Proactive Service Level Monitoring: A Must Have for Advanced MSPs
Providers of IT services, such as systems integrators, are expanding rapidly into the managed services arena, and becoming Managed Services Providers (MSPs). Two underlying developments are driving this transformation - IT service providers are under pressure to differentiate themselves from the competition by offering a broader suite of services and more advanced managed service offerings and businesses are increasingly looking to their suppliers to take on more responsibility for the operational aspects of their IT and telecommunications technology.

Advanced managed services give IT service providers the means to boost their revenues and profitability but winning larger customers and managing more complex infrastructures creates a new set of operational and IT management challenges. MSPs now have to monitor the performance of applications and infrastructure that span multiple types and layers of technology, include a vast number of interrelated and co-dependent elements, and are spread across a variety of virtual and physical locations.

Traditional network management solutions are not capable of meeting the needs of the new age MSPs, where the services provided by the MSP directly support any number of critical business processes of their customers. Many activities performed by the MSP’s customers – from servicing an end-subscriber to shipping purchased products – are directly dependent upon one or more software applications as well as the underlying computing/network infrastructure that is operated and managed by the MSP. Legacy management tools focus on measuring and monitoring just the technical metrics and trends of individual nodes and components in the infrastructure, and do not have the business oriented monitoring perspective now required.

To ensure greater reliability of essential processes and systems for their customers, MSPs need to adopt proactive Service Level Monitoring (SLM) systems that are able to better connect business processes with IT operations to achieve a more holistic view. By connecting the worlds of IT and business, proactive SLM solutions are able to identify the affected services or processes when problems occur in the complex, distributed and virtual IT infrastructure that an MSP operates and manages. Proactive SLM solutions enable preemptive and rapid identification of business issues, accurate identification of root causes and quick resolution of problems. Traditional MSP service monitoring focuses on device up/down status, but end customers are now demanding that the MSP understand their services and assign SLAs to the more important ones (versus not-critical services) and to monitor and proactively manage service availability. Proactive SLM is the only solution that can help MSPs do this effectively.

**Today’s MSP Environment – Increasingly Complex**

MSPs have to manage a wide range of complex and disruptive technologies to deliver required services to businesses. The assortment of managed services needs to cover hybrid cloud environments, router service, backup and security, storage, VPN / IP-VPN, VoIP service, and more. These managed services depend on diverse technologies, such as unified communications, web services, virtualization, composite applications, grid architectures, SaaS and green IT. In a managed services environment, a business application, for example, may leverage a combination of in-house managed servers, pre-built storefront virtual machines from an external cloud vendor, and an external application service. Additionally, a variety of network nodes and links are also part of the required infrastructure to ensure the proper functioning of a given business application.

“MSPs need to adopt proactive Service Level Monitoring (SLM) systems that are able to better connect business processes with IT operations to achieve a more holistic view.”
Traditional network management systems are incapable of effectively monitoring and ensuring the required performance of such a complex environment. These systems are already being stretched to the limit given the universal adoption of multi-tier applications, distributed computing and web technologies in the last decade. Traditional network management systems focus on measuring and monitoring technical metrics and trends of individual nodes and components in the infrastructure. Although an isolated issue in the complex web of new technologies may impact one or more user-facing tasks in a business process, the current monitoring approaches cannot determine the overall service impact of such a problem.

There are even more fundamental capabilities missing that are needed to support the massive distributed infrastructure footprint and the multi-tenancy demands within the MSP environment. In fact, current tools limit the ability of the MSP to provide a variety of enhanced services to their customers, and do not enable MSPs to manage performance in a cost-effective and efficient manner. A new approach is needed.

SLM – Linking MSP Services to the Customer’s Business

MSP’s operations/NOC personnel are focused on what is going on at a technical level, and often don’t have a clear understanding of how problems can affect the business processes of their customers. Thus, there is a significant need for solutions that bridge the information gap.

To ensure greater reliability of essential processes and systems in an MSP environment, proactive Service Level Monitoring systems can help MSPs connect the business processes of their customers with IT operations to achieve a more holistic perspective. By connecting the worlds of IT and business, these SLM solutions are able to identify the affected business processes or services when problems occur.

SLM solutions enable preemptive and rapid identification of business issues, accurate identification of root causes, and quick resolution of problems.

Within an SLM-enabled MSP environment, business process issues are dealt with proactively and rapidly. Joint MSP and customer teams together set priorities in terms of the problems that need to be addressed right away versus those that can be postponed. Information is presented in a way that is relevant to the user roles within and across organizations to aid in this process. The end-customer business process owner has the ability to see a dashboard view for those MSP-provided IT services on which their business depends. The information in this view is described in business terms. An IT operations person working for the MSP on the other hand, has the ability to view the detailed performance data plots for a given server cluster for example, where the data is defined in technical terms. The right SLM solution delivers on both of these types of needs.

Traditional network monitoring products have made the implementation of SLM solutions a challenge. Older generation network monitoring products are unable to integrate fault/event, performance management and SLM within a unified system, and thus MSPs are forced to deploy and integrate multiple tools to get an end-to-end view. This cumbersome approach involves linking multiple disparate applications across different layers and domains of infrastructure and services. Supporting a distributed environment, which is typical for MSPs, is also a challenge.

These legacy solutions contain a confusing array of features, require specialized application-specific expertise to install, integrate and manage, and involve execution of complex projects to complete an implementation. All of this adds up to a significant investment in the initial deployment and ongoing administrative support, resulting in extremely high total cost of ownership.
Kaseya Traverse – A Unified Management Solution for MSPs

Kaseya Traverse avoids the challenges of legacy systems and solves the SLM need for MSPs, with a comprehensive, easy to use and proactive SLM system that comes integrated with the necessary underlying fault/event and performance management capabilities.

Kaseya Traverse is a cloud-based, feature-rich MSP network management solution with advanced capabilities, such as end-to-end correlated network and application monitoring, real-time status of IT services, integrated business/technical views, and SLA management. At the same time, Traverse is easy to deploy and configure, requires minimal training to use and administer, has the ability to be made operational within days, and most importantly, does not require a full-time dedicated resource to manage.

Traverse includes a number of capabilities that allow it to support the unique needs of MSPs. Traverse’s Service Container functionality allows grouping an organization’s IT infrastructure to create logical, business-oriented views of the overall physical and virtualized computing network. Service Containers enable correlating network, application and IT service problems. MSPs can create Service Containers that include monitoring tests for multiple elements of the infrastructure, generate reports on service containers, get uptime information and real-time status for services, and be alerted if services fail or exceed defined thresholds.

Traverse has a fully distributed, real-time architecture for MSPs. What is unique about Traverse is that there is no centralized data warehouse. Other solutions typically centralize their data to generate reports. Traverse has a distributed collection architecture which allows the system to scale to extremely large environments with standard hardware. The Data Gathering Engine (DGE) is a cloud-based data gathering repository that collects, analyzes, and stores performance data from networks, devices, systems, servers, and applications. The MSP simply deploys a local collector (DGE extension) in each datacenter or remote location to capture and process performance data to the host DGE. The cloud-based Business Visibility Engine (BVE) layer is responsible for correlation, reporting and other data management functions. When the Traverse end-user logs in via the Web UI, the data is automatically fetched from the distributed DGEs and presented in a unified, correlated view.

Traverse has a built-in federated security model which supports multiple departments, users or customers in using a single instance of the software. The flexible security model allows creating read-only or read-write users, administrative users within a department/domain, or administrative users across departments/domains. Each department or user group can be viewed as having their own “Virtual Network Management System (NMS)” where they can add their own devices, thresholds, alarms, etc. Additionally, a higher-level account can be created that spans multiple departments or customers. These are not “views” like in other products, but a fully functional “virtual NMS”.

- Supports multiple departments, users or customers in using a single instance of the software
- Not just “views”, but assign complete authority to create, manage devices and notification
- Each department has its own “Virtual Management System”
Configuration Management and Alignment with ITIL

Traverse includes comprehensive Configuration Management capabilities that enable discovery, tracking and configuration of devices in the enterprise network. Traverse creates and maintains a detailed and up-to-date view of all network devices and components, and provides an intuitive user interface to support management, back-up and restoration of device configurations.

Kaseya Traverse is aligned with the main areas of the Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) framework, which describes best practices for information technology (IT) infrastructure management and operations. Kaseya Traverse supports several critical disciplines in the ITIL framework, including Network Monitoring, Performance Management and Configuration Management.

The Bottom Line for MSPs

The reliance by businesses on MSP infrastructure and services for critical process enablement and automation requires MSPs to adopt management and monitoring tools that enable the MSP operations/NOC team to ensure the smooth running of business services. MSPs need to deploy advanced Service Level Monitoring (SLM) solutions that provide real-time visibility into the performance of applications and IT services to meet this demand. Kaseya Traverse is the answer. It is an end-to-end, pre-integrated, distributed, and scalable SLM system that offers enterprise-class functionality at a lower cost of implementation and ongoing administration.

To learn more about Kaseya Traverse, please visit: www.kaseya.com/solutions/traverse

For your FREE trial, visit: www.kaseya.com/traverse

“Kaseya Traverse is the answer, and is an end-to-end, pre-integrated, distributed, and scalable SLM system that offers enterprise-class functionality at a lower cost of implementation and ongoing administration.”

About Kaseya

Kaseya is the leading provider of cloud-based IT management software. Kaseya solutions allow Managed Service Providers (MSPs) and IT organizations to efficiently manage IT in order to drive IT service and business success. Offered as both an industry-leading cloud solution and on-premise software, Kaseya solutions empower MSPs and mid-sized enterprises to command all of IT centrally, manage remote and distributed environments with ease, and automate across IT management functions. Kaseya solutions are in use by more than 10,000 customers worldwide in a wide variety of industries, including retail, manufacturing, healthcare, education, government, media, technology, finance, and more. Kaseya is privately held with a presence in over 20 countries. To learn more, please visit www.kaseya.com

©2014 Kaseya. All rights reserved. Kaseya and the Kaseya logo are among the trademarks or registered trademarks owned by or licensed to Kaseya International Limited. All other marks are the property of their respective owners.