



# A PROBLEM FOUND IS A PROBLEM SOLVED

*Around 80 percent of your IT costs are taken up by maintenance, with most of that spend going on identifying the problems. But it doesn't have to be that way...*

When computers debuted in businesses in the 1950s, most of the cost revolved around buying hardware and developing software. Then came PCs and off-the-peg software applications. While they were cheaper to buy than the older mainframes, most IT spend still went on hardware and software. But as hardware and software prices continued to fall, IT maintenance costs started to rise. At the same time, the computer changed from a tool to help you process words and build spreadsheets, into your mail box, phone system, calendar and other key functions.

Today, this vast array of uses, along with the increasing complexity of software and business IT networks, have combined to

make maintenance by far the biggest single computing expense. What's more, with modern businesses becoming increasingly reliant on 24/7 working and functions like email and web access, the cost of IT downtime is growing.

If your PC crashes, it is likely to seriously hinder your ability to do your job. Starve companies of access to email, the internet and critical software applications for too long, and they, too, will have trouble functioning. According to IBM figures, 80 percent of IT management time is now spent on isolating and diagnosing problems. Meanwhile, a National Institute of Technology study states that 60 percent of computer and network

availability and performance issues are caused by IT changes, such as integrating new applications and upgrading hardware and software. Furthermore, the research also reveals that 80 percent of development funds are spent identifying and fixing problems. In fact, the issue has reached such proportions that research company Gartner states: "With at least two-thirds of IT budgets currently consumed by operations, maintenance and support, there is little scope to invest in projects that could transform the business."

## **NETWORK MONITORING**

This situation has a knock-on effect on other business systems, including security. At the launch of the 2008 Information Security Breaches Survey by the Department for Business Enterprise & Regulatory Reform (BERR), PricewaterhouseCooper's security guru Bruce Schneier said the current speed of technological change allows insufficient time to develop effective responses to possible security threats. Consequently, companies have lost sight of their security objectives due to the complexity of the technology involved.

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**“By spending a little on tracking down IT problems before they go critical, you can end up saving thousands of pounds”**

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## IBM monitoring and upgrades

Tivoli Provisioning Manager Express for Software Distribution helps automate inventory and manage software distribution. It helps you identify non-compliant users and quickly deploy critical software updates to reduce downtime and the need for costly help-desk support. It also includes flexible 'push' and 'pull' capabilities that help administrators easily create and deliver the right software packages for individual laptops, desktops and servers that are in need of software updates.

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To learn more about IBM Tivoli products, visit [www.ibm.com/software/tivoli/smb](http://www.ibm.com/software/tivoli/smb)

So how can you avoid this? The answer is to use software that monitors your network, and keeps your PCs and servers up to date with the latest programs.

By spending a little on tracking down IT problems before they go critical, you can end up saving hundreds, if not thousands of pounds in downtime and IT maintenance costs. Choosing the right package can help you to reduce the need for maintenance and prevent problems before they arise.

A good network monitoring solution should tell you what's attached to your network, from PCs to servers and printers, so you can identify unauthorised devices. It can also provide details on peak data traffic, so you can gauge whether your network needs upgrading, or if a particular switch or router is at capacity and causing a bottleneck. What's more, it can provide a basic health check on all your servers and PCs, so you'll know if a hard disk is starting to come to the end of its life, or if a server is about to hit 90 percent capacity. This enables you to upgrade before you start to lose data or the server crashes at a critical moment.

### SOFTWARE PATCHES

Network monitoring, however, will not solve all your IT problems. Software can prove to be just as troublesome. So the next level of prevention is to add a system that

keeps your PCs, laptops and servers up to date with the latest drivers, applications and security patches.

We're all familiar with anti-virus packages that update their list of threats everyday, or sometimes even every few hours, and the benefits of always having the latest security software on your system are clear. But for most businesses, that's where it stops, because making sure that every application, driver and security patch on your company's PCs is completely up to date would be a full-time job.

However, using a package that automatically and remotely views your software and all of the devices on your network (whether it's a PC in the office, a server in a regional branch or a laptop in a hotel overseas), will help you reduce your IT maintenance costs even further. Additionally, by auditing your software you can also reduce expenditure on the necessary licences required.

Maintaining a record of the applications a system is using also makes rebuilding a server or PC much quicker, should things go wrong. Furthermore, the system can be set to create standard PCs and servers during the rebuilding process, and this can be carried out remotely without any human intervention, saving hours of IT management time. ■

## VIEW FROM THE INDUSTRY



**Systems and network monitoring** should be a key element in any customer's infrastructure. The ability to proactively detect impending errors

before they occur can save money and increase application availability. A well implemented monitoring solution will highlight systems that are close to capacity and identify systems that are under-utilised. This can provide a plan for consolidating multiple workloads onto fewer servers or indicate a need for server virtualisation, thus reducing power consumption and floor space within the data center. In today's economy, monitoring your data center's power usage is just as important as monitoring individual systems.

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## NEXT STEPS: CONTACT

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