



# Network Management success stories

a special eGuide from Solarwinds

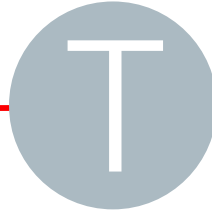
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This special eGuide comprises three local case studies of network management software. Each case study outlines the problem faced and the way Solarwinds' software helped to overcome it, including technical details, references to product suites and quotes from clients.

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**SOLARWINDS HELPS REALESTATE.COM.AU TO MEET 99.99 PER CENT UPTIME TARGETS**

We trust you find this eGuide of value.

Best regards

Geoff Hird

Publisher – *Technology Decisions*

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# SolarWinds transforms Brisbane Grammar's user experience

SolarWinds technology has transformed Brisbane Grammar School's ICT professionals from being reactive to proactive when glitches occur on their complex and geographically dispersed network. In the past, they often heard about problems when students, staff or parents phoned the Help Desk. Today, SolarWinds **Network Performance Monitor** (NPM) ensures that they have either resolved problems or are working on them by the time people call.

## The Customer

**Brisbane Grammar School** is a non-selective independent day and boarding school for boys, located in the centre of Brisbane, Australia. Brisbane Grammar caters for about 1,450 boys in Years 6 to 12.

## IT Management Challenge

The school has a relatively large and complex IT environment which is geographically dispersed across more than 15 buildings. As a consequence, it can be difficult to keep track of what is happening in different parts of the network.

The network includes some 1,900 client devices (tablets, desktops and laptops) and 120 switched devices, including wireless access points. It is used by 1,450 pupils, 320 teachers, and more than 2,000 parents who log-in via an extranet. There are 45 virtual and 8 physical servers at three sites, plus more than 30 switches and 200 applications, including core network services such as Active Directory, Exchange, SQL, SharePoint, file and print.

The school needed a solution to provide real-time monitoring of its core and edge network infrastructure, as well as the ability to monitor the uptime of servers, services and applications across 50-plus physical and virtual servers.

## Solution

In their quest for a product to monitor their environment, Brisbane Grammar's IT team checked several applications that were available on trial and also reviewed what other schools were using. According to Michael Lowbridge, Director of ICT and Information Services, they selected SolarWinds Network Performance Monitor as the most comprehensive all-in-one monitoring

## CLIENT STATISTICS

Complex IT environment geographically dispersed across a site with over 15 buildings. Used by 1,450 pupils, 320 teachers - and 2,000-plus parents via an extranet.

Network includes 1,900 client devices (tablets, desktops and laptops) and 120 switched devices, including wireless access points. There are 45 virtual and eight physical servers at three sites, plus more than 30 switches and 200 applications.

Our higher order of troubleshooting is saving 5-10 hours a week in ICT staff time which is no longer being wasted. The cost of network downtime in terms of lost productivity, frustrated staff and students, and the potential negative impact on the classroom environment was substantially higher than the cost of a robust network management system with the comprehensive features offered by SolarWinds.

solution backed by a robust support model.

Lowbridge said: "As a vendor neutral, agent free web-based product it provides the coverage required in our organisation. NPM made an immediate impact on the stability and visibility of our network. The application is unique in being a single pane of glass interface to access all necessary information relating to the management and monitoring of our network's services."

## Results

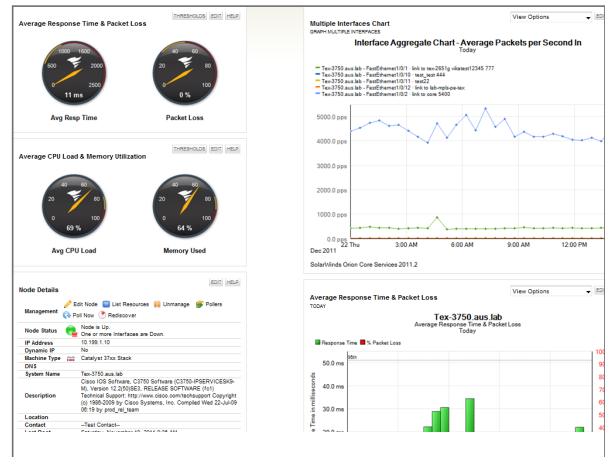
Since adopting the SolarWinds solution, Brisbane Grammar's IT team has been more proactive in managing the network.

For example, when a series of faults occurred in the wireless network due to a bug in the firmware, the IT team became rather gun shy to the point where they assumed that any call relating to network access was a wireless problem. Now NPM allows them to check all aspects of the physical and application layers to confirm whether a problem is wireless-related or potentially another system or end user fault.

"We are receiving fewer calls beginning 'did you know that ...,' because NPM allows the ICT Service Desk team to communicate with our user base more effectively," said Lowbridge. "The solution is also supporting faster diagnosis of problems - our response times have been halved at the very least, and probably substantially more than halved."

He said NPM had enhanced the entire user experience because ICT staff members are no longer blind to what is happening around the network. NPM provides substantially enhanced visibility to the network's operational status.

"Our higher order of troubleshooting is saving 5 to 10 hours a week in ICT staff time that is no longer being wasted," said Lowbridge. "The cost of network downtime in terms of lost productivity, frustrated staff and students, and the potential negative impact on the classroom environment was substantially higher than the cost of a robust network management system with the comprehensive features offered by SolarWinds."



Network Performance Monitor (NPM) makes it easy to quickly detect, diagnose and resolve performance issues and delivers real-time views and dashboards that enable users to track network performance at a glance.

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APAC Headquarters, Intec House, Level 22 - SolarWinds  
215 Adelaide Street, Brisbane, QLD, 4000  
T: 1800 090 386 | F: +61 (07) 3319 6401

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# School Learns Fast as Problems Come to Light

After working for months to improve the unreliable network at **Orange Christian School**, in Orange, Australia, and achieving only moderate improvements, IT Supervisor Justin Dwyer implemented SolarWinds **Network Performance Monitor** (NPM). Immediately, to his amazement, he spotted “billions” of problems! With the help of a switch vendor he soon fixed these and now pupils and teachers are benefiting from reliable Internet connectivity.

## The Customer

Orange Christian School is a parent-owned, non-denominational Christian school established in 1981. The small city of Orange (pop. approx. 39,000 people) lies some 206km (120 miles) west of Sydney. The school provides comprehensive pre-kindergarten through to Year 12 education that promotes spiritual, ethical and relational understanding in children. Its 300-plus pupils interact closely with their teachers; the senior secondary students also interact via the **My Orange Christian School website** which gives them access to resources that allow them to study from anywhere that has an Internet connection. The site enables teachers to engage students in a way that reflects their individual learning style, thus improving their results. It is planned that the site will be rolled out to the junior grades to use over time.

## IT Management Challenge

For years, the school’s network had been somewhat unreliable, dropping out intermittently and often failing to recognise network devices. The school’s network includes about 200 PCs, 70 iPads and 28 printers, all routed via 8 switches.

When IT Supervisor Justin Dwyer arrived at the school in 2010, he found a variety of problems that required a systematic approach to fixing them. Without network tools, he relied on the users to alert him to problems. Justin set about checking devices and making network changes, major improvements were made, many things were cleaned up, but the pace of improvement did not meet with his expectations. Something else was needed.

## Solution

Justin sought a network monitoring solution by checking online IT forums, and discovered that “almost everyone was recommending SolarWinds.” He took SolarWinds Network Performance Monitor on a 30-day trial and the results startled him.

“As soon as I had Network Performance Monitor up and running, I found billions of problems. I was amazed. A network switch that had been installed for three years had dropped 450 billion packets in that time – I could not believe it,” Justin said. Since the SolarWinds product delivered such immediate and impressive results, he decided not to trial other solutions.

### CLIENT STATISTICS

Some 200 PCs, 70 iPads and 28 printers, all routed via eight switches.

Use of the Internet is critical for the learning process.

“As soon as I had Network Performance Monitor up and running, I found billions of problems. I was amazed. A network switch that had been installed for three years had dropped 450 billion packets in that time – I could not believe it.”

Justin uses SolarWinds Network Performance Monitor to detect, diagnose and resolve performance issues through real-time views and dashboards that enable him to track network performance visually, at a glance. Dynamic network topology maps and automated network discovery allow him to monitor the school's network easily.

## Results

When Network Performance Monitor showed Justin the extent of his network problems, he phoned the faulty switch's vendor immediately and within 24 hours received instructions on how to fix the issues. Today, he has resolved most of the network glitches. Delighting in his new-found visibility, Justin has set up NPM to email him if a switch or workstation goes down.

"If a problem develops, I know immediately. This ability to be aware of an issue and often fix it before the teachers or pupils tell me there's a problem is awesome. Today, I would be lost without monitoring software -- I would have no idea of what was happening within the network. There is no doubt that SolarWinds Network Performance Monitor paid for itself within a week," he said.

Although he is not able to speculate on network throughput improvement percentages, since usage varies from 0-300 users on the network depending on school activities, Justin says it is far more reliable. He acknowledges the role SolarWinds' sales engineers played in his success.

"Their support people were terrific. First they helped me by phone to set up their solution and since then they have been fantastic. I have never met anyone like them -- they chase me for input more than I chase them. I would recommend SolarWinds and their team to anyone," he said.



Network Performance Monitor (NPM) makes it easy to quickly detect, diagnose and resolve performance issues and delivers real-time views and dashboards that enable users to track network performance at a glance.

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# SolarWinds helps realestate.com.au to meet 99.99 per cent uptime targets

When IT professionals in the REA Group began to build a 90 per cent virtualised private cloud to accommodate realestate.com.au, Australia's leading web site for residential property, they chose a range of SolarWinds networking and application monitoring tools to help them. It was a critical project as the site attracts more than 20.4 million Visits a month . But SolarWinds' solutions helped the IT team to meet their 99.99 per cent uptime target and have also empowered engineers to make better informed decisions by delivering new levels of transparency and enabling better systems access.

## Customer

REA Group Limited (ASX:REA) is a leading digital advertising business specialising in property. Listed on the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX) in 1999, the Group operates Australia's No.1 residential and commercial property websites, realestate.com.au and realcommercial.com.au, as well as the market-leading Italian property site, casa.it, and other property sites and apps across Europe and Hong Kong. Further details about REA Group's activities can be found at [www.rea-group.com](http://www.rea-group.com)

## Challenge

Having built its own private cloud, the IT team at realestate.com.au sought upgraded solutions to manage the availability and uptime of the corporate network, infrastructure, and applications. Previously they had used old versions of SolarWinds solutions, but these were three major versions behind latest technology and the team was unable to modify them easily.

"We wanted the latest and greatest versions that we could tailor build," said Technology Services Manager, Damian Fasciani.

The technology they chose would be used for monitoring network equipment, as well as 40 virtual servers and 10 physical servers. The corporate environment is a mix of Windows, Linux and OSX. The network serves five offices, two physical data centres and two cloud data centres. There are 100-plus devices, including wireless access points.

Network uptime is critical because none of the infrastructure or servers are located within any of the offices.

"If the network were to go down, our business would come to a halt," said Fasciani. "We have an uptime target of 99.99 per cent."

## Solution

According to Fasciani, REA's IT staff already knew that SolarWinds had some of the best monitoring and management products available. Also he and others had used SolarWinds products in previous jobs. So rather than initiate a time-consuming evaluation, the team went straight to SolarWinds solutions, based on their past experience with these.

The company had used other tools, including Nimsoft and Nagios, and they are in the process of de-commissioning Nagios. Fasciani said Nagios was comparable with SolarWinds in power, but SolarWinds was far easier to use and set up quickly, plus multiple SolarWinds solutions came out of the box with a single pane of glass view.

## CLIENT STATISTICS

- 3 million web 'hits' per month
- 99.99 per cent availability target
- 40 physical and 10 virtual servers
- Two physical and two cloud data centres
- 100-plus network devices

"The SolarWinds solutions have given us better access and more transparency than ever before, as well as better access to the system. This empowers engineers to make decisions when they need to, based on what they are seeing on the monitors. Before, we pretty much relied on intuition."

For systems management they selected SolarWinds Virtualisation Manager (VM), and Server and Applications Monitor (SAM); while for network management they selected SolarWinds Network Performance Monitor (NPM) and Network Configuration Manager (NCM). They added Web Performance Monitor (WPM) to ensure the health of their critical web site; IP Address Manager (IPAM) to simplify and monitor management of IP addresses; Syslog Server to receive process and alert logs from network devices and Windows events; and Mobile Admin for Agentless IT management and monitoring from any mobile device. Finally SolarWinds Enterprise Operations Console (EOC) gives at-a-glance insights into enterprise network performance.

## Results

According to Fasciani, Network Performance Monitor produces a wealth of information, so much in fact that the IT team have added a widget to show only certain types of input. When they need to broaden the application's scope, they simply click through to additional information.

He said, "NPM simplifies detection, diagnosis and resolution of network issues. It is good for learning network utilisation. By reporting problems such as packet loss, and by flagging issues so early, it allows us to be pro-active in fixing problems."

NPM also tracks response time, availability and uptime of routers, switches and other SNMP-enabled devices. The solution also shows performance statistics in real time.

The realestate.com.au team use Network Configuration Monitor to back up all switch and router configurations, and have checked its ability to make configuration changes although they had not yet used this functionality.

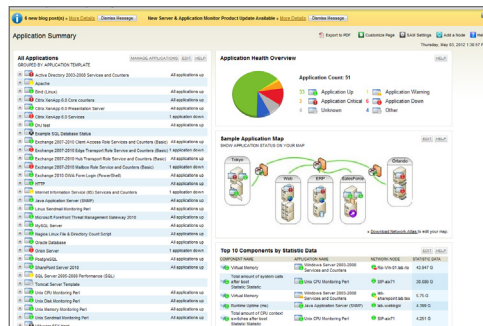
According to Fasciani, NPM and NCM "do the job well, and most of their areas are fantastic". He added, "We implemented SolarWinds Virtualisation Manager (VM) to monitor our VMware infrastructure in our private cloud, which previously we found difficult, but with VM its plug and play and reconfiguring it was easy and straightforward."

Since the realestate.com.au web site represents the business's backbone, the IT team has made its continuing operation their top priority by supporting a 99.99 per cent network availability target. To achieve this they have multiple strategies and solutions in place. If a front end web server goes down, redundancy is such that it does not affect the overall performance.

Web optimisation is critical, so SolarWinds Web Performance Monitor (WPM) which continuously monitors end-user experience for each step of a web transaction, also plays a key role.

"Optimising the network, systems, web and applications (within our Hybrid Cloud) are all critical to the health of our business, and the SolarWinds' solutions combine to enable us to give us early warning of any developing problems," said Fasciani. "Then our redundancy setup lets us drop a server out of the loop while we rectify the situation, usually before our users are even aware of it."

He concludes, "The SolarWinds solutions has contributed to our record of maintaining 99.99 per cent uptime by giving us better access and more transparency than ever before, as well as better access to the system. This empowers engineers to make decisions when they need to, based on what they are seeing on the monitors. Before, we pretty much relied on intuition."



Managing the performance and security of networks, servers, applications, websites, virtual machines and storage devices has never been easier or more affordable. Simply ask SolarWinds what you want to manage and they will guide you to the monitoring or management solution that meets your needs.

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solarwinds.com.au

APAC Headquarters: Level 21, Tower 2, 201 Sussex Street, Sydney, 2000 Australia  
P: 1 800 090 386 | E: [APACSales@solarwinds.com](mailto:APACSales@solarwinds.com)

Toll Free Numbers:

Singapore: +65 6593 7600  
South China: 10800 265 2552  
North China: 10800 650 0579  
India: 000800 650 1572  
Thailand: 001800 658 027  
Vietnam: 120 65 118  
Taiwan: 0080 165 2042

New Zealand: 0800 8850 17  
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