

BUILDING AGILE OPS WITH A PROACTIVE AND UNIFIED INFRASTRUCTURE MANAGEMENT APPROACH

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Report Highlights

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Today's sophisticated end-users have very low tolerance for poor performance on IT issues.

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41% of organizations list rising user demand for applications as a top IT management challenge.

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Businesses with a unified IT infrastructure management approach are three times more likely to reduce MTTR.

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58% of companies with unified IT infrastructure management saw quicker application deployment.

IT today is challenged by the need to proactively manage the IT infrastructure and have the agility to keep systems up and running. Without a unified approach, IT has a very difficult time seeing the true infrastructure picture and making sense of the data. In a dynamic and increasingly complex environment, only fully armed IT teams will be able to keep pace with user demand, manage cost, improve overall quality of service levels, and deploy new apps and services quickly.

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In the modern world of IT, trying to get an end-to-end view of your IT infrastructure using multiple tools designed for different silos becomes a very tough task.

Anyone who enjoys sports can easily see the difference between a professional team and a group of part-time amateurs. With the pros, the entire team operates as if they are a single, unified entity, able to execute with agility and respond to any change instantly. Conversely, teams of amateurs, despite their enthusiasm, often lack any kind of unity and operate more as individuals, which can lead to a slow pace of play, increased mistakes, and lost opportunities to succeed.

When it comes to the management of IT infrastructures, one can often see the same dynamic at play. Organizations that are leaders (or pros) have a unified approach to the management of their IT operations. These businesses have the agility to quickly find bottlenecks and performance issues, and proactively manage the network and IT infrastructure. With these capabilities in place, they can optimize performance and keep systems up and running.

On the other side of the spectrum, companies that are followers in IT management (let's call them the amateurs) are still using mixed sets of tools to monitor and manage their IT infrastructure and operations. This old school style of management leads to poor visibility into application and service performance and makes it much harder to detect and address problems, which can lead to poor user experience and low satisfaction.

In this report, we look at the challenges organizations without a unified approach face when it comes to managing, optimizing and understanding their IT infrastructure. We analyze the strategies that leading businesses adopt in order to keep pace with user demand, manage cost, and deploy new apps and services quickly. How they take a proactive approach to solve issues before they happen, rather than a reactive strategy that leaves problems impacting end-users. In this way, they can maintain or improve overall quality of service levels.

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How a Traditional IT Infrastructure Management Approach Clouds Vision and Slows Performance

IT management has evolved over the years to be very tool-centric, with specific tools dedicated to specific domains. This worked in the past, when:

- ➔ Network staff was only concerned about network performance and reliability
- ➔ Server admins cared only about server activity
- ➔ The dev team's work was done when the application was delivered
- ➔ The business managers pretty much had no visibility into application performance and usage.

“One of the main complexities of building a unified and end-to-end platform for performance management is dealing with all of the existing and siloed tools that a business has deployed over the years and trying to come up with ways to effectively integrate these disparate tools and technologies.”

~ IT manager, North American Manufacturing Firm

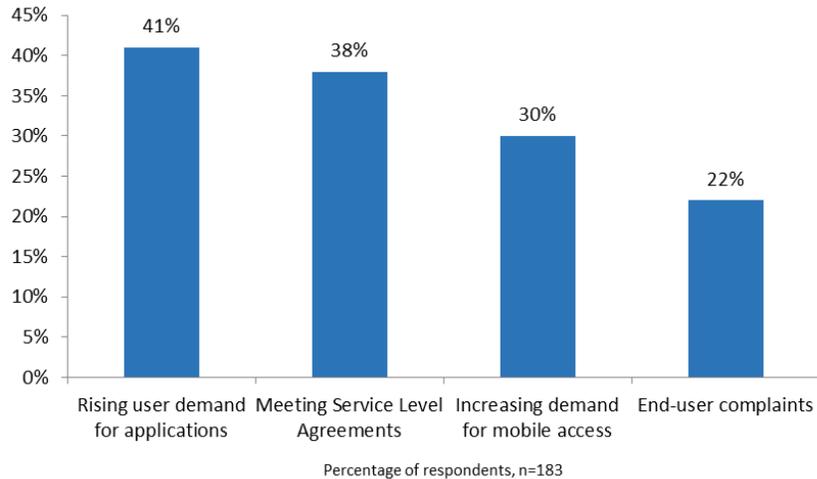
In short, when departments think their own specific area is all that matters, then having a tool solely for their priorities would seem to make sense.

Today, organizations realize that the main reason IT exists is to provide applications and services to end-users and customers. The users of these applications and services are more sophisticated than before and have a low tolerance for poor performance or downtime. In this modern world, trying to get an end-to-end view of your IT infrastructure using multiple tools designed for different silos becomes a very tough task.

In Figure 1, we see the top challenges that businesses reported when it came to effectively managing their IT infrastructures.

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Figure 1: Top IT Infrastructure Management Challenges



Source: Aberdeen Group, January 2015

This data clearly demonstrates how much technology is changing and why trying to manage IT infrastructures using old school methods is a recipe for failure. Top challenges of rising user demand and the need for mobile access are indicators of how significant this IT transformation is. Today’s IT users have high expectations for application performance and they expect these applications to be mobile-first and be available wherever and whenever they need them. These applications need to be agilely built so that they can stay up to date with regularly changing needs and business requirements. To meet these growing user demands, and do so on the devices that are used today, requires that businesses move to IT management infrastructures that reduce complexity and have end-to-end visibility. By doing this, they can not only meet these rising mobile user demands, they can also meet their SLA requirements and keep end-users happy.

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Unifying IT Infrastructure Management: The First Step towards a More Agile and Proactive Approach

When faced with complexity, the last thing one should do is add more complexity. That's exactly what companies without a unified IT management approach are doing. They are using multiple windows when one dashboard would work best. They're creating small knowledge fiefdoms where departments don't know what the other groups are seeing in application and service performance. This disconnected approach leads to increased complexity on the back-end (with competing viewpoints on performance and the causes of issues) and can make it more difficult to bring in new applications and systems, which will have to integrate with all of these different tools. When problems arise, without an end-to-end view, the IT department can turn into a battlefield of finger pointing and constant blame games.

Let's compare this to organizations that have improved agile application delivery and management by reducing complexity on the infrastructure side. By taking a unified approach to IT infrastructure management, these businesses are able to leverage increased capabilities and have end-to-end and real-time visibility into performance. This allows them to be proactive when it comes to addressing potential problems before they impact end-users.

To see some of the different strategies that a unified approach to IT management brings, we compared organizations with unified IT management infrastructures to businesses that had not taken this approach.

In Table 1, we see some of the key advantages and increased monitoring capabilities that companies with a proactive and

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unified IT management approach have gained over the competition.

Table 1: Boosting Performance with a Unified IT Management Approach

Key Infrastructure Management Capabilities:	Businesses with a Unified Infrastructure Management Approach:
Monitor End-user experience of applications	Are 35% more likely than all other businesses to do so
Proactive and automated performance monitoring and analytics	Did so at a 35% higher rate than all others
End-to-end performance analytics dashboards	25% more likely to provide these dashboards to performance stakeholders
Application performance optimization that is real-time and proactive	Implemented 25% more than businesses without unified management approach
Monitor the performance of business-critical applications	12% more likely than all others

Source: Aberdeen Group, January 2015

Along with the goal of unifying IT management, we see that businesses with a unified approach are also clearly adopting proactive capabilities. They are much more focused on the end-user experience than other organizations, as they understand that the goal is to provide a great application experience, not to optimize individual components such as servers. They are proactive in their monitoring and analytics, with automated alerts that give them a heads up before problems happen and offer deep insights that allow for analytics that can predict issues that could occur down the road. These analytics dashboards aren't separate windows showing disconnected data; they provide end-to-end and comprehensive views that make it possible to take action quickly. And they utilize real-time and proactive systems that can, for example, detect when a critical

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app needs to be optimized or requires more bandwidth, and, at a glance, make it possible for IT to take these actions before any IT intervention is needed. These unified and proactive IT monitoring and management capabilities are vital for an agile, high-performance dynamic application infrastructure.

How Businesses with Unified Infrastructure Management Succeed

From a strategic standpoint, these companies are doing everything right. They utilize capabilities that are typically found at organizations that are high performing and successful at IT management, and they've reduced complexity and removed the walls between different departments in IT and operations. But what are the tangible benefits of taking this kind of approach to IT management?

As shown in Table 2, businesses with a unified approach to IT infrastructure management gain a number of benefits, including improved agility in application delivery, better performance, and reduced downtime. All of these results also lead to happier end-users and consistently met SLAs.

Table 2: Benefits of a Unified Infrastructure Management Approach

Key Infrastructure Management Benefits:	Unified Infrastructure Management Businesses
Achieved quicker application installs	Did so at a 58% higher rate than all others
Proactively discovered bugs/issues in 90% or higher of cases	Reached this milestone at 2.5 times the rate of other businesses
50% or higher decrease in MTTR	3 times more likely to significantly reduce MTTR
Increased end-user satisfaction	50% more likely to increase end-user satisfaction

Source: Aberdeen Group, January 2015

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Key to being an agile IT operation is the ability to deploy and upgrade applications quickly and effectively. We see that companies with a unified infrastructure management approach were 58% more likely to speed the deployment of applications when compared to organizations without a unified approach. These businesses were also proactive in finding application problems before they impacted end-users. They also keep users productive and satisfied, which is shown in the data that these companies are 50% more likely to have satisfied end-users. While some may think that fast usually equals shoddy workmanship, these organizations are agile in application deployment while still providing very reliable systems, as shown in their significant reduction in Mean Time To Repair (MTTR).

Key Takeaways

Walk into a NOC or data center at a business using siloed tools to monitor their IT infrastructure, and you'll likely see lots of different screens, showing different and disconnected information, to people who aren't working together or sharing information. The words to describe such a scene are usually ones like chaotic or disjointed.

However, visit a company that has implemented a proactive, agile and unified infrastructure management approach and you'll see informative dashboards providing an end-to-end view of all networks, applications and systems, lots of information sharing and collaboration, and people working together. Different words come up in this situation; smooth, seamless, effective, unified.

In Aberdeen's research into network and application performance and management, we've identified the top 20% of organizations that successfully manage their IT infrastructure. In

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this top 20%, known as the Best-in-Class, we found that they are 50% more likely to take a unified IT infrastructure management approach.

For businesses looking to be leaders in the digital application economy, the time has come to remove the walls between departments, stop trying to piece together information from multiple, conflicting tools, and get an end-to-end view into your IT infrastructure. With a proactive and agile approach, you can ensure that your applications and services are being delivered quickly, effectively and reliably.

In sports, when a team wins a championship, they often talk about how it was due to teamwork and having everyone focused on the same goal. If you want your IT team to be a winner, getting unified is a good place to start.

For more information on this or other research topics, please visit www.aberdeen.com.

Related Research

[*Optimize IT Infrastructure to Maximize Workload Performance*](#); January 2015

[*Preventing Virtual Application Downtime*](#); June 2014

[*Visibility, Automation and Analysis: A Winning Combo for Reliable Networks*](#); November 2014

[*Big Data in Network and Application Monitoring: The All-Knowing Approach to IT Management*](#); May 2014

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