficient troubleshooting. Quick visual confirmation of device dependencies.



Automatic Wireless LAN Mapping

Wireless LANs (WLANs) are a part of every business small and large. WLANs are networks within your larger network and are typically built upon a variety of different WLAN controllers that communicate with full function “thick” access points (APs) and/or minimal function “thin” APs and, ultimately, clients (laptops, tablets, phones). Ipswitch provides automatic map generation of WLAN networks.

Benefits: More efficient troubleshooting. Improved visibility into wireless device environment.

Detailed Inventory Reporting

WhatsUp Gold provides an inventory reporting environment that starts you off with hundreds of views out-of-the-box. And, if those don’t meet your needs, the reports are customizable. Inventory information includes hardware, installed software and updates.

Benefits: Instantly retrievable inventory. Detailed hardware/software information to speed up troubleshooting.

Integrated Windows Server Monitoring

Windows servers deliver your most important applications and deserve the highest level of monitoring and management. Windows Management Instrumentation, better known as WMI, is Microsoft’s native Windows management interface. WhatsUp Gold includes WMI-based Windows server management.

Benefits: No additional product or purchase necessary. Native Windows interface for optimal server management.

Cloud Monitoring

Today, it seems that every business network is becoming a “hybrid cloud” network. That is, in addition to your internal network there are resources - applications or servers - that are running somewhere else “in the cloud.” Ipswitch realizes this and provides out-of-the-box support for both Amazon Web Services and Microsoft Azure cloud environments.

Benefits: Immediate visibility into cloud resources without any additional purchase or setup.

See Table 2 for a summary list of the features discussed above.



Network Monitoring & Management: Ipswitch-Only Features

| Functionality | Ipswitch WhatsUp Gold | SolarWinds NPM |
|---|-----------------------|----------------|
| Automatic generation of dynamic Layer 2/3 network maps | ✓ | ✗ |
| Automatic display of network dependencies on Layer 2/3 network maps | ✓ | ✗ |
| Automatic generation of wireless network maps – WLCs, Thick and Thin APs and Clients | ✓ | ✗ |
| Integrated detailed inventory reporting | ✓ | ✗ |
| Robust windows server monitoring using WMI without having to purchase an additional application | ✓ | ✗ |
| Out-of-the-box support for Amazon Web Services (AWS) | ✓ | ✗ |
| Out-of-the-box support for Microsoft Azure | ✓ | ✗ |

Source: Tolly, October 2017

Table 2

Network Traffic Analysis

Network traffic analysis capability is included in Ipswitch WhatsUp Gold. For SolarWinds, the optional Network Traffic Analysis (NTA) module provides these capabilities.

Flow Aggregation

While it is important to have access to individual flows, there are times you need to see the forest rather than the trees. For those times, Ipswitch provides flow aggregation. This allows the network admin to group and manage multiple sources as a single flow.

Benefits: Provide insights that are only evident when traffic is aggregated. Quicker visibility into network conditions.

Dashboard Consolidation

The environment that you are monitoring consists of multiple related elements. Different users may have different interests and needs. Ipswitch allows user to customize and consolidate the information that they need - network management, application monitoring, network configuration and so forth - into a single view.

Benefits: Increase user efficiency by focusing them on relevant data. Reduce “clutter”.

See Table 3 for a summary list of the features discussed above.



Network Traffic Analysis: Ipswitch-Only Features

| Functionality | Ipswitch WhatsUp Gold | SolarWinds NTA |
|--|-----------------------|----------------|
| Flow aggregation – Group and manage multiple flow sources into a single aggregated source. | ✓ | ✗ |
| Dashboard Consolidation - Fast and intuitive customization of network performance, network traffic analysis, wireless, network configuration and application performance dashboards into a single view | ✓ | ✗ |

Source: Tolly, October 2017

Table 3

Application Monitoring

Application monitoring capability is included in Ipswitch WhatsUp Gold. For SolarWinds, the optional Server and Application Monitoring (SAM) module provides these capabilities.

Critical Component Classification

Certain key components of an application are often pivotal in the ability to deliver that application. Classify certain components as critically important allows network managers insight into components that are essential to delivering a given application. If one or more of these critical components is “down,” then the application is effectively down and the operations team needs to respond to the situation.

Benefits: More granular insights into applications. Faster troubleshooting.

Critical Component Groups

Applications are frequently intertwined with other applications. In the simplest scenario, one application might be focused on the “front end” interaction with the user while another handles the “back end” database tasks. Ipswitch provides a grouping function that allows users to group applications together so that interrelated programs can be monitored in a realistic and intuitive fashion.

Benefits: Visibility at an application functionality level. Faster troubleshooting.



Integrated “Action” Policy

When anomalous conditions are detected or failures occur, the goal is to take immediate action to mitigate the problem. Ipswitch integrates action policy functionality into its core web interface.

Benefits: Faster response to problems, easier for admin to retain focus on problem situations.

Integrated “Blackout” Policy

Many applications are used only certain days of the week or times of the day. For example, customer service might be active 8AM to 8PM US Eastern Time. Ipswitch provides a “blackout” policy feature that allows a business to choose to suppress alerts related to specific applications during times/days when those applications are not typically used by the business.

Benefits: Eliminates alerts that are not relevant to operations allowing more efficient use of operator time.

Integrated End-User Response Time Monitoring

Ultimately, the goal of network operations is to provide an optimal environment that allows the business to function smoothly. In practical terms, this translates into providing end-users with good application response time. Ipswitch integrates this important monitoring function into its solution.

Benefit: Instant visibility to most important metric

See Table 4 for a summary list of the features discussed above.

Application Monitoring: Ipswitch-Only Features

| Functionality | Ipswitch WhatsUp Gold | SolarWinds SAM |
|--|-----------------------|----------------|
| Critical component classification – Providing IT with control over the definition of application states (Up, down, warning) | ✓ | ✗ |
| Critical Component Groups – Increasing IT control over defining application states by monitoring complex component relationships | ✓ | ✗ |
| Action policy utility integrated into the core product web interface | ✓ | ✗ |
| Blackout policy utility integrated into the core product web interface | ✓ | ✗ |
| Integrated end-user response time monitoring | ✓ | ✗ |

Source: Tolly, October 2017

Table 4



Scalability

For network management and monitoring, scalability naturally relates to how many different elements can be monitored or, in the parlance, “polled.” The communication is handled by a function known as a “polling engine”.

Each solution can monitor roughly 8,000 elements with a single polling engine. For networks exceeding that number, additional polling engines would become necessary.

With Ipswitch, one would need to be in the range of 100,000 polled elements before there would be any additional cost.

SolarWinds includes only a single polling engine with its solution. Each increment of 8,000 polled elements has a price tag of \$17,495. For example, to poll 100,000 elements with SolarWinds NPM would require an additional 12 polling engines with a price tag of \$209,940.

See Table 5 for a summary of scalability specifications and costs.

Scalability: Monitors & Polling Engine Summary

| Functionality | Ipswitch WhatsUp Gold | SolarWinds NPM |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| Monitors per polling engine (typical) | 8,000 to 10,000 | 8,000 |
| Cost per additional polling engine | Ten included | \$17,495 |

Source: Tolly, October 2017

Table 5



Pricing & TCO Comparison

Pricing is simple for Ipswitch. As noted earlier, pricing is “per device” rather than “per port”. Simple. A wide range of coverage is included in WhatsUp Gold. Simple. The list price is the actual price. Simple.

Pricing is more complicated with SolarWinds. For starters, the prospective customer needs to choose which ports NOT to monitor. Because SolarWinds charges on a “per port” basis, customers lose the comfort of knowing every port can be monitored. With SolarWinds, this comfort comes at additional cost. Then, to get certain monitoring functions, the customer might need to license additional SolarWinds modules such as NTA, SAM or NCM. Finally, anecdotal evidence indicates that the list price is dramatically higher than the actual price. This leaves the customer in the uncomfortable position of seeing how much the pricing can be pushed down. Buying network monitoring software should not feel like shopping for a used car. SolarWinds complexity is evident by visiting their pricing page. As of October 2017 there were over 130 line items to peruse with seven different license level options alone for Network Configuration Manager.

Your requirements will vary but a glance at the example below illustrates both the cost differences and simplicity of Ipswitch pricing. See Table 6.

Example Pricing & TCO: Ipswitch Simplicity vs SolarWinds Complexity
Hypothetical 330 Device Network (4,840 SolarWinds Elements)

| Functionality | Ipswitch WhatsUp Gold 400 | Three-Year TCO | SolarWinds NPM Unlimited | Three-Year TCO (List) | Discounted 70% |
|--|----------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| Base Functionality | Ipswitch WhatsUp Gold 400 | \$18,801 | SolarWinds NPM Unlimited | \$42,553 | \$12,765 |
| Additional Functionality/ Costs | Additional Products | Revised Total Cost: | Additional Products | Revised Total Cost: | |
| + 3 NTA Sources | Included | \$18,801 | + NTA Unlimited | \$65,436 | \$19,630 |
| + WMI 160 Windows Servers | Included | \$18,801 | + SAM 1100 | \$88,109 | \$26,432 |
| + Configuration Management | Included | \$18,801 | + NCM 100 | \$93,730 | \$28,119 |

Notes: Example pricing to illustrate different approaches taken by Ipswitch and SolarWinds. Discount is hypothetical. See vendors for current pricing. Source: Tolly, October 2017 Table 6



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About Ipswitch

Our mission: To take what is complex about IT & make it simple.

We are dedicated to becoming the world's #1 low-friction vendor serving IT teams.

For more information visit: <http://www.ipswitch.com>



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