

Ipswitch WhatsUp Gold vs. Solarwinds Orion Comparing Product Offerings

Matched Capabilities, Yet Multifold Differences in Cost

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sponsored by Ipswitch

March 2010

INTRODUCTION

With their powerful, easy to use software deployed in tens of thousands of IT organizations around the world, both Ipswitch WhatsUp Gold and Solarwinds Orion are highly successful network management and monitoring products. Built on Internet download distribution models, their success has disrupted the traditional network management industry product sales process that requires on-site consulting from evaluation to final deployment. This disruption continues to grow, as these products extend far beyond their network monitoring roots – consolidating system, application, and flow based fault and performance management, as well as integrated network configuration and change management information, into a single view.

In this paper, we review the capabilities of the core product portfolios and contrast the offerings of WhatsUp Gold and Solarwinds Orion as of November 2009. We also delve into the distinct pricing and licensing philosophies supported by each company. Our analysis shows that while the core product portfolios and capabilities are well matched with some gaps in offering on both sides – WhatsUp Gold holds multi-fold advantage in the price to value equation – because of their distinct pricing and licensing terms.

CORE PRODUCT COMPARISON: WHATSUP GOLD PREMIUM VS. SOLARWINDS ORION NPM

The core products in each product portfolio with their current versions are WhatsUp Gold Premium v14.1 and the Solarwinds Orion Network Performance Monitor (aka Orion NPM) v9.5 respectively. Each supports a number of add-on or plug-in applications, which integrate into the core product platform for single console operation (with the exception of the Solarwinds LAN Surveyor). And both product families (along with their plug-ins) deliver comprehensive infrastructure management support for fault and performance management of networks, systems and applications as well as powerful network configuration and change management.

The following table reviews their individual capabilities and differences in product packaging that they currently offer.

Capability Area	SolarWinds Orion NPM v9.5	WhatsUp Gold Premium Edition v14.1
Product Description	Core product of the Orion product family.	Core product for the WhatsUp Gold product family.
Layer 3 Discovery	Supports IPv4 Layer 3 discovery and mapping with pre-configured monitoring.	Supports both IPv4 and IPv6 Layer 3 discovery and mapping with pre-configured monitoring.
Layer 2 Discovery	Layer 2 discovery is covered by a separate LAN Surveyor solution that does not integrate with Orion NPM. Any device interconnections in Orion NPM maps have to be done manually – making it impossible to map any sizable network.	Full integration of automated Layer 2 topology discovery and visualization with the WhatsConnected plug-in. Together, the integrated solution provides rich mapping and automated discovery of full port-to-port connectivity on networks of all sizes.

Capability Area	SolarWinds Orion NPM v9.5	WhatsUp Gold Premium Edition v14.1
Network Management	Provides network fault and performance management with support for a diverse range of vendors and infrastructure (fixed and wireless) using SNMP v1-3.	Provides network fault and performance management with support for a diverse range of vendors and infrastructure (fixed and wireless) using SNMP v1-3.
Systems and Application Monitoring	Needs a separately priced plug-in called Orion APM (Application Performance Monitoring) to add SNMP and WMI support for servers, operating systems, IP Services and hosted applications. Monitoring of virtualized systems is provided through SNMP.	Includes SNMP and WMI support for servers, operating systems, IP Services and hosted applications in the core product. Monitoring of virtualized systems is provided by the new WhatsVirtual plug-in (released in March 2010).
Network Configuration Management	Offers secure backup, storage and restore capabilities for Network device configurations via the fully integrated Orion NCM (Network Configuration Management) plug-in.	Offers secure backup, storage and restore capabilities for Network device configurations via the fully integrated WhatsConfigured plug-in.
Application Flow Monitoring	Supports comprehensive flow monitoring through the fully integrated Orion NTA (Network Traffic Analysis) plug-in. NetFlow, sFlow, J-Flow and IPFIX formats are supported.	Supports comprehensive flow monitoring through the fully integrated Flow Monitor plug-in. NetFlow, sFlow, J-Flow formats are currently supported.
Distributed Architecture	Requires a separately priced Enterprise Console add-on to bring together centralized alerting from distributed pollers and enable drill down to remote devices.	Needs only a new Distributed Edition license to roll up critical data and alerts from multiple remote clients to a central site for coordinated action and analysis including drill down to individual devices.
Other Technical Differences	Does not support IPV6 device monitoring in Orion NPM. Supports Cisco Energy Wise monitoring. Requires the user to install SQL Server and IIS. Only runs on server class OS's.	Fully supports IPV6 device monitoring across the entire product family. Does not yet support Cisco Energywise monitoring. Installation includes SQL Server Express and the WhatsUp Web Server. Supports non-server class OS's such as XP and Vista.

Capability Area	SolarWinds Orion NPM v9.5	WhatsUp Gold Premium Edition v14.1
Licensing* and Pricing	<p>For Orion NPM, licensing is based on the maximum number of interfaces (physical or virtual), or devices, or logical volumes monitored.</p> <p>For Orion APM, licensing is based on the number of individual monitors (infrastructure and user experience based).</p>	Licensing is simple and direct and based on number of devices and systems monitored.
	*The philosophical difference in licensing results in manifold differences in cost of ownership as illustrated below.	

EFFECT OF LICENSING TERMS ON PRICING OF WHATSUP GOLD PREMIUM EDITION VS. SOLARWINDS ORION PRODUCTS

WhatsUp Gold Orion Premium Edition and Solarwinds Orion NPM and APM have comparable capabilities with some differences, which is to be expected when a snapshot is taken in time within the iterative cycles of competitive roadmap planning and execution. What is striking, however, is the difference in licensing philosophies and terms and its effect on pricing for comparable levels of network and systems infrastructure and application management coverage.

Chiefly, Solarwinds Orion NPM licenses are based on the maximum number of one of the following licensing units (or elements):

- **Interfaces** – including switch ports, physical interfaces, virtual interfaces, sub-interfaces, VLANs, and any other single point of network traffic.
- **Nodes** – including entire devices, for example, routers, switches, servers, access points, and modems.
- **Volumes** – equal to the logical drives monitored.

Typically, as stated by Solarwinds – in any network infrastructure, the number of interfaces provides the highest count over nodes and volumes.

In contrast, WhatsUp Gold licenses are based on the number of physical ‘devices’ which equates to ‘nodes’ in the Solarwinds terminology – regardless of the number of monitored interfaces on network devices.

In addition, Solarwinds customers must pay separately for server and application monitoring support (the latter is only available through Orion APM) based on the number of monitors deployed.

In contrast, server and application monitoring capabilities are integrated into the WhatsUp Gold Premium product and covered under the simple and direct ‘device’ based licensing terms (number of servers monitored). Application monitors or user experience transactions are not counted separately.

With tens to hundreds of monitored interfaces and ports on a typical switch or router, even a small network of say 200 network devices can easily surpass the unlimited license count for a Solarwinds Orion NPM installation (above 2000 elements). Similarly, with a number of operating systems and application components, and synthetic end user transactions targeting a server host consuming multiple monitors – the same holds true for a Solarwinds APM installation (enterprise license count is applicable beyond 1000 elements).

The result is that Solarwinds customers have to pay a significantly higher acquisition costs, and concomitantly larger follow-through annual maintenance costs than a comparable installation of WhatsUp Gold managing the same number devices – as shown in the table below.

Description	SolarWinds Orion NPM	WhatsUp Gold Premium Edition
Managed Infrastructure	200 network devices (>2000 network interfaces managed) 300 servers (> 2000 separate monitors covering OS, hosted application components, user experience transactions and NIC cards) License Tier: Enterprise licenses of Orion NPM and APM	200 network devices monitored 300 servers monitored License Tier: 500 devices of WhatsUp Gold Premium Edition
Costs	Orion NPM - \$20,975 Orion APM – \$19,995 TOTAL : \$40,970	WhatsUp Gold Premium - \$5,195
Savings of WhatsUp Gold Premium over Solarwinds NPM and APM in this scenario	<p><i>Purchasing WhatsUp Gold Premium saves over 87% of the investment in a comparable Solarwinds Orion installation. In this scenario, Solarwinds Orion is nearly 8 times costlier than WhatsUp Gold Premium for exactly the same configuration.</i></p> <p><i>While both WhatsUp Gold Premium and Solarwinds Orion include Year 1 maintenance cost – the Year 2 maintenance cost for Solarwinds is \$ 8,194 while comparable cost for WhatsUp Gold Premium is only \$ 1,095. The WhatsUp Gold advantage on the cost of ownership just keeps getting better each subsequent year!</i></p>	

Table 1: Comparison of WhatsUp Gold and Solarwinds Orion license and maintenance costs for the same monitored configuration

BENEFITS OF WHATSUP GOLD DEVICE BASED LICENSING POLICY

From a customer's perspective, there are several additional benefits to the simple and measurable licensing policy implemented in WhatsUp Gold.

1. Network and Systems infrastructure managers do not have to worry about running out of licenses as they add new types of monitoring on existing infrastructure to ensure full control and visibility. They can focus on their job at hand – ensuring optimal infrastructure availability and performance.
2. Monitoring and establishing license compliance is as easy as keeping track of the discovered physical device inventory. No effort is required to find out individual numbers of interfaces or monitor volumes deployed – which becomes especially hard to track in a dynamic, virtualized environment.
3. Infrastructure managers can accurately predict budget requirements since they have a better handle on how many devices they will need – than thinking in terms of how many monitors they need to pay for.
4. With the current level of price differentiation, many customers can save money by replacing existing Solarwinds products with a new WhatsUp Gold installation – because their maintenance fees over time are substantially higher than the cost of WhatsUp Gold ownership over the same time frame (even after taking into account the initial cost of product purchase).

IN CONCLUSION

Both WhatsUp Gold and Solarwinds offer comprehensive and proven capabilities in infrastructure management across networks, systems and applications. Their product architectures bear many similarities though at individual product levels there are differences and advantages on each side that continue to vary based on new product releases. However, the differences in license terms create a significant advantage for WhatsUp Gold in terms of acquisition cost vs. value delivered. This difference persists for all tiers of customers and Solarwinds Orion can be nearly 8 times more costly than WhatsUp Gold. No doubt, network and IT managers should stop and evaluate if it's worth paying the significant premium for Solarwinds Orion, when a comparable, proven and robust solution like WhatsUp Gold is available.

About The Network Management Division of Ipswitch, Inc.

The Network Management Division of Ipswitch, Inc. is the developer of the WhatsUp Gold suite of innovative IT Management software. WhatsUp Gold delivers comprehensive network, system, application and event log monitoring and management solutions for small and medium businesses and enterprises. Built on a modular, yet integrated architecture - the affordable and easy-to-use solutions scale with the size and complexity of any physical or virtual IT infrastructure. From a single console, WhatsUp Gold supports standard IT management tasks including automated discovery, mapping, real-time monitoring, alerting, troubleshooting and reporting. Over 100,000 networks worldwide use WhatsUp Gold solutions to assure the availability, health and security of their critical business infrastructure today.

Ipswitch, Inc.'s Network Management Division recently added to its product line complete, easy-to-use solutions for Windows Security Event Management (SEM) and Log Management for small businesses and enterprise-level organizations suite with the acquisition of Dorian Software Creations, Inc. WhatsUp Gold was named Network Management Product of 2010 by Network Computing Magazine and earned the Network Products Guide 2010 Product Innovation Award in Network Management. To learn more about WhatsUp Gold – the best value in IT Management software, download a free trial or to make a purchase, please visit: <http://www.whatsupgold.com/products/download/>

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