# CA Nimsoft Modern IT Blog

3 Ways Server Monitoring Alleviates "Too Big to Fail"

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In an era of big data and big infrastructures, the server role really is too big to fail. Your servers sit at the core of the business applications that are critical to running the business. Although the server role may be too big to fail, IT budgets aren't always big enough to effectively monitor proliferating and heterogeneous server environments. Even small to mid-size enterprises and MSPs tell us it's challenging to maintain service levels in a constantly changing environment.

We believe the answer lies in automation. While automation isn't the panacea for all things monitoring, it can alleviate a significant portion of server monitoring issues that impact service levels. We canvassed our customers to see how they managed server proliferation in an era of too big to fail. Here are our top three recommendations.
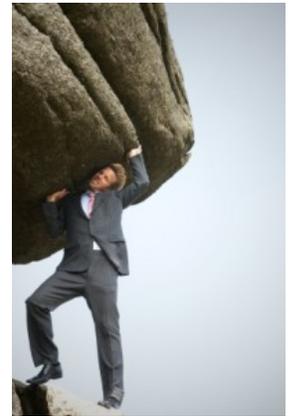
1. Leverage the scale and scope of cluster servers

The advantage of clusters—scale, scope and high availability—are the very issues that make them difficult to monitor. It's not feasible to assign an administrator to each cluster or platform type. Even if it were possible, manually administering them is ineffective at spotting real-time issues that could point to a potential failure.

With automation, administrators can establish upfront performance thresholds, aligned with the SLA, and receive automatic alerts when thresholds are approached or exceeded. But even before a threshold is exceeded, status reports indicate the overall health of the network particularly in a failover or load balancing situation, avoiding unnecessary alarms. This gives administrators the visibility they need to manage more server clusters without the added overhead.

2. Simplify complex server environments

A growing concern among systems administrators is not only the proliferation of servers, but also the proliferation of server platforms. Although most platforms have their own monitoring capabilities, it's not enough to monitor the server independent of the cluster to which it belongs. Systems administrators look for efficient code-based systems that monitor multiple platforms from a single system. This alone helps administrators operate more efficiently despite the complexity of virtual/physical environments.

We recommend using topographical tools to make it easier to locate issues. Our philosophy is that a picture is worth a thousand data points. Why comb through endless data streams or log files, when you can automate the process and visual the results. Having a holistic, single console view also gives administrators more confidence that they can maintain service levels effectively. Of course, a picture that's only partially complete is of no value, which leads to our third element… visibility.

3. Service level visibility

When it comes to monitoring servers, every administrator knows that the sum of the parts is greater than the whole. Where administrators need assistance is gaining visibility to each part's interdependency across the entire high availability system including virtualized environments. So if an application is running slowly, the administrator can pinpoint the server issue, and also other underlying issues that may be the root cause. Often, the most obvious cause is not necessarily the source of the problem; it may be a symptom of another issue. With service-level insights, administrators are monitoring the metrics within the context of the SLA and as part of the entire HA system.

We find that administrators who have visibility to insights at the service level tend to have better optimized IT assets. These administrators are aware of the service level thresholds under which each server operates. As a result, they are more effective at utilizing available capacity because they know the point at which a server will impact service levels.

The role of servers in most organizations makes them too big to fail. However, effective server monitoring doesn't have to be too big to manage effectively. Learn more about effective server monitoring in our 8-page white paper, The Top 5 Server Monitoring Battles—and How You Can Win Them.

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