Back to Basics:
Why Unified IT Monitoring is the Bedrock for Enterprise Growth

Digital transformation is redefining what is possible for the modern enterprise. But it's also enabling certain organizations to pull ahead of the pack. On the surface, it may appear as if they're doing this thanks to investments in flashy customer-facing applications and services. But the true innovation goes on behind the scenes, in the IT operations that are so vital to supporting these offerings. In this context, complexity is the enemy. Yet it is everywhere: in siloed IT functions and data stores, heterogeneous computing environments that blend old and new, and the duplication of IT monitoring tools.
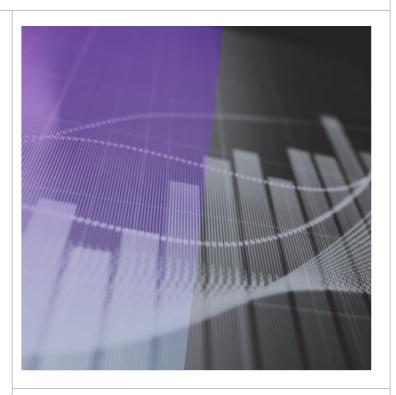
Organizations are increasingly concerned about their ability to keep pace with the competition in this rapidly changing world. To do so, they must tackle complexity head on by going back to basics. Only by ensuring they have a unified view of IT operations to automate manual processes, integrate legacy and digital systems, and prevent problems before they snowball can connected enterprises build a solid foundation for future growth.

> " Organizations are concerned with the pace of business change and vulnerability to disruption

GARTNER MANAGING VP, MATT SHRINKMAN

Firms get worried

A recent Gartner report highlighted "pace of change" as the number one emerging risk for global businesses across multiple sectors, beating factors such as cybersecurity disclosures, accelerating privacy regulation, and talent shortages. Interestingly, "lagging digitalization" came second – and the two risks are fundamentally linked, according to the analyst.

"Organizations are concerned with the pace of business change and vulnerability to disruption," said Gartner managing VP, Matt Shrinkman. "Part of the reason they may feel this risk so acutely is related concerns around their own operations, including digitalization strategies and an inadequate talent pipeline."

IT operations therefore lie at the heart of the challenge for organizations looking to digitalize their way to success. AI and advanced analytics, IoT and connected systems, customer-centric applications and cloud computing platforms are just the tip of the iceberg. They offer fantastic opportunities to improve process efficiencies, react faster to changing market demands and drive innovation. But whatever the benefits, new digital initiatives based on these and other emerging technologies cannot be viewed in isolation. In fact, they introduce a great deal of extra complexity and risk to the connected enterprise.

This comes partly from the sheer range of discrete systems operating in the modern organization. Different vendors, operating systems, applications, endpoints and standards all add to the workload for IT operations teams desperate to gain unified insight and control. It doesn't help that many systems are effectively outsourced to third-party providers. Add the fact that IT teams themselves are often siloed according to different competencies and you start to get a fragmented, disjointed picture where no one has a clear view of what's going on.
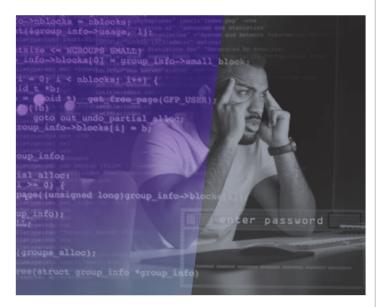
Complexity hits home

With large volumes of mission critical system data running on multiple servers and endpoints in different parts of the organization, IT teams struggle to understand which alerts matter to the business. Performance bottlenecks therefore become more commonplace, leading to potential outages. This can lead stretched operations teams into a downward spiral. More outages means more reactive fire-fighting, putting extra pressure on staff. Human error inevitably results, sometimes making the problem even worse.

In fact, human error accounts for about 70% of data center outages, according to the Uptime Institute. The advisory organization claimed that "the number of outages remains persistently high, and the associated costs of these outages are also high." Its 2019 survey of industry professionals found that although the majority (60%) claimed that their most recent outage cost under $100,000, over a quarter (28%) said it cost between $100,000 and $1 million, and 10% said it cost over $1 million. More important still is the fact that most (60%) said the outage could have been prevented with better management/ processes or configuration.

The result is not just measurable in terms of direct impact on the bottom line. Outages can have a serious effect on customer confidence. In highly competitive industries like air travel, e-commerce and, increasingly, financial services, consumers are more prepared to vote with their feet if service levels do not meet their high expectations.

Visibility and control

Yet while IT operations lie at the heart of the problem for enterprises looking to digitally transform, they also represent a solution. Automate IT monitoring and management of operations effectively and you can spot outages quicker, accelerate time-to-market and support future growth. But to do so, organizations need the right IT Operations Management tools.

Unfortunately, this is an industry that has been saddled with legacy, reactive approaches for too long. If IT Operations Management is not recognized as a value driver, then it can be allowed to languish in the organization. IT siloes and the fast pace of digital transformation often lead to a surfeit of monitoring tools, duplicating effort, creating gaps in awareness and adding more complexity and confusion, rather than eliminating it. It's vital, therefore, that senior IT leaders recognize the importance of consolidating onto a single platform capable of providing insight into the entire IT operation environment — integrating seamlessly with legacy servers, digital services and everything in between.

Automated monitoring improves IT productivity and frees staff to be more strategic, while enhanced metrics enable CIOs to communicate the value of IT to the business more effectively. This all may have to go hand-in-hand with wider cultural change to break down those IT siloes and centralize decision-making. But whatever happens, improving the quality of those decisions by illuminating issues in real-time when they occur means organizations can start to get better at fault diagnostics and resolution. Getting these basics right means protecting the bottom line and corporate reputation, while crucially providing a solid foundation on which to build innovative digital services.

That's how centralized IT Operations Management can be the missing piece of the puzzle for connected enterprises, helping to cut through complexity and drive digital success.

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