

The Sysadmins Daily Grind: Yaps

Red Alert

If middle-age is slowly, but surely creeping up on you, "Yet another pager software" might take you back to the heady days of youth. SMS lets off-site admins know when their servers are misbehaving.

BY CHARLY KÜHNAST

Production servers are typically monitored – using schemes that range from a simple cron-based ping to carefree packages such as Nagios [1]. If an error or even a total failure occurs, it is not particularly useful to have your monitoring software simply log the fact. So you need a red alert!

Now, admins tend not to sleep next to their machines (basically because it is too loud). This leads to a requirement for pro-active alerting. Reliable paging services are the best way of doing this, but for less critical systems the Short Message Service should be good enough.

When I think about SMS, I tend to imagine spotty teenagers vainly attempting to express their hormonal excesses in messages of less than 160 characters – usually with a total disregard for orthographic and semantic niceties. However, even an old-timer like myself can warm to SMS if it helps me deal with server crashes.

Yet another pager software (Yaps) allows the server to use normal telephone lines to send a short message to paging or cellular phone services. The software worked without any hitches in the various cellphone networks we tested. Yaps is included with most

distributions, if not, you will find it at [2]. Yaps uses the *yaps.rc* configuration file. The first thing you should check is whether the cellular phone service data, that is basically Short Message Service number is up to date.

Yet another RC-File

If you are not sure, you might like to take a look at my current *yaps.rc*. You can find this file at [3]. Currently the software works with both TAP and UCP protocol networks..

The following entry sets the caller ID:

```
call-id 04711-1234567
```

The *modem* section defines the device you intend to use; this is an ISDN adapter in my case:

```
device /dev/ttyI1
```

Finally, I need to modify the init string: it must contain my own MSN:

```
init \\r !200D ATZ\r <OK ATE1&Z  
E1234567\r <OK
```

That completes the configuration – we're up and running. The following command

```
yaps Telephonenummer Z  
"Hey, the Server is broken"
```

dispatches the short message, which costs 15 pence from a normal telephone line to my Vodafone mobile; that is slightly more than between two cellphones.

Incidentally, it is quite easy to author a Web front-end for Yaps – a few lines of



Perl or PHP should do the trick. I should know, because I actually programmed a front-end to allow my colleagues to send me the latest news messages while I am off duty. I should have known better – ever since I have been receiving messages such as:

```
Wakey, wakey Sysop!  
Want to crash all your servers?  
Just say the word!
```

Now if you ask me, those guys are suffering from a severe overdose of reading Usenet. ■

INFO

[1] D. Ruzicka, "What's going on – Net management with Nagios": Linux Magazine, Issue 29, p62

[2] Yaps download: <http://www.sta.to/ftp/yaps>

[3] Useful example of *yaps.rc*: <http://www.entropy.de/yaps/yaps.rc.beispiel>

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