

Be Proactive. Not Reactive!

12 Reasons to Choose Sentry-go as your Monitoring Solution

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<http://www.Sentry-go.com>

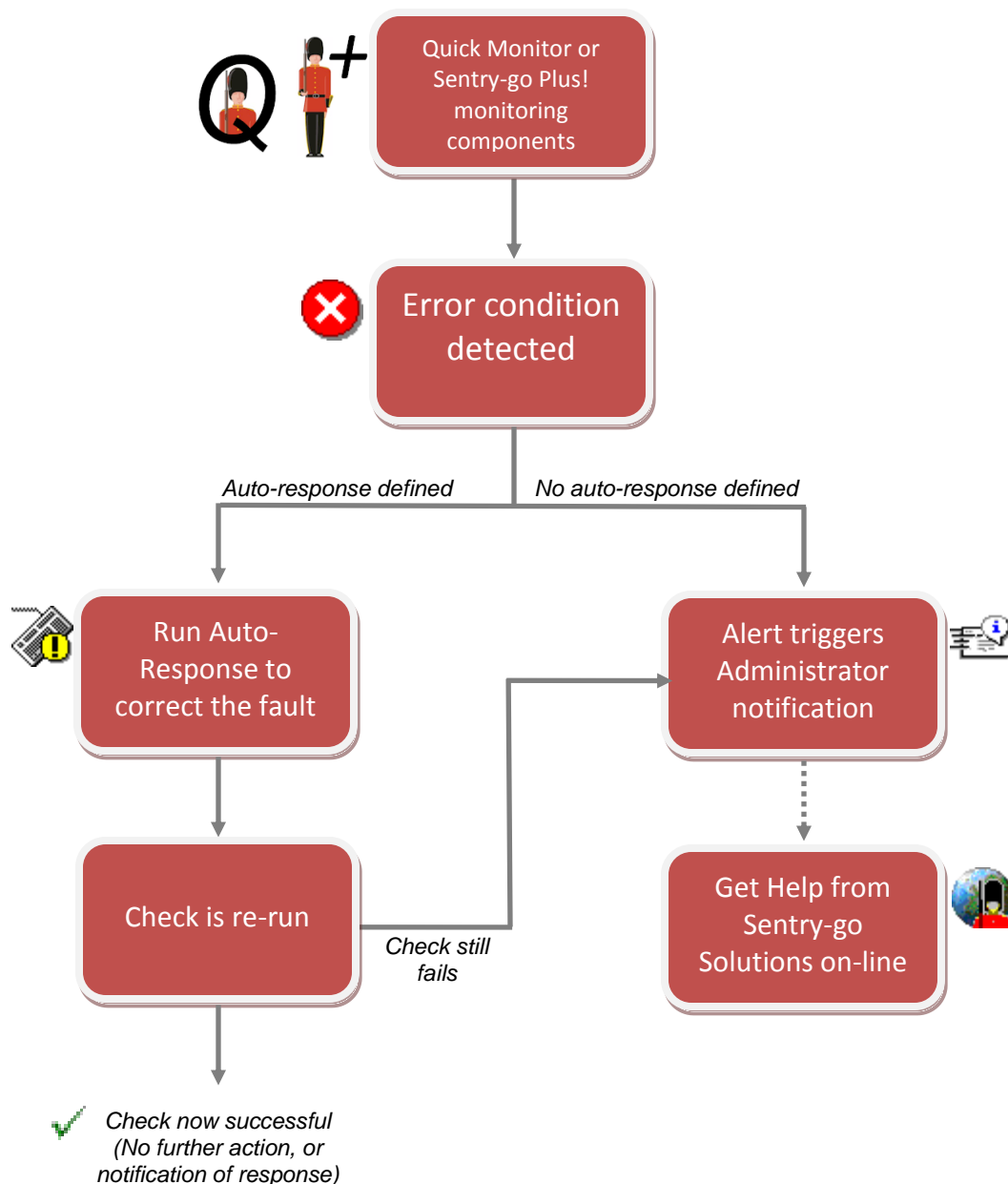
Be Proactive, Not Reactive!

Introduction

OK, we're biased - there, I've admitted it in the first sentence! But we're also in an ideal position to highlight the benefits of using Sentry-go & why you might choose it as your monitoring solution, either for a dedicated task or for your entire enterprise.

If you have looked, you'll know there are quite a few monitoring solutions available today. Each has its own methods of monitoring and one or more reasons why you might choose it over the next one. As the developers of such a solution there are a number of factors to take into consideration, factors that you, a potential buyer may also like to share. These choices and the reasons behind them are discussed in the pages that follow and serve to highlight the reasons why we believe Sentry-go is best placed to server your monitoring needs.

Below is a diagram showing how Sentry-go handles a detected error. We will discuss many of these points in the pages that follow.



What do customers want ?

Actually, you're best placed to answer that one but over the years, we've spoken to a lot of customers – potential & actual, to find out what they're looking for and why they think it's important. Rather than roll off a list of features, the main thing here is to consider what you actually need. For example, do you have a specific issue to resolve or do you want to monitor the health of your systems as a whole ? After all, there's little point paying for a solution that performs every feature under the sun when in fact, you're only interested in checking available disk space twice a week!

Equally, what would it be of benefit to know ? As a rule of thumb, we recommend monitoring anything that, if notified, you would act upon. If you would simply ignore the error because you don't understand it, or consider it unimportant there's little point setting it up in the first place! Not only that, being alerted about 100s of items you're not interested in means you could inadvertently mask the ones you are.

Cost

To some organisations, this may be the biggest factor of all; to others, it may just be one of a number, but somewhere up there cost will be questioned. There are many solutions available, ranging from simple \$10 shareware applications that can write a message to a file to much more expensive, big name solutions capable of monitoring your entire operation – but also maybe also requiring a whole team to manage.

In essence you're probably looking for value for money and this is where we introduce one of Sentry-go's selling points. From the outset, we designed all the solutions in the range to be affordable. Of course, some cost more than others, depending on what they do and how many you want to buy but in terms of expense, we hope you will agree our products are good value – and not at the expense of features.

Pricing of all Sentry-go solutions are available at <http://www.Sentry-go.com/pricing.aspx>.

Reason 1. Sentry-go offers affordable yet extremely flexible solutions allowing you to purchase the tools you need rather than paying for options you don't. From targeted monitoring on a single server to enterprise-wide verification, Sentry-go has the answer.

What does the cost cover ?

Buying the solution is one thing, but are there any hidden costs ? Do you need to pay yearly maintenance, do you pay for upgrades or support and if so how much ? Does it matter what size server you're installing it on ? Which features are "free" and which are not ... and if you don't need them, do you have to buy them ?

Again with Sentry-go we've aimed to be as flexible as we can. Upgrades, for example, within version (e.g. 4.1, 4.2, 4.x etc.) are free to registered customers and the latest versions are freely available from our web site at <http://www.Sentry-go.com/software-downloads.aspx>.

Reason 2. With Sentry-go there are no on-going costs or expensive contracts.



Features

Next up, the solution you choose obviously needs to be able to do what you want it to do, or at least get close. With Sentry-go, there are a number of ways of achieving this.

Sentry-go Plus! Licencing

Sentry-go Plus! provides extremely flexible monitoring, capable of expanding & adapting as your business & servers grow. By using its “plug & play” approach to monitoring, once you install the monitor on a server you simply purchase the monitoring features you need for that machine. Bespoke requirements are also catered for with the Scripting monitor, allowing custom monitoring logic to be run whilst providing full access to the response, alerting & reporting routines.

With Sentry-go Plus! licencing, there's no need to buy features you won't use. And as your server grows of course, so can your monitoring solution be adapted accordingly.

Sentry-go Quick Monitor Licencing

Quick Monitors provide the same monitoring, pre-configured to monitor standard environments such as SQL Server, Microsoft Exchange, File & Print etc. With a single Quick Monitor licence, you have access to all the standard monitoring options that environment is likely to need.

You can enhance this further in a number of ways ...

- Combine Quick Monitor licence for servers with multiple roles
- Add one or more Plus! licences to further enhance the monitoring options available
- Include the Scripted monitoring component to run your own monitoring logic (for custom or bespoke systems) and utilise the result analysis, auto-response & alerting features built-in to Sentry-go.

Other Factors

As well as monitoring, there are a number of other options you may need and those outlined below are all available with Sentry-go ...

- Alerting via e-mail or network message, SMS (text), via 3rd party application, custom file or script
- Logging of errors to a text file or database
- The ability to remotely access the monitor to configure it
- Reporting – each Sentry-go solution here includes a fully integrated web server built into the monitor itself providing web reports for alerting, current status as well as more dedicated tasks depending on what the monitor has been configured to do.

Reason 3. Sentry-go provides all the monitoring & other features you're likely to need in order to efficiently monitor your key systems and environment.



Efficient monitoring

The last thing you want to worry about is the monitoring software – after all, the whole point is that you’re relying on that to highlight faults in your other systems. Efficiency therefore has to be a must – it mustn’t overload your server or cause your systems to slow down, yet it must also be capable of operating in more hostile conditions – i.e. when problems are being encountered.

Sentry-go is designed in such a way to meet these needs & some of the design choices made are directly in response to this issue.

For example, the monitor itself runs as a multi-threaded service, thus ensuring a slow running task won’t hold up other checks or alerts. Checks are typically run periodically but where appropriate, can also be scheduled to run hourly, or only on certain days at specific times.

Local vs remote monitoring

Sentry-go operates primarily on a per server basis. In other words it runs locally on the server its monitoring. We do this for a number of reasons, the main ones being shown here.

Option	Advantage of running locally
Flexibility & control of the monitoring process	By running locally you have far greater flexibility and control over the monitoring process & are in an ideal position to respond automatically if required.
Network overheads reduced	A local solution puts far less strain on the network. With Sentry-go, only checks that need network access use it - e.g. for network related checks, as well as alerting & web reporting etc.)
No single point of failure	A central solution implicitly creates two points of failure – the monitoring machine and the network connecting it to the target servers. Running locally removes these limitations.
Less security restrictions to overcome	A local solution normally only needs access to local resources, so there are less firewall or security limitations to overcome in order to perform monitoring.
Higher network efficiency, network speed issues minimised	By minimising network traffic, little load is typically placed on your network. This is especially important if your network is often under stress or uses slow links – e.g. a WAN.



Retain the benefits

Having said that, there are clearly some drawbacks with this approach that need to be addressed and with Sentry-go we have tried to resolve these whilst not moving away from the above goals.

Advantage of remote monitoring

With a remote monitor I can see all tasks and alerts from a single location

I can ensure the monitor itself is functioning from a single machine, remotely I have to check each Agent.

With a single monitor I only have to set up my checks once

Sentry-go Solution

The Sentry-go Client Consoles provide an easy way of registering & accessing alerts from your Sentry-go monitors.

With the Sentry-go Enterprise Option, additional web reports provide an enterprise-wide view of monitored values, including the latest status of each check & alerts etc.

You can also alert to e-mail queues (e.g. a support/monitoring user) and/or log details to a central file or database.

The Sentry-go Enterprise Option shows the status of all monitors from a single report, remotely from your desktop web browser.

Alternatively the Client Console provides an easy way of viewing the current status of each local or remote monitor, as well as other information such as the time of the last error triggered etc.

With Sentry-go, you have the flexibility to either set up unique configurations, or create one and replicate parts or all of it to other monitors.

For Quick Monitors, parts of, or entire configurations can be exported & used with other monitors.

The Client Console allows parts, or entire configurations to be synchronized (copied) between monitors directly.



I'd only have to perform one install with a remote monitor.

This is of course true and so with Sentry-go, we've tried to make the installation & setup process as quick & easy as possible. It would also be possible to automate the Setup process if required.

Configuration is easier as it's all in the same place

Sentry-go monitors can be configured either locally or remotely across the network.

For Quick Monitors, parts of, or entire configurations can be exported & used with other monitors.

The Client Console allows parts, or entire configurations to be synchronized (copied) between monitors directly.

Reason 4. From day one, Sentry-go was designed with efficiency in mind, both in terms of environmental overhead as well as within the monitoring service itself. Where compromises are necessary to achieve this, solutions are in place to minimise the impact they may have.

Alert or respond ?

Next to monitoring comes alerting – after all there's no point checking for a failure if you can't be told about it! Or is there ? May be there are times when the action you would take is more obvious – for example ...

- If a service fails you'd probably restart it first, then check to see why it failed.
- If you run low on disk space, removing temporary files that may have been left behind may be all you need to do in the first instance.
- If two SQL jobs are locked out, terminating one would release the other.
- If a key process – such as anti-virus software is closed or stops running, starting it again would be the first thing you'd probably do.

With Sentry-go you can do just this – respond automatically, or alert you to the failure, or both.

The alert may simply inform you action's been taken and the problem has now been resolved, or it may highlight that the action taken failed to resolve it – e.g. the service couldn't be restarted.

Alerting too brings its own questions – when to send a network message, or an e-mail, or when to send an SMS text message through your gateway provider ?

With Sentry-go you can set up any number of alerting options and assign times to them, allowing you to be informed by network message during normal office hours Monday to Friday, but by text message or 3rd party application out of hours or on weekends.

Reason 5. Your monitoring solution should be there to help you, not just give you extra work! Sentry-go does just that.



Other useful features

Take the following two scenarios ...

- You want to be told when the CPU usage of your server is continually higher than you'd like it to be.
- And you want to be informed when you run low on disk space.

Continual errors

The first is interesting because you wouldn't just want to be informed if the CPU of your server was higher than the threshold (e.g. 80%) straight off. Why ? Because, a print job or task could easily send the CPU to 100% for a short while and that would be perfectly normal. The key thing here is the word "continual" – you want to know if the CPU is *consistently* higher than expected, thus indicating trouble.

With Sentry-go, simply configure the check to trigger an alert only if X number of errors in succession occur. If not, the count is reset and no alert is raised.

Time to fix

OK, you run out of disk space – alas it happens. You logon and start work moving files or reconfiguring things to free up or add space. Do you need to be alerted again to the fault ? No, you simply need time to fix it.

Again with Sentry-go you can easily do this. Either disable the check yourself for a while or configure the system to suspend it for a given time after an alert is triggered for it. Both options give the Administrator or Support staff time to resolve the issue.

Reason 6. Sentry-go is designed by support people, for support people. Features you may expect to find only in an expensive system can be found in Sentry-go.

On-going reporting & spotting trends

Strangely monitoring is often thought of as a reactive exercise – after all, you react when the system highlights a fault. But if your system is configured to do its job properly, it should be much more proactive than that. Not only should it highlight faults, but the information it gathers should also allow you to spot problems & trends before they become major issues. Performance information is an obvious example – how close to the threshold are your typical values and are they approaching the maximum ? Getting information up front is key to resolving an issue long before anyone else has noticed.

Sentry-go provides the capability of logging not only alerts, but also performance information. The Performance Optimiser keeps a track on minimum & maximum values as well as caching data for trend analysis, allowing you to graphically see how system performance is changing over time.

Using Sentry-go's reporting is a bonus in other areas too. For example, it allows you to see the current status of your monitored values at a glance, direct from your own desktop browser. This means you can not only check on problems, but also resolutions in real-time, as well as determine whether one problem is also causing side-effects elsewhere etc.

Additionally with the Sentry-go Enterprise Option, all information can be gathered and compared within single reports – an ideal way of spotting trends and analysing the data being captured.

Reason 7. "Be proactive, not reactive" - and all within a single solution. With Sentry-go's integrated web server & reporting facilities, you have access to the information you need, when you need it!



Easy to install

If you've used computers for any length of time, you'll know how tricky (and worrying) software installations can be. As a software house, we know too. It's often said that writing the installation routine is trickier than the product you're trying to install. While that may be a bit over the top, there are certainly issues we've all faced.

To help make installation as painless as possible, each monitoring solution is delivered via Electronic Software Download (ESD) as a single ZIP file & comes with a dedicated Setup Wizard. Simply run the Setup Wizard provided and follow the on-screen prompts. The Wizard will guide you through each step and installation takes just a few moments.

Reason 8. We know any new installation or upgrade can be a concern so we've designed our dedicated Setup Wizards to be as quick & easy as possible.

Easy to configure

You've bought & installed your shiny new monitoring solution ... but now what? You've got lots of manuals, it cost so much it must do everything you want – if only you knew how to configure it! The vendor's happy to send in its own consultants to help you but that costs money too and it can't be that difficult ... can it?

Well no, it shouldn't be. Configuring generally involves just 3 main steps ...

- Knowing what you want to monitor.
- Knowing what you want the monitor to do if the check fails.
- Getting the monitoring system to do it.

With Sentry-go we've tried to make all of these steps as easy as we can. The Setup Wizard will typically configure base checks for you, giving you a head start as to what you may wish to monitor. Moreover, we have spent a lot of time ensuring configuring is both easy to understand and quick to achieve.

Configuring

- With Sentry-go Quick Monitors, the dedicated Configuration Utility provides easy access to the information you will need (configuration, monitoring service, web reports etc.), either locally on the server or remotely from your desktop.
- For Sentry-go Plus!, all configuration and management is controlled through a single client application, the Sentry-go Client Console. From here you can manage monitoring components or add new ones, configure them, access alerts and run web reports.

Configuration settings can also be replicated to other Sentry-go monitors as required.

Reason 9. Easy to understand and quick to use configuration options means that Sentry-go monitoring solutions don't have to involve teams of experts crawling all over the keyboard just to set it up. Our monitors are there to help you, not make your life more complicated!



Easy to manage

Your monitor is configured and you assume doing its job. But how do you know ? How can you tell whether it's working correctly ? Well, with Sentry-go there are a number of options available.

Console

The Console provides an ideal means of viewing the status of your monitored environment – for example, the current monitoring status, the last error raised etc. You also have access to the “Runtime display”, allowing you to connect directly to the monitor and list details of monitoring/alerting events as they occur in near real-time.

Status Reports

A number of web reports provide information regarding the monitored server in near real-time. In particular, the Current Status report shows the last monitored values, and highlights any faults that were detected during the last check, whilst alerts are listed in chronological order on the Recent Alerts report.

Reports can additionally be published to an external web server, if required – for instance to access the information from outside your firewall.

Enterprise Option

If you have the Sentry-go Enterprise Option installed, its web reports provide an ideal “global” view of your entire monitored environment – i.e. your enterprise. Using these you can easily determine where faults lie, access more information from the server and start diagnosing them at an early stage.

Summary E-mail

You can configure Sentry-go to send you a summary e-mail of the alerts raised each day, showing you the work the monitor has performed even if no alerts were actually raised.

Component Manager

Sentry-go uses the Component Manager – part of the Client Console, to manage and update the monitoring components installed. Should you wish to add or remove a monitoring component (e.g., to use it on another server), this is easy to do without the need to reinstall the system.

Reason 10. As with configuring, you don't want to spend more time managing/monitoring the monitor than the systems it looks after. And with Sentry-go, you don't have to!



Help & support

You've installed and configured your monitoring system and all appears to be well. But then you realise alerts aren't being triggered correctly ... or maybe they are but you don't understand exactly why they're being generated.

If you've bought a big-name solution you're most likely guaranteed to be able to find someone somewhere to help you ... but it may take some time. There may be a lot of other hoops and helpdesks you'll have to log it with before getting to the answer you need.

Sentry-go is written by support people, for support people. We therefore understand the pressures you're under as Operations or support groups and have tried to design our solutions based on that experience. Our support team is also available to assist you with installation, configuration or general monitoring advice – be it during an evaluation or long after installation.

<http://www.Sentry-goSolutions.com>

As a result of calls in the past, we've also created Sentry-go Solutions – a web site available to all Sentry-go customers and integrated into the alerts and reports generated by Sentry-go.

Sentry-go Solutions allows you to ...

- Access more information on a particular alert or warning raised by a monitor
- Help understand, diagnose & troubleshoot the cause of the problem
- Find out to resolve the problem and prevent it from occurring again in the future
- Resolve configuration errors reported by monitoring solutions
- Search the internet for more solutions, using the error details detected by Sentry-go

Reason 11. Sentry-go not only monitors, detects & reports faults, it also tries to help you resolve them as well.

Evaluation

You think you may have found a good solution so what next ? Well, you could spend some money but best check it'll do what you want first. You could view an on-line demonstration – very useful to help you get the feel of the system and understand how user-friendly it is but by far the best way of seeing a system is to run – preferably in an environment that matches as closely as possible your own.

With this in mind, we invite you to “try before you buy”!

All Sentry-go products are available for evaluation and we would welcome that you do so, free of charge for 21 days. Simply access <http://www.Sentry-go.com/software-downloads.aspx> and select the product(s) you wish to evaluate. Although evaluations are time coded, they are the complete product, giving you access to all the key monitoring, alerting and web-based features outlined here.

If you subsequently choose to purchase, evaluations can easily be upgraded without the need to reinstall.

Reason 12. With Sentry-go, you can try before you buy. Ask your questions before paying any money to ensure you're getting the solution that's right for you.



Custom Monitoring

In addition to our software packages, we can also develop & support bespoke monitoring or systems. Combining our monitoring expertise with our extensive code software library from the Sentry-go product range, we can tailor a solution specifically for you - at a cost much cheaper than you might expect!

To request a quotation or find out more, simply contact us at the address below, or visit the Sentry-go web site at <http://www.Sentry-go.com/build-a-custom-monitor.aspx> and tell us more about your requirement.

Conclusion, help & support

We hope the above sections have outlined the sort of questions you may want to ask when deciding which monitoring solution to buy. We also hope you have seen how Sentry-go answers these questions and aims to meet your monitoring needs both efficiently and affordably.

If you have any feedback or have any further questions or comments please contact us.

- For the very latest information & product updates, please visit <http://www.Sentry-go.com>
- For sales advice, please e-mail Sales@Sentry-go.com
- For technical support, please e-mail Support@Sentry-go.com



About 3Ds (UK) Limited

Established in 1998, 3Ds (UK) Limited is a software house & consultancy specialising in easy to use, affordable monitoring solutions for both Windows Desktops & Servers through our Sentry-go[®] technology.

As software consultants, we also specialise in the latest client/server, n-tier, web-based & .NET technologies. We work either independently or alongside your own developers, offering a number of key services vital to the successful **D**esign, **D**evelopment & **D**elivery of **S**olutions. We have many years of experience in implementing robust, flexible and efficient solutions into new environments as well as integrating the same solutions with client's existing & legacy systems.

Why Choose 3Ds ?

3Ds is proud to be an independent consulting & software house based to the south of London in the United Kingdom. We believe that this allows us not only to respond quickly and effectively to our customer's specific needs but also guarantees that you can reach the right person with the right skills at the right time. We won't pass you from team to team & person to person in order to get an answer!

Our Sentry-go monitoring solutions are used by companies world-wide. In addition to these, we also offer other a number of others services ...

Within the UK

- Software development using the latest Windows, .NET & web-based technologies.
- Consulting services for development, project, or support-related issues.
- Additional product training.
- Customised training - for Sentry-go software, O/S, Technical Support, programming & technologies etc.

World-wide

- Software customisations & enhancements, in order to integrate Sentry-go with your existing & in-house systems.
- Custom monitor development.



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Design, Develop, Deliver Solutions!

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