

## Leading Forest Products Company Achieves Network-wide Visibility with GroundWork Monitor 4

"I know at a glance what's happened with all 90 of our routers and servers—whether they're up or down and where problems might be developing."

**Kevin Nadin, Network Administrator, Sierra Pacific Industries**

### CHALLENGES

- Keep IT network up and accessible 24/7
- Preempt IT network outages and bottlenecks
- Achieve high visibility into network operational status and usage
- Meet rising needs of large, geographically diverse workforce for reliable data traffic flow and connectivity

### RESULTS

- Traffic problems and outages identified in minutes instead of hours
- Deep visibility into network operational status
- Network usage monitored for better bandwidth allocation
- Network team better able to prioritize time and maintain network
- Team now able to focus on more proactive projects

### INTRODUCTION: MAINTAINING FORESTS, SERVING CONSUMERS

Sierra Pacific Industries is a third generation, family-owned and operated company in the business of maintaining healthy, renewable forests and providing wood products for consumers. Founded in 1908, the company has grown into a diversified company active in several wood-related industries. In addition to tree growing and harvesting, Sierra Pacific operates sawmills and manufacturing plants, and produces wood construction products, such as window frame moldings. The company also develops track housing, processes wood by-products into power plant fuel and owns and operates a lumber trucking fleet of 260 trucks.

Sierra Pacific's sawmills, factories, sales offices, forests and 1.5 million acres of grazing lands are scattered across the Western U.S. Approximately 5,000 employees work in locations ranging from remote forest sites to busy urban showrooms.

Because Sierra Pacific is by necessity geographically scattered—sawmills need to be near forests, showrooms must be near population centers—the company relies on a robust, high-throughput IT network to run its numerous facilities and connect a highly mobile sales force internally and with customers. This network currently links over 50 locations—with more growth on the horizon.

### THE PROBLEM: FLYING BLIND

Sierra Pacific faced the common dilemma of operating a network characterized by heavy traffic. The company's 4.5 MB T1 lines were typically full. When parts of the network went down, Sierra Pacific's business was gravely affected. "Thousands of shipment orders from across the country transmit over our network on a weekly basis," said Kevin Nadin, Sierra Pacific's network administrator. "We also have hundreds of salespeople out in the field—often at construction sites—relying on laptop connectivity into the network. Downtime anywhere meant lost business opportunities and lost revenues."

At the heart of the matter was a lack of network visibility. On any given day, Sierra Pacific's IT administrators had to dig deep to find out what their network was doing. This involved logging onto every server and router for traffic reports and system checks. The team typically found out the hard way (usually via complaints from the field) when a system outage occurred. This put the team in a constant reactive mode rather than detecting and preventing potential problems and bottlenecks before they happened.

"Every morning we'd come in and find that a ping failed somewhere on our network," recalls Nadin. "Because we didn't know from the error report what the problem was, we'd literally have to call and talk to someone on-site to find out what was going on. That might mean contacting a remote forest site in the dead of winter or calling a sales office and hoping someone was there. Without network visibility, we were really flying blind."

## THE SOLUTION: GROUNDWORK MONITOR 4

Sierra Pacific needed an effective monitoring tool to achieve the robust 24/7 accessibility it required. The network team initially looked at IBM Tivoli and HP OpenView, but these commercial framework solutions were so cost prohibitive that Nadin quickly ruled them out.

At the other end of the spectrum, the free open source monitoring project Nagios wasn't a viable option either. The Sierra Pacific team didn't have the time required to manage an unsupported product and develop an acceptable user interface. "We value the cost and flexibility benefits of open source, but we wanted a complete, integrated monitoring system that came with strong customer support. We just didn't have time to make a stand alone open source project successful," said Nadin.

"Monitoring the network is a ten-minute process as opposed to the several hours we used to spend logging into servers and calling people."

**Kevin Nadin, Network Administrator, Sierra Pacific Industries**

After carefully analyzing cost, performance, support and ease of integration, GroundWork Monitor 4 became the clear choice for Sierra Pacific. "We liked the fact that GroundWork Monitor 4 was on a Linux-based platform that we could grow with," said Nadin. "And the open source architecture meant that we could easily customize the software as needed over time."

Sierra Pacific went live with the solution in January 2005, monitoring 60 Cisco routers and 30 Microsoft Windows servers. Installation, initial configuration and deployment proved easy for the in-house team complemented by GroundWork's support engineers. "GroundWork support has been very responsive. When we have questions, there are knowledgeable people that get back to us promptly and ensure quick resolution," said Nadin.

## THE RESULTS: SMOOTH SAILING

With GroundWork Monitor 4 watching the network, coming in to work has become a much more pleasant experience for Nadin. "I know at a glance what's happened with all 90 of our routers and servers—whether they're up or down and where problems might be developing," he said. "Monitoring the network is a ten-minute process as opposed to the several hours we used to spend logging into servers and calling people."

The improved visibility has freed the Sierra Pacific IT team from the tedium of network problem diagnoses, allowing them to proactively focus on projects such as intrusion detection and disaster recovery planning. "We felt that having a reliable, comprehensive monitoring solution was a critical foundation for nearly all of our other strategic IT projects," Nadin said.

Nadin is also interested in taking greater advantage of GroundWork Monitor 4's performance graphing capabilities. "With this new feature, I can understand right away what's going on. I can quickly chart where bandwidth is going, who's using it and whether a particular site is using an excessive amount of company IT resources," Nadin explains. Moving forward, Sierra Pacific expects GroundWork Monitor 4 to not only ensure high network availability every day, but to help the company look out into the future and plan accordingly.

## ABOUT GROUNDWORK

GroundWork provides open source software and solutions for network and systems monitoring and management. With GroundWork solutions, enterprises leverage the flexibility and value of open source to achieve enterprise-level availability, performance and operational efficiency at a fraction of the cost of traditional software.

### Contact us

866.899.4342  
[www.itgroundwork.com](http://www.itgroundwork.com)  
[info@itgroundwork.com](mailto:info@itgroundwork.com)

### GroundWork

**Open Source Solutions, Inc.**  
2200 Powell Street, Suite 350  
Emeryville, CA 94608