

# Fluke Networks Launches New Network and Application Performance Business: Visual Network Systems

## Event

On June 28, 2010, Fluke Networks announced the creation and launch of a new operating entity within the Danaher family – Visual Network Systems. The new group will take enterprise-class performance monitoring technologies for networks and applications from the Fluke Networks product portfolio and use them to address the growing needs for such solutions within large enterprise and managed services settings. Visual Network Systems will operate as an independent entity, with its own development resources and sales and marketing teams, but will remain in position to access and leverage technologies present within other Danaher business units, including Fluke Networks and Tektronix. In parallel, Visual Network Systems also made their first two product announcements – an open Web services API called VPM Connex™ and a major refresh and upgrade within their network-attached Analysis Service Element (ASE) probe product line.

## Market Context

As IT infrastructures, and in particular IP networks, continue to mature and become increasingly reliable from an uptime perspective, focus can and should be turned towards tuning and optimization – the realm of performance monitoring and management. And while network performance is a valuable incremental step for evolving operational practices, a longer-term and higher-value objective is to establish direct visibility into and awareness of how the applications and services traversing the network are behaving and performing. Such visibility can be established in a number of ways, including packet inspection, flow records, and passive or synthetic test agents. If successful, the result is an understanding of who is using the network infrastructure, which applications/services are active, and the quality of end-user experiences. As evidence of the wealth of activity in this area, ENTERPRISE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATES® (EMA™) analysts are tracking more than 50 individual management tools companies who currently offer application awareness drawn from network-based monitoring sources.

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Establishing visibility into applications and services traversing the network is a high value objective for evolving operations.

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While this move towards visibility has been a natural evolutionary progression for the tools, technologies, and practices within the network engineering and operations team, similar approaches are being taken in other IT groups. In particular, application development and support groups have been deploying application performance management (APM) products, many of which use similar or even identical sources of measurement (packet analysis and agents are most common) to provide a deeper understanding of how complex, multi-component, distributed applications are performing as well as the experiences of end users.

Both the network and applications teams have a similar set of objectives in establishing these types of visibility. First, they strive to better understand how the served community is experiencing IT services, and thus whether or not IT is meeting expectations and adequately supporting IT-dependent business processes. Second, they are looking for technologies to help them more efficiently and effectively respond to failures or degradations. And thirdly, they seek clear understanding of current operating conditions, growth and usage trends, and early indicators of potential problems so that well-informed,

proactive measures can be effected. All of these objectives are consistent with the evolutionary emergence of integrated, service-oriented management practices within IT organizations – a sector maturation megatrend which holds great promise for elevating the strategic importance and impact of IT on a broad basis.

## A Fresh Start for an Established Solution

Over the past several years, Fluke Networks and their parent company, Danaher Corporation, have steadily accumulated and assembled a broad portfolio of network management technology assets. A group of those products, namely Visual Performance Manager and Visual UpTime from the Visual Networks acquisition, NetAlly from the Viola Networks acquisition, and NetFlow Tracker from the Crannog acquisition have been integrated and formed into a true enterprise-class, application-aware network performance management solution, now known collectively as the Visual Performance Manager system. This solution set was further augmented with the release of an APM-focused component, the Application Performance Appliance (APA), as well as other incremental product developments to improve the integration and consistency across the suite. This solution set, specifically, has now been carved out of Fluke Networks to become the core of a newly created operating entity – Visual Network Systems. What remains behind with Fluke Networks is a substantial catalog of network test, measurement, monitoring, and analysis products, which will continue to be made available to organizations of all sizes.

The new organization will be focused exclusively on addressing the special needs and requirements of large enterprises and managed services providers, under the banner of Enterprise Service Intelligence. As testament to their commitment in this regard, Visual Network Systems made two immediate product announcements. The first, VPM Connex, releases an open set of Web services (SOAP/XML) APIs for connecting the Visual Performance Manager solution with other management systems, most notably event management, service dashboards, and configuration management. With VPM Connex, the Visual Network Systems team is making a strong statement about their understanding of the essential role that network and application management can and should play in the broader integrated management tools architecture that characterizes current best practices for service-oriented IT operations in today's progressive enterprise organizations.

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Visual Network Systems will have the technology and resources to deliver solutions specifically attuned to the needs of large enterprises and managed service providers.

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The second concurrent announcement detailed several important expansions to one of the foundational product elements within the Visual Performance Manager solution – the hardware-based packet inspection probes called Analysis Service Elements (ASEs). New configurations of the ASEs will now be available for multi-port, single and dual in-line Gigabit Ethernet, as well as new models for supporting OC-3/OC-12 SONET links. Visual Network Systems has also moved the ASE products to a Linux operating kernel – a significant future-proofing step that will allow easy portability to other hardware platforms – even (conceivably) virtual appliance form factors.

As important as the new products is the organizational changes that come with this new strategy. Visual Network Systems will be a new operating entity with the Danaher family, and will be accorded all of the resources it needs to achieve success. This means a dedicated sales and marketing team to go with the dedicated development and support organizations. As a result, Visual Network Systems will now be able to develop and execute a business plan that is specifically attuned to enterprise- and carrier-class solutions without having to share resources with the much broader portfolio of Fluke Networks.

## EMA Perspective

As a long-term advocate of integrated management technologies and increasing application awareness, Enterprise Management Associates views this as a very hopeful development for the network and application management tools sector, and for Danaher/Fluke/Visual in particular. As a discrete, fully resourced business entity, Visual Network Systems will enjoy a greatly improved potential for success in addressing the well known and growing challenges of assuring large-scale network and application performance. Prior to this launch, Fluke Networks assembled an impressive cache of technology assets and had already been making steady progress at integrating those assets into a common framework. New developments in terms of APIs and next generation instrumentation technologies evidence a commitment to continued investment and development, and the newly created sales team means that the organization will be better able to understand and meet the demands of their existing and prospective customers.

With a well-established presence in the network tools sector, the primary challenge before Visual Network Systems will be establishing a credible voice in the APM market, which has not been a traditional area of strength for Fluke/Danaher. Also of interest going forward will be how well the new organization works together with its sister companies to continue to draw additional technologies into the solution (for instance the ClearSight analyzer technology, for extended troubleshooting workflows) as well as sharing with other solutions (such as contributing application-layer visibility to the Tektronix GeoProbe solution).

Visual Network Systems is off to an excellent start and is stocked with a solid portfolio of technology components. Their next challenge will be to build their go-to-market engine and establish a track record of success. By many measures, they could not be better poised to deliver value, and if they are even marginally successful, the winners will be IT infrastructure operations teams who seek to establish better application visibility and user/customer experience awareness.

### About EMA

Founded in 1996, Enterprise Management Associates (EMA) is a leading industry analyst firm that specializes in going “beyond the surface” to provide deep insight across the full spectrum of IT management technologies. EMA analysts leverage a unique combination of practical experience, insight into industry best practices, and in-depth knowledge of current and planned vendor solutions to help its clients achieve their goals. Learn more about EMA research, analysis, and consulting services for enterprise IT professionals and IT vendors at [www.enterprisemanagement.com](http://www.enterprisemanagement.com) or follow EMA on Twitter ([http://twitter.com/ema\\_research](http://twitter.com/ema_research)).

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