

# SOLVAY PHARMACEUTICALS, INC. MINES WHATSUP GOLD TO STOP NETWORK MANAGEMENT HEADACHES

Case study

**Company:**

Solvay Pharmaceuticals, Inc.

**Industry:**

Pharmaceuticals

**Business Challenge:**

Solvay Pharmaceuticals, Inc., needed an easy to use network monitoring product that was intuitive, price-competitive and scalable across locations in North America and Europe.

**Outcome:**

Solvay Pharmaceuticals (Solvay) chose WhatsUp® Gold to ensure their production environment was constantly being monitored for device, network and temperature issues that, left unattended, could directly result in lost revenue.

Solvay  
Pharmaceuticals



Marietta-based Solvay Pharmaceuticals, Inc. is the U.S. subsidiary of the global pharmaceutical business of the Solvay Group headquartered in Brussels, Belgium. Solvay Pharmaceuticals houses a business-critical data center that is utilized globally.

Bruce McMillan, Manager of Emerging Technologies, began looking at network management software to monitor and administer his critical data centers in the U.S. because he was having issues with a company they'd hired to perform network monitoring.

"We were paying about \$100,000/year and finding that we were never getting alerted to failures," says McMillan.

Using a network sniffer he proved to the company that they were not receiving messages from its devices. After the company recognized its mistakes, McMillan decided that he wanted to manage network administration internally, leading to a search of network monitoring tools. It didn't take long, he explains.

"We looked at HP OpenView, which is an expensive solution, and we already had CiscoWorks—which is fine for Cisco switches but not for much else. After doing some research I kept coming back to WhatsUp Gold."

"Our visibility into the network was a big thing," continues McMillan. "Previously, we were getting reports from the external company, but only on a quarterly basis. They didn't have the ability for you to actively pull reports, which was necessary for us because I like to see the heartbeat of what's going on. With WhatsUp Gold I can get a baseline for what's happening not only by looking at things when they're going bad but when they're going right as well."

Although Ipswitch's WhatsUp product doesn't have the 144-year history of The Solvay Group, it hasn't stopped expanding since its launch. Each iteration has brought new and exciting improvements to network monitoring and management.

"As we've seen the WhatsUp product mature, it's gotten easier to manage our network from a proactive standpoint," says McMillan. "Up and downstream dependency management is a good example. The maturation of the WhatsUp Gold product has allowed me to set up Solvay by company. Under each company I monitor different sites. Under each site I monitor by building. We monitor routers, switches, and servers, and when there were no dependencies, we'd get a page from every device in that site. Now with the dependencies set up, an alarm announcing a lost switch leaves everything connected to other switches alone. Additionally, if I lose the whole site I don't get paged from every device; I would get only the top level device monitored—the default gateway."

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Ease of use was another important factor in McMillan's decision to choose WhatsUp Gold. Because WhatsUp Gold works with existing software and network devices, there's no need to install, maintain or update any software agents in order to monitor the network—WhatsUp Gold includes full SNMP and WMI monitoring out of the box.

"We've used WMI for Application Monitoring and we love it," says McMillan. "We use it to monitor specific services. For instance, we have a server that goes down one to two times per week. The software vendor had identified the specific problem and said that it will be fixed in the next release, but WhatsUp Gold allows me to monitor the server more closely. It's saved me a lot of headaches."

*"I want WhatsUp Gold to be the notification service one-stop shop for all my applications and hardware."*

**Bruce McMillan**  
Manager of Emerging Technologies  
Solvay Pharmaceuticals, Inc.

A central theme in customers' comments about the WhatsUp product line has been that its robust nature is matched by its flexibility to be customized to a company's specific needs. Using standard scripting syntax (VBScript/JScript), customers have the ability to create an Active Script, many of which are listed on Ipswitch's Website. As far as making customizations to WhatsUp Gold to better suit Solvay's needs, McMillan admits to making good use of the information available to him.

"I've taken them from the Ipswitch Website—there's great stuff there! It's nice to have those things available for the users to pull from. We now have scripts in place that help us get a feel for when problems might occur. We're in a much more proactive mode than where we were before—which was entirely reactive."

With the change to a full Web application that looks identical to the console version, McMillan and his team can now also monitor everything from another building, from home, or anywhere with an internet connection without being confined to a single screen.

"Each of our operators has an account they can use and they customize it to what they like to see," he explains. "WhatsUp Gold has made everyone's lives a lot easier. One of the things I'm looking to do is deploy the Web interface to the system administrators so they can see what we're seeing but from their own perspective."

McMillan is an avid supporter of taking full advantage of the investment Solvay has made in WhatsUp Gold. "WhatsUp Gold is much more than pinging devices or up/down monitoring. A small investment of time will allow customers to maximize its value."

One example is environmental monitoring. "We have environmental monitoring by the facilities group, but there was a



recent problem with their reporting mechanism," he explains. "I had installed an SNMP-compliant probe allowing me to chart historical temperature and humidity patterns. It allows me to not be dependent on facilities. It's really cool. Not only does it show me when the temperature is out of compliance, but I can create a chart that reports the history. I'm going to be expanding that capability to our other devices. That's a recent thing I've done and I don't think a lot of people might know to do that, but it shows the capability of the product."

Reports such as this are one of many: the latest version of WhatsUp Gold now includes 50 different reports that have been enhanced, improved or added. McMillan's drive to squeeze every ounce of capability from WhatsUp Gold is apparent. He is constantly discovering new ways to use the tool and has grand plans for the future.

"Monitoring Web content is definitely on the radar," he says. "My plans for using WhatsUp Gold are for it to become the central management platform for all our products: CiscoWorks, HP Insight Manager, etcetera. I want WhatsUp Gold to be the notification service one-stop shop for all my applications and hardware."

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