



PRTG Network Monitor Ensures Versatility and Reliability for Gaming Grids' Innovative Online Game Tournament System

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Travis N. Howle,
Vice President & Chief Technology Officer,
Gaming Grids

As if the multi-billion-dollar video game industry isn’t enticing enough for serious gamers, Gaming Grids has found a way to add even more excitement. Gaming Grids, a Las Vegas company, has developed patent-pending technology that allows gamers from across the world to legally play their favorite game for money in hourly tournaments.

Versatility, Reliability Are Essential

With so much at stake, Gaming Grids’ IT infrastructure has to be absolutely bulletproof. Versatility and reliability are mission-critical requirements in the Gaming Grids technology platform. Travis Howle, Vice President and CTO of Gaming Grids, realized from the company’s beginning that iron-clad network monitoring would be essential.

“Initially we introduced Spiceworks monitoring software—but it wasn’t long before we realized we needed more features and better overall control,” Howle said. “We started looking for an alternative that would give us custom monitoring capabilities, as well as a nice Web 2.0 interface.”

Gaming Grids’ considerable network monitoring needs span internal/external assets as well as a variety of operational requirements. “Our specifications called for a platform that could provide real-time metrics, graphing, logging, and reporting of specialized outputs from our API’s. We also needed to monitor the performance, utilization and downtime of our entire server and network infrastructure,” he recalled. “If an emergency or outage arises, our IT staff needs to be warned—awakened if necessary.”



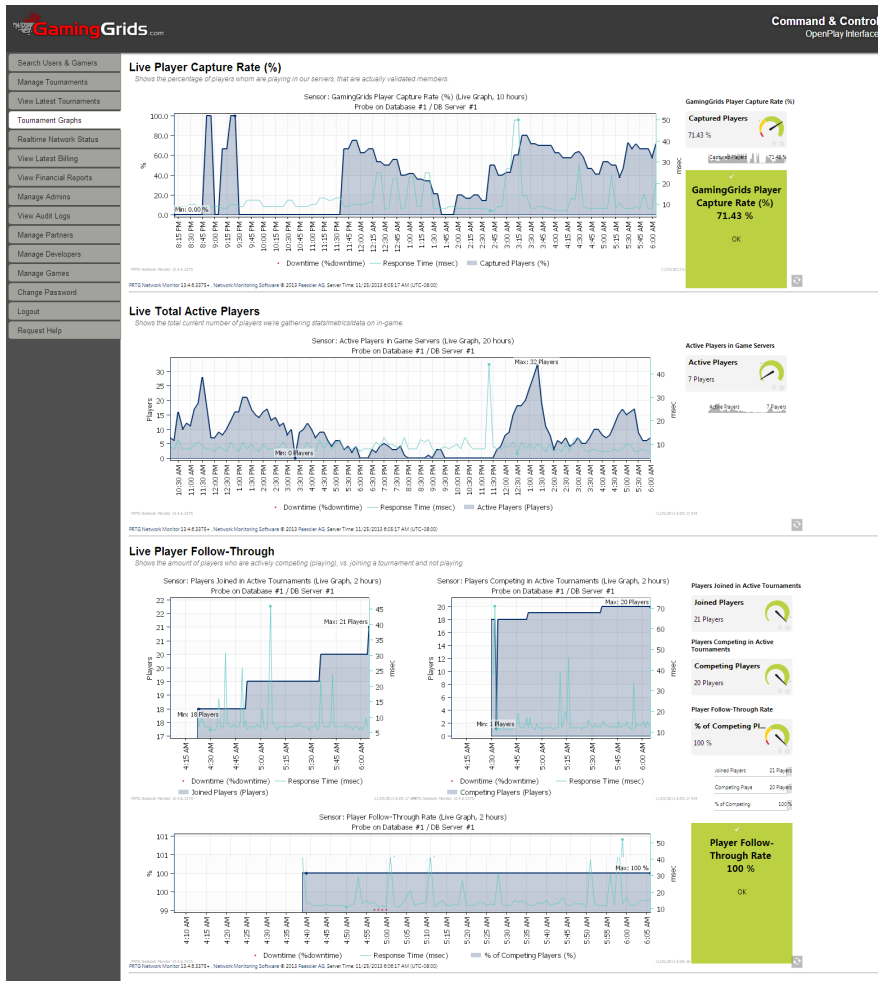


IMAGE:
Clear graphs give an overview of the network status

A “Top-Notch” Solution

A Google search uncovered Paessler’s PRTG Network Monitor. Howle felt that PRTG Network Monitor’s capabilities were well-suited to Gaming Grid’s hybrid datacenter environment. “We have to monitor internal Windows servers as well as cloud services—then there’s VMware ESXi, our proprietary platform API, and external game servers for Battlefield 4 at Electronic Arts and EA’s developer subsidiary, Digital Illusions Creative Entertainment,” he stated. “For price, scalability, configuration and sensor options as well as in-depth support, PRTG Network Monitor looked like a great choice.”

Howle and his team installed PRTG at the heart of Gaming Grids’ monitoring suite. The install included sensors for WMI, HTTP (advanced and full-page), SNMP and database use plus round-trip IMAP email. Remote probes were implemented to monitor the company’s datacenter and cloud assets, as well as its external datacenters in California and Kentucky. The company also uses PRTG to monitor various data lines including Intranet switches, WAN/LAN lines and a load balancer.

“I must say, PRTG is top-notch. We use the PRTG system to monitor our entire network including our API SOAP Web service for returns and records indicating traffic and functionality within our system internals,” Howle reported. “We’ve been able to optimize our database indexing based on query times, and our load balancing configuration based on CPU/memory and network adapter utilization. Best of all, it helps us stay ‘alive’ by ensuring our network and all our platform systems are running efficiently,” he said, adding that the firm utilizes PRTG’s Web and mobile interfaces as well as the external map interface via iFrame to accomplish its monitoring tasks.

Multiple Issues Resolved

As Gaming Grids' head of technology, Howle acknowledges that PRTG Network Monitor is solving multiple issues for the company. "Normally a database engineer would have to be present to run reports within the database or directly from the API for viewing," he notes. "Instead, PRTG provides real-time and graph mode views of metrics that are invaluable to our operation. It allows 24/7 monitoring of our IT infrastructure including game servers and APIs, even when IT staff may not be physically present. PRTG provides increased uptime with advance warnings of outages, performance issues, and unusual activity."

Because Gaming Grids runs hourly tournaments, every minute its system is down, it loses money from players wanting to join and participate. "PRTG has helped us avoid losses that might have otherwise occurred. It costs players \$1.00 to enter an hourly tournament; with 10,000 players, two hours of downtime would cost us \$20,000 in revenue. Proper prevention and monitoring saves us that \$20K," Howle points out.

"Better Than Acetaminophen"

With PRTG Network Monitor overseeing all aspects of its technical operations, the Gaming Grids IT team is confident in its ability to deliver rock-solid performance. "PRTG is beneficial to the entire company, not just IT," says Howle. "We've found it can aid in marketing decisions, our internal audits, our review of game play status, and in tournament player loyalty and capture. On the technical side, our ability to monitor a variety of sensor types, as well as the ability to implement the sensors via map iFrame into our command and control interface, is perhaps PRTG's greatest operational benefit."

Within the highly competitive gaming industry, margins for error are razor thin. Players and business partners alike have very little tolerance for technical malfunctions. With PRTG Network Monitor in place, however, Howle believes that Gaming Grids can not only deliver on its IT performance goals, but its business goals as well.

"In so many ways, PRTG Network Monitor helps us succeed. It's better than acetaminophen at getting rid of the headaches caused by undue stress in the IT world!" he reports. "I'd not only recommend PRTG to colleagues—I'd buy it for them. It's an amazing asset."

ABOUT GAMING GRIDS

Gaming Grids' turnkey technology, suitable for monetizing mobile, console, PC, Web and Smart TV games, is changing the way the public engages with video games. In addition to the hourly events, players take part in worldwide tournaments with progressive jackpots. There are no limits to how big the tournaments can grow; moreover, 90% of the tournament income goes back out to the players. Sixty percent of everyone who enters a tournament receives a payout, making Gaming Grids an attractive destination for gamers of all skill levels.

Gaming Grids' payout model includes royalties for game developers—a component that has resulted in partnerships with some of the industry's biggest names. In November 2013, Gaming Grids announced a partnership with Multiplay, a leading game event promoter, to host live Battlefield 4 tournaments around the world. Dozens of other titles are in various stages of rollout, which means Gaming Grids will soon have the potential to attract millions of qualified video game fans.



ABOUT PAESSLER AG

Paessler AG leads the industry in providing the most powerful, affordable and easy-to-use network monitoring and testing solutions. The company's suite of just-right software products deliver peace of mind, confidence and convenience for businesses of all sizes – from Small Office/Home Office (SOHO) to large enterprises, including more than 70% of the Fortune 100 companies. Based in Nuremberg, Germany, Paessler's global reach includes more than 150,000 active installations of its products. Founded in 1997, Paessler AG remains a privately held company and is recognized as both a member of the Cisco Developer Network and a VMware Technology Alliance Partner.

PRESS CONTACT

Paessler AG

press@paessler.com

T: +49 911 93 775-0

F: +49 911 93 775-409

sslpr

paessler@sspr.com

T: +1 847 4 159 305

Paessler AG

Bucher Str. 79a
90419 Nuremberg
www.paessler.com
info@paessler.com

