

Product Reviews

Networks/Servers

Swiftbase Climate Monitor [PC Pro] ISSUE: 144 DATE: Oct 06

Verdict: A very cost-effective rack environment monitoring system with a sensor for every occasion



With rack-dense server environments now the norm in many larger businesses, it pays to protect your assets, and that includes physical security. Most rack servers have their own internal sensors and monitoring software, but it would save a lot of time if the rack chassis and server room environments themselves were also being monitored to provide early warnings of potential problems.

The Climate Monitor from Swiftbase is a unique alternative to the mainstream products. This slim 1U rack-mount unit looks good value when stacked up against the competition from names such as NetBotz, APC and Avocent. It comes as standard with integral temperature, air flow, humidity, light and sound sensors, as well as an LCD panel that displays these values locally. There are also three I/O connectors and five RJ-11 ports for external sensors, of which it can accept a maximum of 53. To achieve this, some need to be combined units, but Swiftbase offers a huge range of external sensors, with models for fluid, smoke, floor pressure and doors, plus bespoke solutions. Power monitoring also comes into the fray with the Power Egg units, which connect to the RJ-11 ports and provide information on power and current consumption - you can also have custom Power Eggs made up to your specification.

For testing, we installed the Climate Monitor in the Lab's resident 42U rack cabinet, which is kitted out with a selection of Ethernet switches, rack servers, blade servers and storage arrays. We particularly liked the fact that the unit occupies no more than 1U of vertical space - all too many monitoring products aren't designed specifically for rack residence. The unit's homepage opens with a complete rundown of all attached sensors, which includes a graph showing readings over the past two days and a table alongside revealing each one's current value. We added an external temperature sensor to one of the RJ-11 ports and this immediately showed up in a new graph below the main display.

The homepage has options for views suitable for PDAs and WAP-enabled devices, or the data can be viewed in XML, allowing it to be exported into other applications. The homepage view can't be modified in terms of refresh rates and time periods, but move to the Log page and you can select which sensors you want to graph and decide on a time period of up to one month.

Setting up alarms is simple, as you enter upper and lower thresholds for each sensor. Alarms can be a local buzzer plus email and SNMP trap, and for each sensor you can pick any combination of all three. Anyone who attempts to unplug an external sensor will also set off the alarms.

Video comes into the frame too, as you can enter the address of an IP camera and the view will appear in the homepage. Options are provided for Axis 205/206 or D-Link DCS-900/950 IP cameras, but we used an Axis 207 successfully.

The Climate Monitor would make an ideal rack companion. It packs a lot into its slim chassis, and offers a host of embedded and optional monitoring features at this low price.

By Dave Mitchell

SPECIFICATIONS:

3 x I/O connectors • 5 x RJ-11 sensor ports • internal buzzer alarm • 10/100BaseTX Ethernet • supports DHCP, SNMP, HTTP, HTTPS, SMTP • Options: external fluid sensor • external temperature sensor • Power Egg • IP Cameras • etc