

Network Management Tool Consolidation Is Essential To Effective IT Operations

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Executive Summary

Many network managers use a large and fragmented set of tools to monitor and troubleshoot their networks. As network complexity increases with the adoption of new technologies like cloud computing and the Internet of Things, network managers must modernize and consolidate their management systems. This paper offers evidence for why this is important and provides some guidance on how to proceed.

Network Complexity Drives Need for Unified Management Systems

As companies adopt new technologies such as cloud services, the Internet of Things, and big data, corporate networks are becoming more complex. Network managers need modern, integrated network management systems to address this complexity.

Network management tools have undergone significant evolution over the last decade. Not long ago, network managers maintained separate tools for discovering, mapping, monitoring, alerting, and configuring the network. Today's modern network monitoring solutions unify all these capabilities for efficient and integrated workflows.

Unfortunately, many IT organizations have failed to take full advantage of unified network management tools. Enterprise Management Associates (EMA) research has found that 24% of network managers use 6 to 10 tools to monitor and troubleshoot their networks. Another 34% use 11 or more tools.¹ EMA research has found that IT organizations are more effective at delivering a highly available and high-performing network when they use a smaller, consolidated set of network management tools.

Consolidated Network Management Systems Increases Operational Effectiveness

When network managers use large sets of tools to monitor and troubleshoot, they lack a readily available end-to-end view of the network. In fact, the lack of end-to-end network visibility is the number one challenge to successful network operations (reported by 25% of survey respondents). This problem is a bigger issue for small companies (29%).

Network managers who use large toolsets usually spend too much time correlating data from different tools, which plays into one of the other leading challenges network managers struggle with: a lack of resources (both people and budget), reported by 24% of respondents.

These network managers also lack a common platform for collaborating on network operations with other members of IT, and they find themselves wasting time maintaining, updating, and troubleshooting their tools.

EMA research has found that this tool fragmentation has real consequences for network operations. First of all, it impedes a network manager's ability to detect problems. Network managers who use 11 or more network monitoring tools detect only 48% of network problems before users are affected by them. On the other hand, network managers who use just one to three tools are much more effective, detecting 71% of network problems before users are affected.

Network managers who use 11 or more tools also struggle with unstable networks. Thirty-four percent (34%) experience several network outages per day, and 28% experience several network outages per

¹ All data cited in this paper was published in the following research: EMA, "Network Management Megatrends 2016: Managing Networks in the Era of the Internet of Things, Hybrid Clouds, and Advanced Network Analytics," April 2016.

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week. Network managers who use only one to three tools have a completely different experience. Eighteen percent (18%) almost never suffer an outage, 21% have just one or two outages per year, and another 21% reported having an outage every couple of months.

Network managers are becoming more aware of the importance of a consolidated network management toolset. Sixty percent (60%) of network managers with large toolsets have a policy in place to consolidate monitoring and troubleshooting tools whenever possible, and 52% of network managers with small toolsets have a policy to maintain their current number of tools.

Many network monitoring vendors now offer solutions that address this need for integrated, multifunction tools. These management systems combine network discovery, mapping, monitoring, reporting, event management, and troubleshooting. They offer the end-to-end visibility that is so critical in complex networks. And they collect a variety of network data and metrics for full visibility into network health and performance. One example of such an integrated and modern network management platform is Paessler PRTG, which provides network, server, storage and application monitoring in a single system. If you would like to learn more, visit <https://www.paessler.com/prtg>.

EMA Perspective

The network team is the first line of defense for IT operations. When the IT organization assembles an ad hoc cross-functional team to tackle problems, the network team is often expected to lead. Thirty-nine percent (39%) of network managers say they lead these teams all of the time, and 52% said they lead these teams most of the time. Network managers need a modern consolidated toolset if they are going to lead.

EMA strongly recommends that network managers evaluate the efficacy of their monitoring and troubleshooting toolsets. They should especially evaluate whether an overloaded and fractured collection of tools is degrading their ability to manage their networks.

Network managers should not eliminate tools for the sake of reducing numbers. Instead, they should find opportunities to consolidate where it makes sense for their individual organization. For instance, they should consider retiring outdated products that lack vendor support. They should replace open source point management tools that lack commercial support. And they should identify modern management systems that can replace the functionality of multiple tools for consolidated operations.

About Paessler

PRTG Network Monitor is an all-inclusive Unified Monitoring solution that combines a comprehensive set of monitoring features, an easy-to-use intuitive interface, and a state-of-the-art monitoring engine. It monitors uptime, usage and traffic, allowing you to save costs by avoiding outages, by optimizing your IT infrastructure, by saving time, and by controlling your SLAs.

PRTG gives you complete control over your network, as proven in more than 200,000 installations worldwide. The software includes more than 200 pre-built sensors specifically designed for monitoring networks, servers, storage, virtual environments, websites, email-servers, applications, databases, and many others. The sensors are agentless and rely only on standard IT protocols such as SNMP or HTTP. Custom sensors for non-standard devices can be added easily and the software includes an API for integration with 3rd party tools.

PRTG is suitable for networks of any size and in any industry, and it provides vendor-neutral monitoring of your entire IT infrastructure in a single package. PRTG includes the entire monitoring functionality in every license with no add-ons and no hidden costs.

About Enterprise Management Associates, Inc.

Founded in 1996, Enterprise Management Associates (EMA) is a leading industry analyst firm that provides deep insight across the full spectrum of IT and data management technologies. EMA analysts leverage a unique combination of practical experience, insight into industry best practices, and in-depth knowledge of current and planned vendor solutions to help EMA's clients achieve their goals. Learn more about EMA research, analysis, and consulting services for enterprise line of business users, IT professionals, and IT vendors at www.enterprisemanagement.com or blogs.enterprisemanagement.com. You can also follow EMA on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), or [LinkedIn](#).

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