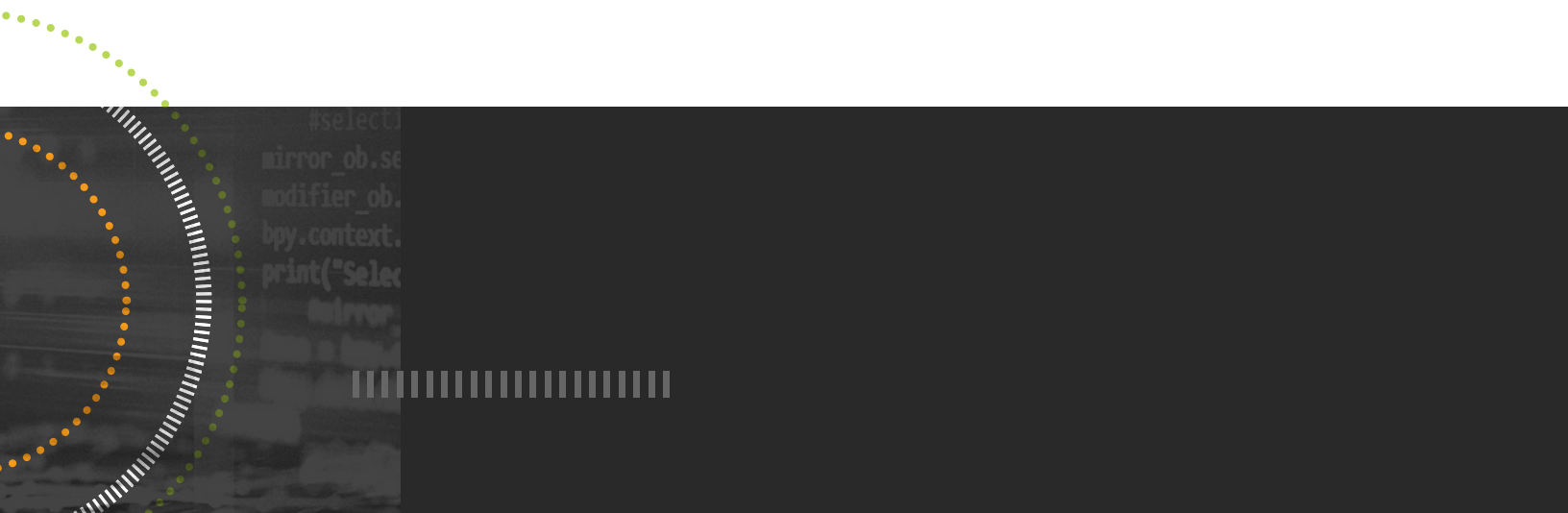




WHITEPAPER

Leveraging SolarWinds to Improve Remote Employee Support





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These are unique times. More and more end users are working from home, and many will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. You've likely seen or made changes within your organization's operations to accommodate remote workers. Perhaps there have been changes to the infrastructure or how staff accesses it.

Regardless of the changes already implemented, the key to ensuring continued mission success for remote workers is to provide the accessibility, visibility, and throughput necessary to allow these employees to continue "work as usual" remotely, which includes supporting them as seamlessly as possible.

The ultimate goal is to be able to centralize, aggregate, and report on remote user activity seamlessly, so you can be aware of performance issues before the phone rings and simplify network operations, then add in application and system operations and security, and continue operating as close to "normal" as possible.

This is a laudable goal, and there will—of course—be challenges along the way. Fortunately, there are also solutions.

Challenges

Consider this scenario: a user call the help desk with a printer problem. Another user tries to issue a trouble ticket for a slow or non-responding application. In both cases, the IT pro can't simply walk down the hall to help solve technical issues. This is just a microcosm of what's happening every day within nearly every governmental and educational organization.

The first challenge is connectivity. We suddenly have up to tens of thousands of users working remotely, and your IT team likely has a skeleton crew onsite. How are these users connecting? Specifically, how are they getting from the edge of the network—or the wide-area network—into the infrastructure?

In addition to connectivity, other high-priority challenges are:

- Capacity and performance, both at the infrastructure and at the end point, on-premises and within the cloud. In a nutshell, how do we make data more accessible to remote users, with performance strong enough to allow these users to do their jobs effectively?
- Security. It's critical to understand what ports and protocols are being used to better understand accessibility and capacity planning and make more accurate projections.
- Access for users and applications. Remote users need to access applications effectively and do their jobs; applications must be able to access the system and deliver the necessary services and data to end users.
- IT support. How can the IT team best support so many remote users? The team must have a clear understanding of saturation, capacity planning, and more.
- Trouble-ticketing. How can the IT team triage tickets? Tickets must be defined, tracked, and resolved, while continuing to meet Service Level Agreements (SLAs).



HIGH-LEVEL SOLUTIONS

Connectivity, Access Control, Availability

Let's start by talking about access and connectivity. With so many users working remotely, this is absolutely the time to think about things like firewall rules and access control lists; IT pros want to provide easy access but certainly don't want to open up attack vectors.

The team also needs to consider the dramatically increased use of online meeting and file-sharing tools such as Zoom, Webex, SharePoint, and Teams. Throughput is critical there; the team needs to set up the VPN to segregate traffic effectively onto a secure communication channel. The VPN connection and traffic can be monitored to visualize and understand availability.

Performance

Enhanced performance monitoring is a no-brainer. The best way to do this is to ensure the team has a view of all performance across the entire infrastructure, including endpoints. This perspective provides the best view of back-end performance and accessibility at the front end—or, what the user sees when they route across the network.

An added benefit is the ability to see performance history across the entire enterprise. Perhaps an IP saturation issue is causing latency; perhaps there's circuit saturation over phone lines; perhaps infrastructure routing is causing a slowdown. Understanding the cause of latencies by examining end-to-end connections is critical to finding performance issues before users do.

Continuous Monitoring

Every IT pro knows continuous monitoring is part of many organizations' compliance requirements, as one of six steps identified by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) as part of the Risk Management Framework (RMF). Continuous monitoring—done correctly—also provides a capacity plan as one of the foundations of information to support remote users.

Ensuring the team is performing continuous monitoring also means troubleshooting is both current and historical, configurations are up-to-date (might a newly installed update affect database connectivity?), and so much more.

Remote Support

With so many employees working remotely, remote support is the final critical piece of the puzzle. The IT team will realize significant value from tools that can centralize and aggregate support and, in turn, make the entire process more manageable and far more effective.



SOLARWINDS PRODUCTS FOR ENHANCED REMOTE EMPLOYEE SUPPORT

SolarWinds has a broad range of offerings designed to support remote users, enhance the remote users' work experience, and ensure they can continue working unhampered by technology issues.

Network Performance Monitor (NPM) - NPM is a must-have tool for any organization managing and monitoring remote workers. NPM gives the IT team critical information on the availability of the network infrastructure, utilization, throughput, and more. With NPM, IT pros can set levels of criticality, thresholds, and customized notifications. The tool allows you to perform correlation and mapping, including end-to-end mapping between a port and host, and overlay this information on top of other performance information to get a "net throughput" number. Combine this to trace and see the network path as a sort of dynamic map on top of the infrastructure.

Server & Application Monitor (SAM) - Need to monitor systems, servers, applications, web services, and more? SAM is the quintessential monitoring tool for government and educational organizations. SAM monitors nearly everything within the application infrastructure, centralizes the information, and provides sophisticated reporting to allow for quick problem identification and resolution—before it affects the end user.

Particularly for remote users taking full advantage of Teams, Webex, and other remote connectivity services, SAM provides exceptional application performance monitoring by focusing on the metrics of the applications behind the scenes. This gives the team an understanding of what's happening with the systems driving the applications, to more effectively track and monitor application performance from a user perspective.

PerfStack™ - This analytics feature of the Orion® Platform allows the IT team to visualize and compare a wide range of data types from many sources side-by-side for easy correlation and performance analysis. Servers, systems, applications, databases, networks—the PerfStack dashboard can provide a view for all these at one time. It's a great tool to use as a dashboard or a performance triage page and helps bring your team together by focusing on the same metrics.

Web Performance Monitor (WPM) - SolarWinds offers a broad range of tools for monitoring the performance of applications from the user's perspective, including WPM, AppOptics™, and more. WPM provides information on capacity, performance, and accessibility of websites and services.

WPM provides basic information on whether an end user can access a website or server. If not, WPM can help determine if the problem is on the website, down to the specific page or resource on the page. WPM uses a synthetic transaction to replicate the user experience, which can be a dramatic help through the troubleshooting process.

Monitoring the user experience from multiple access locations lets you understand when users can't get to your site or web applications. You can also track web services and SaaS applications provided by external service providers to help monitor service levels. Integrating web performance data with network and systems performance data helps complete visibility across your application stack.



Pingdom® - Similar to WPM, but available as a SaaS offering, Pingdom is ideal for monitoring web performance and the end user's digital experience. It provides real user monitoring (RUM), transaction monitoring, page speed monitoring, uptime monitoring, immediate alerts, root cause analysis, and more.

Security Event Manager (SEM) - If you're looking for a way to improve your organization's security posture and meet compliance requirements through continuous monitoring, consider SEM. This tool is a lightweight, ready-to-use, affordable security information and event management solution offering a broad range of features from automated threat detection and response to integrated compliance reporting tools to centralized log collection and normalization, and much more.

Dameware® - Remote Support. In today's work environment, the help desk manager is tasked with supporting up to tens of thousands of users—remotely. This team clearly cannot go to each user's house; they need a tool to help them troubleshoot system configuration problems, Outlook issues, and help fix them remotely: a tool like Dameware Remote Support.

Dameware is remote support and control software designed to help IT teams connect into the mobile phones, tablets, or workstations of newly remote workers to help them secure access and remotely troubleshoot issues. In fact, Dameware can run registry edits, install services, start and stop services, and much more—all without physically touching the users' system.

If you're looking for a SaaS version of Dameware, consider Dameware Remote Everywhere. This cloud-based version delivers on-demand remote support from anywhere to anywhere.

Web Help Desk® (WHD) - The final piece of a successful remote employee experience is a solid trouble-ticketing system. WHD provides a web-based help desk and integrates with other SolarWinds tools to help integrate trouble ticket information with other performance monitoring information to set up tickets based on alerts and help understand the root cause of issues.

In addition to providing the ability to look at ticket history and link to previously submitted (closed) tickets, WHD provides:

- Automated ticketing
- Centralized knowledge base
- Tracking and management of IT assets
- Simplified project and task management with relational ticketing
- Integration with Active Directory and LDAP
- Reporting to measure SLAs

Service Desk - Similar to WHD, this IT service management offering is a SaaS application built to consolidate, manage, and prioritize incoming tickets, and standardize service request and fulfillment processes. As a fully integrated IT asset management solution, SolarWinds Service Desk compiles hardware, software, POs, and more, while serving as a centralized portal for users where they can have a single place to submit tickets and requests.



ABOUT SOLARWINDS

SolarWinds (NYSE:SWI) is a leading provider of powerful and affordable IT infrastructure management software. Our products give organizations worldwide, regardless of type, size, or IT infrastructure complexity, the power to monitor and manage the performance of their IT environments, whether on-prem, in the cloud, or in hybrid models. We continuously engage with all types of technology professionals—IT operations professionals, DevOps professionals, and managed service providers (MSPs)—to understand the challenges they face maintaining high-performing and highly available IT infrastructures. The insights we gain from engaging with them, in places like our **THWACK** online community, allow us to build products that solve well-understood IT management challenges in ways that technology professionals want them solved. This focus on the user and commitment to excellence in end-to-end hybrid IT performance management has established SolarWinds as a worldwide leader in network management software and MSP solutions. Learn more today at www.solarwinds.com.

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