



QUESTION

What can be done when a PatrolAgent silently stops monitoring a critical service or resource?

DESCRIPTION

A casual glance will indicate that the agent is functioning properly. The PatrolAgent process will be running, it will still respond to availability checks, and all the connections to the event manager (whether it's PEM, TEC or POM) will remain active. However, no data points are being collected, and, as a consequence, the alerting has stopped.

This is a common scenario with Patrol. BMC Support will frequently recommend upgrading to the latest version to resolve problems with KMs and the Agent itself, but while some issues may be corrected with patches and upgrades, there are a number of things inherent to monitoring with Patrol that cannot easily be corrected by a single BMC-supplied patch, such as:

- Insufficient resources to do normal tasks, such as forking processes (example, lack of swap space due to a memory leak)
- Failures in dependencies, such as required libraries or system utilities
- Changes in file permissions
- Many other reasons, including those still unknown.

When this type of situation occurs, there are typically only two ways that it can be discovered:

- Using a Patrol console, someone notices that certain parameters are missing or not receiving new data points
- An end user complains that a resource is not working properly, and no alert was received from Patrol

Since these methods require a failure or manual investigation, days, weeks or months could transpire before anyone suspects a problem.

SOLUTION

One simple solution is to create a small custom knowledge module that will do the following on every agent across the enterprise:

- Monitor one or more key parameter(s) (for example, CPU Utilization or Oracle Instance Status) and alert when they are no longer being updated with new data points.
- Check for one or more root causes that commonly cause problems (for example, attempt to run an OS command to verify that new processes can be forked)

Tips and tricks on how to create this Knowledge module:

- Use PatrolCli or the remote PSL functions to access agents remotely
- Load this KM on one or two central servers (for example the PEM or POM server) which are configured with a list of all remote agents.

Obviously, there will always be unanticipated problems that affect monitoring, but using a solution like the one described here should help to significantly minimize them.

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