



Keep Users Happy By Integrating I.T. Operations and I.T. Support

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Imagine that you have a broken application on your work computer and you call the service desk for help. Instead of fixing the problem, the service desk technician refers you to a Web site that has complicated instructions on how to test, repair, and, if necessary, remove and reinstall your application. At this point, you're on your own. To add insult to injury, the support person quickly asks if he can close your incident ticket.

This kind of scenario can happen all too often, but today, driven primarily by the consumerization of IT, the popularity of bringing your own device to work (BYOD), and interactions with social media, users are expecting and demanding far more in terms of IT support. They want services to be available when and where they need them. They want to accomplish their tasks as quickly as possible. And, when they have problems, they expect IT to fix them right then and there. In short, they want a positive experience in all their interactions with IT.

But how can you ensure a positive experience in an environment in which the IT infrastructure is growing in complexity and the pressure to reduce costs is growing in intensity? A major obstacle to meeting this challenge is the disconnect between the IT service support and delivery staff, and the infrastructure and operations staff. These two groups have traditionally worked in silos, and that's putting it mildly.

In many organizations, there is a major disconnect between these two groups. Support teams may have trouble understanding the pressure that operational groups are under in having to perform fixes quickly, such as rebooting a server in minutes while the user is waiting anxiously or fixing a platform outage that affects a revenue-generating Web site. The operations staff, on the other hand, may not realize the level of effort in developing the strategy, planning, tracking, processing, and fine tuning required for the support and planning group to run the business of IT service management (ITSM).

Until now, there hasn't been a strong enough motivator for these two factions to "play nicely together in the sandbox." Today, however, the demands of discerning and sophisticated end users require that the wall between these two teams be torn down. Only in that way can IT ensure that the end-user experience meets users' expectations. Companies that respond to this requirement will rise to leadership positions in the marketplace.

A key factor in tearing down this "wall" is to extend the reach of ITSM solutions by providing standard integrations between IT service support and infrastructure and operations processes. Integration must go beyond the data level to include processes that are easy to manage, track, and monitor and that are transparent to the end users. BMC has been providing this sort of "IT operations management" for quite some time.

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From help desk to ITSM and beyond

It's useful to look at the evolution of the IT service support and delivery organization to better understand the evolution of the solutions that support it. During the 1990s, the primary role of the IT support organization was to help users with technology. The staff answered users' questions, guided them through the use of applications, and helped them resolve problems. The help desk emerged to provide a central place that users could call for assistance. Vendors responded with help desk solutions, the main purpose of which was to track help desk tickets and keep things from falling through the cracks. These solutions were usually intended for internal help desks that supported internal users.

During the first decade of this century, there was a fundamental shift in IT's role — from provider of technology to provider of business services. This shift drove a major expansion in the scope of the IT support organization, from mere incident and problem management to also change management, configuration management, service level management, asset management, service request management, and more. The help desk function morphed into the service desk and became the main focal point of the user experience of IT in an organization.

The evolution of IT's role drove a corresponding evolution in technology — from customer resource management (CRM) solutions to internal help desk solutions, to IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL)-based ITSM solutions, which include the entire service lifecycle. Today, many vendors include a service desk function and ITIL-based processes in their ITSM offerings, making these solutions essentially commoditized.

The next step

Users are now demanding more from IT. These demands are driving the need for further evolution in the functionality of ITSM solutions. The next step is to evolve the support of traditional ITSM processes into support for higher-level processes that transcend service support and operations. It is also important to extend automation to these higher-level processes wherever possible.

Gartner refers to this evolved ITSM technology as IT operations management (ITOM). According to Gartner, "IT operations management (ITOM) software is intended to represent all the tools needed to manage the provisioning, capacity, performance, and availability of the computing, networking, and application environment."¹ Achieving this evolved "ITSM-plus" functionality is important to many IT professionals and will require the dissolution of the wall that now exists between the IT service and support staff and the IT infrastructure and operations staff. Here's an example of the results that can happen when these two groups collaborate effectively:

A user calls the service desk and requests a new application. The service desk technician opens a change request in the service desk solution, which sets tasks that require access of operational automation, such as remote control and client automation tools. These solutions verify that the user is entitled to the application license, gathers change approvals if necessary, installs the application on the user's computer, validates a successful install, tests the new software, initiates any reboots that maybe be required, and closes the change request when the user confirms the fix. In addition, the solution provides an audit trail of all pertinent activities.

Focus on end-user experience

Today's end users, empowered by mobile devices, want immediate and fast access to applications and data at any time and from anywhere. Meeting this demand and keeping users satisfied is paramount to business success, and the evolved ITSM technology that integrates IT operations processes can help.

Of course, the best IT issues for end users are the ones they never experience. The IT service delivery team is responsible for ensuring that service level agreements (SLAs) for performance and availability are met. But it's typically the operations group that monitors the infrastructure and receives the alerts to events generated by the monitors. This presents a golden opportunity for IT support and operations to work together for the benefit of the users. Intelligent integration between monitoring and event management systems with IT support can provide true business service management value.

Here's an example:

Monitoring detects the slowdown of an application server. An event is generated in the event management system. In the configuration management database (CMDB), the company has already identified and linked the technology, people, and processes that create business services. This correlated event is now filtered through an impact simulator so that business services that could be impacted by this application slowdown are identified graphically, both upstream and downstream of the app server. Service levels are accessed, appropriately- prioritized incident tickets are automatically opened and assigned, and probable causes are ranked in order of probability.

With this kind of intelligent early warning system, the IT service delivery team can move proactively and effectively to head off incidents before they breach SLAs and result in negative user experiences. In fact, leading analysts have said that about 50 percent of how business perceives IT is based on service desk interactions. That's why IT cannot afford to be caught unprepared to deal with a major failure, especially when this can be prevented when operations and IT support processes are seamlessly integrated. Let's revisit the example of calling the service desk with a broken application, referenced in the opening paragraph of this article, and see how integration of the ITSM solution with operations processes completely changes the picture.

You call the service desk and ask for help with your broken application. The service desk technician creates a change request in the ITSM solution. The solution immediately and automatically processes the request. It gathers the necessary approvals (pre-approved, in this case), initiates a reinstall of the application on your device, verifies successful install, and closes the request — all within minutes.

Here, the focus and attitude of the service desk is to provide a full cycle of service to users and not just to close tickets quickly. That's important to ensuring a high-quality user experience.

User self-service is another capability in which integration of IT support with operational processes can increase user satisfaction by enabling them to get what they need quickly and on their own. For example, when a user requests a new software application, the processes that are connected include the supply chain and procurement of IT support, based on where the self-service request was made. The ITSM solution would automatically fulfill the request by provisioning the application to the user's device. The combined request and fulfillment processes would require the ITSM solution to perform both service support processes and operations processes. User self-service also dramatically decreases the load on the service desk.

[These demands are driving the need for further evolution in the functionality of ITSM solutions.](#)

Future proof

Each organization differs markedly in its ITSM requirements. What's more, the requirements will likely change in the future as the business environment and user demands change. Consequently, it's advisable to work with a vendor who can provide a variety of flexible, modular offerings that can map to your needs today and tomorrow. This way, you can be assured that your success will not be limited by a narrowly-focused toolset.

A modular solution permits you to address your most pressing pain points first and then add capability as you need it, leveraging what you already have and increasing value at every step. You may be in a place where process integration is just beginning for you and the concept of IT operations management is still a considerable distance away. That's perfectly fine as long as you can leverage your investment now with tomorrow in mind. Or perhaps the future is *now* for you, and you're ready for tight integration not only within the ITSM solution suite but also between the ITSM processes and the operations processes so that you can start building out ITOM value and

business service management (BSM) benefits sooner rather than later. BSM simplifies and automates your IT processes. It lets you prioritize and orchestrate work based on business needs. BSM takes the IT you already have and adds to it the visibility and control of a unified platform.

Being able to *choose* from a modular set of offerings based on your evolving needs empowers you to future-proof your decision today. One size does *not* fit all, and BMC Software provides a variety of ways to oversee your IT service management requirements, however you define them, and helps you to meet the needs of today and the future.

Move up to the next evolution of ITSM

Today's business users have become far more sophisticated and demanding in their expectations of IT. They want immediate access to services, in the manner in which they choose, from whatever device they are using, regardless of their location. And if they have a problem, they want it comprehensively fixed in one motion.

Many companies are regularly asking analysts how to meet these expectations and who can help them achieve this "ITSM-plus" benefit, also known as IT operations management. Enterprises that commit to this demand by tearing down the wall between operations and service support can achieve greater customer satisfaction and productivity more quickly than their competition.

BMC offers solutions for all levels of IT service management, from service desk control, to process integration, to full IT operations management, and more. For more information about BMC IT Service Management software solutions, visit www.bmc.com/itsm.

About the Author



With more than 25 years of high-technology sales and marketing experience, Bruce Campbell has been in and around IT service management for 15 years. He is principal solutions marketing manager for BMC Software and drives outbound marketing and content for the enterprise segment of BMC's IT Service Management line of business. He was part of the original Remedy Corporation and spent five years in field and product marketing positions before moving to Marimba (later acquired by BMC) to head up their Product Marketing team. Campbell was also director of worldwide Sales Enablement at Nimsoft/CA and was director of Product Marketing at newScale for three years. He holds a Bachelor of Business Administration degree from National University.

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Endnote

1 *Market Definitions: Software*, Gartner, Jan 12, 2012, ID: G00226051