MR.PLANB FIELD GUIDE · MONITORING

Zabbix vs Grafana: Do You Need Both? Decision Guide

Zabbix collects and alerts, Grafana only draws. Here is when adding Grafana on top is worth it.

Updated **2026-10-29** · Full guide: www.mrplanb.com/blog/zabbix-vs-grafana

> This is not a real head-to-head. Zabbix is a full monitoring platform that collects metrics, evaluates triggers and sends alerts, while Grafana is a visualization tool that needs a data source behind it. The realistic question is Zabbix's built-in dashboards versus Zabbix plus Grafana, and the same logic applies to Checkmk.

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real questions behind the search

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agents or host inventory in Grafana

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reasons to add Grafana on top

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official Zabbix data source plugin for Grafana

What each tool actually does

	Zabbix	Grafana
Role	Full monitoring platform: collection, storage, triggers, alerting	Visualization and dashboarding layer
Data collection	Yes: agents, SNMP, IPMI, custom checks	No, reads from data sources
Alerting	Built-in triggers and escalations	Can alert, usually layered on a source's alerting
Needs another tool	No, works standalone	Yes: Zabbix, Prometheus, InfluxDB or similar
Dashboards	Built-in, functional but plainer	Polished, highly customizable, many panel types

Why the question comes up

Slicker screenshots

Grafana does not replace Zabbix. It has no agents, no host inventory and no alerting logic of its own.

Is the setup worth it?

Zabbix covers graphs, screens and maps. Grafana adds richer panels, better time-range controls and mixed sources.

Whose alerting?

Most Zabbix teams keep Zabbix triggers. Grafana alerting on top adds a second layer, not a replacement.

When adding Grafana is worth it

The official Zabbix data source plugin lets Grafana query Zabbix history and trend data.

- [ ] You want Zabbix data next to Prometheus, InfluxDB or other sources on one dashboard.
- [ ] Your team already knows Grafana from other tools and wants a consistent look.
- [ ] You need panel types such as heatmaps or flexible time-series overlays that Zabbix screens lack.

When to skip it

- Zabbix's built-in dashboards already answer the questions your team asks every day.
- Adding Grafana just to add it gives you one more system to maintain for marginal visual benefit.
- You are starting with a single monitoring source.

Same pattern with Checkmk

- Checkmk is a full platform with its own well-regarded interface and an official Grafana connector.
- Teams pair it with Grafana for the same reasons: multiple sources on one screen or specific panel types.
- Its native UI is generally considered more polished out of the box, so the pressure to add Grafana is somewhat lower.
- The architecture and the tradeoff are identical.

Sources and notes: Zabbix Documentation · Grafana Documentation · Grafana Zabbix plugin