

Valencia Systems' Aruba Suite Brings Versatility and Pragmatism to Network Management

Product Summary

Vendor name: Valencia Systems

Product name: Aruba Suite

Product function: Networked Infrastructure Performance Management

Operating system under which it runs: HP/UX, Solaris, Windows 2K & XP/Pro, Windows Server 2003

URL for product information:
www.valenciasystems.com

Vendor contact information: Sales +1 714 538 5932

Pricing information: From \$10k with ArubaFlow; \$5k without

Availability: Immediately

and adaptive manner. As an example, the network management marketplace remains largely fragmented between SNMP polling products and flow-based management solutions, both of which are essential for effective network management control.

This report examines Valencia Systems' Aruba Suite in IT management industry context as a pragmatic, cost-effective answer to many of these requirements. The Aruba Suite can correlate flow-based data with data gathered from polling across thousands of networked devices in a scalable manner. It is characteristic of the Aruba Suite's versatile design that it can scale upwards to large service provider requirements, while at the same time scaling downwards to support smaller enterprises with more limited pocketbooks. Moreover, the Aruba Suite is easily deployed and administered, and its intuitive GUI can natively support customized requirements. The net result is a solution that's usable, adaptable and well focused, which should be seriously considered for taking control of infrastructure performance in support of application service delivery.

Industry Requirements

Businesses, large and small, increasingly depend on IT services to compete and diversify. This is due to macroeconomic conditions in which businesses are increasingly turning to IT services to enhance and extend their revenue offerings, either through direct interaction with their consumers and partners, or indirectly, as a part of a business process to enable better quality services and products at lower cost. Another macro-economic factor driving these changes is geographic sprawl, both within a single business to enable more distributed organizations and working habits, and/or between businesses and consumers and partners in order to create new supply chain efficiencies and reach new markets.

This is putting huge pressure on IT – as the opportunities for business growth are speeding well ahead of infrastructure capabilities to enable them. And recent trends such as convergence, with VoIP, rich media, as well as Web Services – will further demand new efficiencies in how IT supports its business. It should be stressed that these trends impact not only large enterprises, but also mid-tier and smaller businesses, as a global economy is unforgiving about service performance, while demanding parity across all components of a partner supply chain. These trends are also putting new pressures on the network, and in particular the WAN, to support a richer,

Executive Summary

Economy requirements are driving IT to align more effectively with business priorities. From a network management perspective, this means managing topologically increasingly complex and services-rich networks with resource-constrained staffing levels. These requirements are also pushing network managers to employ tools that monitor application performance across the networked infrastructure in addition to device-centric management models.

While these requirements are challenging IT organizations in large enterprises, they are also impacting mid-sized businesses with significant resource constraints just as much. This is placing a demand on the management marketplace to not only step up to more complex capabilities for managing infrastructure and service interdependencies, but at the same time to enable these values with a minimum of deployment lag and administrative overhead.

While the network management marketplace is evolving technologically in these directions, it is still largely made up of a mix of niche solutions and hard-to-deploy platforms. These may be providing added insight and depth in many areas, but for the most part they are not delivering cohesive insights in a deployable

more demanding confluence of services. As a result network managers and IT executives must invest in technologies that enable superior levels of accountability in terms of enhancing service quality, reducing costs, and optimizing based on real rather than assumed service demand.

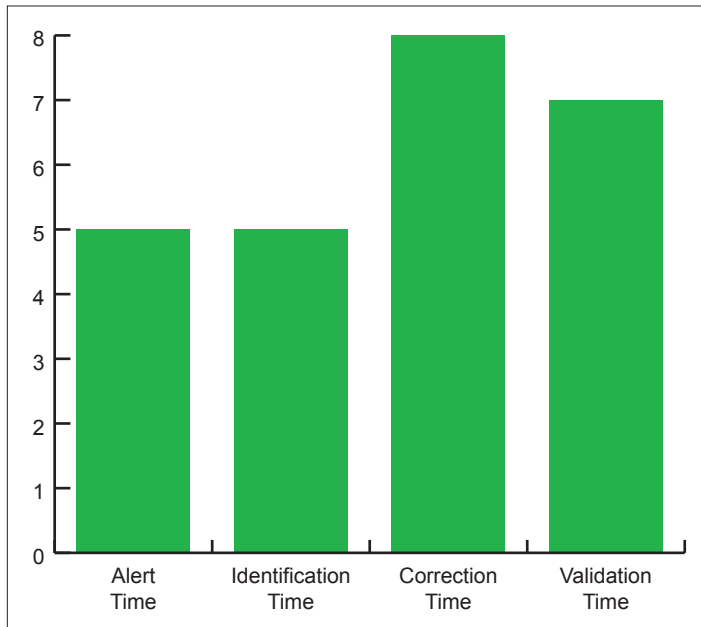


Figure 1: Fragmented management technology adoptions lead to poor processes and inadequate responses to service performance levels

The figure above speaks to the still relatively problematic level of service assurance in IT organizations today. It shows that the time elapsed to alert, diagnose, fix, and validate that a fix is effective for a routine N-tiered Web based application can be as much as 24 hours on average. Drastic or more complex problems can take significantly longer. The impact of these outages on business performance given the macro-economic forces described above can be devastating.

Management Technologies are Evolving but Still “Not There,” Yet

While the need for superior IT management capabilities is being stimulated by these and other forces, vendors of IT management technologies are still struggling to unscramble a number of seemingly opposite requirements. For instance, they have to manage an increasingly complex set of information in order to inform not only on individual device health, but also on cross-infrastructure interdependencies – and do all this in a way that maps to service and business impact. The result is a hugely more complex set of analyses and parameters with which to identify first-phase and drill down problems. Yet at the same time, IT

vendors are facing pressures to make management products easier to deploy, less administratively burdensome, and more adaptable to changing infrastructure and service demands.

Still, vendors are falling into camps with niche solutions that don’t answer the problems of context and interdependencies very well, and far more complex platforms that are costly and problematic to deploy and may or may not step up to a dynamic, contextual view of the infrastructure. They also typically provide their buyers with solutions so complex that only a small percentage of functionality is in play in a given deployment. EMA has sampled usage and satisfaction levels across many enterprise buyers, and estimates that *satisfied* IT adopters are still using only about 25% or less of available platform functionality. While these choices are challenging for enterprises, they present all but insurmountable barriers to effective mid-tier businesses and are driving smaller businesses to look for outsourced solutions.

Valencia Systems

Valencia Systems is an established provider of network management capabilities with a pragmatic and effective answer to mapping network-to-service performance issues in a cost-effective manner. With a nine-year track record and more than 450 accounts, Valencia, although not presently in the industry limelight, is no experimental upstart. Its low cost of ownership has brought it into many mid-tier and larger enterprise accounts, as well as into the offerings of many large and regional service providers.

Valencia’s Aruba Suite is used for network and most often WAN performance management. It combines SNMP polling with flow-based management. This combination device health and topology data supports enhanced:

- Troubleshooting
- Traffic analysis
- SLA compliance reporting
- Cost Accounting
- Capacity planning

The Aruba Suite can monitor NetFlow as well as SNMP-enabled devices, including routers, switches, hubs, computer systems (servers) and firewalls, and ships with pre-configured support for hundreds of different brands. The Aruba Suite is eminently deployable (requiring virtually no training by skilled professionals), usable and easily administered. With a cost as low as \$10,000, it can, not surprisingly, demonstrate very fast ROI.

The Aruba Suite is also highly scalable. Valencia has tested a single Aruba system against hundreds of thousands of device interfaces and tens of thousands of devices. Finally, the Aruba Suite has a very low defect rate, which makes it an easy fit with partner resellers such as Packeteer, ADC and Sync Research.

The Aruba Suite – a Closer Look

The Aruba Suite is targeted at network engineers, managers and IT management in mid-sized enterprises that have a heavy reliance on geographically distributed business applications. It is thus not meant to be all things to all people. What Valencia has done artfully is unify essential WAN performance management requirements into a highly usable package.

Design Points

The Aruba Suite’s scalability is achieved through a three-tiered design. This design includes a central system server, a client workstation console and client Web browsers, and multiple pollers and flow collectors. While agent deployments for polling and flow collectors are done manually, they can be easily configured and administered from the central console. The central server is designed to work with an Oracle database to support robust data collection and scalability requirements. The Oracle database can be external to the Aruba system. Aruba is also designed with support for a standby server.

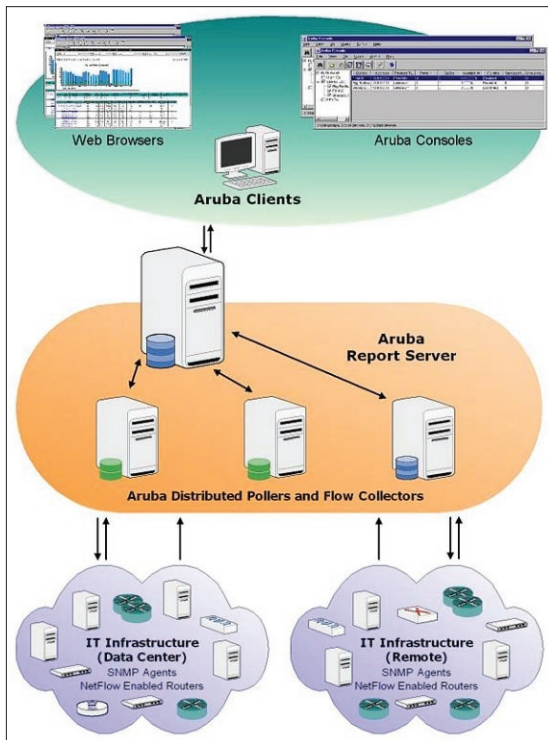


Figure 2: The Aruba Suite’s Multi-tiered Architecture (slide 9)

One of the strengths of the Aruba Suite is how easily customized it can be. Aruba’s customization capabilities can best be understood in terms of core functionality and administration, and in terms of visualization and reporting. Customization for core functionality and administration includes:

- Customizable discovery and polling – based on policy
- Customizable collection hours
- Multiple configurable performance profiles and thresholds
- Customizable data management – e.g. for aging data

Administration through the central console is done via one of the highly intuitive administrative GUIs that EMA has reviewed. It includes support for defining access (e.g. view only, read/write) with support for up to 1,000 user profiles, defining the scope of managed devices, access via community strings, device discovery and device import, as well as access for administering polling and collection policies as described above.

Reports and Analyses

The Aruba Suite supports both historical and real-time analysis, and ships with several hundred preconfigured reports. It supports a broad array of reports including:

- Device and component inventory – e.g. Cisco IOS
- Predictive trending – vis-à-vis utilization, or against thresholds
- Utilization, latency, errors, volume, congestion
- Service quality
 - Threshold violations as they map to SLA compliance
 - QoS levels
- Daily exception reports: chronic exceptions are flagged and identified in automated fashion
- NetFlow and application volume: Top N talkers, Top N conversations, Top N ports, Top N applications – a single Aruba system can monitor millions of flows

The reports supported are XML-based and easily customizable. They can be prescheduled and distributed in automated fashion in a PDF format to authorized personnel if desired. They can also be archived on an automated basis.

Real-time queries and query-based configurations of reports can include user selection based on:

- Perspective or type of report
- Component fields
- Aggregation level
- Time period

Through this versatility, the Aruba Suite provides its professional user base with a very versatile tool with which to monitor and assess WAN service performance.

EMA Assessment

EMA is pleased to be able to contribute to the visibility of Valencia Systems, as its Aruba Suite clearly provides value and serves a very real need. In a sea of industry confusion and a clutter of technologies, Aruba provides an effective, multi-purpose, and contextually sound approach to monitoring networks in support of critical application services. It does not do everything. It is still very focused on network management tool set, for instance, with limited visibility in classifying individual applications – in this it is as good as NetFlow, itself, and hence depends on individual port assignments. However its advantages clearly outweigh its limitations.

Moreover, Valencia has demonstrated strong levels of customer satisfaction, including satisfaction with Valencia service and support – when needed, which is apparently rare. This, combined with Aruba Suite’s reputation for resiliency, ease of customization and usability should make it strongly appealing to IT customers, as well as to existing and potential partner VARs. At its low price point and virtually no training and minimal installation time – Aruba is up and running and ready for the administrator to go to work in minutes – this industry appeal should be all the greater.

So why is Valencia such a quiet and relatively unknown presence? Valencia’s solution, the Aruba Suite, is sold primarily through partners such as Packeteer. This is in part a reason for Valencia’s low profile in the industry today. Another is that Valencia has a strong, technology-driven culture with a focus on product development and customer satisfaction. However, Valencia is forthright in admitting that marketing has so far not been a focus, and so its growth in the industry is one of the more positive well-kept secrets in the industry.

EMA is optimistic that Valencia will do well, and accelerate its growth through partnerships and a continued focus on pragmatic innovation. This will depend on more investments in visibility and marketing. But in the meantime, IT buyers should explore the values of a solution that’s affordable, workable and effective in the management of complex and challenging networked environments.

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