

## Product Review

# GIGASTOR PROBE PLAYS TRAFFIC COP FOR GIGABIT ETHERNET

By Marc Spiwak



Gigabit Ethernet presents unique problems for solution providers who often are searching for a needle in a haystack when trying to determine the cause of intermittent problems on the network.

So much data flows through a gigabit link that it's nearly impossible to capture it all, let alone try to make sense of all that information. That's the environment into which Network Instruments recently released its second-generation GigaStor Probe, a 4U rack-mount appliance that monitors gigabit traffic and stores associated data.

The appliance reports into Network Instruments' Expert Observer or its Observer Suite console, which is a network monitor and protocol analyzer for Ethernet, Wi-Fi 802.11b/a/g, Token Ring and FDDI networks. However, GigaStor Probe also is compatible with any RMON management console.

When it comes to positioning, the appliance can help enforce data-retention-compliance initiatives, such as poli-

cies related to the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, as well as data mining and network forensics efforts. With GigaStor Probe, solution providers can outfit clients with the ability to monitor their own network traffic or, alternatively, they can use the product themselves as a troubleshooting tool for supporting remote or on-site management of customers' networks.

GigaStor Probe comes as a complete appliance, running Windows XP. It

includes a built-in high-performance RAID array, a 10/100/1000 Ethernet connection and a management NIC. The device weighs a substantial 85 pounds, so solution providers might want to consider mounting it on a cart if it is to be used at different job sites.

The latest edition of GigaStor Probe performs wire-speed gigabit capture-to-disk, local processing and decoding, and advanced trunking. The appliance's second-generation capture >>

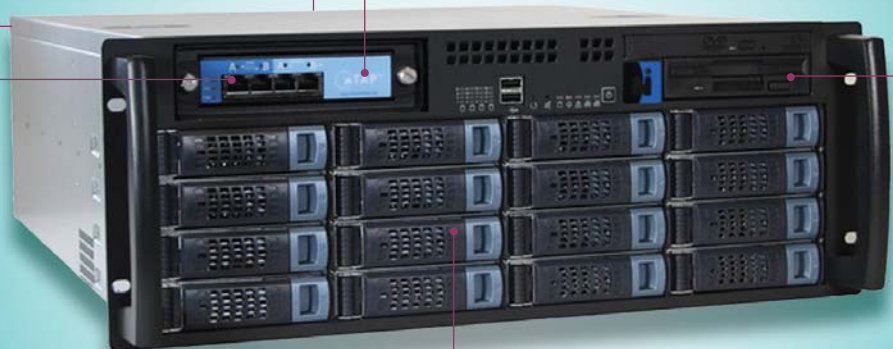
## GIGASTOR PROBE KEY FEATURES

**SFP CONNECTORS**  
MONITOR BOTH OPTICAL  
AND COPPER LINKS

**NTAP INPUT DEVICE:** MULTIPLE NTAPS  
AVAILABLE DEPENDING ON APPLICATION

**STORAGE ARRAY** FOR HANDLING  
UP TO 8 TBYTES OF DATA

**SLIM OPTICAL DRIVE**



card allows granular analysis on individual ports or up to four trunked full-duplex gigabit links. The probe's inputs feature small form-factor plug-gable (SFP) connectors that allow it to monitor both optical and copper links.

GigaStor Probe can capture up to 250 Mbytes per second (Mbps) on full-duplex gigabit links. All that data needs to be stored somewhere, thus the decision to include a built-in storage array.

GigaStor Probe can be configured to monitor either two or four full-duplex links. Pricing starts at \$35,000 for a two-link configuration that includes up to 4 Tbytes of storage; the device includes all the required cabling and connectors. An 8-Tbyte GigaStor Probe configuration is priced at \$50,000.

Network Instruments' GigaStor Probe records network activity, letting an administrator go back to determine specifically when a problem occurred and what network conditions were like at that time. GigaStor Probe also helps companies document all network communications to comply with government regulations such as Sarbanes-Oxley. The data it retains shows when communications took place and what information was contained in the transmissions. The appliance also lets an IT department or solution provider analyze traffic on highly saturated links to help

enforce network usage policies—for example, to prevent employees from running file-swapping applications. The appliance can capture hours', days' or even weeks' worth of network traffic, depending on how it is configured.

GigaStor Probe can be configured as a local console for on-site analysis, providing resellers with realtime information on bandwidth utilization and switch statistics. Data can be captured, decoded and analyzed with nanosecond resolution. More than 500 protocols and countless subprotocols can be decoded, and triggers and alarms can be set for immediate alerts on specific network activities or errors.

Moreover, data-intensive applications such as SQL Server, Microsoft Exchange, Oracle databases, VoIP installations and DNS can be analyzed for response time and the number of transactions completed.


To reduce network overhead as much as possible, GigaStor Probe localizes all data processing and decoding; only screen updates are sent to the console.

Partner status within Network Instruments'

channel program, which has been in existence since 1994, is based on the level of training and support that a solution provider is able to offer to its customers.

All Network Instruments partners are entitled to free technical and sales training and a dedicated partner Web site containing support and sales documentation. They also are able to participate in joint sales efforts and the company's lead distribution program.

As far as marketing materials, the vendor provides partners with lead-generation e-mail templates, joint trade show opportunities and mailers for joint advertising campaigns.



**GIGASTOR PROBE**

- > **Company:** Network Instruments  
Minneapolis, Minn.  
(800) 526-7919  
www.networkinstruments.com
- > **Tech Rating:** ★★★★★
- > **Channel Rating:** ★★★★★
- > **Distributors/Integrators:**  
Sold direct to resellers

NOTE: RECOMMENDED STATUS IS EARNED WITH A SCORE OF AT LEAST EIGHT STARS OUT OF 10



**Corporate Headquarters**  
Network Instruments, LLC  
10701 Red Circle Drive  
Minnetonka, MN 55343  
USA  
toll-free: 1.800.526.7919  
phone: 952.358.3800  
fax: 952.358.3801  
www.networkinstruments.com

**European Office**  
Network Instruments  
7 Old Yard Lane  
Brasted, Westerham  
Kent TN16 1JP  
United Kingdom  
phone: +44 (0) 1959 569880  
fax: +44 (0) 1959 569881  
www.networkinstruments.co.uk