

Getting the Most From Your Network Monitoring Solution

Knowing What to Monitor

White Paper

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Introduction

Merely implementing a network monitoring solution for your network isn't enough. The real work begins after you've chosen and installed a monitoring solution.

Yet many IT managers and systems administrators often find themselves unsure of what to monitor after finally selecting and implementing their network monitoring solutions, said Dirk Paessler, CEO of Paessler AG, a network monitoring company. The key, he said, to effective network monitoring is ensuring that a solution is configured to monitor what are essentially a network's vital signs – or triplets: availability, speed and usage.

»Too often in the field, the natural tendency is for users to move quickly through the set-up process,« Paessler said. »Many users feel that implementation alone is enough to effectively monitor their networks. In reality, a solution is only as good as its monitoring parameters.«

No monitoring solution can be truly effective if users overlook the three monitoring triplets, Paessler said.

1. Availability

Users who monitor network availability will ensure that both internal and external parties can access the services within their LANs, including Websites. They can also determine if their mail servers and leased lines are working, as well as if their network service providers are adhering to their SLAs. Monitoring availability is also essential for a company to ensure its disparate pieces of hardware are operating at optimum levels – or doing their jobs.

For example, the IT staff of a movie-theater chain with 12 locations in metro Chicago uses Paessler's *PRTG Network Monitor* (formerly *IPCheck*) to monitor its security-camera computers and is promptly alerted when one of them crashes or goes off line for any reason, potentially compromising the safety of employees and patrons in and around the theaters.

The network-monitoring tool has markedly reduced the time it takes the chain's IT staff to respond to field-related problems. The chain, for instance, uses the sensor-dependency feature to eliminate false alarms when its corporate DSL goes down, allowing the IT staff to quickly identify an outage's true cause and location.

»Everything starts with availability,« Paessler said. »Without it, nothing else happens. It's that simple.«

Toward that end, the IT team installed the solution onto a dedicated PC in the chain's headquarters and set it up to send audible alerts to staff when network problems arise.

2. Speed

Users who monitor network speed will ensure that their Websites and network services don't lose visitors or frustrate users due to slow-loading pages, files or images. Users who monitor speed can determine how traffic – or stress – affects performance and how to plan for surges in traffic. Most importantly, Paessler said, monitoring speed allows users to identify traffic patterns and proactively install network upgrades before slow-loading pages test the patience of clients or employees.

»Speed is really something that nearly every user is going to demand and – from an operational standpoint – require, so monitoring it is a critical part of any IT administrator's job,« Paessler said. »And they're certainly tools out there that can make it rather easy to monitor speed.«

For example, the IT staff of a full-service mortgage company based in suburban Denver, Colo., must ensure that some 200 employees who work in a terminal-based environment have constant and quick access to the Internet.

After learning that several of its branches were experiencing slow response times with their Internet connections, the company's IT team began using Paessler's PRTG Traffic Grapher to look

at networking trends over time to ensure they didn't make hasty networking decisions due to what could have been small spikes in activity.

The networking-monitoring tool revealed that employees at the company's branches were clearly saturating their circuits. The IT team used its PRTG-supplied data to, with little effort, persuade management to invest in more bandwidth for the branches. Employees at all of the company's branches are now operating at acceptable bandwidth levels.

Paessler adds that users who monitor availability and speed will ultimately gain insight into the true capacity of their networks – or lack thereof.

3. Usage

Users who monitor usage can accurately assess CPU load and learn just what sort of work their servers are doing at different points in the day.

For example, the IT staff of a 130-year-old brick-making company with four plants used Paessler's Network Monitoring Solution to help them upgrade their ERP and strategically plan the changeover.

The IT team used the network monitoring solution to analyze the company's CPU and memory usage, as well as the number of users on its network. They also set up sensors and ran reports to help them plan for network upgrades. The reports were then passed on to their ERP vendor who used them to efficiently size the proper servers for their upgrade.

The company now uses the solution to gain insight into bandwidth usage, which allows it to evaluate trends and ensure its manufacturing operation runs efficiently.

»Looking at any network at a higher level can be intimidating at first, but it never has to be that way and can instead be quite painless,« Paessler said.

Link

To view demo screenshots visit: www.paessler.com/prtg7/screenshots

About Paessler AG

Founded in 1997 and headquartered in Nuremberg, Germany, Paessler AG builds cost effective software that is both powerful and easy to use. The product range is specialized on Network Monitoring and Testing as well as Website Analysis. Its products are used by Network Administrators, Website Operators, Internet Service Providers and other IT-Professionals worldwide. Freeware and Free Trial versions of all products can be downloaded from www.paessler.com.



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