

# The role of monitoring in Application Performance Management



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## Every minute an application is slow or down it hurts your business

**Over the years, applications have become increasingly complex to manage.**

With the adoption of Service-Oriented architecture, the Cloud, Hybrid IT and Big Data, applications are now more distributed than ever with hundreds upon thousands being managed by third party services, not to forget the complications around shadow IT.

The migration of applications into the Cloud has increased the need for tools to manage network and application performance for both the Managed Service Provider (MSP) and Corporate Customer across every vertical market sector. Most importantly, the availability and overall user experience of applications has become a focal point for businesses.

Without the joint visibility of network and application, the close monitoring and management of business-critical applications performance cannot be achieved effectively, leaving end users often unaware of what is causing poor performance of their applications.



## What is the cause?

Is it poorly performing network infrastructure? Perhaps it is non-critical and unauthorised applications consuming the network or server resources. Or is there insufficient network capacity to handle the valid business application traffic?

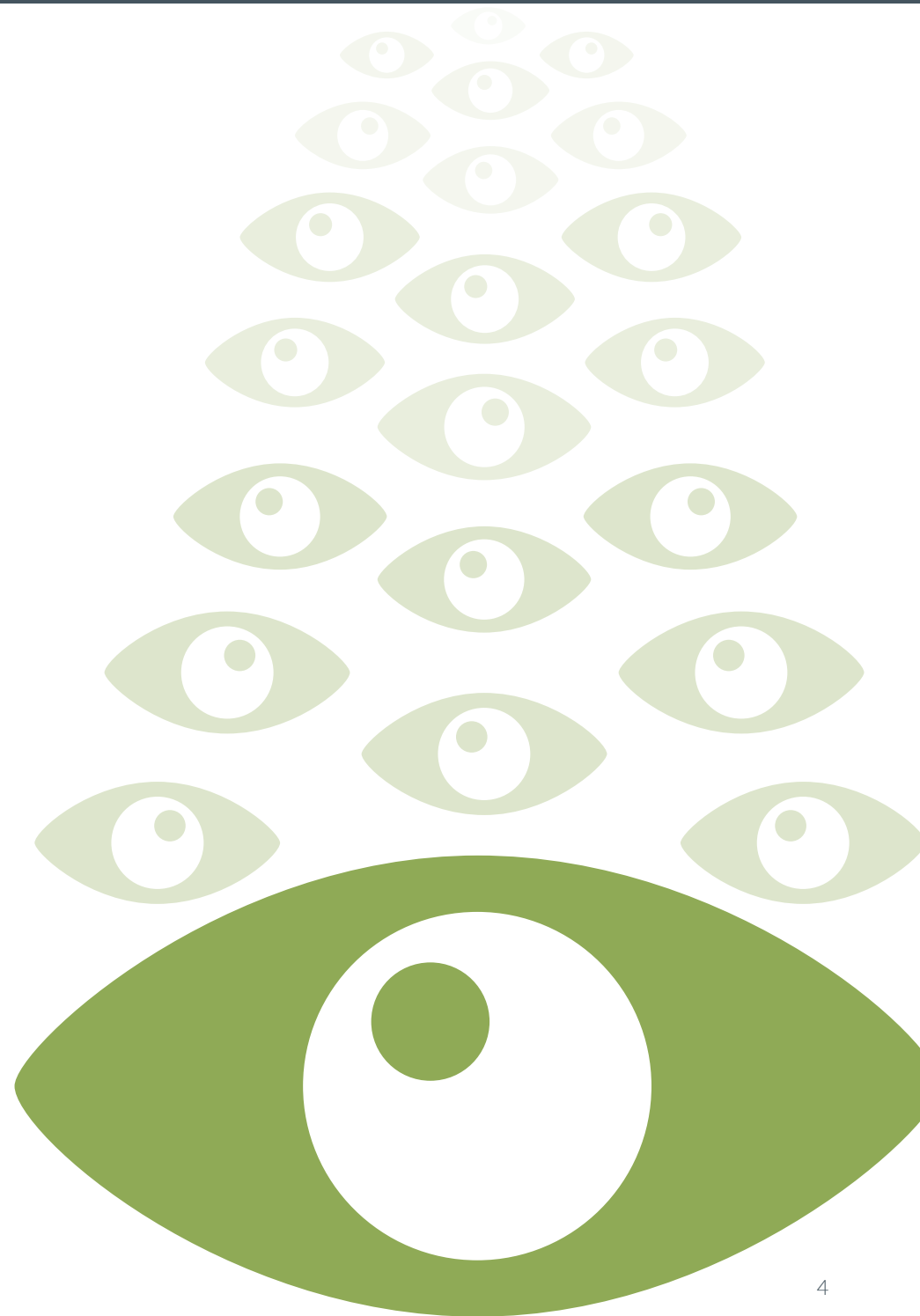
How are organisations with zero to little network and application performance visibility and management supposed to improve or correct this business impacting conditions?

**The truth is that without visibility, they can't.**

*“ ...one in four organisations have no idea which “unofficial” applications are running on their IT infrastructure.”*

It is therefore vital that IT staff have the ability to see clearly and determine the best action to resolve growing performance issues before it has a critical effect on the entire business operation.

Source: Cloud Security Alliance (CSA) Jan 2015



# The performance blame game

MSPs ultimately have common goals; delivering effective services, driving out costs from their business, offering prices to their corporate customers to suit business requirements and differentiating their service experience from competitors.

**When it comes down to effective cost control, performance monitoring is key.**

Being unable to actively monitor customers' applications and infrastructure performance in relationship with one another leaves neither MSP nor customers in a position to understand where problems are arising.

All too often MSPs can't see customers application events that impact the network adversely and similarly, corporate enterprises are unable to see when and how these events are affecting their infrastructure. This condition leads to customers believing their provider's network is of poor quality and the service provider has no evidence to dispute this claim.

The divide is between application and infrastructure performance events, combined with a lack of transparency of both components within the IT landscape. Gartner views the two as being distinct:

- Infrastructure teams normally operate in different organisations which means performance is monitored in isolation. Teams then face the blame game when issues arise as each team comes to the table to discuss the root cause of the fault.
- MSPs and their customers are often left in the dark as a result, especially if their application performance management tool seems to be showing no issues within the applications themselves. As a result, it is assumed that there is fault with the infrastructure, when in fact one has to be able to see clearly both components of the IT landscape to clearly identify the cause.



**MSPs and customers can no longer afford to not have complete visibility of network infrastructure events and application performance in one view. More than ever, it's extremely important that tools have full capability to show the source of arising issues.**

A synergy between application and infrastructure performance management is converging as more MSPs realise the importance of monitoring the two in correlation to provide greater transparency for their customers and in turn increase productivity and effective management.



## Cultivating trusted relationships

In a service-driven environment where competition is fierce, it's important to build and maintain trusted relationships. These are easily destroyed if customers aren't receiving the highest quality of service experience and visibility.

MSPs need to deliver joined-up application and infrastructure performance management ensuring enterprises can focus on their most important business objectives to save time, resources and money, in turn avoiding the blame game.



## The rise of Application Performance Monitoring

The Application Performance Management (APM) industry is advancing rapidly to support these growing needs, with expectations to reach \$5.6 billion by 2020 according to a forecast from Enterprise Software Markets Worldwide 2014 – 2021.

APM first started appearing in the late 90s with solutions such as Precise, Wily and Mercury Interactive. Towards the mid-2000s APM tools took a more consolidated approach whereby they were acquired by larger vendors who integrated them into larger suites, often unsuccessfully.

Around 2009, the more “modern” APM tools emerged, aimed at the new breed of distributed systems running in virtualized, cloud environments. Major vendors of APM today include tools by New Relic, Dynatrace and App Dynamics (now owned by Cisco).

Alongside Application Performance Management, the term Application Performance Monitoring appeared. Whilst the Management industry holds a significant place in the market, Monitoring is sometimes dismissed – an easy mistake since there's only a thin line between the two. Monitoring refers to the collection of performance data whilst Management is a much broader term.

## Who needs monitoring?

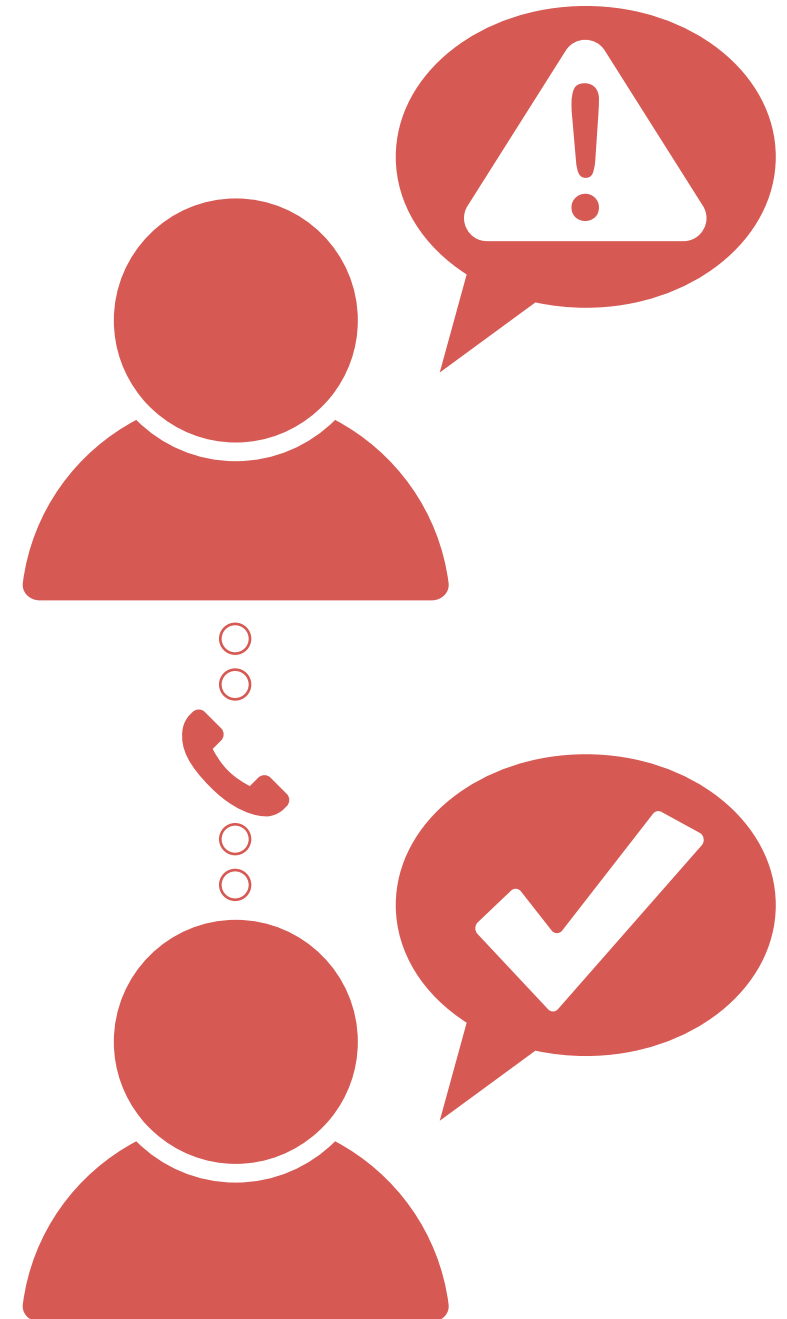
MSPs are amongst the key players in the market requiring Application Performance Monitoring. To allow for effective customer engagement and quick issue resolution, there must be a tool in place that allows the MSP to monitor their corporate customers' requirements.

Lack of performance monitoring can lead to costly downtime affecting budgets, operations and infrastructure, as well as disabling employees from carrying out their job.

Service Providers and their corporate customers need to be speaking the same language, using a shared tool with simple graphical information that can be understood by business users and technical teams alike, allowing them to see clearly the quality and performance of key applications.

Decision makers don't have time to drill down to the nitty-gritty details of applications. An interface which pushes this information to the surface allows users to view application crisis building in real-time. When problems arise, a customer can pick up the phone to their service provider and have the right discussions at the right time leading to proactive issue resolution.

**It can't be stressed enough; not monitoring the performance of critical applications can be a costly mistake. If sluggish or failed applications can be prevented by good visibility, then it's a win-win situation for both service provider and customer, bringing them together on a relationship built through transparency.**





## 5 key features to look for when choosing an Application Performance Monitoring solution

Here are some key features to help MSPs to determine the best tool for the job:

### Single shared consolidated view

An application performance monitoring tool needs to work alongside other tools to ensure the smooth functioning of business operations. This removes the time wasted logging into different tools and correlating data which can leave a tainted user experience, lack of consistency and human error.

An authentic, multi-tenant, multi-tier tool consolidating all operations into one is a must to monitor all services (including Application Performance) of all your customers. This ensures that valuable time and context is not lost by unnecessary switching between tools.

It's critical that this view is shared between MSP and customers, creating executive level transparency and establishing factual trust.

### Graphical display

You want to be able to see the most relevant information pushed to the surface, at a glance. Having an interface with a “no clutter, all fact” design ethos means that information is presented with a focus on business-critical elements and you can easily drill down to the detail of applications.

Knowing where, when and what application traffic is flowing through your network helps control costs, as well as spotting the appearance of unauthorised applications.

Why restrict the list of people who can benefit from this insight? Your corporate customers' sales and service management personnel don't want to rely on engineering and operations management to translate information into something meaningful every time. Information and time is crucial to smooth running, so it's important that this isn't hiding behind intimidating network engineering tools.



Users of all technical levels need to understand and get value from the information.

It's amazing how often MSPs say “Yes, we have tools in place to do this” but those tools are only used by engineers - never by key stakeholders like Sales Account Managers, Service Managers, or Retention teams, where there's huge value to be gained from seeing what their customers see.

Users love simplicity. Using a universal colour system such as red-amber-green to show stability, load and health of network and application performance also means that anyone can understand what's being displayed to them.

## Issue detection

If applications become slow this likely points to a performance problem. Rather than letting applications get to this stage, use a tool which shows crises building in real-time before they become a problem. This reduces inefficiencies and prevents business functions coming to halt.

## Alerting

A tool which provides intelligent custom alerts and reduces false alarms to enable proactive issue resolution is another priority. The ability to be alerted without the need for continuously logging into your tool means you can focus on what's important; you can trust that you'll be alerted when something is wrong with your application's health.

## Breakdowns, trends and reporting

For those who are more technically minded or just curious about investigating application performance issues, it's important that you can drill down into information and detect trends and patterns. Having a real-time and retrospective view that allows you to look back at the past week, month or even year will enable you to correlate application events and provide explanations. This aids in capacity planning and future proofing your IT landscape.

Having an alerting and reporting method which is designed for speed and simplicity, enables you to draw on raw and pre-summarised data. This means you're saving time and can hold the right discussions at any time with your customers.



## Conclusion

**Monitoring application performance is not the end goal...  
it's the quality of service delivered and received by the customer.**

MSPs and professionals from IT and commercial business teams need visibility and access to information on applications being used at any given time and location - insight which can pinpoint performance and availability issues.

What's more, managers require this information in an easy to understand, tangible, graphical format which is available in real-time; enabling decision makers of both a technical and non-technical nature to identify the causes of business-critical application issues and determine the corrective action in partnership.

Ultimately, this requirement is driven by the business need to be effective and ensure a positive user experience. Nothing irks customers more than slow response times or when business-critical applications are down. Monitoring performance of applications and infrastructure is not the end goal, the focus must be on the quality of service both delivered and received by the customer.





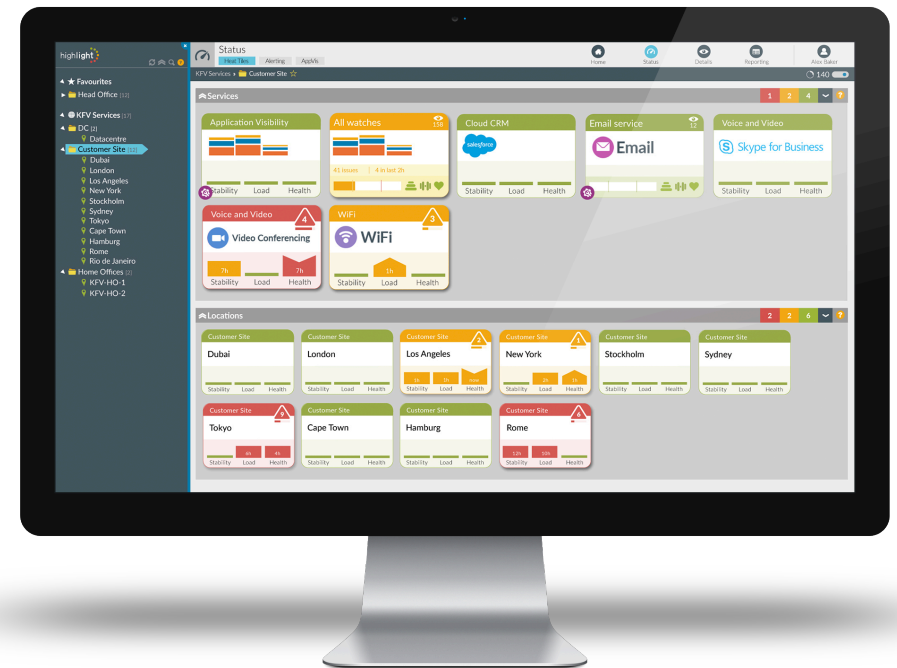
# About Highlight

Highlight is a cloud-based monitoring service enabling Sales, Service Managers and Operations Managers to see clearly, showing all managed services through a single pane of glass.

It provides accurate, impartial evidence of applications and network service performance across all locations, creating trusted advisor relationships, between Service Providers and their Corporate Customers.

Highlight is designed for non-technical and technical professionals who need a commercial/business management view of IT infrastructure and application performance.

Our vision is to be the best sales and service management tool for Network and Managed Services providers which enables trusted advisor partnerships with their corporate customers.



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Cover: Summit Prairie Lookout Tower in Oregon, USA  
Pg 11: Swedish traffic jam in 1967

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## Get in touch

If you are a service provider and want to know more on how Highlight can help you with Application Performance Monitoring or other features, please get in touch:

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