

How can elk**Monitor** help your eBusiness?

A White Paper



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Why is monitoring important?

Even if your site is up 99.9% of the time that means that it will be down for over 8 ¾ hours every year. Worse yet having 99% availability means your site is down over 7 hours per month. In today's competitive e-commerce environment that likely means customers will be going to your competitor's sites during those times.

Even if your site is up, poor performance can drive customers to other sites. If your business depends on it's website and other eBusiness infrastructure then it's critical that you monitor your servers for availability and performance. An outsourced solution like elkMonitor can provide the peace of mind you need while freeing you from investments in hardware and personnel required to implement your own monitoring solution.

I already host and monitor internally, why should I use elkMonitor?

While internal monitoring can catch certain system problems it does not detect many issues that could cause problems for your users. Problems such as failed Internet connectivity, failed DNS servers, network congestion can all cause problems ranging from poor site performance to an inaccessible site and yet would most likely not be found using internal monitoring alone. By testing outside your firewall elkMonitor will find these problems and alert you before they become serious issues.

elkMonitor's performance monitoring can also alert you to situations where site performance may be less than desired. A slow, poorly performing site can be as much a detriment as one that's inaccessible and yet site performance problems can be much more difficult to detect. ElkMonitor's continuous performance monitoring can alert you to potentially unknown performance issues which may occur only at certain periods or times of the day or week. Using the online reports it's easy to see site performance trends and bottlenecks for specified periods of time. Using the reports it's possible to see how a page performs as a whole as well as drilling down to specific objects such as images, etc. on a given web page and see how they contribute to that page's load time.

My host provides monitoring, why should I use elkMonitor?

While most providers do provide simple up/down monitoring, that alone is not enough to assure that you site is functioning properly or that it's accessible from outside the provider's network. elkMonitor provides objective third party monitoring which can help you to assure that your provider is meeting any Service Level Agreement (SLA) they provide for your service.

What aspects of my website does elkMonitor test?

ElkMonitor tests websites both at the connection and protocol levels as well as offering features to assure that the returned content is correct. Additionally, elkMonitor provides performance monitoring by simulating a web browser and downloading your page content. This total operations testing assures you that you'll be alerted to any server problem from a failed server, severed Internet connection, failed backend database to poor site performance before it has a major impact on your website's users.

Key web testing features include:

- ❑ HTTP and HTTPS protocol support including support for Post, Head and Get operations
- ❑ HTML Form support allows elkMonitor to post form content to a page to ensure that pages that process forms are functioning properly. Our forms Wizard makes it easy to specify the form data that is posted to the specified page. Used in conjunction with our Text Checking feature you can check to make sure that the proper page content is returned after posting the form data.
- ❑ Authentication support allows elkMonitor to check pages that require users to logon to the website. ElkMonitor supports the industry standard Basic Authentication protocol. It's also possible to use elkMonitor to check that pages do require authentication and to trigger an alert in the event that the site doesn't request Authentication.
- ❑ Redirection support allows elkMonitor to follow HTTP redirect requests if enabled for a URL.
- ❑ Text matching support allows elkMonitor to check for a user specified text string in the returned page. This can be used to make sure that a page is being properly rendered for a user. Content errors may be particularly difficult to catch when using dynamically generated pages as only a portion of the page content may render prior to an error occurring. With elkMonitor's Text matching you can monitor text located at the end of a page to be sure that the complete page is being rendered.
- ❑ Content Modification Time and Size checking allows elkMonitor to alert you when static pages have been modified. According to a survey by Attrition.org over 1500 sites were defaced by vandals in April of 2001 alone. With elkMonitor's Page Content checking you'll be alerted to any changes in your monitored page's content to avoid the embarrassment of maliciously altered content.
- ❑ Link Checking support in conjunction with the Performance monitoring function of elkMonitor checks links on monitored pages multiple times per day. Studies have shown that up to 50% of sites have some broken links resulting in a poor user experience.

What does the elkMonitor Performance Monitoring do?

The elkMonitor performance monitor simulates a user with a browser visiting your page and downloads not only the base html page as our availability monitor does, but also downloads all referenced content such as style sheets, images, flash content, JavaScript and ActiveX controls. The monitor records the time to download each individual element and whether it was successfully downloaded. And since there are multiple elkMonitor servers located throughout the United States you'll be alerted to any regional issues affecting your site's performance. Using the

online reports on the elkMonitor website you can easily see how the site is performing from each of these remote servers and even drilldown to see the performance of specific page elements.

Why is the DNS monitoring important?

In a study by Keynote Systems they found that 29% of website connection failures were due to DNS problems. Without functional DNS, few users will reach your site making it just as critical as the rest of your eBusiness infrastructure. elkMonitor's DNS checking allows you to specify the address to be resolved and also what IP addresses should be returned from the query. This extra checking validates that not only is the DNS server capable of resolving the address but that the returned IP address is in the proper range.

What other types of servers can be monitored?

In addition to websites, elkMonitor supports checking FTP, POP3, SMTP and NNTP servers for availability.

How flexible is the notification system?

The elkMonitor notification system is very flexible in configuring to whom notifications are sent. Notifications can be sent based on an escalation system or on a time-based model. Using the escalation model you might define that notifications of an initial failure are sent to the first line support technician, if the error exists for more than a certain period of time you could define notifications be escalated and sent to a more senior technician.

Using the time based model you can define the persons to whom notifications are sent based on the time of day and day of week. For instance alerts during normal office hours might be sent to one group whereas alerts during evening hours or on weekends would be sent to a different group.

Notifications can also be specified on a per site basis or for all sites allowing tremendous flexibility in alerting.

What forms of notification are supported?

elkMonitor supports email, standard alphanumeric pagers using the TAP/IXO protocols and also numeric pagers.

What types of reports are available?

elkMonitor features rich online reporting allowing you to view availability and performance data for user specified ranges of dates as both charts and textual reports. Report data can also be downloaded in XML, CSV or Excel Spreadsheet formats for further analysis.

How can I try the service?

You can try the full elkMonitor service free for 14 days by signing up for a free trial on the elkMonitor website at <http://www.elkmonitor.com>. Once signed up you'll have access to the full elkMonitor service. Only after you've decided to continue the service will you need to activate your account by entering credit card information or billing information.

How can I monitor the status of my Servers?

The elkMonitor online console provides a display of all your monitored servers and their current status. From this console it's possible to change, delete and report on those devices.

The elkMonitor Wireless console located at <http://wireless.elkmonitor.com> displays your server status as well as allowing you to enable and disable monitoring and also notifications for a given server.