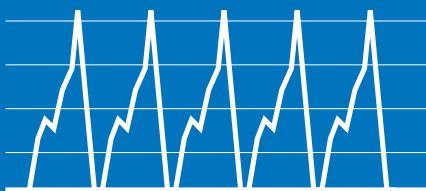
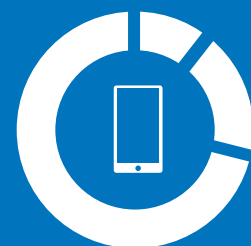


PeerPaper Report

10 Key Selection Factors for Network Monitoring Solutions

Based on Real User Reviews of Statseeker



ABSTRACT

Network problems can quickly turn into business problems, as critical systems slow down and people find it hard to get work done. Network monitoring solutions offer an answer, providing visibility into the far-reaches of the network. They issue alerts and create reports on the most subtle but potentially dangerous network performance problems. What's the right network monitoring solution? Statseeker users offer their perspectives in reviews on IT Central Station.

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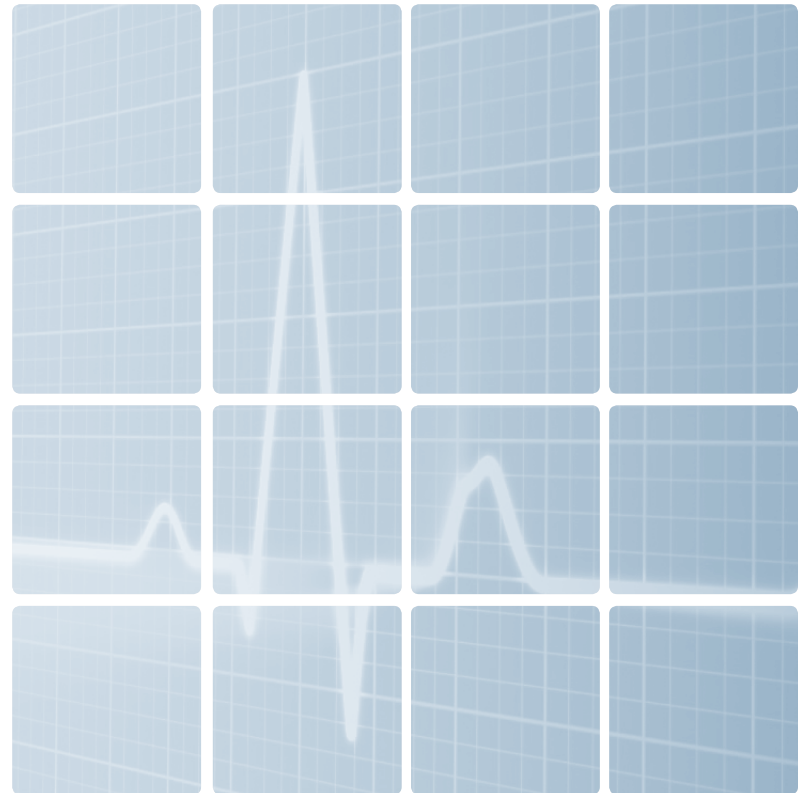
INTRODUCTION

Networks sometimes conceal traffic anomalies and bottlenecks that impede the proper functioning of enterprise IT. Network monitoring solutions are designed to bring such hidden network problems out into the light of day. They provide visibility into the far-reaches of the network, issuing alerts and offering reports on the most subtle but potentially dangerous network performance problems.

What's the right network monitoring solution? Based on real user reviews of the Statseeker solution, this paper sets out 10 key selection factors for a network monitoring solution. These include the ability to monitor, report and alert on the complete network, maintain data granularity, leverage powerful data analytics and offer both flexible dashboards and fast reporting.

A Brief Overview of Network Monitoring

Networks typically comprise many (sometimes thousands) of connected hardware elements, each with its own settings, connections, traffic load and performance characteristics. The network's ability to function depends on complex interactions between these elements—to the point where a human being could never keep track of it all. Network monitoring solves this problem. Solutions for network monitoring constantly keep track of network activities, looking for slowdowns or hardware failures. They monitor core aspects such as temperature, resource loads and availability and measure factors such as demand, response times and uptime. If the solution detects a potential problem, it issues an alert to a network manager.



10 Key Selection Factors for Network Monitoring Solutions

Network managers enjoy a broad range of choices when it comes to network monitoring solutions. Which one is right? Statseeker users weigh in, based on their experiences with the solution. Their reviews highlight 10 factors for an effective monitoring solution. Analytics and complete network monitoring top the list. Ease of deployment, scalability and pricing also count, as do reporting, dashboards and the scope and speed of alerting.



1. Analytics

Network monitoring solutions generate vast amounts of data. To work well, the solution needs to offer data analytics, as a Senior Network Engineer at a mid-sized tech services company commented. He explained, “We previously had WhatsUp Gold, which is a really cheap solution. We needed something with [better analytical abilities](#), better reporting, generally better information, and a better interface.” A Network Analyst concurred, praising Statseeker because its Netflow Analyser provides [visibility into his network](#).

As a Network Security Engineer at a government agency with over 1,000 employees said, “I believe Statseeker has [reduced the complexity of our network monitoring](#). Just one pane of glass allows you to go back in time to look at different patterns.” A Network Specialist at a comms service provider with over 1,000 employees pointed to the value of analytics in his review, citing satisfaction with Statseeker’s “[Interface monitoring](#), mainly for interface statistics.” He added, “We use it for monitoring up/down, capacity management, bandwidth utilization, reporting.”

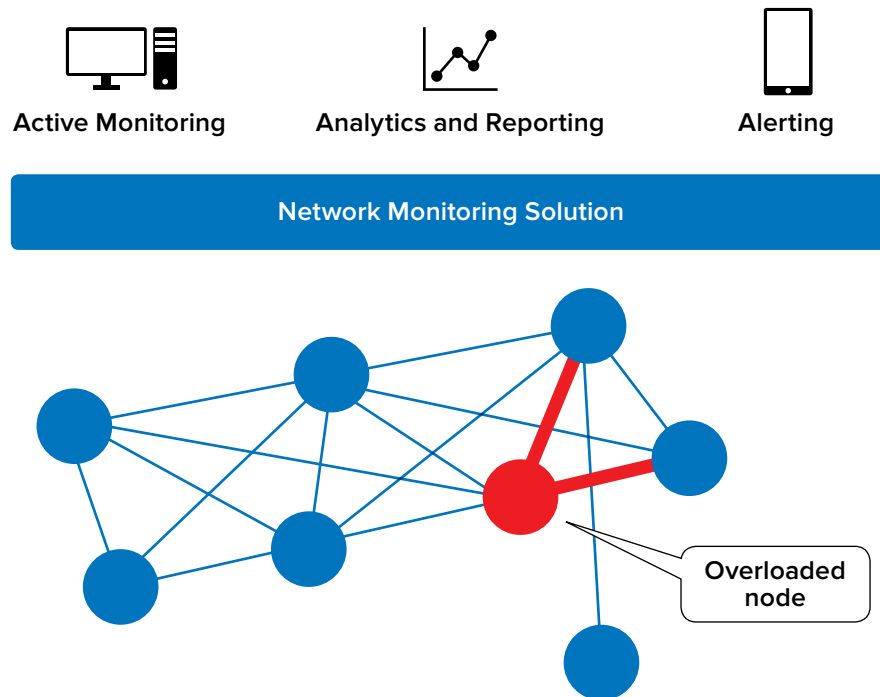


Figure 1 - Network monitoring solutions should track all network activity, discovering overloaded nodes, anomalies and other issues, alerting network managers and providing data for analysis of the problem.

2. Complete Network Monitoring

The ability to [monitor the entire network](#) is a valuable attribute of Statseeker, according to an IT Manager, Network Operation at a financial services firm with more than 5,000 employees. To this point, a Network Engineer at a non-tech company valued the fact that his solution “[simplifies monitoring](#) and provides real-time alerts for issues we might not immediately be aware of otherwise.” A Senior Manager of Core Network Operations at a comms service provider with more than 5,000 employees shared that “Statseeker helps reduce the complexity of our network monitoring because [it’s real-time](#), or somewhat real-time, so we’re able to see stuff quickly and react to it.” Figure 1 offers a simplified view of what this capability looks like.

3. Ease of Deployment

A network monitoring solution is itself an enterprise system that needs configuration, deployment and its own ongoing management. For this reason, network managers prefer network monitoring solutions that keep these workloads to a minimum. As Statseeker users noted:

- “This is a good solution in terms of [ease of use and ease of deployment](#).” - Solution Architect at a tech services company with over 500 employees
- “We performed the [deployment in-house](#).” - Network Engineer at a government agency
- “We chose Statseeker because of the ease of use, [fast deployments](#), and simple interface.” - Network Engineer at a university with more than 5,000 employees

4. Ability to Scale

Networks tend to grow unpredictably. This can occur due to organizational changes as well as mergers and acquisitions (M&A). An M&A event, for instance, could instantly double the size of a network. To keep up, network monitoring solutions must be able to scale up quickly and easily. This was on the mind of the Network Engineer, who shared, “The [Statseeker] product [scales very well](#). With a one gig connection we can do something like a million interfaces, so that works out well for us.” A Network Engineer at a healthcare company with over 1,000 employees further remarked that Statseeker “Allows us to [poll tens of thousands of interfaces](#) at short intervals.”

Scalability in network monitoring refers not just to physical scope. Scale also applies to the monitoring capability itself. As a Senior Engineer at a tech services company with more than 5,000 employees explained, Statseeker “enables us to [aggregate multiple interfaces into a single graph](#),” making it easy to stay on top of a growing network. On a related note, the Network Analyst said, “I haven’t encountered any scalability issues. [Generating a large report](#) is so quick.”

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Allows us to poll tens of thousands of interfaces at short intervals.

5. Network Data Collection and Visibility

Network monitoring solutions function largely by means of data collection. Using Simple Network Management Protocol (SNMP) polling, NetFlow analysis and Syslog collection, Statseeker can compile a large amount of data about the performance and functional characteristics of a network. As Statseeker users revealed, however, the quality of this data collection and the ability to make it visible stand out as selection criteria for a solution:

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Statseeker presents a comprehensive view on a dashboard of how the network is performing.

- “Statseeker presents a [comprehensive view on a dashboard](#) of how the network is performing. It collects three layers (physical, data link, and network) of data from network devices. This data is processed to produce informative and easy-to-read reports.” - Network Analyst
- “In terms of network visibility, Statseeker can be [very granular](#). We can tell it exactly where we want it to go and where we want it to check, or it can do an SNMP walk and find out where everything is. It’s very detailed.” - Senior IT Director at a small healthcare company
- “The most valuable feature of this solution is [NetFlow](#).” - Network Engineer at a government agency

6. In-Depth, Proactive and Rapid Reporting and Granular Dashboards

Network monitoring solution users put a premium on the quality of reporting and the reporting interface. For the IT Manager, Network Operation at a financial services firm, Statseeker stood out because it provides [proactive reports about network outages](#) and utilization. In this case, it wasn't just reporting that mattered. It was the ability of the solution to anticipate issues and report on them before trouble arose. This user further noted, "It catches frequent flapping of the network and provides detailed reports of outages."

A Network Engineer at a university with over 1,000 employees also spoke to the importance of proactivity. He said, "All of our UPS units are set to [send SNMP traps](#) to Statseeker whenever their batteries are in need of replacement, or they start failing self-tests. Statseeker then generates an alert based on that trap, which proactively tells our UPS people that this battery is in trouble."

A Network Tools Specialist at a comms service provider with over 1,000 employees compared Statseeker's reporting abilities favorably to a previously deployed solution, saying, "With Statseeker we [can go back over a time](#) and actually have a look at stuff. The previous product we were using, it would age out the information or aggregate the information up. So, we weren't able to look back in an extended timeframe." A Senior Capacity Manager at a comms service provider with over 10,000 employees added, "Summary Reports provide a quick way to [identify where potential issues are](#). Drill-downs provide more granular details very quickly."

Usability of reporting also mattered. A Network Analyst said, "The easy-to-use Reporting

feature is so important for [presenting network performance to clients](#) and business managers." The Network Tools Specialist added, "It's [very quick when you're doing a report](#) or when you're looking at something, it's very quick to give you the information."

Dashboards complete the usability story. A Network Engineer commented, "I can [modify the dashboard](#) to show whatever I want to see. I could have a top list of devices with higher latency or things like that. So, simplicity is the most valuable feature. I leave it up on one monitor full time in my office." A Network Engineer at a healthcare company with over 10,000 employees expressed that the Statseeker dashboard "helps us [find problem endpoints faster](#)." A Consultant at a large analyst firm simply said, "I like the dashboard because it is simple and fast. The [granularity is really good](#)."

A Network Engineer put the dashboard's value in perspective. He said, "The product has improved our organization by [simplifying monitoring](#) and giving real-time alerts for issues we might not immediately be aware of otherwise. If we notice five devices with latency or errors, I wouldn't know that if I didn't command line into 800 devices and check every day. I can see the status on the dashboard and it just makes it easy to know where the problems are."

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The easy-to-use Reporting feature is so important for presenting network performance to clients and business managers.

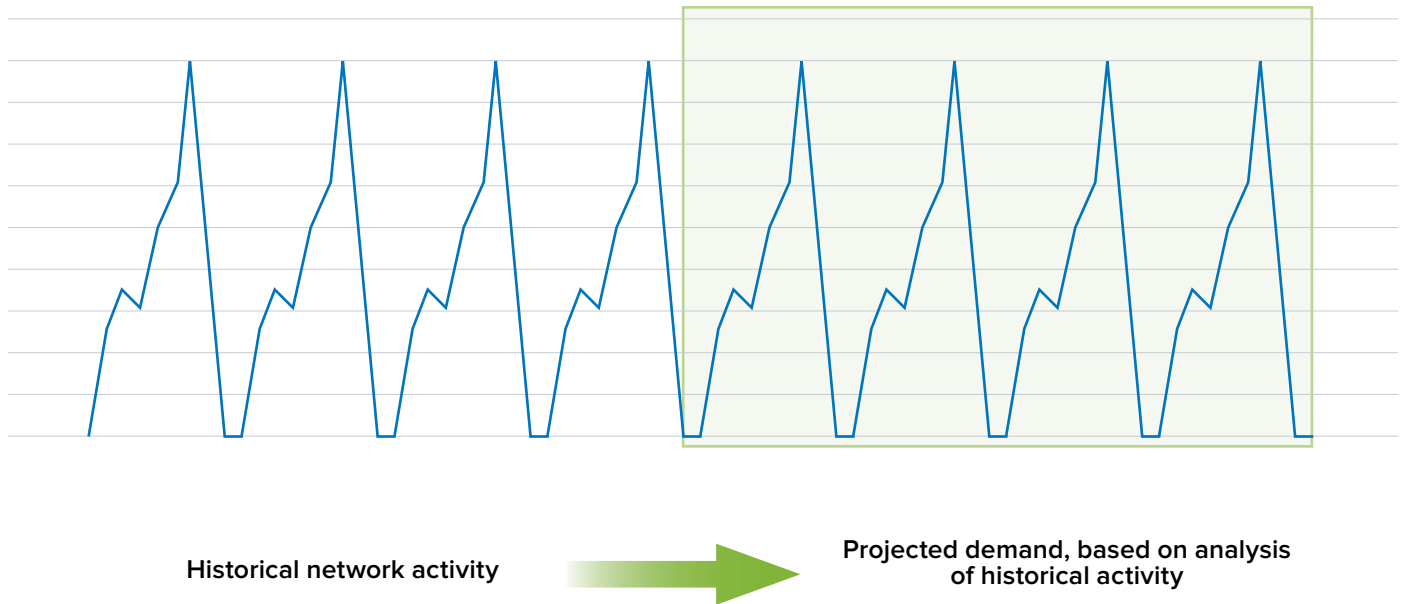


Figure 2 - A network monitoring solution should be able to forecast future network demand and predict capacity needs based on an analysis of past activities and display it in a clear graphic chart.

7. Capacity Prediction

Being prepared for future demand is one of the great challenges of network management. Statseeker provides a solution to the requirement. It has the ability to predict capacity. A Senior Engineer at a tech services company noted, “It also allows us to [predict capacity on WAN circuits](#) to plan when we’ll need the next upgrade.”

A Lead Network Engineer at a healthcare company with over 1,000 employees added, “This solution is used by our network operations center to [identify down interfaces](#). It also allows us to predict the capacity on WAN circuits, as well as other circuits, to help us plan for upgrading.” For a Senior Network Engineer at a large insurance company, the value was to look thirty days into the future “based on [past stats of trends](#) or fashion.” Figure 2 depicts a simplified version of the capacity prediction function on Statseeker.

8. Speed of Alerting and Reporting

Alerts don't mean much if they arrive too late to do anything about them. This was an issue for a Network Specialist at a comms service provider, who was pleased with Statseeker because,

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It's so quick I could run reports in a matter of seconds, whereas with some of the other systems they take minutes.

“It's so quick I could [run reports in a matter of seconds](#), whereas with some of the other systems they take minutes.” He added, “Sometimes they time out. With Statseeker, I could do the last year's reports in a couple of minutes.” A Network Engineer at a university had a comparable insight, noting that Statseeker gave him near-instantaneous alerts that helped his team quickly narrow down problems. As he put it, “The most valuable feature is the [ping going out every second](#), which gives us almost instantaneous alerting.”

9. Impact on Network Availability

A network monitoring solution that's doing its job will facilitate greater network availability. This was an important selection factor for the Network Engineer. He described Statseeker by saying, “[It improves availability](#). If a circuit goes down texts and email alerts get sent out. So, even if it's in the evening or we're not on premises, we'll know if something's down.” A Network Security Engineer at a government agency agreed “Statseeker has provided [real-time alerts](#) and on-demand graphs, improving our network availability.”

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Statseeker has provided real-time alerts and on-demand graphs, improving our network availability.

10. Competitive Pricing

Network monitoring solutions are part of the network management budget, so pricing is a selection criteria for Statseeker users. In discussion about this aspect of Statseeker, a Network Analyst observed that the solution's “pricing isn't expensive; [very reasonable](#).” A Network Specialist at the comms service provider similarly stated, “We now feel the pricing is a good value. Previously, we had a just a normal license but now we've got an Enterprise license. Since the Enterprise, it's been a lot [better value](#).”

CONCLUSION

Network monitoring is essential for a reliable, fast and well-functioning network. Corporate IT and the business it supports both depend on network managers having a good idea of what's happening in the network. As users of Statseeker shared in their reviews, the right network monitoring solution will offer extensive analytics on network data as well as complete network

monitoring. It will be easy to deploy and scale. A network monitoring solution should encompass proactive, detailed reporting that provides insights into network performance in near real time through granular dashboards. The solution must rise to the many challenges confronting network managers while remaining available at a competitive price.

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ABOUT STATSEEKER

Statseeker network monitoring: monitor more, spend less.

Statseeker is an agnostic and predictive network monitoring solution for increasing network performance, reducing downtime and enhancing business productivity.

First developed as a pioneering network monitoring solution in 1996, Statseeker was created by network engineers who understood the importance of proactive monitoring. It has since grown and evolved, with active deployments in over 22 countries. Many blue chip firms now consider Statseeker to be an integral part of their day-to-day operations.

Statseeker is a Techniche product (www.technichegroup.com) with offices in the US, UK and Australia, as well as support teams across the globe.