

Big Brother™ Professional Edition

SYSTEMS AVAILABILITY MONITORING

- **Framework for systems and availability monitoring**
- **Provides an ideal solution for monitoring general availability and performance for hundreds of servers**
- **Web-based graphical interface displays information in real time for quick problem detection**
- **Color-coded format that anyone can understand**
- **Architecture makes it easy to deploy, maintain and customize**
- **Architecture supports redundancy to ensure that a single point of failure does not cripple monitoring infrastructure**
- **Open and extensible, with a community generated repository of over 700 custom extensions**
- **Integrates with Foglight® for complete application-centric monitoring and Spotlight® for real-time diagnostics**

Big Brother is a framework for low-cost system and network availability monitoring. It is built for system administrators tasked with managing availability and performance of hundreds of servers — without a budget to match.

Unlike monitoring solutions that are expensive to purchase and maintain, difficult to deploy and tax your systems with high overhead, Big Brother delivers an attractive alternative. Big Brother is inexpensive, simple to use and manage, and lightweight.

Guiding Principles

Big Brother Professional Edition was designed by system administrators for system administrators. The guiding principles that were behind the creation of the software remain in place today.

They are:

- Make it work, make it right, make it fast
- Monitor and notify, but do not act
- Make it simple
- Make it understandable
- Make it extensible
- Make it portable



These principles are evident today in the look, feel and function of the product. An experienced system administrator can install the core of Big Brother in about one hour. A simple green is good, red is bad paradigm makes the information understandable, even to non-technical staff. Big Brother is so popular and easy to extend, that the user community has developed over 700 scripts that do everything from adding client support (AS/400, OS 390, OpenVMS), to monitoring printer queues and tracking CPU temperatures.

Versions

Two versions of Big Brother are available; Big Brother Non-Commercial and Big Brother Professional Edition. Quest Software has made a purposeful commitment to delivering low-cost — and in some cases — free versions of our software. We offer non-commercial users of the software a no-cost version of Big Brother. For commercial users, or non-commercial users desiring a greater level of functionality and support, Quest Software offers Big Brother Professional Edition.

Big Brother™ Professional Edition

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The differences between the two versions are summarized below:

Big Brother Non-Commercial	Big Brother Professional Edition
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Un-compiled (except for Windows)• Manual installation• E-mail alerts• Numeric paging and SMS (via Kermit for Unix systems only)• Rudimentary help system• Support available, but must be purchased separately• Subject to license agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Compiled for major Operating Systems• Automated install• E-mail, page, and SMS alerts• Alert acknowledgements to facilitate teamwork and problem resolution• Professional quick start guides and help systems• Includes phone and e-mail support between 5:00 AM PST to 5:00 PM PST• Supports data encryption for extra security• Integrated with Spotlight® and Foglight® to provide detailed diagnostics and application specific monitoring• WML output (Unix/Linux version only)

The non-commercial version of Big Brother is available at www.bb4.com. Please remember that the non-commercial version is subject to a license agreement. The Professional Edition of Big Brother is available at www.quest.com/bigbrother.

Big Brother Community

Since its inception in 1996, Big Brother has become enormously popular. There have been hundreds of thousands of downloads which equates to an estimated 50,000 users worldwide. The availability of a non-commercial version has led to the generation of a grassroots community with members who actively support one another and extend the functionality of the tool. When you become a "brother," you become part of the community and reap the benefits that it provides. You can join the community by following the community link at www.quest.com/bigbrother. User published scripts to extend Big Brother are growing all the time. Download or publish Big Brother scripts at www.deadcat.net.

Low-impact, Redundant Monitoring

Big Brother is based on client-server technology and is composed of four parts:

- Server processes to receive incoming messages and provide a Web display
- Server processes to process all paging requests
- Server processes to test network services
- Client processes to send local information (CPU, memory, etc.)

The architecture of Big Brother allows for agent-less network and availability monitoring, with an option to install a client to deliver additional information about systems resources utilization. Big Brother also supports running multiple servers to build redundancy into your monitoring solution. This ensures that a single point of failure does not disrupt your monitoring initiatives.

Agent-less network tests include ftp, http, smtp, pop3, dns, telnet, imap, nntp, and ssh. Big Brother clients capture data, and forward that data back to a central server to reduce the monitoring footprint. Clients are equipped to monitor disk space, CPU usage, messages, and memory, as well as ensure that the processes you identify are running.

Notifications and Visibility into System Availability

The first concern of a system administrator is whether any component on their system is unavailable. Immediate notification of such an occurrence is vital. Big Brother has a sophisticated rules engine that supports notifications based on time of day, machine or test that has failed. It also supports advanced features such as paging groups, acknowledgements, escalations, page-only-every defined amount of time, and initial delay before paging (to eliminate erroneous notifications of self-resolved problems). When an alert happens, Big Brother can notify you via e-mail, or alphanumeric, numeric or SMS paging. To facilitate response tracking and problem resolution, Big Brother allows administrators to acknowledge alerts, which, in turn, delays additional alerts and lets other administrators know who is working on the problem.

To visualize your environment, Big Brother offers a graphical interface that displays, in near real-time, system status information on Web pages or in WML-based format for WAP-enabled devices (Unix/Linux versions only). The color-coded representation of which servers and tests are experiencing availability issues or performance degradation allows even the most non-technical users to identify systems in need of attention. A green light in the program's browser-based display indicates servers are operating flawlessly; yellow means something requires attention; and red denotes a serious condition that requires immediate attention. In addition, the background of the status page reflects the color of the most serious condition. Problems not directly visible on the screen are quickly brought to the attention of an administrator for quick and proactive problem resolution.

Big Brother not only notifies you about system availability, but also tracks state changes over time. This information is used to quickly generate availability and service level agreement (SLA) reports.

Extensible and Open

One of the guiding principles for Big Brother is to be extensible and easily customized to suit your needs. Big Brother allows administrators to easily define alerts to meet specific monitoring parameters. Notifications can be configured to send SMS messages, e-mail or pages based upon event criteria so that the proper personnel, at any level, are proactively alerted and able to quickly react to potential problems.

Big Brother's Web-based display is customizable to provide status reports on specific servers and processes that the user is monitoring, providing a custom view to suit departmental needs. Servers can be grouped by any criteria you define.

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"Big Brother is an invaluable tool for network management. Its out-of-the-box options provide the core functionality we need for most servers and the framework is flexible enough that modifying or even constructing new monitoring scripts is pretty easy. Quite simply, you can set it up to monitor the servers and page the administrators when problems are discovered so that your headaches don't become migraines."

— John Awbrey
Chief Systems Engineer
Acuent Inc.

Supported Platforms

- Red Hat Linux 7.x
- Red Hat Enterprise Server 3.0
- SUSE Linux 8
- Sun Solaris 6 or greater
- HP-UX 11.0 or 11i
- IBM AIX 4.33, 5.1 or 5.2
- Windows NT 4 Server
- Windows 2000 Server or Professional
- Windows 2003 Server

Most importantly, Big Brother offers support for user-written scripts and other products to further extend the breadth of monitoring an administrator may need to successfully manage a specified group of servers and processes. User-defined tests are easy to create, which means that Big Brother is able to monitor the availability of nearly every aspect of your extended computer network, with results sent to the centralized server for display and notifications.

Integration with Quest's Application Performance Management Solution

Big Brother integrates with Foglight and Spotlight to deliver a complete application performance management solution. Big Brother serves as a framework, and is able to provide a layer of broad systems availability monitoring to help system administrators manage large numbers of servers.

Foglight is designed to help businesses focus very specifically on mission-critical applications. With Foglight, application and IT managers can understand end user service levels for critical business applications, notify stakeholders when those service levels are violated, and assign problem resolution tasks to the appropriate domain expert. Unlike traditional monitoring tools, Foglight maps business objectives to both system and application-specific performance information across every tier of the application stack to measure and improve the performance of packaged and custom applications. Big Brother integrates with Foglight by allowing its alerts to display in the same environment as Foglight and gives a holistic view to the entire system infrastructure.

Spotlight is a revolutionary performance diagnostic and resolution tool that helps administrators rapidly pinpoint the specific cause of performance problems. When Big Brother alerts you to a system availability problem, you can launch the appropriate Spotlight (Spotlight on Unix/Linux, Spotlight on Windows, Spotlight on Web Servers, etc.) to drill down into the problem area and graphically identify the performance bottleneck. This helps speed the time to resolution when performance problems occur.



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