

NetScout Nails It With New Network Monitoring Switches

That today's enterprise Data Centers face an escalating challenge in monitoring and managing network to optimize service delivery and assure a positive user experience is not surprising news to overworked network operations staff.

The enterprise is rapidly being penetrated by a proliferation of BYOD with data intensive apps evolving into the internet of 'things' with high density, i.e. all those highly active, 'intelligent' devices, e-readers, smartphones, etc. with high-volume, automated data flows. This increases network operational complexity with a profusion of time-sensitive traffic loads even as it stresses its capabilities for timely and reliable service delivery.

Monitoring and management is made more difficult and compelling by the distributed nature of traffic coming from enterprise data centers, service providers and cloud-networks. Most of which are operating with infrastructure that has just negotiated the transition from 1 Gigabit Ethernet (GbE) densities to 10 GbE network links, are just beginning to contemplate 40 GbE, and worrying about the 100 GbE coming over the horizon.

NetScout® Systems, Inc. hit the trifecta in its recent announcement. Refining its architecture, extending its service and traffic monitoring capabilities in multiple, customer-satisfying ways and providing automated, simplified deployment and administration software. As part of this announcement, Steve Shalita, NetScout's VP of marketing declared, "NetScout continues to drive change in the networking monitoring switch market", and "we are committed to establishing a leadership role and aggressively capturing market share." Before we start, the new features and functions of the nGenius 3900 series are well-documented and discussed in NetScout literature. Those interested in the details should visit [here](#)¹ for more complete details. This is why we think this is neither an exaggeration nor unrealistic goal for them.

1. *Their Strategy*

First, there is the Unified Service Delivery Management (USDm) strategy underlying NetScout's products and activities. The NetScout strategy promotes a business-oriented, end-user focused, integrated, holistic (end-to-end) view of performance management for IP network and service-delivery performance to assure the user experience. It provides architectural guidance and structure for technicians. It provides business audiences with a structured, organized context to understand the need for, value and implementation of performance management. It effectively bridges a communications gap that has frustrated many technology firms.

It also provides the foundation for NetScout's unified service delivery management framework and service-oriented architecture that guide acquisitions, as well as solution definition, design and implementation. These provide the foundation for product and service development focused on the user with speedy identification and delivery of solutions specifically targeted to satisfy customer needs. The benefits are well documented in a history of successful product



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¹ http://www.netscout.com/products/enterprise/nSAS/Switches_and_TAPs/nGenius_3900_Series/Pages/default.aspx

development and introductions, as well as a series of efficiently integrated and intelligent acquisitions.

All of which support NetScout's expanded offerings for proactive scalable network and application monitoring solutions.

2. *The nGenius 3900 Series® Packet Flow Switch*

Second, NetScout announced the nGenius 3900 series packet flow switch, a highly extensible chassis-based, data center-class network monitoring switch. It addresses the needs of the dynamic, rapidly expanding and evolution network environment, which is a fact of life for enterprise communications as data center modernization and expansion continues to accelerate. It is available in three modular configurations with the ability to add capacity and functions incrementally to meet the needs from mid-range to enterprise installations.

Managing and monitoring a dynamic network environment typically involves a range of tools and solutions to cover the variety of services, environments, devices, traffic elements, configurations, etc. involved in accessing and delivering a networked service today. It requires support of multi-data center services, UC services and dealing with diverse physical and virtual infrastructures. It must monitor and deliver WAN Edge services in multiple configurations and with a variety of infrastructure parameters to serve customers at differing levels of reliability, service and performance. It requires interaction with the miss-matched capacities, configurations and heterogeneous mix of devices and solutions. And, that's just the technology side. In addition, there exist licensing issues, feature fees, support services, etc. with all of the attendant costs of evaluating, selecting, acquiring and managing these.

NetScout has taken an aggressive approach, staking out a leadership position to offer an integrated, single platform solution to the most prevalent operational, licensing and functional problems with the nGenius 3900 series switch. The nGenius 3900 series is comprised of three chassis-based switches that allow the solution to scale to meet customer density needs. Fully flexible port-by-port support, dynamic, software-driven configuration, including adjusting capacities and functionality (filtering, port tagging, load balancing, etc.) maximizes operational efficiency while helping to hold down costs. Supporting current 1GbE traffic – it easily supports the increasing number of 10GbE and emerging 40GbE interfaces and beyond in anticipation of just on the horizon 100GbE. The result is a high availability, fault-tolerant switch fabric for non-stop switching.

One more area covered by NetScout in this announcement was the often delayed area of provisioning and management. Here is what they announced.

3. *Unified Management and Provisioning with nGenius PFS Management software*

Third, management of IT and network infrastructure is, for all intents and purposes, a messy business. There are too many stove-piped, single-purpose, unintegrated, self-consciously unique solutions cluttering the landscape. Unfortunately, the solution in the form of a single, fully-automated, self-configuring, intelligent, fully integrated, cross-functional wonder tool isn't likely to appear any time soon.

On the other hand, the best vendors, NetScout among them, have recognized the need to simplify the utilization and extend the compatibility of their solutions. Many are making the effort to increase automation, allow more interaction, share data and simplify installation and operation.

Consistent with those goals and extending them further, NetScout announced nGenius PFS Management software for automated, drag-and-drop provisioning and unified administration of large-scale network monitoring fabrics built with nGenius 3900 series switches. The nGenius PFS Management software can help customers accelerate the setup and simplify the management of hundreds of connections across multi-chassis, distributed deployment environments. The embedded software includes a web-based GUI for 'point-and-click' management including complete diagnostics and reporting along with a view of all switches and the status of every port. Activity schedules drive automated topology management to optimize utilization and performance. Integration with the nGenius Service Assurance Solution is underway to further simplify and optimize operations.

The Final Word

We have reviewed and written about NetScout a number of times in the past. We found them to be among the most thoughtful and market-oriented vendors that we cover. With each announcement that we have covered, they have consistently displayed a significant depth of knowledge, understanding and awareness of the challenges and complexities faced by their targeted market segment. They have never failed to present new solutions and/or enhancements to existing solutions that are aimed at reducing that complexity. Based on our conversations with clients and experience in this market segment, they continue to do so with this latest set of announcements.

In short, we believe that the nGenius 3900 series switch and its associated software are quite accurately directed to address the most pressing and challenging problems that the network operations and administration staff must deal with today. In addition, NetScout has identified and is tackling emerging problems to speed and facilitate the transition to a more robust, resilient and reliable network infrastructure. We advise anyone dealing with network switch monitoring and management challenges to acquaint themselves with what NetScout is offering and saying.

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Richard Ptak has over 30 years’ experience in systems product management working closely with Fortune 50 companies in developing product direction and strategies at a global level. Previously Ptak held positions as senior vice president at Hurwitz Group and D.H. Brown Associates. Earlier in his career he held engineering and marketing management positions with Western Electric’s Electronic Switch Manufacturing Division and Digital Equipment Corporation. He is frequently quoted in major business and trade press. Ptak holds a master’s in business administration from the University of Chicago and a master of science in engineering from Kansas State University.