

## BEK COMMUNICATIONS MANAGES EXPANSIVE NETWORK WITH WHATSUP GOLD

### Case study

**Company:**  
BEK Communications

**Industry:**  
Telecom Cooperative

**Business challenge:**  
BEK needed a robust network monitoring solution to ensure that any disruption in service would be addressed quickly and by as many resources as possible to fix the issue with a minimum of impact to its subscriber base.

**Outcome:**  
BEK chose WhatsUp® Gold to keep its critical technology working in order to focus on meeting the complex requirements of its commercial and residential customers.

Mark Harsma has had a long and happy relationship with Ipswitch's WhatsUp product, going all the way back to 1995. "My whole career has been spent with WhatsUp," he says. "I was a consultant from 1995 to 2006, hired by companies to get their network management in place. I was an HP OpenView user and I was frustrated by the lack of options. It was counterintuitive; it didn't have the alarms that the WhatsUp product gave you. WhatsUp has always been a really helpful product."

When Harsma came to BEK Communications, a multi-faceted telecommunications company headquartered in Steele, North Dakota, he was faced with a situation he had seen countless times as a network management consultant. "There was nothing in the way of network management here, just Nagios® monitoring a couple of circuits," he says.

Over the years, BEK has invested heavily in the electronics and infrastructure necessary to deliver state-of-the-art services to their customers, so it made sense that they needed a network monitoring product that would match their drive to provide quality voice and data services to their approximately 6,000 customers. "I was hired to implement network monitoring," explains Harsma. "I modeled the entire system and WhatsUp Gold fit our needs. We're going to be one of the first telecommunications cooperatives to offer IPTV services using fiber to the home as well as DSL access platforms, and we'll be using WhatsUp Gold to monitor everything."

Because of the nature of the services that BEK provides to their customers, any down time has a significant impact to BEK's bottom line. One of their critical business objectives is to ensure that any affected circuit or device is detected and dealt with immediately. "We get a hair-trigger response sent to our cell phones," notes Harsma. "That's the beauty of WhatsUp Gold - if anything's down longer than five minutes, five technicians get text messages on their cell phones. So we can immediately see what's affected. I have literally thousands of circuits being monitored every thirty seconds. WhatsUp Gold lets us know exactly what interface is down, down to the card and port."

WhatsUp Gold ensures that business critical applications like Microsoft® SQL Server and Microsoft Exchange® Server remain up and running. If either of these services stops unexpectedly, WhatsUp Gold can be configured to fix the problem by restarting the crashed service automatically. WhatsUp will also notify you of the event, allowing you to keep track of performance. "I back up daily so I have the comfort that for disaster recovery, I have the latest snapshot of the SQL database ready to roll," states Harsma. "But the SQL Server feature offers solid performance and unlimited capacity. Whatever you throw at it sticks. As a network administrator, it doesn't get any better than that."

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**-Mark Harsma,  
Network Technologist,  
BEK Communications**

The large library of reports in WhatsUp Gold includes health reports, state change timelines, and detailed availability and performance reports for the entire network, device groups or specific devices. Flexible reporting can export report data to text files or to Microsoft Excel formats so you generate reports in your favorite reporting tool. "I don't have to run a third party scripting program," says Harsma. "That's unbelievable. These are things the other products on the market just don't give you. For Oracle back ends and for SQL databases, to name just two, WhatsUp Gold comes with a variety of canned scripts. But I've taken it further for things like temperature, Oracle databases, etcetera. The sky's the limit because what they don't give you can do yourself."

Security is a constant concern at many companies, and BEK is no exception. But the WhatsUp Gold Web interface gives Harsma the best of both worlds. "Currently we don't allow anyone into the console for security reasons, but what WhatsUp Gold gives you is the Web interface that mimics the console," he says. "So our team can get the console view from the Web interface without being in the console itself. It's why we're upgrading from WhatsUp Professional. That alone is worth its weight in gold."

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