Are you struggling to monitor your IT infrastructure? Here's five ways to make sure you remain on top

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Dr Steve Turner, Vice President of IT Optimisation at Intergence (http://www.intergence.com/), reveals some ways to make your life easier

As the IT estate continues to grow in both scale and sophistication, IT managers are being asked to do more and more to keep things running smoothly with fewer resources. Monitoring the infrastructure requires many skilled employees with specialist knowledge in networking, applications, storage and virtualisation to name but a few areas. There is a pressing need to meet bandwidth demand, optimise efficiency, simplify management and improve visibility throughout the business; all this needs to be done as quickly and cost-effectively as possible. Evaluating what metrics to monitor and what systems are critical to the day to day running of the business is key.

You need to be confident that your IT Infrastructure documentation is accurate and up to date with all relevant information and assets detailed. These will include what applications are running on what servers, including server interdependencies, physical and logical topology information and resource utilisation.

All this data can lead to information overload, hence you need an intelligent way of managing all the data. Here are five ways to make sure monitoring your infrastructure is not a major headache:

1. Filter your data to only show information which is relevant - minimise the noise
When you need to understand the health of a critical business service and the systems which it relies upon, it is essential to filter out data from systems which are not related to current area of interest. For example, when evaluating the impact of a current attempt to attack multiple systems, you need to prioritise where to deploy your resources. This can be achieved by filtering out all non-critical systems which are under attack so you can focus on protecting the key business critical systems first.

2. Correlate your monitoring data to identify where you need to focus resources
When there are multiple monitoring systems in place, it can often be difficult to know where to focus activity, especially if the team is small. An intelligent way in which to manage the estate, would be to correlate data from all your monitoring tools to identify what key systems and services require attention first. A server check may display some devices with high response times, however data from the network shows several interfaces to the server farm have high error count on them. Hence events need to be correlated from your different monitoring tools to understand the root cause of performance problems.

3. Track end user experience to identify changes in performance before the users notice
Rather than fighting performance problems when they are reported by end users, it would be better if you could identify service degradation before it has become an issue for your users and prevents them from carrying out their duties. If you can understand how somebody uses and experiences an application and how that experience varies over time, you can anticipate performance problems and identify the root causes of these issues before they affect the service.

4. Outsource your infrastructure monitoring to a dedicated managed service provider (MSP)
If you lack the resources to fully monitor your IT estate as it grows with the business, then it can be highly effective to outsource the activity to a dedicated MSP who can ensure that the infrastructure is being monitored 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. False positives can be reduced and key support staff can be notified immediately when an event of significance occurs.

5. Install modelling software
Predicting the behaviour and growth of the infrastructure is vital for the business to remain competitive. By taking this proactive approach you can ensure that business critical services remain available and continue to achieve the level of performance the users have come to expect. Modelling software can achieve this by analysing current trends and then predicting future demands on the infrastructure, allowing you to plan for upgrades rather than fire fighting when the current capacity is exceeded.

Peter Friar, Project Manager at HP, has benefitted from Intergence's optimisation services and comments:

"In order to deliver value to our customers, HP has used Intergence as our provider of Optimisation Services for the last two years to compliment our solution portfolio. During this period, Intergence have performed a number of very valuable APM and Voice over IP (VoIP) assessment studies for our key clients. Our experience of working with Intergence to date has been excellent both in terms of their professionalism and the consistent quality of their work. The consultants Intergence provide for HP engagements are always of very high calibre and knowledge experts in their field. I would recommend their services to other organisations".

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Notes to Editors:

About Dr Steven Turner

Steve Turner is the VP of IT Optimisation at Intergence. He specialises in Network Optimisation and has successfully completed a large number of optimisation projects for clients in both the public and private sector. Steve is Cisco CCNA and CCNA security certified and is currently studying CCNP. Steve has gained a BSc (Hons) in Computer Science from the University of Warwick, and an MSc in Network Systems from the University of Sunderland. He has also completed a PhD using genetic algorithms in conjunction with parallel processing to produce a multi-utility network optimisation tool.

About Intergence

Intergence (www.intergence.com) is a leading independent IT Optimisation Consultancy, headquartered in Cambridge, UK, with a regional office in the Middle East (Dubai, UAE) and was founded in 2003 to address the growing requirements of clients demanding high-level impartial expertise in networks and IT.

The company has recently (February 2012) been announced as one of the suppliers of the UK Government's

cloud computing procurement initiative, G-Cloud. The framework will feature services divided into four segments, with Intergence forming part of the specialist cloud services.

Our close relationship within the Cambridge academic community enables us to innovate in partnership, rapidly incorporating the latest technology advances into our products and services.

Intergence operates over two distinct lines of business; people and performance. Our expertise and knowledge within the field allows us to resource the right people in the right place, getting your IT projects completed quickly and hassle free. Utilizing world first products and professional optimization services, Intergence has a clear and common purpose- to improve performance and extract more value from your IT infrastructure.

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