

Nimsoft® Cloud User Experience Monitor

Public Status Page Guide



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Overview

A Nimsoft Cloud User Experience Monitor Public Status Page (PSP) provides an easy control channel through which you can transparently display information about the availability and performance of your critical services. Your organization can use your PSP to post announcements, annotate current issues, and optionally set up a special host name (CNAME) so that visitors can access the page using your domain name, e.g. `status.yourdomain.com`. Nimsoft Cloud User Experience Monitor PSPs are hosted on Amazon's cloud infrastructure, meaning they are available even if your site or service is not.

Nimsoft Cloud User Experience Monitor PSPs are very easy to set up and free for all Cloud User Experience Monitor paid subscribers!

Style & Content

Nimsoft Cloud User Experience Monitor PSPs can be completely customized to match your corporate design. Most importantly, all the information displayed is determined by the settings you define and reflects your nominated performance limits.

The Nimsoft Cloud User Experience Monitor PSP cover page offers an overview of the performance and availability of your sites and services. Further performance data is presented on a detailed page, which can be accessed by clicking on an individual site or service.

Normal performance is represented with a green tick icon. When a monitor returns a confirmed error, the PSP will display a red exclamation mark icon. When the monitor detects a return to normal performance, the PSP will update and revert to the green tick icon. Poor performance (e.g. a slowly loading site) is represented with an orange icon. You define 'Poor performance', for each individual monitor. For more detail about the icon coloring please see the appendix.

Whenever your organization experiences a performance or availability issue, you can annotate it in your Nimsoft Cloud User Experience Monitor customer console. The annotation (for example, 'Our technicians are working on a solution. We expect the service to be back to normal by 16:00') will be published on your PSP. Announcements can also be added through an RSS feed.

Benefits

A PSP demonstrates to your customers that you're being transparent which will help your business to:

Gain Customer Trust – Customers will forgive you for downtime but only if you have built up their trust by admitting what's going on. Instead of hiding performance issues, use your PSP to honestly inform customers that a site or service is experiencing problems. Through announcing a problem before your customers 'catch' you, your business will create a strong sense of trust. Post announcements to explain what's going on and set realistic expectations about when you'll be back up. (Also see: 'Tips For Managing and Outage').

Manage The Message – Customers are humans, if you don't say anything they'll speculate and assume the worst. Instead of watching your brand get tarnished by "#FAIL" tweets use your PSP to manage social media 'buzz'. Customers much prefer to read transparent performance information via a PSP than posting angry message via their social networks. (Also see: 'Tips for Managing and Outage').

Minimize Stress & Focus On The Actual Problem – With a PSP you can post one announcement and reach your whole customer base rather than explaining it to each individual. Issue a simple, honest update then get on with fixing the problem!

Reduce Support Costs & Calls – Everyone prefers getting information for themselves so direct customers and internal teams to your PSP for updates. Posting announcements via your PSP also leaves technical support with the space to get on with fixing the problem rather than updating each member of staff.

Set Up Steps

Any registered Nimsoft Cloud User Experience Monitor user can set up free PSPs. To do so, sign-in to your Nimsoft Cloud User Experience Monitor account and use the navigation links in the footer to click into 'Monitors' from the 'Settings' menu.

Step 1: Select Monitors for your PSP

If you don't already have a set of monitors set up for the sites & services you'd like to publish in your PSP, create the necessary monitors. Note: The monitors need to be in a single monitor group.

Set the following for each monitor by clicking on the monitor and then on the 'expert mode' link in the top right:

- **Name:** The name of your monitor that will be displayed on your PSP. Ensure it's clear and descriptive e.g. "Home page", "Log-in", "Shipping API" etc.
- **First and Second limits:** Carefully consider what you set for these limits to avoid displaying performance issues. E.g. internal alerts might be set at 3 seconds. For the purpose of your PSP you might want to increase this limit to 4 seconds. Your PSP will display the orange 'Performance issues' icon if your monitor exceeds your "First limit" and a red 'Service disruption' icon if your 'Second limit' is breached.
- **Time out in second:** The time-out value you enter influences downtime, as each confirmed time-out is registered as an error. In addition, DNS or server errors result in increased downtime and have an effect on the color of the icon. (Also see: Appendix)
- **Monitoring_Stations:** Tick the "Checkpoint selections" box to change your monitoring stations to a set of stations which is relevant to your users e.g. if your customers are based in Europe, select a set of monitoring stations around Europe and remove all other monitoring stations as they don't need to be warning if the site underperforms from Australia or Brazil.
- Click 'Save'

Step 2: Set Up the PSP

Enter 'Public Status' from your 'Settings' menu.

- Click the link 'add public folder'. (If you do not see this link you do not have monitors in a folder. Go back to the 'monitors' area to create one).
- Select from the 'Folder' drop-down menu the monitors that you wish to publish in your PSP.

- Ignore the CNAME option at this time. (It is covered in STEP 5).
- Click on 'more options' to see further configuration settings including:
 - RSS Feed URL: allows an existing RSS feed to import messages to your PSP e.g. an RSS feed for maintenance announcements then need to be posted in the PSP.
 - Show availability charts: displays two additional availability data charts in the detailed page.
 - Show today's uptime: displays today's uptime figures in the overview page.
 - Show daily uptime: displays uptime figures of services per day in the detailed page.
 - Show current performance: displays how fast the page or services loads in the overview page.
 - Public Notes in RSS feed: permits you to export announcements in the RSS feed of your PSP.
 - Monitoring messages in RSS Feed: includes monitoring alerts in the RSS feed of your PSP. You will also need to add a contact of type 'RSS' to your regular escalation on the contacts page
 - Announcements history: enter the number of days that your announcements will be kept. '0' will only show future announcements.
 - Auto refresh: set an interval in minutes.
 - GA Tracker Code: add a Google Analytics tracker to use in the PSP Click "Save"

Step 3: Preview Your PSP

Click the 'eye' icon to preview your PSP and check that it displays performance information that you are comfortable with. (Note that it takes a while for the full PSP to be pushed to the servers.

The 'arrows' icon indicates that it is still uploading). To adjust any of the configuration settings, click on the 'folder & pencil' icon.

Step 4: Announcements

Announcements can be imported to your PSP from an RSS feed (Also see: STEP 2) or added manually in the console. Announcements are immediately published unless a later publication date/time is scheduled. All announcements are stored under the 'Public status' tab, in the 'Settings' menu, where announcements can be edited or deleted by clicking on the corresponding icon under 'Actions'.

To manually enter an announcement:

- Clicking on 'add announcements' button
- Note's: enter your announcement into the text field
- Regarding: select from the dropdown the site or services the announcement relates to. If you select the top level folder the announcement will be published to your PSP overview page with 'General' written as the service/ website. If you select a specific rule, the announcement will be published to your PSP overview page with rule name written as the service/website. These announcements will also be displayed in the detailed status page for that service/website.
- Date and Time: leave these if you want to immediately publish an announcement. Enter a date if you'd like to schedule an announcement for publication later.
- Public: uncheck this field if you want to simply store an announcement. You can also use this option to remove old announcements from your PSP.
- Click the 'Save' button.

Step 5: Setting Up Your Hostname (CNAME)

The default URL of your PSP is http://status.cloudmonitor.nimsoft.com/<psp_id>. You can find this URL in the PSP console by clicking on the 'preview' icon. Optionally, your PSP can be accessed using your domain name, e.g. status.yourdomain.com.

To make your PSP accessible through your domain you need to:

- Ask your IT/DNS provider to create a CNAME for the host name from status.yourcompanyname.com to status.cloudmonitor.nimsoft.com
- Once your DNS service has been updated, use the navigation links in the footer of your Nimsoft Cloud User Experience Monitor account and click into 'Public Status' from the 'Settings' menu.
- Click on the 'edit' icon for the relevant PSP Add a host name within your own domain in the CNAME field Click 'save'. (Note that it may take up to 2 minutes to update the PSP data including the CNAME directive, while NS records might need more time).

Step 6: Customizing the Look and Feel

To create a custom PSP, refer to the guide and examples at:

http://cloudmonitor.nimsoft.com/assets/downloads/psp/templates_latest.zip


Tips for managing an outage


1. Make sure that users know about your PSP before problems occur. Blog about it, 'tweet' it and add a link to it in from your home and support pages, in the footer of emails, on invoices and other communications. Anticipate where your users will go when they experience downtime and published a link to your PSP from those places.
2. When the inevitable happen and an outage or other crisis starts unfolding, follow these guidelines:
 - Admit failure as soon as possible, preferably by someone high up in your organization
 - Make sure the posts and updates sound human. Do not post announcement such as "We're sorry for any inconvenience this may have caused". They are impersonal and infuriating.
 - Explain in detail who and what is affected (which regions, percentage of customers, what services, etc.)
 - Publish a detailed timeline of the outage, and start maintaining this immediately after the first event
 - Share detailed post mortem reports and lessons learned after the crisis is over.
 - Read the information published here for a more detailed analysis of the psychology of transparency


If you follow these guidelines, the added benefit is that you will actually increase customer trust in your company and brand. It also gets your message across, which will be relayed in social networks. And finally, it will save you serious money in your contact center, as it sets the right expectations.

Appendix: Perceived Performance & Icon Color

The status icons on your PSP can have one of three colors:

Green  All working well no downtime or performance issues detected

Yellow  Your services are currently not performing as fast as defined in the monitor settings

Red  Recent errors or time-outs have been detected from multiple locations

Because people in different geographic locations will experience the performance of your service differently, we do our best to match the behaviour of the icons with what we've learned people expect to see. The icon colours are influenced by two factors:

1. The current performance using an exponential moving average over the most recent checks
2. The time-out and performance limits you have defined for each of the monitors on the settings page
3. By adjusting the First and Second limit in the monitor configuration, you can determine when performance is unsatisfactory and thus the public status icon should turn yellow or red.