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## TECH TRACKER

For IT By IT

### Flying High On Cloud Nimbus

Nimsoft turns in a strong showing in our application performance management review

**F**OR THE FIFTH INSTALLMENT of our ongoing application performance management software review, we brought Nimsoft's Nimbus into our labs. Nimsoft compares favorably with larger enterprise software vendors by offering scalable APM at prices well below its nearest competitors.

Nimbus focuses on real-time systems monitoring and reporting; service-level agreement definition, monitoring, and reporting; and end-to-end response-time measurements. All these metrics are presented via a configurable and customizable dashboard for business service and operations performance.

To collect data from your application environment, Nimbus relies on a variety of agents and polling methods, but it doesn't employ the network traffic monitoring seen in earlier reviews (see [nwc.com/rollingreviews/apm](http://nwc.com/rollingreviews/apm)). Popular out-of-the-box applications, including Microsoft Exchange, Internet Information Services, and Active Directory, are monitored via Nimbus agents, or "probes" in Nimsoft-speak. Additional probes for WebSphere, Citrix, and SAP are available. Nimsoft also tracks a variety of

functions specific to Linux, Unix, and Windows systems, as well as all common databases, and it monitors network operations.

#### THE UPSHOT

**>> CLAIM:** Nimsoft Nimbus is far less expensive in terms of initial purchase and implementation cost, and ongoing administration compared with other management products on the market, while also offering superior scalability. This enables fast deployment and end-to-end service-level management of an enterprise's entire application infrastructure.

**>> CONTEXT:** Organizations are typically forced to choose between costly enterprise-class software from big vendors or work with smaller software providers that may offer some compelling features, but limited scalability as the environment grows.

**>> CREDIBILITY:** Nimbus is the first APM product we've seen that can offer enterprise scalability for application performance management at a rock-bottom price. The product still requires some time from a skilled software engineer to install and customize, but it doesn't need constant care and feeding.

#### GET ROLLING

Nimbus was easy to set up and configure in our environment and is the only product reviewed to date that automatically builds Web-based dashboards and reports to display collected performance data.

Nimbus also has a flexible and robust SLA reporting engine. It enabled us to manually build application service-level agreements by coordinating groups of monitored components into a comprehensive service picture. We could report SLA performance during defined business hours and exclude particular time slots, such as maintenance windows. Nimbus also can exclude a particular component, during a specified time range, within a group of elements that operate under an SLA. This granularity is helpful for IT organizations that may want to exclude an application component that failed because of a customer-generated outage that falls outside its SLA. This happens all too frequently, yet many APM tools are unable to manage this scenario.

When change is detected, such as in network components, servers, or applications, the service view needs to be manually updated. We're a bit disappointed that Nimbus lacks integration into a config-

## IN DETAIL

**FEATURED PRODUCT:** Nimsoft Nimbus; [www.nimsoft.com](http://www.nimsoft.com)

**ABOUT THIS ROLLING REVIEW:** Application performance management products are being tested at our Real-World Labs at Windward Consulting Group. We're assessing the breadth of support for existing apps, how well the product detects and reports on performance problems, how well the architecture supports distributed application performance monitoring, and whether the software supports a tiered architecture with native high availability and failover capabilities. We'll also explore how seamlessly it integrates with the surrounding environment.

**ALREADY TESTED:** Indicative, NetIQ, NetQoS, Compuware

**NEXT UP:** Quest Software

**OTHER VENDORS INVITED:** BMC, CA/Wily, Compuware, EMC/Smarts, HP/Mercury, IBM, Infovista, NetScout, Network General, Oracle, ProactiveNet, Symantec

**Rolling Reviews** present a comprehensive look at a hot technology category. See our kickoff and other reviews in this APM series at [nwc.com/rollingreviews](http://nwc.com/rollingreviews).

uration management database that would allow service models to be built automatically from information stored in the configuration database. Manually building these service views was relatively easy to do within Nimbus, but still, it requires that an administrator know and understand all the components of a multitiered application.

#### NO HITCHES HERE

For our tests, we leveraged individual probes that monitored base system performance—CPU, mem-

ory, disk, critical processes—as well as more specific probes, like IIS and Microsoft SQL. We also configured Nimbus to monitor application availability using several of the data-collection methods available, including ICMP ping, testing availability of specific Web pages and running complex synthetic transactions. All worked without a hitch.

Information garnered from these distinct methods of data collection provided us visibility into end-to-end application performance as well as detailed network

performance. This, combined with the Nimbus SLA engine, gave us the big picture on how business-critical systems performed.

In terms of out-of-the-box capabilities, probes come with a set of preconfigured thresholds and monitored values that are easily customizable. The Nimbus architecture includes the use of a publish/subscribe model for data communication. When an application within the Nimbus domain has new data to share, it's automatically published onto the messaging bus and then all subscribers receive it. This feature reduces the overhead in communicating within Nimbus components and is so far unique among APM products tested. We also could configure all publications and subscriptions via a single Nimsoft management console or Web-enabled interface.

When assessing the price, we initially thought Nimsoft left off some zeros. However, the price of Nimbus as tested is indeed approximately \$20,000. This includes the base application; synthetic transactions; and probes for IIS, MS-SQL, Windows server, and network device monitoring. —MICHAEL BIDDICK ([mbiddick@nwc.com](mailto:mbiddick@nwc.com)) AND CHRIS HURT