

NetScout nGenius Service Delivery Manager: Transforming the View of Performance Management

NetScout® Systems, Inc. developed its *nGenius* solution suite to provide comprehensive end-to-end network and application management to assure end-to-end performance that will meet service and quality level commitments. They recently announced the availability of the nGenius® Service Delivery Manager. This is a real-time service dashboard to provide unified visibility into end-to-end service delivery in the context of how services are actually being delivered and consumed as reflected by the user experience.



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The complexity and variety in today's operating environments has led to an abundance of tools and overwhelming variety and amount of data. NetScout Systems has set its sights on resolving that problem. The nGenius® Service Delivery Manager allows the results of that data analysis to be presented in a context that is meaningful to the different operations managers responsible for infrastructure performance and allows these same consumers to understand what is happening in terms of its impact on the delivery of business services. Further, the dashboard is flexible enough to also present the business managers with meaningful information about how infrastructure performance will affect the delivery of their services.

What's the issue?

Business service delivery requires the action and interaction of a complex collection of moving parts, starting in IT and extending all the way to the service consumer and back. The common end-to-end connecting thread is the network. The end user experience is the ultimate measure of successful service delivery. To reliably guarantee an acceptable experience, there must be end-to-end monitoring, measuring, analyzing and reporting across this complex environment.

The environment includes networks, servers, databases, storage, applications and other services – that must interact seamlessly to deliver the service. The task of managing this environment is accomplished using a wide variety of data gathering, analyzing tools and devices. It involves managers with responsibilities that range from the network operations center to applications to the datacenter to diagnostic specialists. Each requires and operates with a unique informational view and context.

Despite an explosion in monitoring and management tools providing access to more data from a wider variety of sources, operations and business staff still have trouble getting prompt access to the actionable information needed to meet performance expectations and commitments. The analyzed results are too frequently displayed as informational and operational silos. They lack

the context needed to interpret event and performance significance in time to avoid disrupting critical business services.

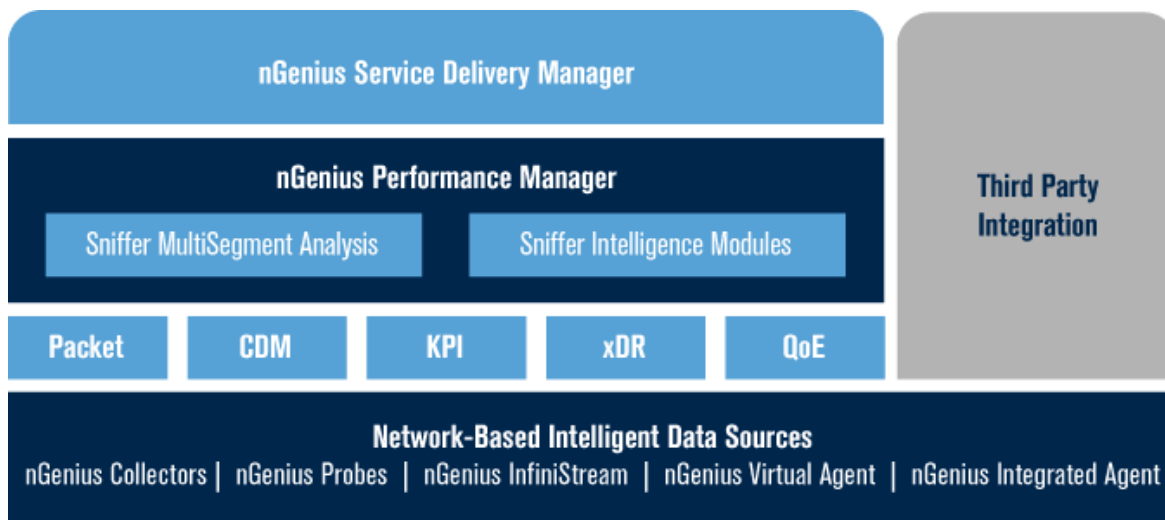
Performance information needs to be represented in a way that it is easily understood in the context of the consumers' job responsibilities. It must clearly relate performance to their impact on business services and end user experiences. The users need to know if a reported anomaly or behavioral change threatens a service or quality objective or critical service. Only then can they know what and if corrective action is needed to meet SLA and quality of service commitments.

Business and IT operations managers need to understand how infrastructure performance will impact their service delivery. It is too late if the first notification of a service disruption is a call from an irate customer. These managers need to know about a performance anomaly and its potential to impact specific services in order to avoid or minimize any disruption.

Finally, any solution must also be able to learn and adapt to the unique way a service is implemented, deployed, accessed and delivered. This requires intelligent, proactive and dynamic discovery and analysis of the service at a very detailed level.

nGenius Service Delivery Manager

nGenius Service Delivery Manager is designed to provide a business-oriented view of operations. It works with and builds on the existing family of products and very effectively leverages nGenius Intelligent Data sources. Figure 1 illustrates how the separate NetScout and 3rd party pieces fit together.



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Figure 1: nGenius Service Delivery Manager Architecture

nGenius Service Delivery Manager works with other NetScout products to initiate monitoring of end-to-end performance. It automatically learns the ‘normal’ operational behavior of all the constituent pieces. Having established a ‘base-line’ of behaviors, it monitors for anomalies or changes in this behavior that will impact service delivery performance. When it finds a disruptive anomaly, it automatically and pro-actively issues an alarm so that action can be taken to identify and triage problems that threaten service quality.

nGenius has included a very nice extension in the Integrated Threat Management capability. This detects both new and blended security threats occurring in physical, virtual and cloud-based services. It monitors service behavior to detect anomalies and policy violations. The extra layer of visibility provided from the service behavioral data makes it a strong complement to existing primary, endpoint and signature-based security solutions. An extensive set of post-event forensic analysis tools comes with the package. IT managers get real-time and historical views into user-defined service domains and what is happening there.

The solution works because it leverages all the capabilities of the existing NetScout products. NetScout specifically designed their products with the intent of providing an end-to-end management capability and view of service delivery. The family of products includes the nGenius Performance Manage console, Sniffer Application Intelligence, Sniffer analysis and the nGenius Intelligent Data sources. It will also integrate with 3rd party OSS and major management platforms.

The Final Word

Today’s operations and business staff have access to more data from more sources than before. Unfortunately, the challenge remains getting actionable information from that data in time to minimize or prevent disruption to business operations. All too often, the analyzed results end up being presented as silos of information – difficult and time consuming to interpret in a timely manner. NetScout has tackled these problems with a vengeance and, with what we see as a highly effective strategy. This commentary has only touched on a few highlights of the capabilities and in-depth management monitoring, management, analysis and reporting capabilities built into the total nGenius solution.

When first introduced to NetScout’s nGenius solutions, we noted that they provided a “solid foundation for dealing with existing and emerging technologies and the operational challenges they present to today’s enterprise.¹” Since that first introduction, NetScout has expanded and strengthened their solutions package at every stage. They promote themselves as a leader in Unified Service Delivery Management with the commitment to Optimize,

¹ **NetScout’s nGenius delivers Improved Business Services**, Ptak, Noel & Associates LLC, April, 2005

Protect and Simplify Service Management. If that sounds as good to you as it does to us, we highly recommend that you contact the folks at NetScout Systems to learn more about what they are delivering.

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Richard Ptak (rlptak@ptaknoel.com) has over 30 years experience in systems product management working closely with Fortune 50 companies in developing product direction and strategies at a global level. Previously Ptak held positions as senior vice president at Hurwitz Group and D.H. Brown Associates. Earlier in his career he held engineering and marketing management positions with Western Electric's Electronic Switch Manufacturing Division and Digital Equipment Corporation. He is frequently quoted in major business and trade press. Ptak holds a master's in business administration from the University of Chicago and a master of science in engineering from Kansas State University.