

# NetScout Brings Video Quality Monitoring Into the Fold with Psytechnics Acquisition

## Event

On March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2011, U.S.-based NetScout Systems, Inc. announced its intention to acquire U.K.-based Psytechnics, Inc., a maker of Unified Communications quality and performance monitoring software. Psytechnics' technologies will be directly integrated into NetScout's nGenius Service Assurance Solution and the Psytechnics organizational headquarters in Ipswich, U.K., will become NetScout's worldwide Voice/Video Center of Excellence. The resulting expanded capabilities of the NetScout solution will be of particular value and interest to IT and Service Provider organizations rolling out IP videoconferencing solutions – especially those on the high end such as telepresence.

## Context

The use of IP (Internet Protocol)-based voice and video technologies has advanced steadily and is now present in the vast majority of organizations worldwide. But while Voice over IP (VoIP) has widely achieved mainstream status, IP video is still less prevalent. It's important to note that IP video can take many forms – from cached/streaming (a la YouTube) to broadcast to video-enabled Web conferencing to live video conferencing and telepresence. Those forms of IP video that require real-time communications back and forth, such as telepresence, are still early in terms of broad adoption but represent some interesting challenges for those early adopters seeking to optimize returns on their investments through assured service quality.

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High-end IP videoconferencing such as telepresence creates many new challenges for network and infrastructure operations teams.

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All forms of real-time, interactive IP communications bring with them significant user/customer expectations for reliable quality of presentation. This creates challenges for network and infrastructure operations teams in the form of new network capacity planning drivers, new elements to be monitored proactively, and new technologies which will require troubleshooting when things don't work as expected. At the high end of the scale, telepresence is a relative newcomer and represents a worst-case scenario affecting all of these areas – requiring the greatest bandwidth, demanding priority delivery, lacking standardized and well-accepted monitoring techniques, and introducing a number of new technology elements, which make troubleshooting all the more daunting.

The lack of broad standards for monitoring video quality is a significant issue when planning mainstream adoption of videoconferencing solutions. Mean Opinion Score (MOS) is a well-accepted metric for assessing voice quality and has been in use for decades, with its roots in the traditional non-IP voice world. Videoconferencing requires both voice communications, which can be measured using MOS, but also image quality measures. A number of videoconferencing equipment vendors have tried to tackle this, but one of the few in the independent management tools sector to do so is Psytechnics, with its MOS-V effort.

Until such time as videoconferencing quality standards mature, the best strategy for mainstreaming videoconferencing technology is to incorporate and integrate direct monitoring of health and performance into the same infrastructure management tools in use for monitoring the health and performance of the delivery infrastructure. The vast majority of network management products,

whether focused on availability or performance, have integral support for VoIP. But few have embraced specific functionality for videoconferencing at this time, and thus may not be able to help with recognizing and characterizing the traffic footprint and operational quality of these increasingly important communication systems.

## NetScout Makes Its Play in Video Management

NetScout delivers performance monitoring and management solutions, which provide rich, complete visibility into all layers of the network. Predominately leveraging a packet-inspection approach for instrumentation, its nGenius Service Assurance Solution is designed for large-scale enterprise and service provider networks, providing true real-time awareness of network activity and the composition thereof, including servers, clients, users/customers/subscribers, applications, and services, as they are delivered across the network. The company terms this solution strategy as Unified Service Delivery Management (USDM) – an evolutionary successor of performance management for applications and networks.

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Psytechnics brings significant depth of IP video quality management technology and expertise to NetScout's solutions.

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The acquisition of Psytechnics will bring significant depth of IP video technology and expertise to NetScout's solutions. Psytechnics has its roots as an OEM solutions provider for actively testing and monitoring IP voice call quality, as well as the network characteristics that contribute to call quality, by means of its PESQ monitoring algorithms and agency. In 2005, the company added a platform solution for collecting and reporting measurements from its monitoring technology, and launched the Experience Manager solution as a result.

Within the last few years, Psytechnics had been working diligently on building and perfecting video call quality assessment, culminating in the development of MOS-V. As a management technology component supplier, Psytechnics has inked hundreds of OEM agreements including most major test, measurement, and management technology vendors. Psytechnics also built technology alliances with most of the big infrastructure names in the industry – Cisco, HP, IBM, and Microsoft included.

Consistent with the scope of NetScout's USDM approach, it has long included detailed viewpoints for tracking and characterizing the health and quality of real-time IP communications as an integral part of complete application/service visibility from the network perspective. To date, this has focused primarily on VoIP usage/activity/quality, but by its comprehensive nature was able to reveal performance and usage metrics for streaming media, Web conferencing, and even videoconferencing. The company incorporated MOS metric calculation for real-time VoIP quality monitoring years ago, and with this acquisition stands on the threshold of incorporating leading-edge video quality technology within the same solution.

## EMA Perspective

ENTERPRISE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATES® (EMA™) analysts strongly advocate for the use of integrated, service-oriented strategies for converging management across all types of information technologies. The growth and adoption of unified communications should be treated as yet another set of services to be delivered over a common network infrastructure, and consequently EMA recommends that UC management become an integral part of planning and operations monitoring across the organization.

By bringing the Psytechnics technology into its broader enterprise service management solution, NetScout is re-asserting its leadership role amongst the management technology community. NetScout has long been focusing on “systemic” approaches to management, and this is natural extension that

puts NetScout and its customers in an advantaged position to deal with today's videoconferencing deployments as well as any future expanded usage. These are precisely the types of evolutionary solutions required for new technologies, such as telepresence, to make the jump from curiosity to mainstream.

NetScout has yet to formalize detailed plans for how Psytechnics technology will be integrated into its nGenius Service Assurance Solution, but the naturally complementary nature of the two means that this will represent tremendous additional value for existing NetScout customers, and a potentially compelling new capability for enterprise organizations who are evaluating or planning expansions for telepresence and other high-capacity videoconferencing projects.

### **About EMA**

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