

ITSM in Today's Service-Based IT Operations



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New Technology necessitates new Methods of Support

Emerging new technologies are changing the way IT operates. Instead of managing hardware and software systems, businesses are increasingly approaching IT as a constant service delivered to support the company's day-to-day functions and operations.

Businesses initially started adopting a service-based approach to IT in an effort to improve efficiencies, economies of scale, expand their capabilities and meet key operational requirements. This included the tools and applications employees needed to be productive, such as customer relationship management, order processing and email. In order to support the growing application usage needs of their employees, enterprise IT departments had to provide the services needed to operate and maintain the technology, while ensuring the highest quality possible.

Such a vast and diverse infrastructure requires a new type of IT department that is ready and able to provide the necessary support services in the most efficient and productive way possible.

Business continuity and high-quality business performance soon became the chief objectives of the IT department. Employees across companies of all sizes relied on technology in order to complete their daily operations. This led to new challenges of compatibility, capacity, maintenance and performance management. For example, companies looking to remain productive needed to be able to integrate new users into their system without compromising on the performance of their applications.

Essentially, internal business employees needed technology to be available at all times, and the IT department needed to deliver the services necessary to ensure it was. The trend to approach enterprise IT as an internal technological service provider has been accentuated by the significant rise in cloud computing. Now, with cloud technology, companies can support hundreds or thousands of services on a daily basis, as well as deploy new services faster. Such a vast and diverse infrastructure requires a new type of IT department that is ready and able to provide the necessary support services in the most efficient and productive way possible.

IT as a Utility

The transition to service-based technology delivery has forced IT departments to operate more like utility providers. For example, a telecom service provider may offer multiple different consumer internet services, as well as cable television and phone plans. That same provider could also have business-specific internet and phone offerings. All of these services are delivered through an infrastructure of cabling, switches, servers and other various hardware maintained by the service provider.

Similarly, the modern IT department approaches the business as a large base of technology users it needs to support. Just as a utility offers and delivers a broad catalog of different services to their customers at all times, the IT department provides the organization's full range of IT services to the company's end users and ensures they get the most value out of them.

The transition to a service-oriented IT architecture has changed how organizations manage their technological resources. Today's businesses are investing increasingly large amounts of capital into technology. As a result, IT departments need to be capable of managing a broad catalog of services while supporting a complex network of systems through which they are delivered. As most businesses are looking for a return on these technology investments, they need to be sure their IT services are managed appropriately.

The portfolio of services offered by an IT department often features a considerable number of applications and IT resources. Of course, keeping track of how many services are being used and by whom is of critical importance. However, IT service management also needs to provide the tools to measure the impact of new technology and analyze the performance of the company's services.

ITSM solutions are capable of helping companies identify key performance indicators across the entire organization. This can make it easier to track how services function and whether they can consistently meet end user needs. ITSM also has the potential to help the IT help desk operate in a more proactive way when it comes to resolving IT issues or addressing company needs. This enables IT professionals to identify and resolve potential issues before they disrupt business operations, rather than react after it has already affected business continuity and performance.

IT departments also need to evaluate whether their hardware foundation will be able to handle new deployments. This may involve a range of responsibilities, from identifying server availability levels and computer specifications, to maintaining Internet connectivity and network bandwidth rates.

Cloud computing adds another layer to a service-based IT delivery system. The cloud enables rapid application deployment, requiring a company to adapt to the introduction of new technologies faster. Cloud computing also has the potential to provide significant cost savings by helping companies invest only in the technologies they need, and only when they need them. With cloud services, businesses no longer need to invest in software licenses and hardware for their end users. Instead, cloud services support peak loads with pay-per-use models that take advantage of hosted IT resources. Hosting IT resources in the cloud also allows businesses to deploy new systems quickly and respond almost immediately to innovative new technologies or sudden needs within the business.

Organizations that lack the resources and management tools to operate a service-based IT department often face challenges when trying to deploy new technology. In many IT departments, a significant amount of resources are devoted to maintenance, support and help desk issues. When the cloud is put into place, the technology simply moves too fast for individual IT professionals to keep up manually. In an outdated IT environment, these issues dramatically reduce operating efficiency and, in the long run, bring down the return on investment in technology.

IT SERVICE DELIVERY

- Today's IT department acts as a service provider, delivering IT resources to all end users throughout the organization.
- New users, sudden needs and emerging technologies are all addressed quickly.
- ITSM is critical to ensure the IT services supporting these technology needs are performing to the best of their abilities.

This is where FitSM® comes into play for companies trying to manage their IT services. FitSM® is a set of defined industry best practices for managing among others IT configurations. This is especially beneficial because FitSM® can be applied to each enterprise IT department's business-specific goals.

Every IT department is different. In order to get the most value out of the investments devoted to technology, many organizations turn to FitSM® as guidance for managing enterprise IT. Deploying an ITSM platform is often the best way to set up an organization to follow the best practices laid out in the FitSM® framework. An ITSM solution that is FitSM®-aligned helps companies collect and analyze the detailed metrics needed to evaluate service performance.

Understanding why Performance Measurements are important to IT Service Delivery

An FitSM®-aligned ITSM solution is critical in today's service-based IT environment because of its potential to evaluate the impact of a company's expensive IT systems on business operations. These benefits are among the prime reasons companies make the switch to service-based IT delivery. If an organization is unable to adequately measure IT service quality, it will not be able to leverage the full benefits of its new, redesigned IT systems.

Service-based IT delivery programs can also present some security and reliability risks. Since more of the IT systems are automated and operated with minimal human oversight, security breaches and operating malfunctions can occur and persist for quite some time before they are recognized. This is especially the case if companies depend on public vendors for their cloud service delivery needs because the organization gives some control and data to a third-party provider.

ITSM provides the internal oversight and performance tracking tools necessary to help IT professionals identify any security or availability risks. This gives businesses the level of critical protection necessary to support service delivery systems.

Many companies have found that an effective ITSM system helps prepare for future growth as well. Any growing business is going to encounter new technology needs. As more users are given access to the company's applications and technology, servers often need to be expanded to meet rising data needs. ITSM can help IT departments understand the amount of server resources a company will need to deploy new applications, as well as whether the hardware required for an application is being used properly.

While all of these factors are beneficial, none have as noticeable an impact as the overall improvements in quality and performance within IT departments attempting to migrate to the cloud. In general, when the IT department begins using cloud services, quality can drop quickly. Performance issues typically arise immediately following the deployment process because the technologies needed to deliver services in a cloud-based environment are more complex than those used in traditional IT. The sudden access to cloud-based applications and storage solutions creates a larger workload and delivery rates that are too quick for IT help desk and support representatives to keep up with manually. ITSM gives businesses the information they need to evaluate how the slightest configuration change will affect hardware, allowing them to make sure they are able to maintain a technological foundation that supports the services they are trying to deliver.

Poor quality standards can quickly derail any efforts to improve IT efficiency, while also wasting time, money and technological resources that could be better used elsewhere. When quality wanes, all of the benefits of service-based IT delivery fall by the wayside. With these risks facing today's businesses, ITSM is quickly becoming one of the most important tools in the IT department.

This shift to a utility-like system is a key trend in the IT industry that is likely to stick. While the move may be a product of the poor economy forcing companies to operate with less money to spend, the trend toward service-based delivery systems is generating such impressive results that companies are not likely to look back. Businesses are recognizing this and, as a result, are investing in ITSM to not only enable service-based delivery, but also help to get the highest return on their IT investments. ITSM has the potential to improve IT efficiency by providing critical insight into IT service performance and helping businesses measure quality, not just technical capabilities.

How ITSM can get Value out of IT Services

Typically, quality of service tools for IT measure the current performance metrics against precise expected performance specifications. They evaluate how fast the Internet connection is at any time, monitor server throughput and I/O speeds or track server utilization rates. While these tools give IT departments access to a variety of important metrics, they are really only able to provide a snapshot in time of the overall situation. Traditional performance monitoring tools determine whether a business' technological systems are operating properly at the time they are tested. They do not provide insight into the overall quality of IT systems.

This is where ITSM services stand out. With an ITSM solution in place, businesses can get information that provides details beyond just the capabilities of the technology. ITSM can gather data on IT services and how they interact and impact the technology in place. For example, a company with a new, cloud-based enterprise resource planning system may have a clear idea of its specifications and expected performance. With an ITSM solution, though, that company can get an idea of key performance indicators that are important to gauge the impact of the investment and the business' needs. This includes the application's performance upon deployment, scalability upon the addition of new users, and how it handles unexpected IT problems.

Quality of service is quickly becoming critical for companies trying to measure the financial impact of investments in new technology. ITSM systems can evaluate the actual quality of applications being used throughout an organization. This includes tracking the number of users supported, monitoring the impact on business processes, determining whether operations meet the standards of service level agreements and identifying return on investment. The ability to measure IT service performance gives businesses the information to identify which areas are giving them value and which need improvement.

Once companies can get an idea of the financial impact of their current IT services, they can use that information to plan new investments that may be beneficial in the future. In today's competitive business environment, this is increasingly becoming critical for enterprise IT.

ITSM enables businesses to collect and compare performance statistics to expected quality of service levels. This becomes beneficial when allocating technological resources by helping identify which areas perform well and which need additional support. Shifting IT services to the specific areas in which they are needed helps businesses organize their resources in the most efficient way possible.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

- ITSM gives the information needed to identify which services are performing well, and which need improvement.
- Performance metrics provide the information needed to gauge return on investment.
- With the ability to measure quality of IT services, businesses can map out their future IT investments for the areas that need them.

Without this data, companies can end up wasting money by devoting resources to areas that may not need them, while ignoring others that can be improved. Service performance statistics are also essential before companies migrate to the cloud, helping portray what they already have in place so they can determine what cloud services are necessary. Access to performance information in this environment is absolutely essential to extracting value from IT resources and keeping costs within budget limitations.

With this detailed quality of service information, IT professionals and business administrators can go through their service portfolio and determine which investments are providing a return, and which are not.

This process is not only beneficial for managing IT budgets. It is also necessary for tracking the quality of IT services. Maintaining high-quality IT services depends on making sure the foundational hardware is capable of supporting all services at all times. Without ITSM, getting this level of oversight is nearly impossible, making it difficult for companies to ensure performance quality and identify the financial ramifications of any IT configuration changes.

This is one of the problems that ITSM systems can help solve. By giving companies detailed, actionable data on their IT configurations, ITSM not only helps maintain quality standards, but also makes it easier for organizations to monitor expenses on individual services. This means companies deploying new technologies to reduce costs should be able to identify how much they are actually saving, enabling them to transfer those savings into other areas.

Bringing it all together: ITSM as provided by iET Solutions

The ITSM platform of iET Solutions is capable of meeting these needs because it gives users access to technologically advanced management tools and expert consulting services. ITSM is capable of offering service management platforms for such needs as incident management, problem management, service asset and configuration management, change management, service catalog management, knowledge management and event management. All of these solutions offer unique capabilities for IT departments transitioning to a service-based delivery system.

For example, service catalog management is integral to the implementation of service-based IT systems because the companies using these services need a central hub from which to launch applications. With the IT department functioning as a utility, services are often placed in a catalog through which end users and department heads can request services whenever they need them. Then, IT support staff need to respond to those requests and make sure these services are delivered.

ABOUT iET SOLUTIONS

iET Solutions, a division of UNICOM® Global, helps large and midsize enterprises to increase the efficiency and security of their IT operations and infrastructure. Organizations around the world use software from iET Solutions for IT service management (ITSM), software asset management (SAM) and enterprise service management (ESM). The company has more than three decades of experience in service management and works with organizations across all industry sectors.

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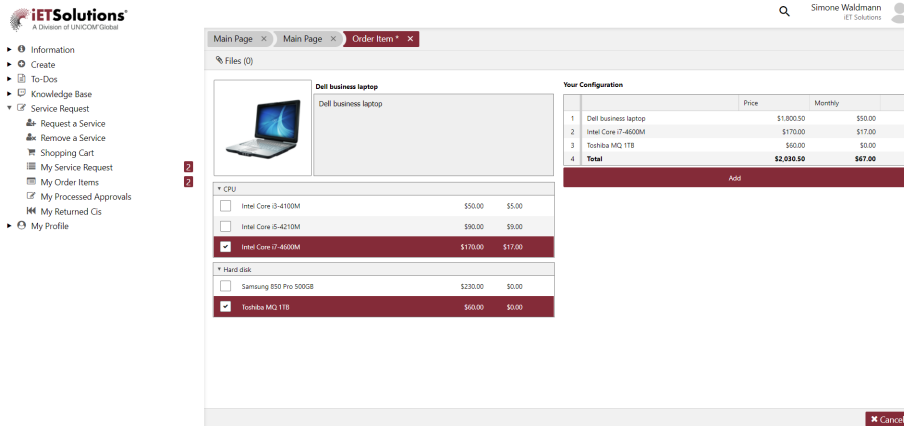
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The screenshot shows the iET Solutions ITSM interface. On the left is a navigation sidebar with options like Information, Create, To-Dos, Knowledge Base, Service Request, Request a Service, Remove a Service, Shopping Cart, My Service Request, My Order Items, My Processed Approvals, and My Profile. The main content area is titled 'Dell business laptop' and shows a configuration table. Below the table are sections for CPU and Hard disk with checkboxes for different options. The 'Your Configuration' table is as follows:

	Price	Monthly
1 Dell business laptop	\$1,800.00	\$50.00
2 Intel Core i7-4500M	\$170.00	\$17.00
3 Toshiba MQJ 1TB	\$60.00	\$0.00
4 Total	\$2,030.00	\$67.00

Below the table, there are sections for CPU and Hard disk with checkboxes for different options:

- * CPU:
 - Intel Core i3-4100M \$50.00 \$5.00
 - Intel Core i5-4210M \$90.00 \$9.00
 - Intel Core i7-4600M \$170.00 \$17.00
- * Hard disk:
 - Samsung 850 Pro 500GB \$230.00 \$0.00
 - Toshiba MQJ 1TB \$60.00 \$0.00

At the bottom right of the configuration area, there is a 'Cancel' button.

Graphic: Relevant information in iET ITSM to manage and analyze IT services

Without a well-organized catalog, it can be difficult for IT to properly provision the resources and services necessary at any given time.

ITSM services that are aligned with FitSM® best practices are integral to a successful transition to a service-oriented IT architecture, and iET Solutions is well-positioned to help companies complete this migration as quickly and easily as possible. The ITSM suite of iET Solutions is available for businesses in both cloud-based and on-premise formats.

With a unique combination of technologically superior solutions and expert consulting, iET Solutions is equipped to identify a company's ITSM needs and help generate significant value out of service-based IT systems.