
Top 10 Reasons SMBs Need Integrated Network Performance Management

As an IT professional at a small or medium business (SMB), you have many responsibilities and little time to spare. So, how do you maintain high-performing and secure networks while also managing all your other duties? You need a way to work smarter, not harder.

Assuring network performance is important to organizations of all sizes. But, with fewer staff and resources than your enterprise counterparts, you have to find ways to be more efficient in how you keep the corporate IT environment up and running smoothly.

While there are many network monitoring tools available in the marketplace, a strategic investment in an integrated network performance management (NPM) solution can save you time and reduce risks and costs for your organization.

Here are the top 10 reasons why small and medium businesses should use an integrated network performance management solution.

1. Do More with Less

The right NPM solution provides integrated flow collection and packet data with advanced analytics and easy reporting in one, easy-to-install solution. It should provide everything you need to:

- Proactively monitor network and security performance
- Speed problem identification and resolution
- Map application dependencies
- Improve user experience

Your NPM solution should also provide advanced behavioral analytics that alert you when something deviates from normal behavior. This enables you to proactively investigate anomalies before they become potentially serious problems and before users are even aware there's an issue.

2. Monitor Anywhere, Anytime

An integrated NPM solution can alleviate the burden when your IT services are in high demand and time is a precious resource. Whether you're traveling, in the office, or at home, you can receive prioritized alerts via email, SMS, or phone. You can log into the system remotely to remediate the issue 24x7. No more trips to fix an issue before it blows up!

3. Know Who / What's on Your Network

An integrated NPM solution provides IT with visibility into which apps are running on the network, who is using them, and how much bandwidth they are using. The right solution can also automatically distinguish between business and recreational applications so you can ensure your critical apps get the bandwidth they need.

4. Keep an Eye on Cloud Services

Cloud software and services are efficient and can get SMB companies online quickly and at minimal cost. But, "shadow apps" such as Dropbox, Google Docs, Box, et al., are often purchased and used without consulting IT. Don't be blind: know how these cloud apps are behaving on your network.

Also, many of these services involve paying for scale, which means costs can increase quickly when you forget to turn them off. Keep an eye on this by tracking usage and by turning off lightly-used services.

5. Protect User Experience

The primary reason you manage network performance is to ensure your users can access their applications in a timely manner. In other words, it's all about user experience. So, it's essential that your network performance management solution provides rich response time metrics that enable you to quickly determine where problems are and where to focus your troubleshooting efforts. When you protect user experience, you maximize your business availability.

6. Troubleshoot Faster and More Easily

Occasionally, part of your network will suffer a critical slowdown or even an outright outage. When this happens, it pays to have an integrated NPM solution to quickly diagnosis and remediate the root cause.

By continuously recording the packets traversing the

network, rich troubleshooting details are always available when you need them. Having these details speeds mean time to resolution and minimizes the effect downtime has on business productivity.

7. Map Your Application Dependencies

Your NPM solution should provide an application map, which defines all the components used in delivering an app to its user. It is a fundamental template for more effective problem resolution and for data center transformation projects, such as consolidation, virtualization, and hybridization. Know your application dependencies to get the most out of your IT environment.

8. Improve Network Security

Securing critical business data from outsiders and insiders alike is a top concern for both enterprises and SMBs. Modern cyber-attackers circumvent security controls and compromise high-value assets with alarming ease.

An effective NPM solution enables rich visibility into malicious activities in real-time and retrospect, ensuring even the most evasive attackers have nowhere to hide:

- Identify compromised hosts
- Detect DDOS attacks, ransomware & malware
- Expose suspect user behavior
- See unauthorized communications

9. Improve Network Reliability

Everybody suffers the occasional outage. Nobody is perfect. The faster you can get your network back online, the more reliable your business will be, and hopefully, the happier your employees and customers.

Network reliability depends largely on whether you take a proactive or reactive approach to managing

performance. What's the difference? A reactive approach often leads to a last-minute scramble to figure out what's wrong and results in extended downtime. A proactive approach, enabled by an integrated approach to network performance management, means mitigating potential issues before they become active issues to maintain a positive user experience.

10. Save Money

According to Digital Enterprise Journal, the average cost of down time is \$72,000 per minute per IT outage. While this dollar figure is alarming, what's even more concerning is the impact an outage may have on customer satisfaction and brand. Some companies never recover from a public-facing network outage.

Automating network performance management gives you peace of mind knowing you won't miss critical performance issues. Plus, it frees up your time to be

more productive elsewhere.

By keeping an eye on the network 24/7 you can address concerns before they become serious, and potentially fix issues before failure occurs. All things considered, the cost of deploying an integrated solution is quickly justified by its high ROI.

Explore What Integrated NPM Can Do for You

Network performance management is an essential tool for helping IT maintain a healthy network environment and thriving small/medium-sized business. Look for a product that combines network flow collection, packet capture, advanced analytics, and reporting into a single, integrated, easy-to-use solution.

Get started today with your [free 30-day trial of Riverbed SteelCentral NetExpress](#).

About Riverbed

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