

SolarWinds® Reaches for the Cloud with Synthetic End User Monitor (SEUM) v.1.5 and Cloud Player Portal

Abstract

In February of 2012, SolarWinds (NASDAQ:SWI) announced the latest update to its Application Performance Management (APM) portfolio with the release of Synthetic End User Monitor (SEUM) v. 1.5, which includes the new Cloud Player Portal. With this new product, IT teams can run distributed transaction testing from the Amazon® Cloud as a cost-effective alternative to traditional, cloud-based synthetic monitoring solutions.

EMA sees this as an important announcement for SolarWinds, its customers, and its prospects. It puts a quality APM solution within reach of almost any company, providing a good entry point for APM monitoring that can grow as a company's application portfolio expands.

SolarWinds' Announcement

On February 15, 2012, SolarWinds (<http://www.solarwinds.com/>) announced an upgrade to the SolarWinds APM solution with the release of Synthetic End User Monitor (SEUM) v. 1.5 and a new Cloud Player Portal. The new technology enables IT Operations teams to provision synthetic transaction monitoring testers to Amazon® EC2 locations worldwide. In addition to further extending SolarWinds' application-related management portfolio, the new solutions extend cost-effective, cloud-based synthetic monitoring to companies of virtually any size.

SolarWinds, founded in 1999, builds powerful yet affordable IT management software. With more than 93,000 customers of all sizes and in virtually every industry vertical, SolarWinds is best known for delivering a wide variety of cost-effective enterprise management solutions covering servers, networks, storage, and other IT-related infrastructure.

More recently, SolarWinds has focused on application-related toolsets as well, and its fully-integrated solutions now deliver correlated top-down (application focused) and bottom-up (infrastructure focused) performance analysis.

This solution is available now, with entry-level pricing starting at \$1,995 for five transaction recordings with unlimited steps. Larger customers can monitor an unlimited number of transactions and recordings from unlimited locations with a blanket license priced at \$28,995.

Industry Context

Synthetic transaction technology is part of the End User Experience (EUE) management class of Application Performance Management (APM) solutions. ENTERPRISE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATES® (EMA™) analysts have done extensive research on both APM and EUE, and on the impact of Cloud computing on enterprise IT strategy. More than 40% of today's IT organizations indicate that Cloud application deployments are causing them to re-evaluate management solution portfolios. As a result, many are considering EUE purchases, which they see as the technology of choice for monitoring and managing end-to-end transactions that access the cloud. At the same time, EUE solutions can be expensive to purchase and deploy.

Specifically designed to monitor performance as experienced by the end user, they encompass both network-based and endpoint-based technologies. For example, “active” (synthetic transaction) and “passive” (Real User Monitoring) monitoring technologies, as well as client-side instrumentation, and web server/browser instrumentation, all deliver visibility to specific aspects of the user experience.

Cloud-based synthetic monitoring solutions have been available in the marketplace for quite some time from vendors such as Keynote and Gomez (now Compuware Gomez). While both solutions can also execute synthetic transactions from multiple locations worldwide, such services can be expensive. This is particularly true if synthetic transaction testing is integrated to suite solutions delivering a consolidated “single pane of glass” view of application execution.

With its increasing focus on APM, SolarWinds is filling this gap with a set of integrated, cost-effective solutions that will be within reach, cost-wise, of companies of virtually any size.

Details and Differentiators

Instead of running synthetic transactions from monitoring stations owned by EUE vendors, SolarWinds enables IT teams to provision test scripts to Amazon EC2 locations worldwide. Results are reported in a SolarWinds-supplied portal (see Figure 1) and correlated with information gathered by other SolarWinds monitors running in the enterprise. This can provide an extremely cost-effective APM alternative to provisioning servers at multiple locations OR running scripts on EUE vendor clouds.

Additional differentiators include:

- *Single Pane of Glass (LUCID Interface):* SolarWinds software is designed to be deployed in hours versus days or weeks, without professional services involvement. Once deployed, the displays are intuitively designed for ease of use, eliminating much of the training overhead of competing solutions.
- *Monitors both internal, user-facing and external, customer-facing applications:* SEUM testing can monitor internal (behind the firewall) applications as well those delivered to external customers. It can also be used to monitor performance of public cloud-hosted applications.
- *Supports multi-tenant environments:* SolarWinds APM supports multi-tenancy for large application deployments and Managed Service Provider (MSP) environments
- *“Dynamic Service Groups:”* Users can model services as aggregations of servers and applications, with status of such groups then dynamically maintained by the monitoring technology. This can considerably simplify the process of troubleshooting and fixing problems within complex tiered applications.
- *Conditional Group Dependencies:* This feature allows IT specialists to map applications to physical and virtual server dependencies. Alerts are then correlated to a single critical alert identifying the source of an application or server issue.
- *SaaS monitoring:* SolarWinds provides “out-of-the-box” support for HTTP, HTTPS, DNS, Microsoft SQL Server, Oracle®, and other ODBC databases. It includes a Quality of Experience (QoE) measurement quantifying performance as experienced by end users.
- *Application “fingerprints” or “templates:”* Configuring APM solutions to specifically monitor every enterprise application can be an expensive, time-consuming process. SolarWinds includes an application template library with out-of-the-box templates for packaged applications such as Exchange, SharePoint, SQL server, and Java applications. It also includes customizable templates for “quick start” monitoring of a company’s custom applications.

- “Network Atlas” *application mapping*: The Network Atlas application visually tracks applications across the network, another feature supporting fast troubleshooting, root cause analysis, and problem remediation.
- *Support for script recording and native Nagios scripts*: SEUM includes its own script recording and replay capabilities. In addition, SolarWinds APM supports existing Nagios (<http://www.nagios.org/>) scripts, as well as third-party script libraries.



Figure 1: SEUM 1.5

EMA Perspective

APM solutions have been on the market for years, but many companies did not see the need for them until fairly recently. EMA research has found that, as recently as 1 ½ to 2 years ago, many companies were still relying primarily on infrastructure monitoring to support application environments.

However, with widespread use of virtualization, cloud, Service Oriented Architectures (SOAs), and other dynamic services, companies running applications of even average complexity are seeing the need to invest in more application-focused toolsets. Without adequate tooling, these environments are simply too complex and expensive to manage—troubleshooting and root cause analysis require too much time and too much staff bandwidth.

SolarWinds' investments in the APM space address these new requirements while extending quality APM tooling to a broad spectrum of prospective buyers. EC2 hosting puts global monitoring within reach of even the most cost-constrained companies, particularly since SolarWinds is known for its relatively low overall cost.

SolarWinds offers a “try before you buy” option capable of playing back a single recording at a time, at: <http://www.solarwinds.com/products/freetools/web-transaction-watcher/>. Recordings made with the “freeware” tool can be reused by the licensed SEUM version as well.

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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 line of business users, IT professionals and IT vendors at www.enterprisemanagement.com or blogs.enterprisemanagement.com. You can also follow EMA on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#).

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