



CHALLENGE

- Supporting an expanding managed services business, while working with several discrete monitoring solutions.

SOLUTION

- Employing Nimsoft Monitoring Solutions to monitor, manage, and report on all core systems and services.

BENEFITS

- Eliminated burden of supporting multiple point solutions.
- Streamlined reporting processes.
- Improved resource planning through sophisticated monitoring insights.
- Enhanced service levels and support for expanded service offerings.

NIMSOF CASE STUDY

ISC Optimizes Managed Services and Operations with Nimsoft

Leveraging a Single Solution for the Entire Infrastructure

Established in 1984, ISC is a highly accredited IT solution provider that offers IT infrastructure supply, implementation, and support services.

ISC offers a range of managed IT support services on a 24 x 7 basis. These include user support, hosting in a custom-built data center, and monitoring and management from a dedicated network operations center (NOC).

When ISC first began offering managed services, they elected to use IBM Tivoli for systems management and monitoring. "As our needs evolved, we found it necessary to use other tools alongside Tivoli. Ultimately, we came to the realization that the product no longer represented the best fit for our needs," explained Jason Bass, Technical Director, ISC.

The company's management team realized that, in their effort to evolve and grow, they needed a monitoring solution that would offer greater efficiency and flexibility, so they could continue to expand and improve the services they provided. To accomplish these objectives, the company's IT leadership ultimately chose Nimsoft Monitoring Solutions (NMS).

"After our first look at Nimsoft's solutions, we were impressed," said Bass. "NMS' comprehensive capabilities meant that we could use one product instead of four. Plus, it was very easy to set up and manage."

Today, ISC is using NMS both to do remote monitoring of systems residing at clients' facilities, and for monitoring systems they're hosting. NMS is being used to monitor a host of critical systems and services:

- **Servers.** NMS monitors a broad range of client servers, including Exchange, SQL Server, Active Directory, and Citrix—providing the vital insights required for optimizing their performance and availability.
- **User response.** Reporting on whether the Exchange server is up or not is important, but it's only a part of a bigger picture. With Nimsoft's solutions, ISC can both understand and report on the performance levels users are actually receiving from the IT infrastructure. For example, for clients that rely on ISC for email, ISC can now report not only on the performance of specific systems within the email chain, for example the Exchange server and virus scanning equipment, but on the total time it takes a message to get from a sender at the client's facility, to the hosted email server, and to the recipient.
- **VMware.** NMS's support for VMware is crucial to helping ISC effectively manage and monitor its own hosted virtualized servers, and to offer remote monitoring of clients' virtual infrastructures. NMS can monitor hosted VMware ESX servers, and all resident virtualized machines and applications.



Nimsoft Streamlines Reporting and Operations

Since deploying NMS, ISC has realized a range of benefits. By having a single product to manage all core resources and services, ISC's IT staff can eliminate the burden of supporting several disparate point solutions. Plus, with a centralized view of clients' deployments, they can streamline reporting and get better insights for resource forecasting and planning. Following is more information about the benefits ISC has enjoyed since deploying NMS.

User Response Monitoring Improves Service Levels

By providing end-to-end monitoring of user response, Nimsoft's solutions help ISC furnish clients with much better insights into what's working, and what can be optimized to deliver better email service levels. NMS's insights are also instrumental in improving capacity planning.

"Before, if there was downtime reported by a client's email users, the client may ask us whether the Exchange server is working," explained Bass. "The answer may be yes, but the obvious next question is what about all the other bits in between, the virus scanning, the network connectivity, etc. Now, with Nimsoft's solutions, we can say, 'the Exchange server and scanning software are all working, and a message went from you to us and back in x amount of time.' This makes it a lot easier for us to pinpoint issues, and to deliver better, more helpful services to our customers."

Centralized Reporting Fuels Operational Efficiency

Traditionally, ISC would send reports to customers on a monthly basis. Reports were run manually by an ISC service delivery manager, who would then consolidate stats into a word document that would get sent to the customer. With Nimsoft's Service Delivery Portal (SDP), the client can actually log in to an online resource any time, and get all the monitoring details—including real-time performance levels, alerts, and more—that ISC staff can see.

Now, instead of waiting for monthly reports, clients can login and get the real-time status of their monitored infrastructure. If an issue is reported by an end user, clients can see for themselves whether there's an outage. This is a huge benefit to the client, and it also enables customers to help themselves, so it saves time for ISC's staff.

While many monitoring offerings are designed solely for use within a single enterprise, with SDP's multi-tenant reporting capabilities, NMS makes it easier and more efficient for service providers to support multiple clients. By consolidating and aggregating all reporting data into a single repository, Nimsoft's solutions have helped ISC streamline its infrastructure. The company used to manage an array of products for reporting, including Tivoli as well as open source offerings such as MRGT, Nagios, and Cacti. Now, they can use just one product: NMS. This helps improve overall efficiency.

"While open source offerings were useful initially, they grew increasingly challenging to work with as our business grew," Bass revealed. "Because they had little or no management interface capabilities, they were very time consuming to manage and maintain, and an increasing distraction for our administrative staff."

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— Jason Bass, Technical Director, ISC

"Now, all our monitoring data comes into NMS," said Bass. "And the great thing is that it gives us one central location for consistent alerts, reporting, and monitoring, which is exceedingly efficient."

Intuitive Dashboards Provide Insights for Improving Service Levels

Today, ISC is using a custom NMS dashboard in the NOC, which provides an at-a-glance, real-time view of the status of all clients' deployments. The dashboard features icons for each client, which are color coded to signify whether alerts have been triggered, and, if so, the severity of the event. In addition, the dashboards offer historical information, including alerts for the prior week as well as trending data.

Having intuitive access to this monitoring information is a powerful tool for ISC's staff, enabling them to operate more efficiently, monitor and manage systems more proactively, and respond to outages and potential issues more quickly.

Ease of Use and Streamlined Operations

Compared to Tivoli, NMS has proven to be much easier to implement, manage, and maintain. "The product is very powerful, but it is extremely easy to use," Bass revealed. "And it was so easy to implement it was unbelievable."

Another significant benefit has come in the form of reduced maintenance time and cost. With Tivoli, an upgrade to a new version or a service pack upgrade could be a lengthy process. With NMS, the team isn't burdened by laborious upgrades, and can instead focus on core responsibilities.



“With NMS, when there are updates available, we simply right click on a link to upgrade to the latest version, and we’re done in about ten minutes,” explained Bass. “The first time we needed to do an upgrade with Nimsoft, we set aside three to four hours, and were done in minutes. We were impressed, and that’s continued to be the case with subsequent upgrades.”

Improved Capacity Planning and Infrastructure Optimization

NMS’s sophisticated reporting capabilities are proving instrumental in the ability of ISC’s staff to do effective capacity planning. Now, a service delivery manager can look at reports and review trend lines, both over shorter and longer timeframes, to identify potential capacity and performance issues in advance, and report them to clients.

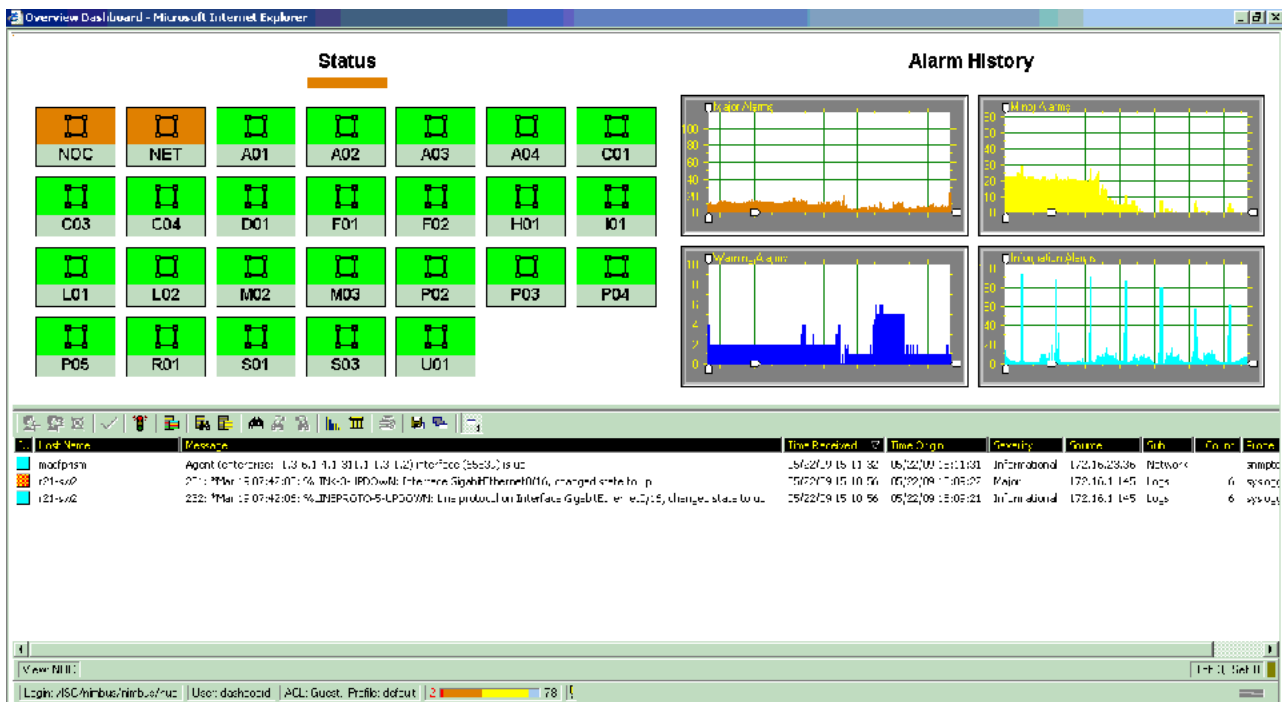
“Usually, if we tell a client they’ll need to invest in a new server, they’ll want to be sure that it’s needed before they make the purchase,” Bass stated. “With Nimsoft’s solutions, it’s easy to provide an accurate, intuitive picture of trends, so we’re confident in our recommendations, and so are clients.”

In addition, ISC is beginning to refresh their NOC, and NMS’s insights will prove instrumental in streamlining monitoring efforts, and in identifying areas for resource optimization.

Support for Broadened Service Offerings

Now, Nimsoft’s solutions are helping support ISC’s efforts to broaden its service offerings. With its off-the-shelf support for VMware monitoring and end user response monitoring, NMS made it faster, more efficient, and so more profitable, to bring these new services online.

In addition, ISC is exploring the possibility of offering clients application-based SLAs, for example guaranteeing email response times. As they roll these services out, NMS’s SLA reporting capabilities will streamline the process of tracking and reporting on these SLAs.



ISC has employed a custom NMS dashboard that provides an at-a-glance, real-time view of the status of all clients’ deployments.



About ISC

Established in 1984, ISC is a highly accredited IT solution provider. With annual revenues exceeding £60m, over 300 employees, offices across the UK, and an extensive portfolio of services, ISC is the partner of choice for many businesses. For more information, visit www.iscnet.co.uk.

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. The Nimsoft solutions redefine the standards for ease of use and speed of deployment - providing outstanding return on investment and unparalleled customer satisfaction. Over 800+ 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 and Amway Corporation, Bay Area Rapid Transit, Ladbrokes, MTU Aero Engines, TriNet, 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

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