

FireScope Uses Web 2.0 to Lessen IT Operations' Pain

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The startup's namesake operations management tool aims to reduce legwork and speed resolution of network problems.

Bootstrap startup FireScope on April 23 will release a new version of its IT operations management tool, which exploits Web 2.0 capabilities such as mashups to eliminate IT pain points.

The FireScope Business Service Management tool, delivered in an appliance form factor, uses a variety of open-source management offerings integrated together and combined with a portal architecture to provide real-time monitoring and reporting of availability and performance of IT resources.

The new version adds the ability to create mashups based on multiple sources of IT operations management data. "We take events and raw data, - and - aggregate all your applications and group them logically by geography, vendor or what have you, and you can monitor them from a single portal," said Mark Lynd, president of FireScope, in La Palma, Calif. "We pull data together in logical groupings; it tells you what happened - and - what steps to take and we aggregate all those applications," he said.

Early customers at competitive local exchange carrier Telscape Communications, in Monrovia, Calif., found that FireScope solves problems that the big enterprise management systems such as those from IBM/Tivoli, CA and Hewlett-Packard don't, according to Joseph Holob,

CIO for Telscape.

"This is introducing a method - that allows one - to collect disparate data, put it in logical groupings, act on the data in a timely fashion and fill that niche that a number of these products do not address," Holob said. "You see results faster than you do with the traditional products in the space," he added.

The portal architecture used in FireScope allows the BSM tool to provide each user with a menu of available tools that can be accessed from that view. Those tools can range from network tools, firewall administration programs and help desk systems to wikis, forums and shared calendars. The network administrator can view the performance of network switches and make changes. "I can see how my changes are affecting my network and I have wikis to show common commands to do my job," Lynd said. New applications or features can be added without having to reboot the FireScope appliances.

FireScope competes with existing BSM tools such as those marketed by Managed Objects or the former Mercury Interactive Business Service Management Suite, now owned by HP.

Lynd said he believes FireScope's use of Web 2.0 capabilities such as mashups, Google Maps, AJAX (Asynchronous JavaScript and XML) and Yahoo finance Sparklines is one of five elements that makes it unique. "Those Sparklines minigraphs are fantastic for trend data. It gives you the ability to get more information in a limited area and provides a more flexible way of looking at data," he said.

Another unique attribute, he said, is the ability to logically group event data from different IT resources such as applications, operating systems, server clusters, anti-virus, the network, and power and air systems.

"Traditionally, when you get a call from users saying the ERP - enterprise resource planning - system is running slow, everybody gets involved and the diagnosis takes a long time. The ability to custom-tag events, whether they're availability, performance or security events, allows you to filter accordingly," he said.

Also unique is the flexible, real-time reporting in FireScope that eliminates the requirement to have a report-writing specialist. "You can build reports - and - make them private or public, and they are all live," Lynd said.

FireScope is also unique in its use of blogs, wikis, forums and journals that can be used as references and for knowledge transfer. For example, an incident report on SharePoint can be linked and put into an alert notification, saving time, Lynd said. "Most analysts say it takes 7 to 22 minutes after determining the type of incident to when the root cause has been identified. Our customers see an average of 4 to 5 minutes because we took the legwork out of remedial steps," he said.

The FireScope appliance is available in five different models that range in price from \$10,000 up to \$150,000.

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