

# SolarWinds Announces SolarWinds APM v4: Application Modeling and Monitoring Made Simple

## Abstract

In January of 2011, SolarWinds announced the release of SolarWinds Application Performance Monitor (SolarWinds APM) version 4 (v4). The new release adds aggregation of performance and availability metrics from multiple servers to SolarWinds' existing APM solution. The enhancements enable IT administrators to create a holistic view of critical business applications as they relate to existing infrastructure. They also deliver consolidated monitoring capabilities.

In a parallel announcement, SolarWinds also announced the acquisition of Hyper9, a privately-held virtualization management software provider. SolarWinds already supports virtualized environments, including vMotion, and this acquisition enables SolarWinds to continue to add virtualization-related features to the product line. ENTERPRISE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATES® (EMA™) analysts see SolarWinds' direction as positive and APM v4 as a sound alternative for companies seeking a simple, inexpensive route to Application Performance Monitoring.

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## APM v4 Announcement

On January 19, 2011, SolarWinds announced the availability of SolarWinds APM v4. The new release offers consolidated application-level monitoring, which gives system administrators and IT operations personnel better insight into the technology they support and the applications running on that technology.

APM v4 fills the niche between stand-alone server monitoring and full-blown application performance and availability products such as those offered by Quest, CA-Wily, HP, and IBM. Initially introduced in 2008, SolarWinds APM already numbers customers in the thousands, attracted by the combined value proposition of simplicity, affordability, ease of use, and a rich feature set.

## Background and Ramifications

SolarWinds, founded in 1999 and based in Austin, Texas, USA, is best known for its Network Management solutions which include SolarWinds Network Performance Monitor, Network Configuration Manager, and NetFlow Traffic Analyzer, among others. However, SolarWinds has continued to add capabilities over time, and the product line now encompasses integrated management solutions for servers, virtualization (VMware), backup, and applications.

SolarWinds' key differentiator and overall strategy is to deliver high quality management products and features at a competitive price. SolarWinds' price point and consumability level are more attractive to mid-sized and small businesses than many of the expensive, full-featured platform solutions currently on the market. The company presently has more than 97,000 customers worldwide, including 400+ of the Fortune 500.

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SolarWinds' business model is rooted in its core network products and the company continues to add products and features to the network line. The strategy is much the same with APM, with capabilities addressing technologies such as storage management and synthetic transaction monitoring (aimed at more complex applications) on the product roadmap.

APM v4 brings with it several new features, the most notable of which is aggregation of performance and availability metrics from multiple servers. This new capability delivers a holistic view of critical business applications as they relate to existing infrastructure, along with consolidated monitoring capabilities. In conjunction with SolarWinds network monitoring solutions, it also gives customers a simple entry point into basic quality of experience (QoE) monitoring.

SolarWinds developed these new capabilities based on customer requests. Administrators and other Operations personnel tasked with managing these systems requested better insight into the performance and availability of the applications running on the servers they support. These enhancements take server monitoring to the next level by providing these specialists with a business-focused perspective on their areas of responsibility.

## Key Differentiators

- **Simplicity of design:** Simplicity is a key message. Products are designed to require minimal training, although training classes are available through the vendor.
- **Supports simple or complicated applications:** Pre- APM v4 users were restricted to element management. With this release, they can define and group applications across servers into business service-focused models.
- **Service models incorporate network components, NetFlow, user experience (and, in the future, storage):** Simple or complex applications may be defined, whether they run on a single server or multiple servers.
- **Affordable pricing:** Simple server monitoring tools don't provide application visibility; however most application-focused solutions are out of reach, cost-wise, for smaller companies or departments within large companies. APM v4 fills this gap. Pricing starts under \$3,000 with top-tier solutions in the \$20,000 to \$30,000 range.
- **Application visibility for Operations teams:** Service models provide Operations personnel with an application-focused view that is not typically available in standard silo-focused management products.
- **Ease of Use:** Products can be installed and upgraded in hours versus weeks or months, and require minimal training.
- **Online Community:** This is a significant value-add. Users of enterprise management products indicate that community forums can dramatically improve productivity while reducing the time required to come up to speed on product capabilities and usage. Online forums provide critical, timely support for a wide range of organizational and operational issues. SolarWinds Product Managers monitor postings to the forum on a daily basis to ensure that questions are addressed in a timely manner. Currently, the community has approximately 60,000 members.
- **Parallel announcement of Hyper9 acquisition:** Also on January 19<sup>th</sup>, SolarWinds announced the acquisition of Hyper9, a privately-held virtualization management software provider also based in Austin. SolarWinds expects to continue its pricing differentiation with this solution as well, with pricing starting at \$3000, including the first year of maintenance.
- **Try before you buy:** All SolarWinds products are available on a "Free Trial" basis at: <http://www.solarwinds.com/downloads/>.

## EMA Perspective

With the latest enhancements to APM, SolarWinds continues to build out its solution set to address today's dynamic and complex IT environments. Typically, application visibility is the purview of cross-functional application support teams within infrastructure services, architecture, or center of excellence groups. APM v4 puts basic business service modeling and application monitoring within reach of administrators and departmental-level operations personnel. These personnel are increasingly being called upon for application-related information within their areas of support.

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With a clear focus on simplicity and reasonable pricing, SolarWinds also brings some nice surprises in terms of features associated with more expensive products. The product combines standard server monitoring with visibility to virtualized environments, including VMware vMotions, as well as to supporting network devices. The network-oriented roots also deliver visibility to network flow (NetFlow), an essential element for monitoring performance on the end-user side of the application equation. Support in the form of an online forum is a powerful value-add as well.

One caveat is that APM does not compete directly with APM offerings from vendors focusing more specifically on application versus system management. It currently lacks horizontal visibility in the form of transaction monitoring, as well as automated dependency mapping, among other capabilities. It is a basic, slimmed-down product that can be installed quickly and easily, used with a minimum of training, and purchased with departmental versus enterprise budget.

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### About EMA

Founded in 1996, Enterprise Management Associates (EMA) is a leading industry analyst firm that provides deep insight across the full spectrum of IT and data management technologies. EMA analysts leverage a unique combination of practical experience, insight into industry best practices, and in-depth knowledge of current and planned vendor solutions to help its clients achieve their goals. Learn more about EMA research, analysis, and consulting services for enterprise IT professionals, lines of business users, and IT vendors at [www.enterprisemanagement.com](http://www.enterprisemanagement.com) or follow EMA on Twitter ([http://twitter.com/ema\\_research](http://twitter.com/ema_research)).

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