

Nimsoft Unifies Monitoring for Vblock Converged Infrastructure

Event

On September 28, 2010, Nimsoft announced support within their NMS management product/service offerings for integrated, unified monitoring of the VCE Coalition's Vblock converged data center infrastructure solutions. Vblock represents a pre-configured, bundled solution that includes compute, network and storage technologies, all tightly packaged together for rapid deployment and highly flexible usage by virtue of its heavy utilization of virtualization technologies. Nimsoft is the first to offer seamless, one-step unified monitoring tools for Vblock Infrastructure Packages, and the new capabilities arrive at a time when Vblock solutions are reaching significant levels of deployment. Driven by the Vblock's growing popularity, the need for unified management solutions for converged infrastructure is becoming increasingly obvious to anyone who seeks to achieve the full potential of this important new technology.

Context

Vblock is a prime example of a new breed of converged infrastructure solutions that are changing the way data centers are planned and built. Offered by the VCE Coalition, a collaboration of Cisco, EMC and VMware, Vblock Infrastructure Packages are highly modular, pre-configured IT infrastructure bundles that combine compute, network and storage elements into what is often referred to as "data center in a box" or "private cloud in a box." The primary advantage of these offerings is a significant reduction in the time required to design and deploy infrastructure, coupled with a platform that was designed specifically to offer high levels of flexibility and agility through virtualization at every layer.

The Vblock solution has inspired significant interest within both the enterprise and service provider communities. Enterprises are interested because it represents a viable alternative for accelerating new data center build-outs as well as refresh/consolidation initiatives that focus on virtualizing computing infrastructure. Service providers, particularly those providing hosting and outsourced platform offerings such as IaaS and PaaS cloud services, appreciate the modularity and ability to support multiple customers (a.k.a. "tenants") on a single infrastructure platform.

What makes Vblock Infrastructure Packages challenging to manage is that they incorporate all of the primary technology components, and hence all of the complexity, of an entire data center within a single modular footprint. This means that in one step, a deploying organization suddenly has servers, hypervisors, networks, disk arrays, enclosures and power supplies to deal with simultaneously. And when any one of those elements is not functioning properly or performing up to full capacity, it will very likely affect one or more of the other integral components.

As a result, organizations embracing convergence of physical and virtual infrastructure also need to collapse and integrate their operational monitoring solutions. The alternative is to deploy multiple tools that provide monitoring of the various technology types independently, and then at best forward information to a higher-level manager of managers or service management system for correlation. This is costly and inefficient – and the antithesis of the operational simplicity of the Vblock concept in the first place.

Nimsoft is the first to offer seamless, one-step unified monitoring for VCE Vblock deployments.

With the initial launch of Vblock, the VCE Coalition announced integrated management tools for configuration and provisioning via the Ionix Unified Infrastructure Manager (UIM) product. Ionix UIM initially converged network/compute configuration and change control functions and more recently added coverage of the Vblock storage subsystems; but yet to emerge have been simple, integrated, consolidated options for monitoring the health and availability of Vblock Infrastructure Packages once they have been put into production.

Nimsoft Unifies Vblock Monitoring

Nimsoft, a CA Technologies company, has been providing integrated infrastructure monitoring solutions for years and has demonstrated a particularly keen focus on flexibly fulfilling both the needs of commercial IT operations teams as well as those of management and hosted service providers. The Nimsoft strategy has been to understand and support all of the IT technology domains that must come together to assure timely, reliable delivery of applications and services – the lifeblood of today’s businesses.

Nimsoft has addressed the lack of converged monitoring for Vblocks by directly adding support for them into their Nimsoft Unified Monitoring Architecture via a “Vblock Pack.” The set of extensions unifies monitoring by discovering and bringing under management all of the components present in the Vblock – networks, computing and storage – and tying them all together with relationship modeling that captures the intrinsic converged nature of the Vblock.

The Nimsoft approach includes not only the physical and virtual components involved, but also the applications that are being hosted on the Vblock. Nimsoft leverages management data available from the management components within the Vblock, including VMware vCenter, EMC Symmetrix/Navisphere Management Console and Cisco UCS Manager, as well as direct interfaces into network fabric elements to discover and model the Vblock, and then apply templated, customizable availability and performance monitoring capabilities.

Nimsoft has made a number of specific extensions to their solution for supporting Vblock, including:

- Auto discovery of all physical and virtual elements
- Automated templates for immediate deployment and configuration of monitoring policies
- Display templates that aggregate the health and performance of each Vblock based on its constituent components and hosted applications
- Cross-domain root cause analysis within a Vblock
- Chassis and rack monitoring for physical/environmental metrics
- Monitoring templates for Cisco UCS blades and elements
- Monitoring templates for EMC’s CLARiiON, Symmetrix, and Celerra storage systems

Collectively, this allows Nimsoft Monitoring Solution (NMS) customers to optimize the operational monitoring and performance of their Vblock deployments, while also supporting direct, service-level visibility into configurations that support multiple customers or constituencies on a customer-by-customer basis.

The Vblock Pack is available for either end-user license or hosted/SaaS customers. SaaS customers will have access to these new extensions with no need to take action, and end-user licensees can download the pack without any up-front charge. In either approach, fees are charged via Nimsoft’s usage/subscription model, but only when and if a Vblock is brought under management within the system.

EMA Perspective

Nimsoft is one of the first management tools providers to directly embrace the VCE Vblock. This is a relatively new infrastructure offering in the IT marketplace, but it is on the leading edge of a tectonic shift in the way enterprise and service provider data centers and cloud services are being implemented. The converged infrastructure approach that is now gaining momentum also offers the opportunity for management tools to be more fully integrated. In ENTERPRISE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATES® (EMA™) analysts' view it will not be possible to fully optimize converged infrastructure and achieve the full potential of these promising new architectures without unified management technology.

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The NMS Vblock monitoring solution does for monitoring what the Vblock does for infrastructure – it converges monitoring into a single, unified view, spanning all of the physical and virtual components that make up a “private cloud in a box.” The Vblock solutions are enjoying significant and growing sales and deployments, and the IT organizations and service providers installing them would be well served to take notice of the opportunity to consolidate and streamline management tools at the same time. For the purposes of easily deployed, comprehensive production monitoring, there is no better choice at this time than the Nimsoft Vblock solution.

About EMA

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