

Getting Strategic about IT Service

IT leaders embrace a more integrated IT management solution and reap the rewards.



Once an organization thinks holistically about IT, assessing, embracing and deploying an integration solution becomes feasible.

AS ANY IT LEADER KNOWS, effective IT service management is an ongoing battle of aligning in-house capabilities with demand in an increasingly complex operating environment. Although resources remain strapped while cost and demands continue to escalate, IT departments still need to identify strategic avenues to consistently offer high-quality, high-value services.

According to recent research from IDG Research Services in conjunction with FrontRange Solutions, as IT leaders seek to effectively manage IT assets and service offerings, they turn to a host of different solutions including Voice Communications, Service Catalog, Customer Service, Change Management, Incident, Problem and Knowledge Management, Inventory, Asset management, and Configuration Management.

Understandably, when faced with such a sweeping array of needs and differing solutions, survey respondents see real benefit in embracing a more integrated Service and Asset management solution. The key benefits identified include the ability to improve customer satisfaction (56 percent) and reduce IT complexity (53 percent), in addition to reducing cost through self-service capabilities (52 percent).



Seeking solutions

Although IT leaders understand the significance of integration, survey results reveal that only 12

percent have a fully integrated solution in place. While this does not come as a surprise, it is of concern to Bill Irvine, senior director of solutions strategy and engineering at FrontRange Solutions, a leading provider of integrated IT service management, help desk, IT asset management and CRM solutions for midmarket enterprises.

“Achieving and leveraging integration is a necessity if CIOs hope to optimize their potential Service provision. Strategically, they need an executive dashboard providing visibility across all areas of responsibility, including customer satisfaction metrics, realistic resolution information, change risk and success as well as the current state of licensing and compliance,” he says. “Unfortunately, the prevalence of the siloed organizational structure often prevents and discourages integration. IT leaders should make increased demands on the organization for more governance across all areas of responsibility.”

So what steps should CIOs embrace?

Success starts with gaining an understanding and aligning IT offerings to fit current organizational needs. According to Janie Chung, product director of service management solutions with FrontRange Solutions, CIOs need to overcome

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56%

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Reduce IT complexity

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Reduce cost through self-service capabilities

SOURCE: IDG Research Services Survey

Cloud Control

As part of the survey, IDG asked respondents about their willingness to embrace SaaS-based IT service and asset management solutions. While the number of firms already utilizing a SaaS solution is currently at 9 percent, the rise of SaaS as a viable option is quite clear. Specifically, 39 percent of respondents are likely to consider SaaS delivery for IT asset management and/or IT service management solutions. IT leaders need to know the following when considering solutions:

SOLID SECURITY: As cloud offerings have matured, the level of security has improved dramatically. In many instances, SaaS solutions are very secure, often with higher levels redundancy and disaster recovery capabilities than in-house solutions.

OVERHEAD REDUCTION: Utilizing a SaaS solution greatly reduces the need for in-house infrastructure and administration. This also means the application has no requirement for in-house personnel with system support skills.

MOBILE SUPPORT: Putting the application in a cloud environment can improve access to distributed personnel vs. on-premise solutions. This is key as IT organizations focus on improving flexibility and providing dynamic solutions that adapt to changing business needs.

COST CONCERNS: Embracing a SaaS solution often has far lower start-up cost, meaning the associated expenditure is often operational rather than capital in nature.

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the temptation to treat every service with equal priority. “This only creates an environment of disappointment. You need to identify the most critical services the IT organization offers and align your priorities to focus on the top ten areas of concern so that you can make an impact on the organization,” she says. “The best practices that CIOs should embrace include gaining agreement across interoperating business units on which services provide the greatest value, and then developing and communicating the delivery plan during normal operations as well as a response plan when these services are interrupted.”

The next step is to clarify goals for the IT organization. According to the survey, keeping IT costs down (70 percent) and improving IT asset utilization (64 percent) were the clear frontrunners with end-user enablement (38 percent) and compliance (37 percent) also surfacing as significant drivers.

To best realize these goals, IT requires an integrated set of service and asset management processes and capabilities to manage activities from the beginning to the end of the lifecycle, explains Irvine. “The applications development lifecycle is traditionally considered separate but recent experience shows that good results are being realized by including it in the overall change and release management approach with transparency of the

process and visibility for the customer. This level of integration allows leaders to take control.”

Unfortunately, there is rarely a focus on what’s needed for success across the enterprise. Setting this straight means the CIO must demand an understanding of the entire management lifecycle on an ongoing basis, explains Irvine. “People across the enterprise need to embrace a shared vision with regard to managing an incident or request throughout the lifecycle,” he says. “For instance, it’s crucial to look beyond the closure of an incident, and consider whether it might be part of a larger problem, how change might impact critical service assets and how to release change with appropriate control and risk management.”

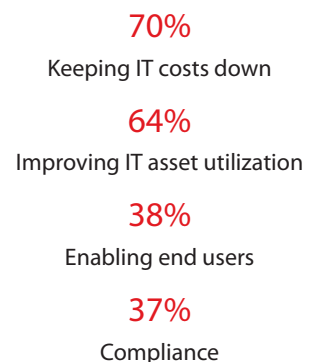
Early in the integration process, Irvine also recommends embracing a framework applicable to the individual organization. CIOs will find value in governance models and control processes, such as ITIL, ISO 20000, COBIT, and BS17799 that encourage interaction across all departments with the integrated management solution providing the data and metrics to measure performance and compliance.

Conclusion

As with any deployment, sustainable success is a direct result of solid planning. The more effectively the organization is able to align a solution with its needs, the higher the likelihood the organization will realize a documentable return on its investment.

Once an organization thinks holistically about IT, assessing, embracing and deploying an integrated solution becomes feasible. “If we are too focused on managing individual technologies with dedicated point solutions we will lose the opportunity to fulfill our potential as true enterprise service providers” says Irvine. ■

Top IT organization goals



SOURCE: IDG Research Services Survey