

Resolving Problems Quickly and Easily

[Novell Support Advisor and Novell Support Link](#)

It is the end of the quarter, and as the system administrator for a finance department of more than 500 users, you are under a lot of pressure. Your network's speed has reduced to a crawl, and your users are complaining as they work overtime to finish their reports before quarter's end. They cannot wait for processes that used to be instantaneous, and you do not have the time to call customer support or thrash through the possible problems one by one. What do you do?

With Novell Support Advisor, you quickly analyze your servers, narrowing down the problem to an outdated LAN driver that you didn't know about. In addition to finding the problem, Novell Support Advisor points you directly to the solution in the Novell Knowledgebase that has links to updated drivers. Downloading the new driver, you quickly fix the entire problem, and your department calls you the quarter-end hero!

Proactively, you can run regular “health checks” on your systems, identifying and solving potential problems even before they arise.

> **Novell Support Advisor: The Best Self-Help Tool in the World**

Novell Support Advisor provides you with a streamlined way to perform both reactive and proactive system diagnostic tasks typically provided by Novell Technical Services, but in a local, secure and automated way. Reactively, Novell Support Advisor allows you to deal with unexpected problems like the one illustrated in the scenario above. Proactively, you can run regular “health checks” on your systems, identifying and solving potential problems even before they arise.

With Novell Support Advisor installed and regularly updated, during a regular health check of your systems, you find other outdated drivers, this time before they impact your servers and affect your department's productivity. While this proactive diagnostic and issue resolution does not result in the kind of level of public accolades that your earlier success at the end of the quarter, you know that you have helped your department dodge a bullet, and your colleagues—and especially your supervisor—comment on how smoothly the system functions.

Designed to support and diagnose SUSE Linux Enterprise Server, Open Enterprise Server (Linux) and associated products, Novell Support Advisor allows you to probe your systems for a variety of selectable service and functional options, such as:

- Connectivity
- eDirectory
- Open Enterprise Server
- Print
- SUSE Linux Enterprise
- Update and Security

Novell Support Advisor can be installed and run from:

- SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop 11 or later
- SUSE Linux Enterprise Server 11 or later
- OpenSUSE 10.3 or later
- Microsoft Windows XP SP2 or later
- Microsoft Windows Vista
- Microsoft Windows Server 2003

Novell Support Advisor can run against and analyze these platforms:

- SUSE Linux Enterprise Server 9
- SUSE Linux Enterprise Server 10
- SUSE Linux Enterprise Server 11
- Open Enterprise Server 1.0
- Open Enterprise Server 2.0
- NetWare 5.x
- NetWare 6.x
- NetWare 6.5

Version 1.1, which is already available, also includes support for your upcoming migration from NetWare to OES!

Novell Support Advisor needs to be installed on a system that can communicate with both the servers within your local environment and the update server at Novell. When connected with the Novell update server, the Novell Support Advisor client automatically prompts you to update to the latest client version.

Novell Support Advisor

- [Download Novell Support Advisor](#)
- [View a *video demonstration* of Novell Support Advisor](#)
- [View the planned Product Features and Roadmap](#)
- [Watch a *video interview* of the program manager.](#)

Additionally, the client prompts you to download newly released Novell Support Diagnostic Patterns (SDPs) from the Novell Update server as they are published by Novell Technical Support Experts. SDPs are patterns of code against which analysis is run resulting in known solutions provided by Novell Technical Support. SPDs are frequently compared to the virus definitions provided by premium anti-virus software programs such as McAfee. Just as new virus signature files allow anti-virus program to identify and then quarantine or delete dangerous viruses, Novell SDPs identify new problems, providing you with the ability to diagnose systems and resolve problems based on the most current issues known to Novell.

By being connected with local servers, this client can run a health diagnosis on selected systems by running a “health check” that gathers configuration and log files from the system being analyzed and compares them with Novell Support Diagnostic Patterns. This not only determines the current health state of the system, it also provides recommended solutions for resolving problems and preventing potential issues.

> Easy and Efficient to Use

The Novell Support Advisor performs its tasks in an automated way, using the latest diagnostic techniques and information available from the Novell Technical Services team. This diagnosis occurs securely and locally, and does not require sending log information to Novell for analysis.

When the data is gathered for a health check, some load occurs over a Secure Shell connection to the queried device, but once the data is collected, the

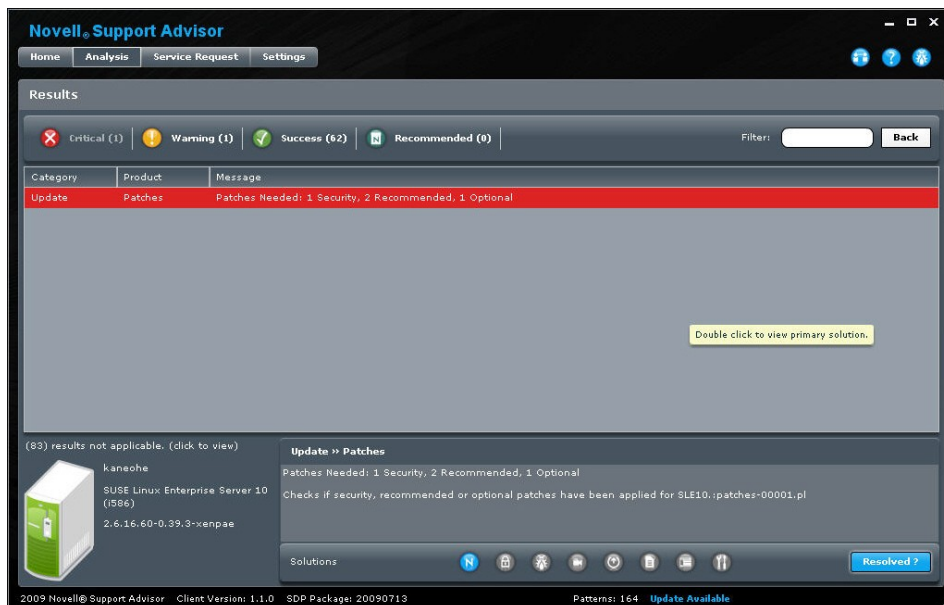
connection is terminated so network and device load is minimized. The gathered data is then consolidated into an easy-to-use view that allows you to quickly see the state of the system. This view is presented as a dashboard that shows critical patterns in red and good patterns in green, identifying what segments in which systems need attention. (See Figure 1.) Novell Support Advisor then provides you potential solutions, allowing you to select the one that best addresses your situation.

Novell Support Advisor In Action: Finding a Failure in the BNX2 Kernel Module

While working on the phone to support another customer, Novell Technical Support Engineer Bryan Riley received an e-mail requesting help with a problem. Novell Support Advisor allowed Riley to start analyzing the supportconfig file sent in even as he resolved the first customer's call. Comparing the information received with a Novell SPD that marked a BNX2 kernel module, Riley was able to provide the customer with a quick solution to a problem that has been reported frequently recently by other customers, [TID 7002506 "bnx2 driver drops packets - erratic behavior of UDP based applications and TCP slowness"](#).

“I was able to provide the customer with a solution suggested a few hours after being assigned, without devoting a lot of time on the issue,” said Riley. “Although this may not be the final solution for this request, it provides the customer with resolution of a problem that he may not have even known he had.”

Figure 1: Novell Support Advisor dashboard lets you quickly see the state of the system and easily identify what segments in which systems need attention.



This tool also builds an Analysis Archive Database, or tar ball archive, that preserves a history of health checks that have been run and the problems that have been addressed, allowing you to see trends and changes over time. A dashboard using the same color-coding scheme, a simple red = critical and green = good makes the information readily accessible.

Because the client is linked to Novell update servers to load pattern updates and new patterns, its value increases over time without requiring much administrator time. In addition, Novell has provided users with the ability to provide direct feedback and relevancy ratings for individual patterns. The user can select reporting on entire categories or select specific patterns from multiple categories, providing enormous flexibility as well as targeted feedback when diagnosing a problem.

> Novell Support Link: When More Support Is Needed

If a problem is discovered where help is needed, a service request connection to the Novell Customer Center can be opened. In this scenario, Novell Support Link provides a highly efficient way for you to get the specific help that you need.

SUSE Linux Enterprise Server 11 already comes with an innovative diagnostic and reporting infrastructure to accelerate problem determination and issue resolution. Novell Support Link uses this data collection technology, accessible via a new YaST module, that automatically captures support configuration information and—if and when you want—sends it to Novell via secure HTTP as a tar ball archive. Novell Support Link integrates with Novell Customer Center to help resolve issues faster and more accurately; a Novell technical expert can evaluate the tar balls and then walk you through the solution.

> Quick and Easy Problem Solving that Keeps Getting Better

With the new support infrastructure provided by Novell Support Advisor and Novell Support Link, problems are diagnosed more effectively and issues are resolved faster. You can view a demonstration of Novell Support Advisor as a video demonstration on the Novell Services Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QmIRG3vFIIQ>. You can also download the Novell Support Advisor tool at <http://support.novell.com/advisor>.

As noted, Novell Support Advisor regularly updates its Support Diagnostic Patterns, and new patterns and

solutions are regularly being produced, optimized and calibrated as a result of customer feedback. In addition, in coming months the same functionality of Support Link that is found in SUSE Linux Enterprise, will also be found in Novell Support Advisor as we add the ability to upload the same support data back to Novell via secure link.

Novell Support Advisor is also able to target and analyze NetWare systems, mainly to mitigate any migration issues while moving your NetWare servers over to Open Enterprise Server. So any Novell product running on either SUSE Linux Enterprise, Open Enterprise Server, OpenSUSE or NetWare will work with Novell Support Advisor.

With Novell Support Advisor and Novell Support Link, you have all the tools you need to resolve your network problems quickly and easily!

Novell Support Advisor In Action: Random Screen Blackouts from a Split Kernel

On May 18, 2008, another Novell Technical Support Engineer, Jason Booth, received a call from a customer whose screen was periodically turning black. Naturally Booth had the customer check his display configuration, but he was initially stumped when the configuration revealed no problems. Running Novell Support Advisor revealed the customer's server had a split kernel condition and led him to the following [solution](#), which revealed the customer's server had a split kernel. Not only that, it had an old BNx driver, and these two problems were seriously hindering the server's performance.

Booth then proceeded to familiarize the customer with the Novell Support Advisor Web site. When the customer downloaded the program and its updated SPDs, he became excited about being able to run his own diagnostics. Novell Support Advisor enabled him to find and resolve problems on his own without any further intervention by a Novell Technical Support Engineer.

Booth enthusiastically endorses Novell Support Advisor: "Novell Support Advisor is a wonderful tool for us on the front line ... I think about our current motto of 'We fix problems quickly.' Without this tool I would have spent more time researching logs and configuration files instead of fixing the problem quickly. The customer's issue with the black screen has seemed to not come back after fixing his split kernel issue. Thank Novell Support Advisor!"