



World Leader in Automotive Spark Plugs Implements OmniCenter for its U.S. Headquarters, Manufacturing Plants, Warehouses and Sales Offices



“OmniCenter gives us more bang for the buck. It has the ability to monitor every system and device on our network – it doesn’t matter what it is – our AS400, an old version of Windows Server 2003, exchange servers, email servers and SQL servers plus routers, firewalls, switches of all kinds. If we can ping it, OmniCenter can monitor it.”

– Mark Kennell, IT Operations Manager
NGK Spark Plugs (U.S.A.)

Organization

NGK Spark Plugs (U.S.A.)

Industry

Automotive Parts Manufacturing

Location

Headquarters: Wixom, MI
Additional locations Irvine, CA,
Sissonville, WV and elsewhere
around the USA

Applications

Network Management
Financial Standards Compliance
Fault Monitoring
Capacity Planning
Performance Monitoring
Configuration Management

Netreo Products

OmniCenter® Pro

> Nationwide IT Monitoring

NGK Spark Plug Co., Ltd., founded in 1936 in Japan, is a world leader in spark plugs and oxygen sensors for automotive applications. In 1966, the company established operations in the U.S. as NGK Spark Plugs (U.S.A.) Inc., and today a substantial number of its products sold in the USA are made in its ISO/TS 16949 certified manufacturing plants in California and West Virginia. A related business unit, NTK Technologies, Inc., also distributes IC packages, piezoelectronics and ceramic filters.

In addition to its nationwide data network, NGK Spark Plugs’ West Virginia-based IT department supports 500 employees in its Michigan-based U.S. headquarters and in two 24x7 American manufacturing plants, two 70,000+ square-foot warehouses and a dozen regional sales offices scattered around the country. The U.S. IT group is responsible for roughly 40 servers, 60 switches, dozens of devices and a VOIP telephony system.

Because of its focus on quality and on-time delivery of products and components, and a requirement to comply with Japanese government corporate financial standards, the company needed a reliable and easily manageable IT and network monitoring system.

“We spent some time researching various monitoring solutions,” said Mark Kennell, IT Operations Manager for NGK Spark Plugs (U.S.A.). “We evaluated several, including Dell OpenManage, HP OpenView and Netreo Omniscenter. Omniscenter was the most impressive of the group because it could do everything we needed with the depth we needed at an excellent price.”

> Rapid Deployment and Easy Maintenance

Once Kennell and his colleagues made their decision, they had OmniCenter installed within a week.

“The speed of implementation was really fast. Netreo shipped us the appliance, we plugged it in and turned it on. It searched through our network and auto-detected all of our devices. We entered the labels for the IP addresses for each device. The whole process was painless and quick.”

Kennell found that OmniCenter required very little maintenance by his team.

“After you have it installed, there’s not much more you have to do. That’s the beauty of OmniCenter. When there’s an upgrade or an enhancement, they’re installed automatically by Netreo. If you ever have a question or problem, a quick phone call to Netreo support gets you the answers you need. It’s been smooth sailing for us ever since we rolled out OmniCenter.”

> Cost Savings and ROI

“Before we had OmniCenter, we would manually connect to each server through a remote desktop connection and look at the event viewers. That takes a lot of time. Every day we checked a portion of our servers and after a week or ten days we would eventually get to them all.”

“If a server went down, it might stay down for a couple of days before we found it, or we would have angry end users calling and complaining that they couldn’t access something they needed. We used to fight fires after they started, and now we’re preventing fires. OmniCenter has helped us increase our credibility with our users. We used to be the guys that people yelled at when something went down, and now we’re the guys everybody thanks because our IT systems are always up,” he added.

Kennell anticipates a quick payback of the company’s investment in OmniCenter.

“OmniCenter saves us an hour or two each day since we don’t have to monitor servers manually any more. That’s a labor savings of \$2,000 to \$3,000 per month. Our IT people now have more free time to focus on other major projects. If we had a sales office with five or ten people offline for a couple of hours, that would be very expensive, so there are some lost opportunity cost savings from OmniCenter too. We now have better server uptime and happier users. We expect that OmniCenter will pay for itself quickly through cost savings and improved network performance.”

The IT staff at NGK Spark Plugs now has more time to work on other priorities, such as a new implementation of SAP.

“We’re just getting started on the SAP project, but as soon as it’s done, OmniCenter will be monitoring that too,” Kennell revealed.

> Notifications and Alerts

System administrators can set up configurable alerts, customizable email messages and instant reports to notify and inform responders, technicians and managers of a problem anywhere on a network.

“If there is ever an imminent server problem or if we have an outage on one of our networks, we receive mission-critical alerts on our mobile devices that we can respond to immediately. This has made us more proactive and helped us improve our response times by tenfold. We can call our business offices, plants and warehouses and let them know that they might have a problem so that they can make any needed adjustments to their workload or production schedule, at least until we get the issue resolved. Our plants and warehouses operate 24x7, so this knowledge is important to them,” Kennell explained.

Thresholds can be set within OmniCenter so that when available hard drive capacity runs low, administrators can be alerted to take action before a serious problem develops or causes server downtime. The IT staff can constantly monitor assets, devices and networks by glancing at browser screens that depict status and performance through easy-to-interpret color gauges and graphical screens.

> IT Performance Reports

The IT staff can use OmniCenter to generate automatic daily or periodic reports with charts and graphs that display current and historic IT performance metrics, helping them justify IT system investments and supporting compliance with U.S. and Japanese corporate responsibility standards.

The company’s outside auditing firm periodically checks for compliance with Japan’s 2006 Financial Instruments and Exchange Law, (FIEL or J-SOX, similar to the USA’s Sarbanes-Oxley Act), especially as these regulations pertain to IT controls and the preservation of data and records. If there’s a problem anywhere in the IT infrastructure, OmniCenter issues an immediate alert and the IT staff can immediately address the problem. This means that memory problems and storage issues are less likely to result in lost data or records, and that helps the company remain in compliance.

“Our senior management team is happy with OmniCenter, because they know we’ve got a great solution and a stable platform that monitors everything continuously and helps us keep all of our systems and network components up and running as efficiently and reliably as possible,” Kennell said.



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> OmniCenter Benefits to the Enterprise

- Compared to other IT products evaluated, OmniCenter provides more operational flexibility, easier implementation and a better value for dollars invested.
- OmniCenter is system and device agnostic. It monitors routers, firewalls, switches, exchange servers, email servers, SQL servers, Windows servers, AS400 systems, hard drives, raids, and virtually any component connected to an IT network.
- IT and systems monitoring is provided 24x7 to help keep systems up and running in ten office facilities around the nation and in two U.S.-based spark plug manufacturing plants.
- When a network node or a component fails, IT personnel are notified immediately. They can warn affected plants or remote facilities that a problem has occurred and advise when the system will be restored, making it easier for workers to plan their activities.
- IT personnel are now free to focus their time on other priorities – uptime and response times are significantly better and the company expects OmniCenter to quickly pay for itself through cost savings, greater productivity and improved systems performance.
- OmniCenter helps the company remain compliant with corporate financial regulations.

The screenshot displays the Netreo OmniCenter web interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with menu items: At-A-Glance, Reports, Security, Utilities, IPTelephony, MSSQL, Administration, and Favorites. Below this is a 'Configuration Management' section with buttons for SEARCH, LOGS, RETRIEVE, and PUSH. Two pie charts are shown: 'Config Management' with segments for Unmanaged (8), Managed (66), Failed (12), and Manual Man (15); and 'Config Approval' with segments for Approved (20) and Unapproved (64). Below the charts are two tables: 'System Log Summary' (showing no messages) and 'Device Configuration Status' (listing various devices like Atlanta-Router, Berlin-Switch1, etc., with their status and last attempt dates).

