



IT Monitoring Buyer's Guide

ipswitch

It's All About Empowering Your Team

Look in any organization today and you will find a hard-working group of individuals tasked with the near impossible: navigating an increasingly complex IT environment while securely delivering virtually zero downtime. That is your IT team, and the software you choose to empower your team is critical to their ability to perform.

This guide is designed to help you make the right selection, based on your specific needs. It covers some of the critical business issues that IT teams deal with across all regions of the world and vertical markets. The guide then lists requirements that would help you address those issues and asks you to decide if they are important to you with simple yes/no answers. When completed you will have a non-biased assessment of your unique requirements with which to compare alternatives.

Critical Business Issues

Based on interactions with tens of thousands of customers, we've compiled the following 'Top 5 Business Issues' that are directly related to the monitoring tools and approach IT teams select.

1. Reactive Management

All IT teams react to unplanned service interruptions. But some teams identify the vast majority of issues before they are reported by users. The degree to which your team is reactive versus proactive can be measured by the percentage of service affecting incidents you first learn about from users. The more reactive the team, the less they are perceived as a valuable asset to the organization.

In countless studies and analyst reports, reactive management has been correlated with silo- or point-specific monitoring deployments. The causal effect most often stems from the inability to integrate data between organizational siloes and/or gain end-to-end visibility across technology domains.

2. Lengthy Troubleshooting Times

Service level disruptions trigger cross-departmental meetings and conference calls in which SMEs compare the health of their individual domains in an attempt to find a likely cause. Since what passes as a 'healthy' condition in at one level of the service delivery stack may cause disastrous results at a higher level, cause is all too often difficult to ascertain. This 'siloed tool' monitoring approach often adds considerable delay to your mean time to repair (MTTR) especially in more complex IT environments.

3. Higher Incident Rates

"Have you tried turning it off and on again?" As time passes and user frustration mounts, IT teams often turn in desperation to the process of restarting suspected problem servers. While this approach may restore service, every IT professional knows it just adds to another 'known problem' to the list. Over time, an increasing number of unresolved issues resurface resulting in higher incident rates.

4. Lowered Service Levels

Higher incident rates and long troubleshooting times combine to reduce service levels and impact your ability to role out improvements. A common complaint of IT teams firmly in or entering this undesirable state is that 'too many people spend too much time troubleshooting'.

5. Wasted Manpower

Each management tool used requires some degree of dedicated manpower to operate and maintain. All too often, tools are selected based on the degree to which they can be customized without due consideration to the ease of customization. As the number of tools grows, this becomes a manpower drain on resources that impacts productivity. Therefore, as IT teams mature they often place a higher degree of emphasis on ease of automation and smaller numbers of tool vendors.

The Advantages of a Unified Monitoring Approach

To address critical business issues, IT Teams are seeking flexible and unified monitoring tools to help them control complexity. In a typical multi-vendor environment nearly all IT components support a wide range of protocols that are used to gather data. Unified IT Monitoring tools (UIMs) leverage these protocols to provide end-to-end visibility of servers, storage, networks, and applications as well as their interrelationships. This results in a number of key advantages:

A Proactive IT Posture

A single end-to-end perspective encourages a dependency-based approach to monitoring individual domain elements. For instance, knowing the scale and criticality of the virtual workload a physical servers hosts will dictate the thresholds and severity you apply to key performance indicators. When IT monitoring is based on such a knowledge of dependencies it is more likely to identify potential or developing problems. Thus, organizations that use a unified monitoring approach are more likely to be proactive.

Faster Problem Resolution

Networking, server, storage and application teams are able to work together more effectively when they are all dealing with the same information. This leads to faster problem detection and resolution (MTTA, MTTR). Teams that better understand technology dependencies for the delivery of critical business applications and services are able to more quickly identify the cause of problems.

Flexibility

Every IT environment is different. Monitoring tools need to have the flexibility to handle a wide range of use cases, devices and protocols. Software licensing models also need to be flexible to support growth and changes in your environment. IT teams want to be able to monitor new devices and applications without having to buy additional licenses.

Improved Incident Rates

Of course, being able to detect developing problems and take proactive steps to avoid them decreases incident rates. So too does actually being able to diagnose the cause of incidents. As causes are identified, problems can actually be fixed and the list of known problems decreased.

Better Service Levels

Perhaps the largest benefit of unified monitoring to IT teams is the impact on service levels. When teams are able to meet aggressive SLA's they worry less about network availability, end-user response times and application performance and increase their focus on overall service quality factors like faster, smoother deployment of improvements.

Lower Costs

Finally, unified monitoring goes a long way to decreasing the number of silo specific tools that are actually needed. Not only does this translate to more productive use of manpower, it also means reduced costs in licensing, maintenance, configuration, training, upgrading and the associated manpower.

IT Monitoring Selection Criteria

Selecting an asset as strategic as an IT monitoring system is made more difficult by confusing vendor emphasis on the features they consider most important. In reality, there's only one set of features that matters: the ones you need to do your job. Every IT environment is different and every IT team has different needs.

By reviewing the following checklist you can determine which of the following features is a requirement for your organization. Be sure to consider both present requirements and those future needs that are within your planning horizon. When complete, you will have a handy reference to use when selecting the best tool for your specific needs.



DISCOVERY/VISIBILITY FEATURES

YES

Automated Layer 2/3 Network Discovery

Automatically discover networked assets

Automated Network Mapping

Automatically map and document physical servers and virtual machines, clusters, vCenter server, and VMware ESXi hosts and guests.

End-to-End Dashboard View

Show all network components and domains in one window/single pane of glass.

Multiple/Customizable Dashboards

Support multiple out-of-the-box dashboard configurations and makes it easy to develop customer dashboards for individual users.



MONITORING FEATURES

Monitor Network

Monitor anything with an IP address that is accessible by standard monitoring protocols like SNMP, WMI (Windows), and SSH (Unix/Linux).

Monitor Applications

Monitor the performance and availability of business critical applications running on Microsoft, Linux, Java and virtual environments.

Monitor Servers

Monitor the status and performance of both physical and virtual servers.

Monitor Storage

Monitor storage devices and report on volume utilization, analyze storage traffic load via network interfaces and detect abnormalities in the system's temperature, fan and CPU.

Extensive/Custom Monitor Libraries

Support libraries of SNMP objects to monitor your network attached devices, a WMI library to monitor your Windows servers and applications. Supports easy custom monitor development.

Monitor Wired & Wireless Networks

Discover and monitor the dependencies between wired and wireless networks. Supports fast response to performance problems using dynamic wireless maps displaying clients, access points and wireless LAN controllers. Proactively addresses trends with historical reports on access point subscription, signal strength, and hardware health.

YES

Trend Analysis

Retain historical data in order to prove SLAs are being met.

Continual Monitoring with Minimal Setup

Start collecting data, receiving alerts and analyzing reports in under an hour.

Role Based Monitoring

Allow for easy application of role based monitoring profiles.



AUDITING/REPORTING AUTOMATION

Automated, Historical & Customizable Reports

Include multiple out-of-the-box reports that include historical data. Support simple customization to develop new reports. Track access and permissions changes and leverage out-of-the-box compliance reports for audits.

Automated Inventory Reports

Quickly generate inventory reports on network assets, H/W modules, installed S/W data, warranty status and more.

Automated Log & Event Management

Automatically collect, store and archive logs. Generate out of the box compliance reports for PCI, HIPPA, SOX, Basel II, etc. Analyze logs to track access and permission changes typically required for compliance audits.

Configuration Reports

Automatically inventory and store configuration files in a secure repository. Automate configuration changes and leverages configuration change audit trails for regulatory compliance and to restore device configuration.



AUTOMATION FEATURES

Easy Automation of Manual Tasks

Discovery, mapping, inventory reporting, compliance reporting, etc.

Configuration Management

Automates network device configuration including auto restoration.



TROUBLESHOOTING FEATURES

Proactive Problem Resolution

Leverage custom dashboards, alerts and automated resolution to find and fix problems before users are impacted. Analyze network bandwidth utilization to assure critical applications and services are prioritized.

Simple Interface

Accelerate the diagnostics process with a simple, single-pane-of-glass interface.

Smart Alerting

Support flexible thresholding, alerting and alert suppression to eliminate alert storms for faster fault isolation.

Diagnostic Reporting

Provide extensive reporting for diagnostics and SLAs.



EVALUATION/PURCHASING FEATURES

YES

Easy to Try, Buy and Use

Provide simple evaluation process making it easy to try before you buy.

Simple, Flexible Licensing

Clear packaging and device-based licensing making it easy to scale without any surprises.

Effective Scaling

Include support for future needs and doesn't require additional plugins, licenses, etc. when your network doubles in size.

Easy Set-up

Go from download to monitoring in less than an hour.

Support

Support during evaluation, installation/setup and ongoing use.

Ipswitch's Unified Infrastructure & Application Monitoring

Ipswitch WhatsUp Gold is powerful, easy to use and deploy software for unified application, server and network monitoring. Your IT team gets the control, insight and automated resolution needed to:

- › Find and fix problems before your users are impacted
- › Assure bandwidth is optimized for critical apps and services
- › Automate configuration management, log monitoring and inventory and compliance audits



ALL THE ESSENTIAL INFRASTRUCTURE & APPLICATION MONITORING FEATURES

We're known for fair prices, for flexible software that works out of the box, and honest business practices that delight IT teams. More than 25,000 customers rely on Ipswitch software to provide secure control of business transactions, applications, and infrastructure across cloud, virtual and networked environments.

Our software is designed to be simply powerful and enable IT teams to perform.

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About Ipswitch

Ipswitch helps solve complex IT problems with simple solutions. The company's software is trusted by millions of people worldwide to transfer files between systems, business partners and customers; and to monitor networks, applications and servers. Ipswitch was founded in 1991 and is based in Lexington, Massachusetts with offices throughout the U.S., Europe and Asia.

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