



With half of the planet focusing on its network's security, there must be times when some of the other aspects of network maintenance are totally left in the dark. Some might surmise that this comes from a lack of invested time spent looking for a reliable solution to simplify this task. To all of the IT Pros out there needing a network to simply *work*, have I got a solution for you.

Enter the world of ipMonitor for Windows 2K, XP, or 2003 workstations or servers. Rather than simply log all of the errors and problems that are being caused on your network, ipMonitor will actually keep you informed regardless of where you happen to be. Imagine a system that is in place that can provide you with the critical information you need while you are still sitting comfortably on your couch watching reruns of M*A*S*H. Without ever having to pick up a phone, you can be kept up to date as to the exact status of restarted services, specific network failures, plus a whole lot more. But enough about the alerts. Let's go deeper into the nuts and bolts of what ipMonitor can do for your network - not to mention for your free time.

Installation

Most applications of this nature are a pain in the butt to get up and running. When I installed ipMonitor onto my own home network, I was blown away at how quickly and smoothly the install process actually went. To be brutally honest, most Office suites are more complex during an install than ipMonitor ever was!

As this is a very powerful network tool, I assumed there were going to be a ton of bells and whistles to set up. Yet, to my amazement, I was greeted with a friendly dialog that totally walked me through the whole process of getting the program set up to meet with my needs. Once I blew through the administrator setup, I was greeted by a straightforward area to enter my communication settings. It is at this point I was presented with the opportunity to set up my HTTP and TCP settings. As the network admin for your office or place of business, you will obviously already have the information you need to be entered here. One thing that I really appreciated about the program was the ability to be as vague or razor precise as I wanted with these settings. In other words, you can watch specific machines or just keep a close eye on the entire network at large.

Getting to know your monitors

To me personally, I feel that the meat and potatoes of this utility come from its ability to monitor - everything. This bad boy keeps close tabs on everything from your DNS to TELNET. Best of all, you can configure each monitor how you wish. You could think of it as a virtual extension of yourself. With eyes in the back of your head, no rogue process or data has a snowball's chance in your domain! You're truly given the opportunity to be the master of your virtual universe.



But enough of that. You want to know exactly what ipMonitor can 'monitor,' right? Well then, behold:

- Active Directory
- DNS (both TCP and UDP)
- Drive space
- The event log
- EXEC
- FTP
- HTML and ASP
- HTTP and HTTPS
- IMAP4
- IRC
- Network Speed
- NNTP
- NTP
- POP3
- PING
- SMTP
- SNMP
- SNPP
- Plus a number of others

Since the list was getting a little long there, I opted to give you the specifics that I thought might peak your interest. So basically, folks, if it needs to be monitored, there is a monitor for it with ipMonitor.

Staying alert and allowing automation to run its course

Since there are times that no monitor or software program can replace the decision making abilities of a human being, you really need to be kept up to date on the status of your network.

OK, I think I actually heard a few of you groaning there for a second. You are concerned that the LAN party planned for the upcoming weekend is going to be totally botched on account of having to wait around for your e-mail to sound off a critical alert that may or may not ever happen. You know the type. Some lame alert stating that your network is down and little additional information other than that. Well, my friends, with ipMonitor, this problem is a thing of the past.

First of all, you can be alerted to any specific problems via mobile phone SMS messaging, beeper, Net Send (wow that takes me back) and, of course, e-mail. Speaking for myself, I



would likely hang with the SMS being I could have my mobile set to vibrate and not having any of those cheesy ringtones jinxing my gaming action as I take my LAN party participants to school with a mean game of UT 2004!

Then again, perhaps you have the other (lesser) admin watching the shop for you this fine eve. No worries. You will have the option of checking out the log files from that evening once you return to work on Monday. All right, now that we have covered the 'alert' scenario, we can take a moment to see what sorts of automated functions ipMonitor can do on your behalf.

Well, for one thing, ipMonitor has the ability to point out potentially problematic trends before they become something really horrendous. The ipMonitor utility can run historic reports as well as recent activity by assigned group. Another thing that all admins will appreciate is the ability to shut down monitoring of specific server functions during pre-planned maintenance schedules. Trust me, this is a must have!

Security is always key

All of the nifty features mentioned above are not worth diddly if your network is not kept in a secure environment. Let's face it, your boss is going to have your butt in a sling if something goes wrong, correct? So you had better be using a tool that mirrors your concerns about the network's well being. Once again, we come full circle to ipMonitor.

This utility/tool/program/whatever you wish to call it offers protection by enforcing strong passwords if desired. You can also count on the SSL abilities to keep things buttoned up tightly when used with proper credentials. To be frank, ipMonitor will work with just about any sort of security scheme that you are currently using for your network. I am convinced that you will find it to be as flexible as it is powerful.

Let's wrap this up

Look, I can sit here till the cows come home trying to convince you why investing in ipMonitor makes sense from the get go. The final decision will rest in your hands - there is no dancing around that. Folks, I will make no claims that any one setup is going to be completely perfect. But by God, this is the best monitoring environment that I have had the opportunity to explore in any recent memory. If keeping your network up and running is critical to keeping your job, then you had better be placing your trust in ipMonitor.

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