



FAQs

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FAQs

This document sets out to answer some of the questions commonly asked about netPrefect's capabilities. The questions and answers have been grouped together to make it easier for you to find what you are looking for.

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Monitoring

- ▼ **Does netPrefect allow us to monitor switches being up or down, disc space, whether Exchange is working, the Internet being up and down?**

Yes, using a mixture of SNMP and WMI queries you can get all of this information and more

- ▼ **As we are only interested in monitoring servers, does netPrefect allow us to monitor server availability and disk capacity, and provide trend analysis to say the machine is running within its optimum portfolio between say 50% and 70% utilisation on the processor and identify variations in performance over a 24 hour period?**

netPrefect will capture all of the performance information that you require from your managed devices and can present that information to you in the form of time series graphs. netPrefect will even determine that a performance metric has exceeded threshold and automatically generate alerts, clearing the alerts when those metrics have fallen below the threshold. For trend analysis, netPrefect provides the raw data to external systems that are specifically designed for analysing trends, and which will also allow you to merge data from other sources in your reports.

- ▼ **Can netPrefect monitor multiple applications on a single server?**

Yes, netPrefect can monitor all aspects of a server including multiple applications.

- ▼ **Will netPrefect allow us to monitor the performance of switches?**

If the switches are managed or "smart" then yes, SNMP will typically be used to monitor and manage the switch.

- ▼ **To query a machine with SNMP, does it need a service running on the machine?**

Yes, the managed device must be running an SNMP agent, which is typically built into most devices and simply needs to be enabled. On Windows, the SNMP agent is not installed by default and must be added to the running system.

- ▼ **Can netPrefect monitor client servers that are located in our data centre rather than at the client location?**

Yes, netPrefect is built with multiple disparate networks in mind. It is equally capable of monitoring and managing a single location.

- ▼ **How many screens do you need to monitor multiple customers**

The GUI can monitor multiple customers at once using its hierarchical tree view on just one screen. Of course, if you want separate screens for each customer, that's straightforward too.

- ▼ **If we've got multiple customers using it, can netPrefect present multiple dashboards?**

Yes, netPrefect has a security system that allows users to be assigned the managed devices that they are allowed to see, along with the levels of interaction with those devices. So customers can be given their own login credentials that are set up to only allow them to see their own systems when they log in through the GUI or web interface.

- ▼ **Is there a limit to the number of nodes you can actually monitor?**

No limit is built into the software, but there will be a practical limit based on performance of the hardware that is being used to run netPrefect. However, when this limit is reached, simply install more hardware to extend the number of devices that netPrefect can manage.

- ▼ **Will netPrefect log temperature from an EM box and log it onto the database?**

Yes, if the environmental monitor can provide the temperature information to netPrefect via one of its standard transports.

▼ **Could the server manager be installed on one of the servers that's actually being managed?**

Yes, but be aware that if the server is down, then you have no visibility of any of the devices that that server manager is monitoring.

▼ **Does netPrefect allow us to alert our customers to potential problems before they are aware of them?**

Yes, you can send notification to you customer at the same time as it is sent to you, when the issue is first detected by netPrefect.

▼ **Does netPrefect allow us to identify whether SQL agents are running?**

Yes, using the WMI transport.

▼ **How can we use netPrefect to show our customers that we are doing something for them despite the fact they have had no major problems?**

You can publish managed device statistics to the customer via the built in web server. This allows the customer to view the current state of their systems as well as view any outstanding alerts that may be raised for any given device.

▼ **You say netPrefect is monitoring the software. Does it flag up when someone drops a new piece of software on?**

Yes, netPrefect can be configured to monitor the installed software on a managed device and to generate an event/alert when new software is installed.

▼ **What exchange monitoring is built into netPrefect?**

Using the new WMI capability in netPrefect, all aspects of Exchange can be monitored. Cyclone has created specific rules to monitor the Exchange server mail queues, and netPrefect will notify you if the backlog of emails has exceeded thresholds that you set.

▼ **Will netPrefect allow us to integrate system monitoring with our ticketing system?**

Yes, events generated by netPrefect can be used to update an external trouble ticketing system, either directly by inserting records into its database, or by sending the trouble ticketing system an email in order to automatically create a ticket.

▼ **Can you write something like RAID sets. What about Acer?**

Yes, we can monitor ACER devices, RAID sets and their controllers providing they present their status information to us via one of our transports, e.g. SNMP.

▼ **Can I monitor patches issued by Microsoft?**

No, we do not currently have the ability to monitor the Microsoft patch distribution system. We can, however, using WMI, tell you what you have installed on your managed devices. You can then compare that information with your sources of updates from Microsoft.

▼ **How configurable are the Cisco rules? We predominantly use Fortinet kit.**

We provide a number of rules that are aimed at Cisco devices. However, in general, as with all netPrefect configuration items, rules can easily be copied and modified to suit specific device types and behave in the way that you need for your environment. If you need help configuring any rules you only need to ask, and we will be happy to help.

▼ **Is netPrefect an Enterprise Product?**

Absolutely, netPrefect provides Enterprise functionality and scalability but at a price ideally suited to the SME.

Alerts

▼ **We are currently bombarded with alerts. Will netPrefect allow us to filter alerts?**

Yes, netPrefect allows you to either not generate the alerts unless specific conditions exist, for example, the alert state/severity has changed, or between certain times of the day, etc. Additionally, in the GUI, you can choose to only display alerts greater than a specific severity, or after a specified date/time, etc. Filtering alerts is completely tailorable to make sure that you only get the alerts that are really meaningful.

▼ **Would it notify if backup had failed? We currently use Backup Exec.**

Yes. As with all event detection, netPrefect takes the message from your application (in this case Backup Exec), which has an indication of job status. From this message we will be able to automatically determine success or failure and notify you accordingly, depending on the rule you set.

▼ **Our main concern is that we get an alert as soon as the disk drive starts creating errors, whether they're soft errors or hard errors, and what we don't want is to get the errors when the drive is actually down. How does netPrefect cope with this?**

The regular polling for device status should indicate the current status of the device, which may include hard and soft errors. netPrefect can be configured to alert if the error count increases, and can also indicate what replacement part number is required on site when an engineer visits. The key to netPrefect is its proactive alerting.

▼ **Does the dashboard provide a simple graphical notification of alerts such as using individual icons for clients, servers and services?**

The dashboard view in the main netPrefect GUI simply indicates the total number of alerts that are present, categorised either by severity or classification. The web interface can display more information to the user, such as uptime pie charts and time series information, detailing any of the statistics gathered by netPrefect.

▼ **What about checking SQL backups? There is an event when backup is done, so if you don't get that, can netPrefect send a message?**

Yes, netPrefect can generate an alert when something of interest doesn't happen (such as a backup not running).

▼ **Will it tell me the part number? That would be really useful.**

netPrefect can be configured to look up part numbers for a device from an external database and then notify engineers of the part number. The alert can also contain expert knowledge about the device or the alert itself – anything that might be useful to advise an untrained operator.

▼ **Can you set netPrefect to say if it's not seen an event in the event log in the last 2 hours? What we would be looking for in the event log would be a successful message within the last 5 hours.**

Yes, netPrefect can automatically raise an event if a condition has not been seen for a specified length of time. This event may then cause an alert to be raised, depending on the rules you have set.

▼ **How does netPrefect let me use an individual alert to drill down to find out exactly what the problem is?**

netPrefect displays the outstanding alerts in a list form. In the case of alerts that have been propagated up the hierarchy of managed devices, these alerts can be shown in more detail, including the alerts that are their root cause. This can be annotated with any information that the developer of the rules that generate the alerts has included, which can be particularly useful for problem resolution.

▼ **When you investigate an alert, can it all be conducted through a single screen?**

Yes, all interaction with netPrefect and the devices it is managing is performed through a single GUI (each user has their own instance of the GUI, with their own privileges). If just the ability to view details about a managed device is

required, then a web browser can be used to display them directly without the need to install the GUI. This is ideal for giving your customers the ability to view without interaction with the device.

▼ **If a service has stalled and we then restart it, will netPrefect identify whether it's a hardware failure so that we can get a service engineer in?**

If the information detailing the root cause of the service fault is available to netPrefect (either in log files, or via SNMP/WMI queries) then yes, netPrefect can determine the hardware that the engineer needs to replace and, if configured correctly, can even indicate to the engineer the part numbers and locations to get them.

▼ **If the server power dies, will netPrefect identify and report this?**

netPrefect will detect that the server is no longer functioning. However, it will be unable to determine the cause, unless the server is connected to a UPS that netPrefect is also monitoring.

▼ **Can netPrefect set thresholds?**

netPrefect can be configured with thresholds on key performance statistics. These thresholds, when crossed, can cause action to be taken, such as sending an email or generating an alert.

▼ **Does netPrefect allow us to check SQL databases up and online, exchange servers up and online and any excessive queuing with exchange server?**

Yes, using the WMI transport, all performance characteristics of SQL and Exchange can be monitored.

▼ **If I correct an issue that has caused an alert, do I have to wait until the next scheduled time for the alert to be removed?**

No, you can either manually re-issue the scheduled query or, in the case of the reachability transport, which has no interactive console, it can be reset which will force an immediate check for reachability.

▼ **My customers are demanding a better service. How can netPrefect help?**

netPrefect allows you to be informed of issues as they arise instead of when the customer notices and calls you. In some cases it is also possible to automatically correct the problem by executing commands on a managed device in response to the device indicating its status to you.

▼ **Can you filter alerts by time of day?**

Yes, alerts may be sent to different destinations (email, gui etc) depending on the time of day or day of week.

▼ **Can I stop alerts being sent when I have a system down for maintenance?**

Yes, simply use the netPrefect GUI to set the device (or subsystem) into Maintenance mode, with an optional time at which the device should be placed back into production status.

Management

▼ **Can you actively reboot the server through netPrefect?**

Yes, SNMP and WMI both allow the facility to reboot the device, if the device itself has been configured to allow it. Additionally, the HP iLO transport will allow the device to be powered off and on if netPrefect is connected to its onboard iLO card.

▼ **Does netPrefect replicate exactly what you would see if you were on site at the client?**

Yes, netPrefect can be configured to show a managed device and its subsystems (disk, memory network interfaces etc) and their status.

▼ **Can netPrefect manage Dell hardware?**

Yes, using SNMP. netPrefect doesn't currently support the Dell DRAC lights out card, although this is on our roadmap for the future.

▼ **Does netPrefect support remote desktop?**

No, netPrefect does not support RDP. There are many issues with using RDP, the main issue being that it is not possible to effectively audit an RDP session or even detect events in an RDP data stream.

▼ **What firewall configuration needs to be in place?**

netPrefect requires no firewall configuration over and above that which will normally be in place to allow general web access through ports 80 and 443.

▼ **Does it have built in email support?**

Yes, netPrefect can be setup to forward alert information automatically to one or more email accounts through an SMTP server that you designate.

▼ **Do you have plugins for specific backup software packages?**

Not at this time, however, if the package you use is able to provide its notifications to netPrefect via one of its standard transports, then netPrefect can be configured to interpret the notifications and alert you just like any other monitored device/object.

Architecture/Configuration

▼ Is netPrefect hardware or software?

Currently netPrefect is a software only product, although we are considering an appliance version for a future roadmap entry.

▼ How much physical space do I need at my site and the customer's to use netPrefect?

netPrefect is installed on standard server hardware. Typically, a customer site would have one or more server managers installed, often a small 1U rack server. The engine may be larger, depending on the database and disk storage requirements.

▼ Does netPrefect work cross platform?

Yes, netPrefect is fully cross platform and has been developed and tested on a variety of platforms. The various netPrefect components also communicate cross platform, e.g. the engine can be installed on Linux and the server managers on Windows (or vice versa).

▼ What database can I use?

We currently test and support either Microsoft SQL Server, MySQL and Oracle databases. However, netPrefect is capable of supporting others. We can test and validate your database of choice if we are given access to it for a few days in order to perform the necessary netPrefect configuration changes and testing.

▼ What has to be loaded on the servers at individual customers?

Nothing, netPrefect is an agentless solution.

▼ What kind of processor power and bandwidth is required?

This depends on the verbosity of the managed device and the number of scheduled/interactive commands you execute on the device. netPrefect is designed to be scalable. So, if the engine is becoming overloaded, simply add another server to your existing setup using the engine clustering technology, and the work of the engine will be spread amongst the nodes in the cluster. As for the server manager, simply add more server managers, dividing the responsibility of a subnet between multiple server managers.

▼ How much traffic does netPrefect generate?

Again, this is difficult to quantify as it depends on how many managed devices are being monitored and what scheduled/interactive commands are being executed and how often. Bear in mind that we are using industry standard protocols so, whatever network management solution you use, an SNMP Get is going to generate the same traffic.

▼ Does netPrefect support 64 bit versions of Windows 2008?

Yes, netPrefect is fully 64 bit compatible both to run on and to monitor, although it does require 64 bit java to be installed.

▼ Do we buy the server that goes on the customer site?

You purchase and own the physical hardware that netPrefect runs on. As for the software, you purchase the appropriate number of licenses to manage the devices you need to. It costs nothing extra if you decide to deploy those licenses to managed devices on one or 100 remote sites.

▼ How would netPrefect work if we didn't have it on the customers site?

The engine would communicate with your customer devices either via the internet (unsecured) or through a VPN connection to your customer site.

▼ **What's the bandwidth up and down the line for that (engine)?**

This is impossible to say as it depends on how many devices are being monitored and the scheduled commands that are being executed on the device and how often.

▼ **Does netPrefect require firewall configurations?**

No, all communication between netPrefect components is encrypted and performed using standard http and https ports and so does not require any extra firewall configuration above and beyond that required for normal web browsing.

▼ **Does the software update itself automatically?**

The engine upgrades are performed manually, and Cyclone can come and perform these upgrades for you. The server manager upgrades are performed automatically after the engine has been upgraded.

▼ **Does it have the ability to deploy?**

Not currently. netPrefect is primarily a system and network management solution, not an automated software distribution and installation tool. If there is sufficient demand for this, we may consider it for a future version. Please share with us your requirements and we will add this to our roadmap.

▼ **Does netPrefect produce reports in a standard format?**

netPrefect has a web interface that can be tailored to display standard reports in html format, which can then be printed. For more in depth reporting and analysis, all captured data can be exported in csv format into reporting software, such as Crystal reports.

▼ **Do I need a separate server for the server manager?**

No, the server manager can be installed on the same system as the Engine. The decision as to where the individual netPrefect components are sited depends very much on how you manage your customers, the network topology and the SLAs you have in place.

▼ **How do I make configuration changes remotely on my device?**

Use the Telnet (or to be secure the SSH) transport. This will allow you to remotely manage the configuration on your device.

▼ **How do we distribute a new router firmware image to our devices?**

Use the built-in TFTP server functionality. By importing your firmware image into the netPrefect configuration at the site level, then that configuration file becomes available for use by all devices at that site. This enables the firmware update command to be executed on each device at the site in order to download the image to the device.

▼ **My router does not allow ICMP ECHO. Can I discover using any other means?**

Yes, in addition to an ICMP ECHO request, we can also perform discovery by attempting to open a connection to the TCP/IP ECHO port on a device. We have plans to perform other tests in the future to determine whether a device is connected to the network.

User Interface

▼ The desktop GUI – is that just Windows PC based?

No, netPrefect is multi-platform and that doesn't just mean the server components. The GUI can be installed on a wide variety of platforms, including some of the leading Unix variants, as well as Microsoft Windows.

▼ Does it run on Windows mobile?

No, netPrefect doesn't have a Windows mobile user interface. However, notifications of alerts can be sent to a Windows mobile device using email.

▼ Can I group my systems together in the GUI?

Yes, new "nodes" can be created in the tree that is displayed by the GUI. Managed resources can then be "dragged" into the new nodes to create a different hierarchy. This technique can be used to display devices by their business function.

Compliance

▼ **Is there an audit facility?**

All data received from managed devices is time stamped and logged in the database, as are any events and alerts that are generated. In addition, when an interactive console is opened to a managed device, then all interaction with that device is also logged along with who issued the command. Obviously, you cannot keep inserting data into the database ad infinitum, so regular housekeeping jobs are run which archive data from the database to flat text files, which you can then back up and delete using any appropriate mechanism. The volume of data retained in the database after a housekeeping job is run is determined by you on a per managed device basis.

Pricing

▼ **How does netPrefect software licensing work? Can I pay just for what I use?**

Yes, netPrefect allows a number of licensing mechanisms, from outright purchase to leasing and pay-as-you-use. Don't forget that licensing is concurrent, so you can move the licenses between different monitored devices (and different customers if you are an MSP).

▼ **Can netPrefect be configured so that we are only charged for the time we are using it, say in the case of monitoring an upgrade to a ticketing system?**

Yes, a pay-as-you-use license would be the solution. Even if you only did this once a year, that's all you would be charged for.

▼ **Is there a minimum contract length? Is it paid yearly?**

With lease licensing, you can choose a 1, 2 or 3 year lease period. With pay-as-you-use, the minimum would be one hour. You can pay monthly in advance or annually.

▼ **If the licensing works 9-5 or 24/7 and we usually schedule the backup to run in the early hours of the morning or very last thing at night, how would this be reflected in licensing fees?**

If you only enable the device for monitoring 9-5 and you backup runs from midnight to 4am, then netPrefect would not attempt to detect backup failures. In order to do this you would need to include your backup period in the times that the device is monitored. This is simple to do when using pay-as-you-use.

▼ **If you put the management server on the network and it discovers 100 devices on the network, are you paying for the devices that you discover?**

Only if those devices are enabled within netPrefect. So, for example, if you just need an inventory of all of your systems but want 10 devices monitored, then setup auto discovery so that it finds the devices and creates the management entities disabled, then manually enable the 10 devices you need to manage. You will pay for the monitoring and management of those 10 devices, but not the other 90 that will appear on your GUI, which will only show whether they are reachable or not.

▼ **How is the pricing tiered?**

Pricing attracts quantity discounts, up to 50%. Licensing is cumulative, so if you move into the next discount band, the discount applies to all of your licenses.