The hidden costs of traditional network management tools

Your monitoring tools leave you unprepared to embrace the latest and greatest technologies

The digital transformation is here, and organizations need to prepare.

Leaders from all industries must make business-critical decisions to stay one step ahead of the competition. The organizations that are embracing the digital transformation are trailblazers. They're reinventing the services and applications they deliver by anticipating customer needs proactively and delivering accordingly.

Hundreds of companies are looking to journey through a digital transformation by deploying next-generation infrastructures to run and scale operations and services.

But many of the traditional infrastructure management tools on the market today can't support digital transformation initiatives.

You can't depend on a preexisting tool if your business seeks to be agile and you plan to invest in new technologies such as hybrid cloud, software-defined networking (SDN), software-defined wide-area networking (SD-WAN) and Internet of Things (IoT). You can't depend on a traditional tool if your business is growing and you need insight into the health of your digital infrastructure at scale. You know your team can't waste any more time reacting to problems and fighting fires.

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Hidden costs

You may think that just because you purchased a tool long ago or upgraded to a newer version for free, you're doing the company's bottom line a favor.

Well, think again.

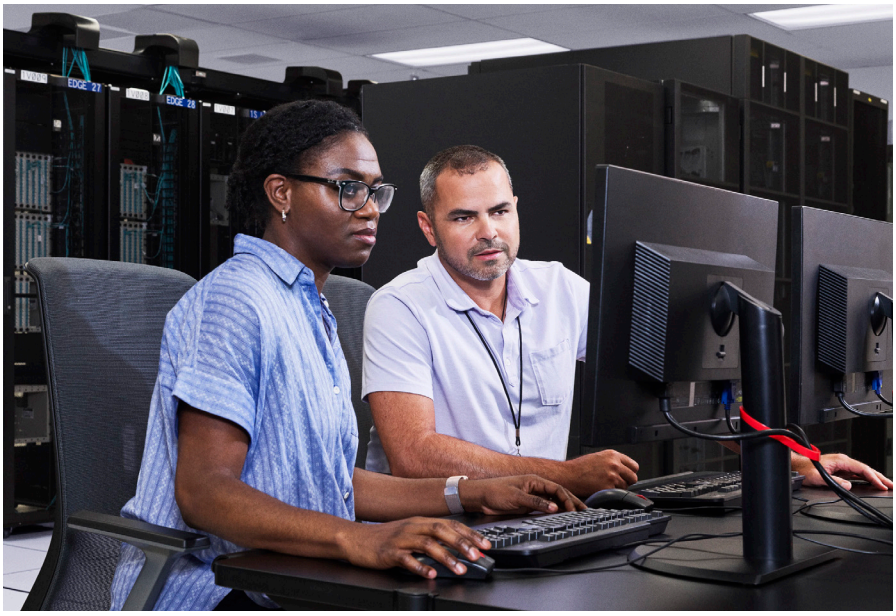
There are many hidden costs associated with relying on preexisting monitoring tools—and you might already be paying for them.

For instance, if you're relying on multiple tools from various vendors to monitor individualized segments of your network, you're probably paying a hefty amount in aggregated maintenance contracts.

If you're dealing with troubleshooting delays because you need to check multiple tools, you're losing money. And it costs even more to train new staff on each tool's protocols.

Maybe your tools take a long time to provide the analytics and insights you need to make business-critical decisions. Or you might be experiencing slowness in troubleshooting as your company grows and expands. This can cause visibility gaps throughout your infrastructure, creating a lack of trust in your data.

If your tools aren't equipped to support strategic initiatives such as hybrid cloud, IoT and software-defined environments, your business isn't poised to reap the financial benefits of a more automated infrastructure.



When to upgrade

You might see no reason to replace your monitoring tools. Yet.

Perhaps you know there are better solutions out there but you're willing to wait until the ones you use run their course. Or perhaps you're just not ready to invest in a monitoring platform and are considering a free software download.

Maybe your current vendor is offering a new solution at no cost, or a free upgrade to keep you from switching providers.

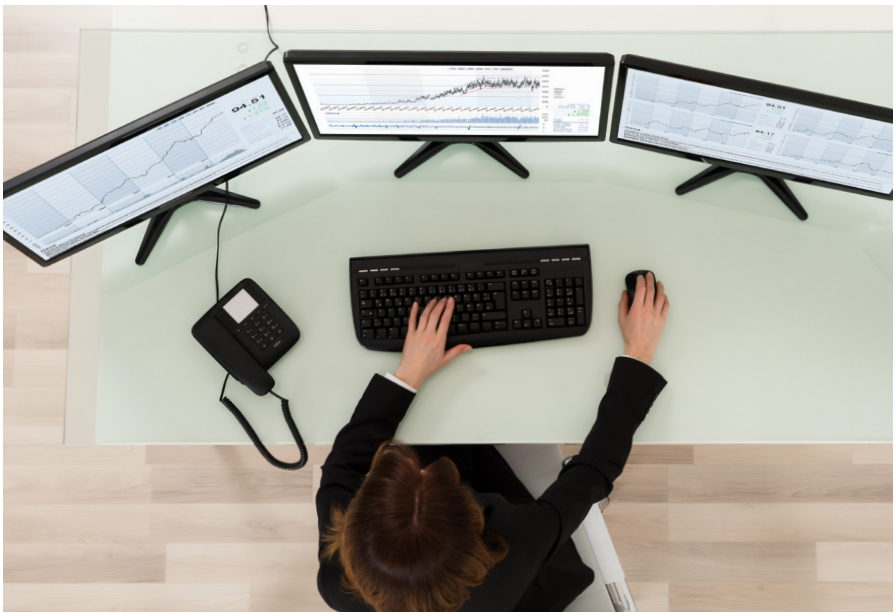
The established tools may be able to provide you with some basic reporting and analytics. But ask yourself—is that still good enough?

If your business and reputation are on the line, the answer is no. If you're looking to embrace the hybrid cloud, SD-WAN, SDN, IoT and other new technologies, you'll want to avoid earlier software.

If you want your IT and operations teams to spend their time proactively solving issues instead of reacting to problems and fighting fires, disregard older solutions. They just won't cut it.

Your team doesn't need to settle for the status quo. Just because "this is the way we've done it for years" doesn't mean it's the best way to go about monitoring your business's critical infrastructure. Better solutions exist. And the time to consider them is now.

Next we'll discuss four hidden costs to consider when comparing traditional monitoring tools with tried-and-true solutions.



Hidden cost #1

Your tools aren't providing the insight and analytics you need to compete and move forward.

First and foremost, it's important to assess what your organization needs to succeed and grow. Knowledge is power and insights are king.

Is your business a service provider that needs to know how much traffic is being passed through a certain pipe at any given time? Or a large financial institution that offers a mobile banking app that must work all the time to attract and keep customers? Or an IT department at a college that needs to determine how much bandwidth is needed next semester based on predicted enrollment?

These are all questions that can be answered with data from a robust network observability system, one that provides actionable insights in just a few clicks.

As data increases and domains continue to expand into unchartered territories, blind spots, knowledge gaps and delays are becoming a daily reality. Existing monitoring tools are being stretched to the breaking point. With multiple metrics, tidal waves of data and fluctuating demand, companies are struggling to monitor their infrastructure and deliver vital applications and services.

Businesses need a network observability solution that offers true speed at scale. In doing so, you'll have access to all your data in real time for continuous service delivery insight.

Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health faced challenges proactively monitoring its critical IT systems. "We needed to find a monitoring solution that would be an integral part of our daily IT workflow, helping us identify and address issues before they became problems," noted Devereux Vice President of Information Resources Tom Shurer. The organization implemented IBM® SevOne® to improve insight into its systems and ensure greater reliability. Now, proactive detection of storage area network (SAN) capacity issues eliminates 3 hours of downtime per incident for Devereux.[1]

Hidden cost #2

You're cobbling together multiple preexisting tools to make it all work.

If you're using more than two or three tools to understand what's happening within your infrastructure, it's time to consider switching to a single platform that can provide end-to-end visibility.

Toggling between multiple traditional tools is burdensome. If there's a problem, can administrators easily pivot from data that shows something happened to data that provides insight into why it occurred?

If you want your teams to act quickly when an issue occurs, they need immediate access to data so they know what course of action to take—before customers start complaining. The less time it takes to solve an issue, the more your business can preserve revenue.

Look for a solution that removes visibility gaps and allows you to capitalize on the power of integrated collection, analysis, workflow and IT operations integration.

Telecommunications company Spark NZ gained robust network visibility and consolidated its NPM solutions from 5 to 1 by replacing existing tools with IBM SevOne. The solution provides end-to-end visibility for more than 400,000 objects in the Spark network.[2]

Hidden cost #3

Your tools don’t scale with the business as it grows.

Traditional monitoring tools might help you get by today, but will they supply you with the insights you need in six months, a year or five years from now?

Using a heritage monitoring tool might be just a Band-Aid situation for the time being. Because what happens if the business grows and suddenly your team is responsible for monitoring and ensuring systems, wifi and more across multiple domains and locations?

If you think your existing tools will be able to handle monitoring that additional activity, think again. And even if you could pay extra to monitor multiple locations, are you confident that the speed at which you get all this data will be the same?

Many established tools employ a centralized database architecture that hinders scalability. Another expensive side effect of this architecture is the need for more human administration. Numerous servers, databases, operating systems, security updates and licensing add to the complexity.

In the end, performance monitoring solutions built around a centralized database architecture become problematic. As monitoring needs expand, the solutions become expensive and fail at providing instantaneous information about the health of the environment.

Here’s an alternative: a network observability system—one equipped to handle the digital transformation—that employs a unique, patented architecture based on the concepts of distributed computing. The absence of a centralized database allows for unmatched scalability.

When your business is ready to grow, ask yourself if you can be assured you’ll have the insight to continue monitoring the growing infrastructure that comes with it.

Hidden cost #4

Your tools aren't providing a good ROI.

Although an older tool's sticker price may be less than its competitors', it might not be doing your bottom line any favors.

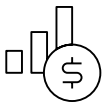
If you're cobbling together a few established tools to give you data and insights, chances are good that you need a team of people dedicated to each tool.

Now think about a platform that provides you with end-to-end visibility, operational insights at your fingertips, and speed at scale. Additionally, the platform provides a vast amount of data, presented easily through reports and alerts, but doesn't require as many full-time employees to monitor. What would your business look like if you could reassign three employees to other tasks instead of fighting fires and waiting for alerts?

With the right network observability system, your business can preserve revenue, reduce costs and lower risk. Can a preexisting tool provide you with that?

Consider this: How does downtime of a specific application or service impact your financial standing? These are questions business leaders need to understand. Look for ways to correlate a dollar amount with violations and downtime. Then extrapolate that over the frequency and duration of service issues. Now you have a tangible number that allows executives to weigh financial impact against the cost of rectifying the issue.

With the right network observability system, your team members won't be reacting to business impacting events after they've happened. They'll be addressing concerns before they become a major issue.



Devereux's IT team has enjoyed the ease of generating reports and graphs. Sutton, for example, built reports to troubleshoot specific issues. "I pick an object, pick an indicator, hit detach, and in no time, I can have a report with half a dozen or more graphs," he says. "I've never worked with a solution where you can build meaningful reports so fast.

"We use reports to help us decide what alerts would be useful," continues Sutton. "We have regular alert summary meetings to work together to spot patterns and fine-tune our alerts. With SevOne deployed, the number of preventable incidents is down. The team now utilizes much richer and more accurate baseline data, which better informs decisions."[2]

Conclusion

Trusting a preexisting tool to provide business-critical insights is a recipe for disaster.

Using a heritage monitoring tool is like buying a suit off the clearance rack that doesn't quite fit. The price is right and it might do the trick in a pinch, but it's ultimately a waste of money because you'll never wear it again. Buy the suit that looks good, the one you'll wear time and time again.

Because after all, if your monitoring tool doesn't do what you need it to do—whether that's help grow the business or allow you to embrace new technologies—it's not worth it, no matter the investment, or lack thereof.

Do your homework and look for an NPM system that will give you end-to-end visibility, operational insights at your fingertips, and speed at scale.

Why IBM?

IBM SevOne provides a single source of truth to help assure network performance across multivendor, enterprise, communication and managed services provider (MSP) networks.

Learn more more about IBM SevOne and how it can help your organization monitor and manage the performance of both your existing and next-generation network and infrastructure resources more effectively.

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1. Proactive protection for people with behavioral & cognitive differences, IBM case study, December 2021.
2. Igniting growth and innovation – Spark NZ gains end-to-end network visibility with IBM SevOne NPM, IBM case study, November 2021.