



#### CHALLENGE

- Gaining end-to-end service level monitoring insights needed to demonstrate and deliver more business value to clients, while contending with disparate, limited monitoring platforms.
- Finding a monitoring platform and establishing a strategic vendor partnership that can help support business growth objectives.

#### SOLUTION

- The Nimsoft Monitoring Solution, which offers capabilities for business-centric monitoring and support for emerging technologies, was selected to replace several monitoring products.

#### BENEFITS

- Reduced training and administration costs.
- Cut repair times by as much as 50%.
- Expanded service catalog and revenue streams.
- Improved service profitability.
- Enhanced ability to demonstrate business value.

## NIMSOF CASE STUDY

# Atrion Enhances Managed Services, Profit Margins with Nimsoft

## Comprehensive Capabilities Enable Veteran MSP to Replace Multiple Point Solutions, Streamline Operations

### A Consistent Focus on Business Objectives—and Results

Established in 1987, Atrion Networking Corporation has been offering managed services for more than 14 years. Atrion's offerings span the full IT management lifecycle, including design, implementation, ongoing break-fix support, proactive and reactive managed services, and optimization. Today, Atrion monitors the "always on" infrastructures of mid to large enterprises, supporting clients that have anywhere from a couple of hundred to 2500 employees.

In a competitive landscape filled with technology resellers masquerading as service providers, Atrion is a managed service provider (MSP) that has a long track record of succeeding by truly partnering with clients and ensuring services deliver real business value.

"The saying goes that 'if you have a hammer, every problem looks like a nail,' and that's a pretty good depiction of the mindset of many MSPs, who try to adapt the customer challenge to their limited solution sets, rather than the other way around," said Tim Hebert, CEO, Atrion. "Our differentiation stems from the fact we focus first on our clients' business—their challenges, opportunities, and objectives—and we then develop solutions that are tailored to those needs. We can follow that up with a complete set of services that can help take clients from initial analysis through to implementation and ongoing support."

This approach has yielded continued growth for Atrion—and continued high marks of satisfaction from Atrion's clients. A long-time Cisco partner, the company is consistently rated in the top 1% of Cisco Gold Partners worldwide in terms of customer satisfaction and loyalty.

### Monitoring Platform Limitations Hinder Business Growth

As with any other MSP, Atrion's monitoring capabilities can play a big role in the quality of services that are delivered to clients. Over time, Atrion's management team found that different aspects of their monitoring platform weren't as scalable as required, and began to hinder their ability to enhance services and grow the business.

The company had implemented several point solutions, and also invested in the Dell Remote Monitoring platform (formerly Silverback Technologies). While the Dell solution initially represented a viable offering, over the course of several years, it started to present significant challenges:

- **Service levels.** Early on, Silverback provided excellent service and attention to Atrion's team. However, after the company was acquired by Dell, the team at Atrion began receiving slower response to inquiries and requests—a significant issue, given that, in a managed services business, delays of even minutes can make the difference between highly satisfied customers and lost business.



- **Technology direction.** After the Dell acquisition of Silverback Technologies, the product roadmap changed substantially. For example, Dell had a strong focus on desktop support, which was counter to Atrion's objectives to move up in the IT value chain. Consequently, a lot of upgrades were being made that didn't align with Atrion's priorities, while the new features Atrion needed, such as support for business applications, virtualization, and unified communications, were not happening or slow in coming.
- **Transitional gaps.** The Dell Remote Monitoring platform was being migrated from a traditional appliance deployment to a hosted model. As a result of this transition, many of the features that were most important to Atrion's customers were no longer supported. Further, many of the custom reports Atrion's team had built would need to be re-engineered to work on the new platform. Ultimately, Atrion was forced to choose between remaining on the old platform, which wasn't being enhanced, or migrating to a new platform that wasn't ready to meet Atrion's immediate needs in serving clients. Neither of these options truly fit with Atrion's objectives.

"Atrion has had a fantastic relationship with Silverback and Dell for many years," said Chris Poe, CTO, Atrion. "We will continue to work with them in ways that make sense for our business. However, as our organizations' priorities with regard to monitoring technologies appeared to be misaligned, we were forced to either remain stagnant in our solution offerings or move on to a newer, more flexible, and more comprehensive platform."

For Atrion's managed service team, the answer was clear: they needed a more nimble monitoring platform that would support their ongoing efforts for service advancement, evolution, and market leadership.

## Seeking the Right Solution and Vendor

Monitoring capabilities are a critical component in Atrion's ability to serve its clients effectively. Consequently, when it came time to choose a new monitoring solution, the company's managed services team undertook a rigorous, two-year evaluation of the alternatives. Initially, staff from Atrion traveled to visit other MSPs around the country to see what products their peers had selected, and to assess how

these organizations were actually using the products.

The company's assessment started with 12 alternatives, and included not only an assessment of the products, but an in-depth analysis of the companies, their strategic vision, product road maps, and people. As the list of potential solutions narrowed, the scrutiny became more intense, including exhaustive technical testing. The company's managed services team evaluated a range of alternatives:

- **Incumbent solution.** The MSP considered staying with the Dell Remote Monitoring Platform, but the solution did not align with their business needs.
- **Monitoring solutions for MSPs targeting small and medium-sized businesses.** Atrion's managed services staff evaluated several popular offerings in this category, including Kaseya, N-Able, Level Platforms, and others. Many of these didn't make the short list simply because of product limitations or business issues, such as a lack in funding or strategic focus. Ultimately, this class of solutions didn't appear to be suitable for an MSP like Atrion, which targets larger, more demanding enterprises.
- **Open source products.** Open source alternatives also didn't make the short list. While the company has a Web development arm that relies extensively on open source, they decided that this wasn't a viable route for their monitoring platform.

## One Solution for Optimal IT Services Coverage and Business Insights

When the evaluation came to an end, one vendor surpassed the rest: Nimsoft. The evaluation made clear that the Nimsoft products and its people were best equipped to support Atrion's clients and business objectives.

"We are completely and passionately focused on the business success of our clients," said Hebert. "That entails taking time to understand what they're looking to accomplish and then delivering truly customized services that meet those objectives. The Nimsoft solution uniquely supports us in these efforts. It helps us be more agile in adapting to technology advancements and evolving customer needs, and it ultimately enables us to deliver higher levels of service to our clients."

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In the end, Atrion found that the Nimsoft Monitoring Solution (NMS) fit the core of the IT services space better than anyone.

“Some of the products we evaluated were better for servers, but they didn’t do networking very well,” Poe explained. “Others were very good at network monitoring, but they didn’t handle servers and applications very well. Still others lacked key functionality or flexibility. Nimsoft proved to be the one well rounded, multi-purpose platform that delivered all the key capabilities our staff needed.”

Following are a few of the key reasons Nimsoft came out on top.

### Establishing a Strategic Business Partnership

Given the strategic role monitoring plays in the level of service the company can provide, Atrion was looking for a strategic partner, rather than a mere technology supplier. The Nimsoft team, including the CEO and representatives across the organization, demonstrated a commitment to Atrion’s success that was unrivaled.

“We wanted to make sure that we could build an effective, long-term working relationship with the vendor, and that we’d feel confident about their commitment to our business,” said Hebert. “Ultimately, this partnership aspect represented our most important evaluation criteria. Hands down, there was no one even close in matching the Nimsoft team’s willingness and ability to build a partnership, including incumbents that we’d already been doing business with.

“For example, during initial conversations with the Nimsoft team, we mentioned some features that were important to us, and within weeks Nimsoft came back and delivered on those features,” Hebert continued. “It’s one thing if I have to say, ‘there’s no deal if you don’t deliver a given feature.’ It’s another thing to have a vendor really listen, and proactively respond to our input—without our having to push for it. This is just one example of how the Nimsoft team took a personal interest in our business, spent the time to understand our needs and objectives, and took the steps required to support us in those efforts.

### Robust Reporting for Business Insights

Atrion’s previous tool sets meant that either Atrion staff needed to manually build a host of reports on an ongoing basis, or provide basic reports that only offered minimal insights for clients. With the Nimsoft Service Delivery Portal (SDP), Atrion can actually provide clients with access to an online resource any time, enabling them to get all the monitoring details they need—including real-time performance levels, alerts, and more.

In addition, NMS offers simple to use, yet sophisticated dashboard and reporting capabilities that enable Atrion to offer customers better insights for administration and optimization, improve the quality of service provided to its clients, and ultimately better communicate the value of the services being offered.

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“Being able to create customizable dashboards was another capability that made NMS stand out,” said Poe. “This allows us to create different viewpoints for different people within the organization. Now, we can sit down with our clients and discuss what the CIO needs to see, what the VP of IT needs to see, etc., and then build custom dashboards and reports for those specific roles. Ultimately, this gives them the specific, customized views they need to run their business better.”

### Monitoring Coverage of Emerging Technologies and the Entire Infrastructure

The Nimsoft solution’s comprehensive monitoring made it possible for Atrion to eliminate numerous point solutions and the associated costs and complexity of using and maintaining disparate products. Nimsoft offered several features that enabled it to address virtually all of Atrion’s monitoring needs:

- Emerging technology support.** Atrion’s staff wanted to support the emerging technologies that its customers were adopting, including virtualization and unified communications, and NMS was uniquely equipped to support these advanced technologies.
- Scalability.** NMS was proven to manage the high volumes of monitoring data generated by Atrion’s largest clients.
- Resilience.** With an architecture that offers a range of high availability features, Nimsoft practically eliminates the chance of downtime within Atrion’s monitoring services. For example, NMS enables Atrion to roll out upgrades, patches, and new features without incurring any down time.

“Compared to other solutions, NMS allowed us to get into new technologies faster,” Poe explained. “This is critical because we constantly look to innovate in order to provide our clients with the latest and most impactful solutions. The modular approach, product architecture, and investments in new technologies made NMS the best solution to help us standardize on a single product, and stay on the forefront of emerging technologies.”



## Delivering Visibility into Business Service Levels

Featuring comprehensive infrastructure coverage, end user response monitoring, and service level agreement reporting, NMS equips Atrion with an ability to move beyond simplistic, commoditized device monitoring. In addition, with the Nimsoft BSM Express product, Atrion can do business service management with unprecedented ease, flexibility, and scalability. Now, Atrion can monitor and manage a host of business services, including email systems, ERP, and applications.

This delivers a critical business advantage to Atrion for two key reasons:

- First, this service level insight offers greater value to customers. In the end, the customer really cares about whether a business service is performing reliably and quickly, rather than whether a specific device is up or not.
- Second, this service level monitoring enables the MSP to move beyond an increasingly commoditized device monitoring market to higher value, higher margin offerings.

"I don't think there's any doubt that the market for simple device monitoring is going to become commoditized," Hebert claimed. "Instead of monitoring routers, switches, and servers, we want to monitor email, for example, and everything about email from a systematic level. We want to monitor that service as one entity not as fifty independent entities. Nimsoft allows me to change my focus beyond monitoring devices to business services."

## Benefiting From a Solution that Streamlines Operations and Strengthens Competitive Position

By implementing NMS, Atrion has enjoyed several significant benefits:

- **Reduced training and administration costs.** With its comprehensive monitoring coverage, Nimsoft enables Atrion's administrators to use one product—when they used to use five. The result will be far less administrative complexity, and less time and effort required to train new employees.
- **Reduced repair times.** With enhanced monitoring granularity and comprehensive, intuitive dashboards and reports, Atrion expects its repair times to be reduced by up to 50%.
- **Expanded service catalog and revenue streams.** Nimsoft provides comprehensive infrastructure coverage, enabling Atrion to quickly and easily augment the services they offer clients, whether that means monitoring new devices or systems, emerging technologies like virtualization and unified communications, or an entire service infrastructure, such as email, ERP, or e-commerce.
- **Improved service profitability.** With their scalability and ease of use, Nimsoft solutions enable the MSP to do more with its existing people and budgets—which means Atrion can scale its business while controlling costs. Plus, by enabling Atrion to deliver higher value and higher margin services, the business profits further.

"Nimsoft allows us to do more without spending more," Hebert said. "Now we'll be able to monitor from an application, rather than a device, standpoint, which opens up a host of new possibilities in terms of service offerings. Plus, not only can we expand our service catalog, we can offer higher value, higher margin services—all with one tool set."

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## About Atrion Networking Corporation

Established in 1987, Atrion specializes in the fusion of business and technology. We accelerate business productivity and enhance client satisfaction through a dedicated focus on our clients and through customized technology design, implementation and support solutions such as consultation, project management, manufacturer-certified training, carrier services, telephony, equipment procurement, local and wide area network implementation and managed services. Atrion's multimedia division, Shazamm, offers innovative and interactive multimedia designs to enhance solution functionality and visibility. Atrion's 1nService affiliation allows it to service companies locally and internationally. We are a Cisco Gold Partner, Microsoft Gold Partner and placed 455 on the 2009 VAR 500 list. To learn how we can empower your company, visit [www.atrion.net](http://www.atrion.net).

## About Nimsoft

Nimsoft is the fastest growing provider of next-generation performance and availability monitoring solutions for the complete physical, virtual, and cloud-based IT infrastructure. Nimsoft solutions redefine the standards for ease of use and speed of deployment—providing outstanding return on investment and unparalleled customer satisfaction. Over 850 customers in 36 countries rely on Nimsoft solutions to monitor their IT-based business applications and services, including cloud environments. These customers include mid-market and global organizations, such as Barclays Capital, Amway Corporation, Bay Area Rapid Transit, Ladbrokes, MTU Aero Engines, TriNet, and TRW Automotive, and hundreds of leading managed service providers, such as CDW Hosting Services, ENKI, Thomas Duryea, Easynet, and Rackspace Managed Hosting. For more information, visit [www.nimsoft.com](http://www.nimsoft.com).

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