



## PRTG Network Monitor Improves IT Admin Efficiency by 30%

### PRTG Keeps Vital Production Systems Up and Running at Raven Industries

**Proactive monitoring for virtual and physical infrastructure eliminates “babysitting” and provides system-wide visibility to quickly pinpoint, troubleshoot and resolve issues before they become a problem.**

To better manage its IT environment and ensure more reliable system support for its manufacturing processes, Raven recently deployed PRTG Network Monitor by Paessler AG to achieve complete network monitoring across its virtual and physical infrastructure. In just under a year, PRTG has already improved IT operational efficiency by 30 percent, brought system-wide visibility under a single pane of glass and helped to stave off major system errors that could have halted production and impacted revenue.



“PRTG has definitely increased our productivity as a team and has raised the bar with higher expectations for our team’s role within the company.”

Steven Tims,  
Raven Industries,  
IT support services manager

### Putting Out Fires

As the company’s IT demands have grown alongside the business, the Raven IT team found itself trying to keep up. The need to “put out fires” drew attention away from business building activities that might otherwise contribute to bottom-line growth for the company.

“When I started here, we had hundreds of systems and devices across multiple sites, and no proactive monitoring in place for any of them. The majority of my time seemed to be spent on reacting to system failures and unexpected outages,” said Steven Tims, Raven Industries IT support services manager. “Downtime was a major issue—we had no way of proactively monitoring our systems and often relied on the business to tell us when there was an issue.”

In fact, in Tims’ third week on job, a remote production file server went down, with zero megabytes free on the C: drive. It was locked up so tightly, the team couldn’t even log in to begin troubleshooting. In a race against the clock to get production back up and running and minimize the outage, Tims dropped everything to work on the problem.

Even with the server back up and running, Tims and his team were thinking that there had to be a better way. Their current system, HostMonitor, had very basic capabilities, required a lot of manual configuration and there was no GUI to offer visibility across the network. Nor did their current monitoring situation support the move toward virtualization.

“As our use of hosted applications, servers, Enterprise storage and VMware grew, this made monitoring increasingly difficult and time consuming,” Tims said. “I spent a lot of time babysitting systems, logging in just to make sure everything’s good, and wasting time trying to integrate third party systems, not to mention solving critical issues as they arose.”

## PRTG Offers Proactive Monitoring, Eliminates Babysitting

Hoping to develop a more proactive posture across the entire network and avoid any surprise system failures, Tims sought the expertise of local Sioux Falls datacenter provider and Paessler AG partner Dataware Services. The Dataware team offered a demo of PRTG Network Monitor. After discussing Raven's needs for disk space monitoring, CPU, RAM, VMware and hardware monitoring, Tims says PRTG was the clear choice.

Tims installed PRTG locally and within two days had the system configured to his specifications, although he continues to tweak it as Raven's monitoring needs change. He now has more than 900 sensors actively monitoring the environment across multiple sites, including some 100 servers, physical and virtualized resources, hosted applications, SANS, Exchange servers, Sharepoint and more. And, he can keep an eye on all of these components through one pane of glass through the PRTG GUI, which means no more wasting time "babysitting" each individual component.

In addition to PRTG's flexible features, the fact that it offered a cost efficient solution played a major role in Tims' decision to deploy PRTG.

"When you're first starting out, it's tough to gauge exactly how many sensors you need, and once you start to use the product, my expectations changed as I learned what all it could do," he said. "The fact that PRTG included all the sensors for Exchange, VMware, Terminal Services, Windows Performance Data, WMI, etc. made it a much more affordable solution."

## Stay "In the Know" While on the Go

In addition to offering complete network visibility from his desk at work, PRTG also lets Tims keep tabs on the network while away from the office. PRTG's alerts feature enables him to establish specific thresholds for network activity-when a server reaches 20 percent free space, for example-and receive an email, text message or phone call when that threshold is reached. Not only does this offer that proactive approach that he was hoping for (now he knows a problem is brewing before it causes a problem) but it also lets him decide if the issue requires him to take action immediately, or if it can wait until he's back in the office.

"Setting up the thresholds was easy, because I had it all planned out," Tims says. "I made a list of all the servers, what I wanted to monitor and PRTG fit my needs nicely for one price. Others would let me do it, but all at an added cost."

Tims describes himself as a "heavy mobile user," taking full advantage of the iPRTG iPhone/iPad app to keep tabs on the network while he's away. He has even created custom maps of the network landscape that fit the iPad screen parameters to see what's happening on the network if trouble pops up. If it requires immediate attention, he can easily access the network via VPN, log into PRTG and determine what steps to take.

## PRTG Reduces Stress, Saves Time and Money

With PRTG keeping tabs on the network, Tims said the visibility and peace of mind have dramatically reduced his stress level and allowed him and his team to be much more proactive-precisely his goal in the beginning. Of course, issues still happen. But now, instead of putting out fires as they spring up, the Raven IT team learns about problems ahead of time thanks to PRTG. Oftentimes, they can even resolve the problem before it has an impact on production or workflow.

In addition, Tims estimates that PRTG has saved at least 30 percent of his time spent in troubleshooting, if not more. The combination of threshold-based proactive alerting

### About Raven Industries

A worldwide leader in diversified engineering and technical innovation, Sioux Falls-based Raven Industries depends on its highly advanced IT systems to meet growing demand for its specialized applied technology products for agriculture, ultra-thin and reinforced engineered plastic films, electronic components and technical sewn and sealed products for the aerospace and aviation industries. With multiple office and manufacturing sites located across the country and deep integration of virtualization technology, the IT team faced a daily challenge to keep all systems up and running.



<http://www.ravenind.com>

along with PRTG's network visibility and logging of historical data lets the Raven team be aware of the problem much earlier and find the root cause much faster than traditional troubleshooting methods.

In one instance, PRTG prevented an outage on a major piece of equipment. When a core production AS 400 system indicated it was nearing disk capacity at 70 percent utilization, PRTG issued an alert about the unusual activity. Tims and his team were able to contact the administrator on that machine and pinpoint the cause of the problem: another employee running a query that was hogging up resources.

"If that would have continued, it would have taken down the machine and all production, shipping and receiving for our company nationwide" Tims said. "With PRTG, we could see a screenshot of the disk space usage and the extreme difference compared to the historical data that helped us figure out what was going on and get it stopped before it caused a major problem. PRTG paid for itself just by resolving this one issue. Had that system gone down, we would have lost tens of thousands of dollars in production."

The ability to create graphical representations of resource usage, data demands and more through PRTG also helps Raven Industries satisfy its auditing and resource planning requirements. With an easy-to-understand visual graphic, the IT team is able to provide the auditing team with uptime and availability of various systems on demand. Tims has also used PRTG to demonstrate where upgrades are needed-and showcase their effectiveness on improving latency and capacity after the fact-by providing graphic charts to the CIO and other chief decision makers in the company.

On the other side of the coin, he has also used PRTG to optimize resources already in place.

"I recently went through our VMware environment with PRTG and cleaned up 30 GB of over-allocated RAM," he said. "That's another 10-15 servers I have available now for free. PRTG saved us from having to purchase additional hardware and showed us how we could make the most out of the resources we already have."

## Superb Support, Active Plug In Community Enhance Built-in Features

In addition to the robust features and flexibility inherent in the PRTG software, Tims says he has found the Paessler support team to be exceptionally accessible and responsive. When he has encountered an issue, he simply sends an email and typically gets a reply within a day, sometimes with a quick fix. When he submitted an idea for a change to the iPRTG iPad app, he heard back from developers that they would be adding it to the list of features for the next update.

"When you do have an issue, they're jumping all over it," he said. "And, if they can't fix it right away, they don't say 'no, it can't be fixed.' Instead, they'll look into it and get it resolved."

To supplement the Paessler support team, Tims has also discovered-and joined-an active community of PRTG plug-in developers offering additional integration tools and technical assistance. He's become very involved with the community at [www.prtgplugins.com](http://www.prtgplugins.com), helping others to troubleshoot issues and contributing both project ideas for new components he'd like to monitor and solutions for other members' needs.

Tims says that not only has PRTG enabled him to meet his goal of being more proactive, it has enabled him to take a more business-focused role in the company. Now, instead of just solving problems, he has more time to spend on new initiatives and new solutions to help grow the business.

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### 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.

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