IPSWITCH

IPSWITCH WhatsUpGold

WHATSUP GOLD MAKES THE GRADE AT MISSOURI SOUTHERN STATE UNIVERSITY

Case study

Company:
Missouri Southern State University (MSSU)

Industry:
Education

Business challenge:
MSSU needed a way to monitor over 700 devices while also letting IT staff know what alerts were truly critical and what were less pressing.

Outcome:
MSSU chose Ipswitch WhatsUp® Gold to create an accurate picture of their network while ensuring that network administrators aren't getting paged for non-critical services.

Missouri Southern State University's international approach to undergraduate education ensures that students have a wide range of educational experiences. The faculty and staff of MSSU emphasize quality teaching and learning as the most important attributes of the institution.

So when MSSU needed a network monitoring tool that would ensure that the students, professors and staff had secure, 24 x 7 access to the school's online community, they looked to their Director of Infrastructure and Security, Albert Stadler, for help.

"We monitor over 700 devices: switches, servers, printers, routers and firewalls," says Stadler. "We needed a shop that was big enough to be able to support us over the long term. WhatsUp Gold gives you the ability to see what might be a problem in the future - we can see trends happening and can stop them before they affect the campus."

Although MSSU considered SolarWinds® and Nagios® before choosing WhatsUp Gold, they did not meet Stadler's requirements that MSSU's solution be both highly scalable and not an open source-based system. "The main reason I worry about open source is that it doesn't always play nicely with other proprietary software," Stadler explains. "I don't have the time to identify the issues and make adjustments to the programs, nor do we have the programming skills required to effect those changes across so many different languages. I believe Open Source has a place - just not right now on my mission critical software."

Stadler also appreciates WhatsUp Gold's feature-rich product. "WhatsUp Gold has the ability to customize data based on SNMP or OID variables. It has templates and wizards to design those things. It has dependency charts with really good correlation. The other products just don't have that."

> "The reason we're always using WhatsUp Gold is the front page console - it's more intuitive. It's becoming our help desk dashboard, and that says a lot."
>
> -Albert Stadler, Director of Infrastructure and Security, Missouri Southern State University

WhatsUp Gold's Web alarms allow an operator to be notified by placing a visual and audible alarm on the Web console, and can be configured to send messages to a pager on a pre-set schedule to get a "snapshot" of the current network status. "We have certain monitors set at a certain temperature level in the server room," explains Stadler. "We get paged before it becomes a critical issue. We've got two thresholds - 70 degrees and 75 degrees. We try to keep it at 68. When we hit the first threshold, it alerts us, and if it hits 75 we have to decide whether or not to shut down systems. This is one of the main reasons that we purchased WhatsUp. There are several products that will just monitor temperature, but we might not know about issues because we might not always be monitoring the application. We're always using the WhatsUp application so we would know right away if temperature became an issue. The reason we're always using WhatsUp Gold is the front page console - it's more intuitive. It's becoming our help desk dashboard, and that says a lot."

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WhatsUp Gold also allows users to create custom monitors or actions for specific devices using a standard scripting syntax. "The ability to customize the alerting - it's easily configurable - means that we don't have employees getting paged for non-critical services at 2:00 a.m., which helps with morale," notes Stadler.

Additionally, the ability to create dynamic groups of devices that are populated by specified characteristics means that WhatsUp Gold provides a more flexible and meaningful reporting environment. Group level reports can be produced by the group's members as of the time of the report. "We use the exportable reporting for strategic and technical planning, auditing, etcetera," says Stadler. "It proves to upper management that we have the servers up and running as much as we say we do."

True to its mission to prepare students for the future, MSSU has further plans for WhatsUp Gold. "We want to distribute WhatsUp Gold to the campus for the staff to use," says Stadler. "We're trying to be more open communication-wise, so we will hopefully roll this out by summer. The entire campus will be able to see what services are up and down, which will help with lightening the calls to the help desk. You'll be able to access WhatsUp Gold on your cell phone, laptop, PDA, etc. We want to give everybody on this campus as much access to the functionality of WhatsUp Gold as possible."

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