

NETWORK ATTACHED STORAGE SNMP SINGLE SYSTEM IMAGE**FIELD OF THE INVENTION**

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The present invention relates generally to computer networks, and more specifically to management of nodes in private network clustering environments.

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BACKGROUND

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A computer network is a group of computers, printers, and other network devices linked together by a communication system. Computer networks allow devices within the network to transfer information between one another. A computer network can be a very small, such as two network devices coupled together in close proximity to each other, or extremely large, such as thousands of interconnected network devices spanning the entire globe.

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As a computer network grows in size, the ability to efficiently manage the network becomes increasingly difficult. In a large network, also referred to as a wide area network (WAN), the number of devices connected to the network may constantly change. Networking equipment may fail, causing bottlenecks or traffic diversions in the system. Expansions may require higher bandwidth capabilities in certain portions of the network. A network administrator must keep track of such changes and respond accordingly in order to maintain the computer network in proper working order.

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One method of organizing a computer network is to arrange network devices, also referred to as nodes, into node clusters or node groups. Node clusters are composed of two or more nodes and are typically created to handle different resources in the network system. For example, one node cluster may be responsible for transferring data files while another node cluster may handle a site's e-mail services. Node clusters also help coordinate and distribute network traffic so that no one node becomes overloaded.

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Since each node cluster member typically performs the same set of tasks as the other nodes in the node cluster, it is often desirable to perform the same management operations on all or many of the node cluster members at the same time. One difficulty in performing the same

management operations on many node cluster members at the same time is that a network administrator may not always know which nodes are members to particular node cluster. Thus, a network administrator may be required to spend time investigating exactly which nodes belong to the node cluster.

5 Further complicating a network administrator's desire service multiple nodes in a node cluster is that not every node cluster member may have the same network connectivity. Therefore, the administrator may be faced with a situation where not every node in a node cluster can be serviced from a particular network location. These and other difficulties may require a
10 network administrator to expend considerable time and effort servicing node clusters.

Summary of the Invention

15 The present invention addresses the above-mentioned limitations of traditional computer network management systems by providing a single system image of a node cluster to the network manager. This arrangement enables the node cluster to be managed remotely by communicating with any one of the node cluster members, thereby greatly simplifying management
20 tasks.

According to a first aspect, the present invention provides a method for a management station to manage a node cluster in a computer network, wherein the node cluster includes a plurality of servant nodes, a target
25 node and a master node. The method comprises a receiving step for receipt of a management command from the management station through the network by the target node. A sending operation sends the management command to the master node from the target node. A processing step processes a management response to the management command by the master node. Next, a
30 sending step sends the management response to the target node from the master node, and another sending operation sends the management response to the management station by the target node.

According to a second aspect, the present invention provides a
35 management agent for processing management commands from a management station. The management agent includes a receiving module and a sending module. The receiving module is configured to receive management data requested from the node members. The receiving module is also configured to communicate management commands from the target node to the master
40 node. The sending module is configured to send management data from the node members and to communicate a command response from the master node to the target node.

According to a third aspect, the present invention is a system for processing a management command issued from a management station. The system includes a node cluster with a plurality of servant nodes and a master node. A target node belonging to the node cluster receives the management command issued from the management station. A master management agent executes on the master node, and is configured to process the management command and send a command response to the target node. A target management agent also executes on the target node, and is configured to forward the management command to the master node and send the command response to the management station.

According to a fourth aspect, the present invention provides a computer program product embodied in a tangible media for managing a node cluster in a computer network by a management station. The computer program performs the operations of: receiving a management command from the management station through the network by the target node; sending the management command to the master node from the target node; processing a management response to the management command by the master node; sending the management response to the target node from the master node; and sending the management response to the management station by the target node.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

A preferred embodiment of the present invention will now be described, by way of example only and with reference to the following figures, in which:

Fig. 1 shows an exemplary network environment embodying the present invention;

Fig. 2 shows a flowchart showing operations performed by management agents;

Fig. 3 shows an exemplary system according to the preferred embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 4 shows an alternative configuration of the preferred embodiment; and

Fig. 5 shows the functional blocks used to compose a response by a master node to a management command.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The invention is described herein with reference to **Figs. 1-5**. When referring to the figures, like structures and elements shown throughout are indicated with like reference numerals.

As detailed below, the present invention is designed to facilitate management of a cluster of nodes in a computer network. The invention beneficially masks the complex interconnections within the node cluster from the management station by representing the node cluster as a single node or a single system image (SSI). Such an arrangement allows the node cluster to be managed remotely by accessing any of the node cluster members, thereby greatly simplifying management tasks.

In **Fig. 1**, an exemplary network environment **102** embodying the present invention is shown. The network environment **102** includes a management station **104** communicating with a node cluster **106** via a computer network **108**. The management station **104** represents a network client with the capability of performing one or more network management tasks. Typically, the management station **104** is a computer used by a network administrator to manage the systems in the network environment **102**. For example, the management station may query the number of packets sent and received by the node(s), the number of connections made by the node(s), and so on. The communication path between the management station **102** and the node cluster **106** may include a variety of networking devices known to those in the art, such as routers **110**, repeaters, hubs, switches, bridges, etc.

The node cluster **106** comprises several servant nodes **112** and a master node **114** connected by a private network **116**. As used herein, a node cluster is a group of nodes selected to appear as a single entity. The nodes selected to be part of the cluster may be selected for any reason. Furthermore, the node cluster members may not necessarily be physically located close to one another or share the same network connectivity. Every servant node **112** in the cluster **106**, however, must have connectivity to the master node **114** via the private network **116**. A private network generally refers to a local area network (LAN) connection shared by all the nodes participating in the node cluster and not accessible by other devices in the network. It is envisioned that a node

cluster **106** may contain as many nodes as required by the system. In practical applications, however, a maximum number of nodes may be determined by limits in functional performance. For example, in some applications it may be the case that the performance of a node cluster **106** beyond twenty (20) nodes begins to degrade in performance.

As discussed in detail below, the master node **114** is responsible for processing management station requests received by any node cluster member.

Although any node in the node cluster with connectivity to all the cluster members may be selected as the master node **114**, the node offering the highest availability in the cluster is typically selected as the master node **114**. It is contemplated that backup master nodes may be selected in case the master node **114** fails. For purposes of simplicity, however, selection of the master node **114** is assumed to be arbitrary.

Each node in the node cluster **106** includes a management agent **118** that handles management requests received from the management station **104**. As explained below, the management agent **118** on each node passes received management requests from the management station **104** to the master node **114**. The management agent **118** running on the master node **114** then processes the management request. Once the request is processed, the master node **114** sends the response to the original node that received the management request. The original node then forwards the response to the management station **104**. In one embodiment of the invention, the management agent **118** includes a gateway for Protocol Data Units (PDUs) formatted under a Simple Network Management Protocol (SNMP) standard. It is contemplated that other system management standards known to those skilled in the art, such as Common Information Model (CMI), Common Management Information Protocol (CMIP), and System Network Architecture - Management Service (SNA-MS), may be used by the present invention.

In **Fig. 2**, a flowchart containing operations performed by the management agent, according to the preferred embodiment of the present invention, is shown. It should be remarked that the logical operations of the management agent may be implemented (1) as a sequence of computer executed steps running on a computing system and/or (2) as interconnected machine modules within the computing system. The implementation is a matter of choice dependent on the performance requirements of the system implementing the invention. Accordingly, the logical operations making up

the embodiment of the present invention described herein are referred to alternatively as operations, steps, or modules.

Operation flow begins with receiving operation **202**, in which a target node receives a management command packet from the management station. As used herein, a target node is the node in the node cluster that the command packet from the management station is addressed to. The target node may be a servant node or a master node. In one embodiment of the invention, SNMP is utilized to send management request commands to the nodes. For instance, SNMP allows the management station to query a node's status by sending a "Get" or "Get-next" command. After the target node receives the management command, control passes to sending operation **204**.

In sending operation **204**, the management command packet is forwarded to the master node. Thus, rather than processing the management command, the target node sends the management command to the master node. The exact communications mechanism used to transfer the management command from the target node to the master node is not of particular importance, and thus may be realized using any method known to those skilled in the art. For example, in one embodiment, a remote procedure call (RPC) is used to communicate the management command between nodes. After the sending operation **204** is completed, control passes to determining operation **206**.

At determining operation **206**, the master node receives the management command from the target node and determines the scope of the information required by the management station. For each management request issued by the management station, a decision is made about how to best represent the data returned to the management station in the command response. The master node must consider what the response data represents. That is, whether the data represents information about a node, multi-node, Virtual File Server (VFS), or other entity. This representation is also referred to herein as the scope of the information. Once the scope of the request is determined, control passes to processing operation **208**.

In processing operation **208**, the master node executes the necessary directives and performs the necessary processing to compose a response to the management command. The type of management command and its scope dictates the actions taken by the master node. The actions taken by the master node may include, for example, communicating with the target node that received the management command packet, communicating with other

servant nodes, and compiling and formatting information into a response. After processing operation **208** ends, control passes to forwarding operation **210**.

5 In forwarding operation **210**, the master node forwards the composed response to the target node. Again, the communication mechanism used to transfer the response from the master node to the target node is not critical. In one embodiment of the invention, an RPC is used to transfer the response from the master node to the target node.

10 Next, in sending operation **212**, the target node sends the response back to the management station. The target node sends the response to the management station in the protocol expected. Thus, if SNMP was used to issue the management command, the response is sent using SNMP. Once the
15 target node issues the response to the management station, operation flow ends.

 In accordance with the preferred embodiment of present invention, the operations performed by the management agents can be a computer
20 readable program embodied as computer readable media. By way of example, and not limitation, computer readable media may comprise computer storage media and communication media. Computer storage media includes volatile and nonvolatile, removable and non-removable media implemented in any method or technology for storage of information such as computer readable
25 instructions, data structures, program modules or other data. Computer storage media includes, but is not limited to, RAM, ROM, EEPROM, flash memory or other memory technology, CD-ROM, digital versatile disks (DVD) or other optical storage, magnetic cassettes, magnetic tape, magnetic disk storage or other magnetic storage devices, or any other medium which can
30 be used to store the desired information and which can be accessed by the management agents. Communication media typically embodies computer readable instructions, data structures, program modules or other data in a modulated data signal such as a carrier wave or other transport mechanism and includes any information delivery media. The term "modulated data
35 signal" means a signal that has one or more of its characteristics set or changed in such a manner as to encode information in the signal. By way of example, and not limitation, communication media includes wired media such as a wired network or direct-wired connection, and wireless media such as acoustic, RF, infrared and other wireless media. Combinations of
40 any of the above should also be included within the scope of computer readable media.

In **Fig. 3**, an exemplary system implementing the preferred embodiment of present invention is shown. The system comprises of a master node **114** communicating with a servant node **112** in a node group. The master node **114** includes a master management agent **302** and the servant node **112** includes a servant management agent **304**.

The master management agent **302** is split into two parts: a sending process **306** and a receiving process **308**. The sending process **306** is responsible for communicating information requests to servant nodes **112** in the node group according to the scope of the received management command. Furthermore, the sending process **306** passes the command response to the target node that originated the management command. In a particular embodiment of the invention, the sending process **306** communicates with servant management agents **304** using RPC technology.

The receiving process **308** of the master management agent **302** obtains data requested from the servant nodes **112**. The receiving process **308** is also utilized to obtain the management command from the target node. As mentioned above, in one embodiment of the invention the receiving process **308** includes an SNMP PDU gateway.

The servant management agent **304** is also split into a receiving process **310** and a sending process **312**. The receiving process **310** receives requests issued from the sending process **306** of the master management agent **302**, and may also include an SNMP PDU gateway. Once the request is obtained, the servant management agent **304** retrieves the necessary data and forwards it to the receiving module **308** of the master management agent **302** via its sending process **312**. It is envisioned that communication of data between the receiving process **310** and the sending process **312** of the servant management agent **304** may also be accomplished utilizing RPC technology. If the servant node **112** is also the target node, then the receiving process **310** is additionally configured to obtain the command response from the master node **114** and the sending process **312** is additionally configured to send the command response to the management station, as described below.

In **Fig. 4**, an alternative system configuration of the preferred embodiment of the present invention is shown. The system includes a target node **402** that receives management commands **404** from the management station. The management commands **404** are formatted under a User Datagram Protocol (UDP) and are received by the target node **402** through a UDP port

406. It is contemplated that other management command protocols may be utilized by an embodiment of the present invention.

The UDP port **406** informs the target management agent **408** running on the target node **402** that a management command has been received. The target management agent **408**, in turn, initiates a gateway receiving process **410** which forwards the management command to a master management agent **302** executing on the master node **114**.

The management command may be forwarded to the master management agent **302** by means of, for example, an RPC **412**. In one embodiment of the invention, the target management agent **408** and the master management agent **302** are SNMP agents. Furthermore, if the master node **114** is also the target node **402**, then the RPC results in calling the SNMP agent on the same node.

As discussed above, the master management agent **302** receives the management command and constructs an appropriate command response. This process may include polling servant nodes in the node cluster for data, accessing stored data, and compiling the data. Once a command response is prepared, the master management agent **302** sends the response to the target management agent **408** of the target node **402**. In the preferred embodiment of the invention, the response is sent from the master management agent **302** to the target management agent **408** using an RPC **414**.

The target management agent **408** initiates a gateway sending process **416** after the target agent **302** receives the command response. In a preferred particular embodiment of the invention, an RPC server port **418** is used to receive the command response. The gateway sending process **416** passes the command response to the UDP port **406** and may also format the command response to an appropriate protocol.

Once the command response is passed to the UDP port **406**, the target node **402** sends the response **420** back to the management station. It is contemplated that the command response **420** may be formatted as a UDP packet. Thus, the system described above beneficially allows a network manager to issue management commands and queries to a single node in a node group, while still maintaining a single system image at the node cluster.

As discussed above, once the master node receives a management command, the master node composes a response. In **Fig. 5**, exemplary functional blocks used to compose a response by a master node **114** are shown. It should be noted that the functional blocks presented may be implemented in hardware, software, or a combination thereof, depending on the performance requirements of the user.

The master node **114** includes a common interface **502** which comprises routines, protocols, and other tools for interacting with software executed by the master node **114**. In one embodiment of the present invention, a common application program interface (C-API) is used as the common interface **502**.

The common interface **502** is coupled with an information processor **504**. The information processor **504** is used to collect and process data from node cluster members. The information processor **504** is also responsible for formatting and arranging data in the manner expected by the management station. Thus, the information processor **504** is aware of the scope of the information required from the management system and constructs a response to the management command accordingly. It is contemplated that a lookup table may be used to determine the type of data required for each management command.

Coupled to the information processor **504** are a local access module **506** and a remote access module **508**. The local access module **506** is utilized when local data access is needed to construct or perform a response to the management command. For instance, if, as part of the response, the master node **114** is required to provide its own serial number to the management station, the local access module **506** is used to acquire the master node's serial number. In one embodiment of the invention, a node's local data is represented by a management information base (MIB). The local access module **506** obtains local data from the node by retrieving an object instance represented by the MIB. Likewise, the local access module **506** may set local data by modifying an object instance in the MIB.

When data access from servant nodes is required by the master node **114**, the remote access module **508** is used to access such information. Furthermore, the remote access module **508** is used in conjunction with a communication module **510**. The communication module **510** includes routines to format and transmit information, as well as data compression and error correction routines. It is contemplated that any node-to-node communication mechanism could be used by the communication module **510**.

As described above, in a preferred embodiment of the present invention, access to remote nodes is achieved using a remote procedure call (RPC). An RPC allows the master node **114** to execute a function on a servant node **112** and obtain the results of the function. Specifically, the remote access module **508** associates a functional call on the servant node **112** with a particular management command. The remote access module **508** passes the function call, along with the proper function parameters, to the communication module **510**. The communication module **510** then calls the function in the servant node **112** and awaits the result. Once the result arrives, the communication module **510** utilizes conversion routines to retrieve the information formatted in external data representation (XDR).

A servant node **112** also includes a communication module **512** and a local access module **514**. The communication module **514** is used to format and transmit information, compress data, and correct errors. When a command is issued from the master node **114** is received by the communication module **512**, the local access module **514** is used to obtain a response. Once the response is encode by the local access module **514**, it is sent to the master node **114** by the communication module **512**.

It should be apparent to those skilled in the art that the above-described invention assists in node cluster management by providing a means of representing the node cluster as a single system image (SSI). The invention allows management control of the entire node cluster by accessing any of the node cluster members. Such an arrangement simplifies management tasks and reduces the effort required in servicing network node clusters.

CLAIMS

1. A method for a management station to manage a node cluster in a computer network, the node cluster including a plurality of servant nodes, a target node and a master node, the method comprising:

receiving a management command from the management station through the network by the target node;

sending the management command to the master node from the target node;

processing a management response to the management command by the master node;

sending the management response to the target node from the master node; and

sending the management response to the management station by the target node.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein processing the management response further comprises determining the scope of the management command.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein processing the management response further comprises polling the servant nodes for data required by the management command.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein processing the management response further comprises formatting the management response to the protocol expected by the management station.

5. A management agent for processing management commands from a management station, the management agent being suitable for execution in a node cluster, where the node cluster includes a plurality of node members, the node members including a master node and a target node, the management agent comprising:

a receiving module configured to receive management data requested from the node members, the receiving module being further configured to communicate management commands from the target node to the master node; and

a sending module configured to send management data from the node members, the sending module being further configured to communicate a command response from the master node to the target node.

5 6. The management agent of claim 5, further comprising an information processor configured to format the command response in a manner expected by the management station.

10 7. The management agent of claim 5, further comprising a local access module configured to obtain local node data.

8. The management agent of claim 5, further comprising a remote access module configured to obtain node data from another node member.

15 9. The management agent of claim 5, further comprising a common interface configured to interact with software executed by the node members.

20 10. The master management agent of claim 8 wherein the another node member is the master node or a servant node.

11. A system for processing a management command issued from a management station, the system comprising:

25 a node cluster, the node cluster including a plurality of servant nodes and a master node;

 a target node belonging to the node cluster, wherein the target node receives the management command issued from the management station;

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 a master management agent according to any one of claims 5 to 10, the master management agent executing on the master node; and

35 a target management agent executing on the target node, the target management agent configured to forward the management command to the master node and send the command response to the management station.

40 12. The system of claim 11, wherein the node cluster further comprises a local network connecting the servant nodes with the master node.

13. A computer program product embodied in a tangible media comprising:

computer readable program codes coupled to the tangible media for
managing a node cluster in a computer network by a management station, the
node cluster including a plurality of servant nodes, a target node and a
master node, the computer readable program codes being configured to cause
5 the program to carry out a method according to any one of claims 1 to 4.