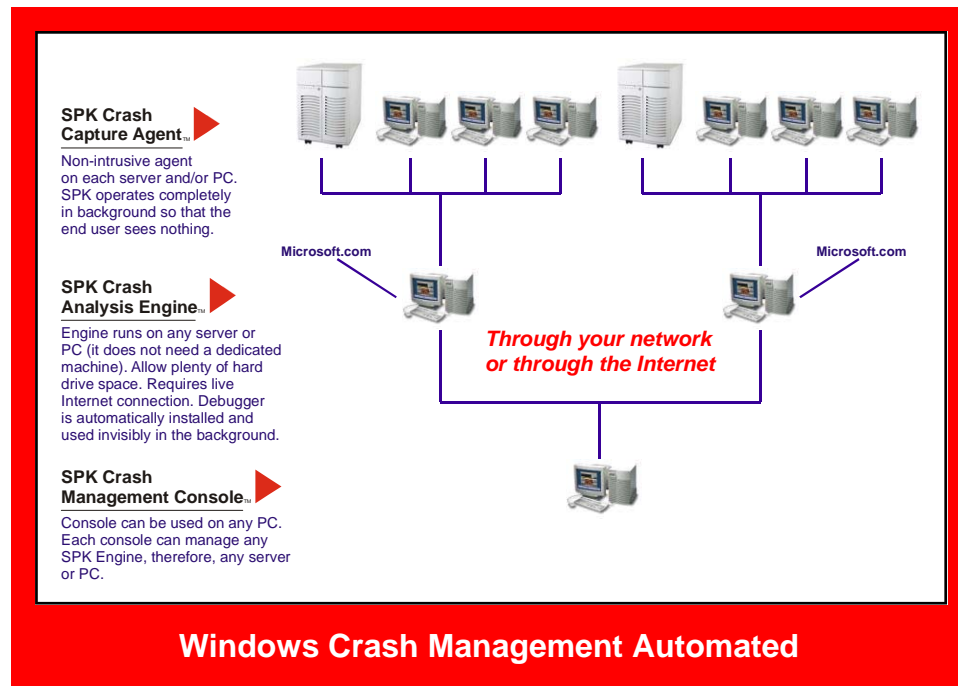


SPK Enterprise Edition: Installation Notes



Alexander Support Document

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1. Introduction

The raison d'être of the Alexander SPK in its various forms is to simplify the resolution of system crashes. Crash resolution, a black art in the minds of many, has always been problematic. One terrible result of this is that crashes tend to recur many times prior to resolution. This is a costly problem. By deploying the SPK, many crashes can be resolved immediately, preventing those costly recurrences, reducing downtime, and driving IT costs down.

The Enterprise Edition of the SPK takes this one step further by centralizing Crash Management across your enterprise network of servers and workstations. You will be able to change settings affecting how a server or workstation behaves during a crash, read a crash report showing the cause, or send a report to the vendor of the culprit driver. You can do this for any single server or workstation, for groups of them, or for every machine in your enterprise network at once. Whether you manage a small network of a few servers and couple dozen workstations, or you oversee a vast enterprise across different countries, it can all be handled, quite simply, from your desk or laptop, through your network or through the Internet. This incredible simplification of crash management, added to the savings of crash resolution, drives IT costs down even further.

2. Before Installation

Before installing the Enterprise Edition of the SPK, take a few moments to consider *how* you want to manage your environment, because that will affect *how* you deploy it. Just as the very concept of *Crash Management* is new to most users, so is the software that does it. Deployment of the SPK is not intuitive, though it is quite simple and can be accomplished quickly. Use of the SPK is not intuitive ei-

ther, though it too turns out to be simple.

The Alexander SPK Enterprise Edition, unlike the Single PC Edition, is designed for centralized management. To that end it is comprised of several components enabling you to design your own layout which can simplify the management of even complex networks.

3. Product Overview

The Enterprise Edition is comprised of several key components: SPK Agent, SPK Engine, SPK Console, and SPK Viewer. If these modules had more descriptive names, they would be:

- SPK Crash Capture Agent
- SPK Crash Analysis Engine
- SPK Crash Management Console
- SPK Crash Report Viewer

SPK Agent

The SPK Agent module sits on each server and workstation in your network. When a crash event occurs, SPK Agent will ensure that a memory dump is saved to disk, the system is restarted, the event is reported to the SPK Engine, and the raw crash data is passed to it for processing. In minutes, the server or workstation is back on line without any human intervention.

SPK Engine

The SPK Engine sits on one server or workstation where it receives information from the various SPK Agent machines that report to it. SPK Engine is both a repository for your crash data as well as a

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processing center that prepares your crash reports. It receives the memory dumps from the Agent modules and distills it down to the crucial data needed to resolve the cause. It retrieves the precise symbol tables from Microsoft.com matched to your operating system version and patch level and merges it in to create the only complete system Crash Report for Windows; generates both SNMP traps and email alerts, and reports to the SPK Console.

You can use one or any number of SPK Engines (there are no license limitations). You can set up one Engine for each: systems administrator, department, or site. Each individual server and workstation will report in to its respective SPK Engine.

Note that the server or workstation that has the Engine installed is the *only* one that needs a live connection to the outside world. Also, the SPK Engine does NOT need a dedicated box. It can be put on any server or PC.

SPK Console

The SPK Console sits on the network administrator's workstation. It provides a central, Windows-based interface to manage the servers and workstations protected by the SPK. Through its console you can select any SPK Engine, then select any individual system, set or change configuration switches, read reports that enable you to solve crash causes, or generate and send emailable crash reports.

SPK Viewer

The SPK Viewer enables remote support vendors receive and view crash reports. It is automatically integrated with each SPK Crash Report so that the recipient of an email crash report from you needs only to run it as he would run any .EXE file. This means that he does not need to have the SPK to view and analyze your crash reports.

4. Installation Considerations

An important consideration, prior to installing the SPK Enterprise Edition, is *how* you want to manage it. Options relating to this are based upon two key features:

1. Do you want the SPK Agents to report crash events and data via your network or the Internet?
- and
2. Do you want to use the SPK Engine to organize your servers and/or your workstations into groups?

1. SPK Agent Reporting

After each crash event, the SPK Agent on any server or workstation will report the event itself and will pass the raw crash data to the SPK Engine for processing. The Agent knows where to report to because at installation it was told either the name of the machine that bears the Engine or its IP address. According to which it was given, it will then either use your network or the Internet. Offices with smaller or more concentrated networks will usually opt for communication through their own network. Those with broadly deployed networks, especially those with international sites, will probably find IP-based management the most convenient.

2. SPK Engine Deployment

A component singular to the Enterprise Edition is the SPK Crash Analysis Engine. While the core features found in the Engine are also in the other versions of the SPK, only the Enterprise Edition has both a separate module as well as the ability to organize your network into multiple reporting groups.

When deploying an SPK Engine to a server or workstation, it will

take on the name of that computer. If you install to a PC called Admin03, then the various systems that report in will do so to Admin03 (unless you use the IP address). Remember that the computer you deploy the Engine to does not need to be dedicated; it can be active with other duties and still run the SPK Engine fine.

If your environment is fairly small, you will likely install only one Engine for your entire network, but if you have many servers and workstations, then multiple Engines will simplify management. One reason for this is simply that you may not want to scroll through a window listing hundreds or thousands of computers; you might prefer to break them into smaller groups. Regardless of whether you deploy one or many Engines, there is no difference in cost. Alexander LAN, Inc. does not charge for additional Engine licenses.

SPK users who use multiple SPK Engines vary in how they organize crash management for their environment. Examples include location, department, systems, and administrator. Remember that these groups represent an *Engine* the *Agents* will report to.

Location

For a simple example, assume that your office has two locations, Boston, Massachusetts and Tokyo, Japan. Install one SPK Engine to a computer named *Boston* and another named *Tokyo*. Then, assign all servers and workstations in Boston to report to the *Boston* engine, and all servers and workstations in Tokyo to report to the *Tokyo* Engine.

Department

Some offices assign an Engine to each department, so that, for instance, all problems occurring in the Accounting Department will report to the *Accounting* Engine.

Systems

Many prefer to separate management of servers and workstations. Thus, SPK configuration switch setting changes can be made for a group of servers without affecting workstations, or vice versa. This is often important because server issues are normally considered to be more crucial than workstation issues. You might, for instance, elect to receive SNMP trap alerts or automated email messages containing crash reports for all server problems, but not for workstations. This can be done in concert with other groups. For instance, you might have Boston servers report to a computer named *BosSrv01* and Boston PCs report to one named *BosPC02*.

Administrator

Another common method of organizing management of the systems is by administrator. In our Boston-Tokyo example above, assume there are two administrators at each site, one server admin and one desktop admin. The SPK Engine groups might therefore be: *Fred*, *Mary*, *Hiro*, and *Miki*, where *Fred* and *Mary* are server and desktop administrators in Boston, and *Hiro* and *Miki* are server and desktop admins in Tokyo.

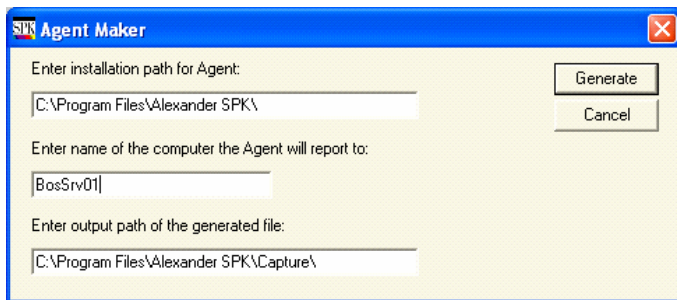
5. Product Installation

Allow about 35 MB of hard disk space for the product. During installation, be sure to have a live connection to the Internet. As the SPK is being installed, it will install the Java runtime from the installation files. It will also download the MS Debugging Tools for Windows from Microsoft and ask you to install it (note that this is then used invisibly in the background by the SPK). Once installation is complete, the SPK will ask you to start it up from a dialogue box. It will begin operation *without having to restart the computer*.

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When deploying Agents to several nodes, and especially when deploying in large numbers, wait until the SPK has been installed on at least one computer, including the SPK Management Console. Then select the Make Agent button on the Console. It will bring up a simple dialogue box (see below) offering 3 variables: Where the SPK Agent will be installed on each server or PC; the name or IP address of the machine the SPK Engine is on, and; where the SPK Agent installation file will be located after it is created.



After creating the file, use whatever method of deployment you like. Send it out and have it launch on every computer it is to go on. It will auto-install the SPK Agent, and report back to the SPK Engine. It will also show up as an Agent in the SPK Console. From that

point on, the SPK will manage it, and you will be able to work with it. Note that any time you change a switch setting on the SPK Console that affects that Agent, the change will be invoked typically in less than 60 seconds.

Please note: With the SPK Enterprise Edition, it is always important to have a live connection to the Internet for the Engine (it is not needed for the Agents or for the Console unless you are using the Internet to manage the system.) This is because the SPK needs to obtain system level data from both Microsoft.com and Alexander.com in order to build a complete and accurate SPK Crash Report.

Following installation, you will find very informative information by selecting the HELP button. It will walk you through the Alexander SPK Single PC Edition and its functions.

Please register your software at:

<http://www.alexander.com/Registration/Registration.html>

If you have any questions regarding installation or use, please contact our support department. If the SPK identifies a driver ("Crash Driver") that you are unfamiliar with, let us know. Perhaps we can direct you to the correct vendor to support it.

For additional information

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