

Aligning IT Operations and IT Service Management

6 Steps to Get Past
the Churn and
Get Down to Business



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Introduction

Your IT Service Desk and Operations groups are supposed to be on the same team. But let's be honest. At most companies, these two teams are not in alignment. Each team resides in its own silo. Misalignment causes churn and wasted cycles.

Tickets get opened up when upset business users report problems. This is also usually when IT usually first realizes there is a problem. The result? IT looks clueless again.

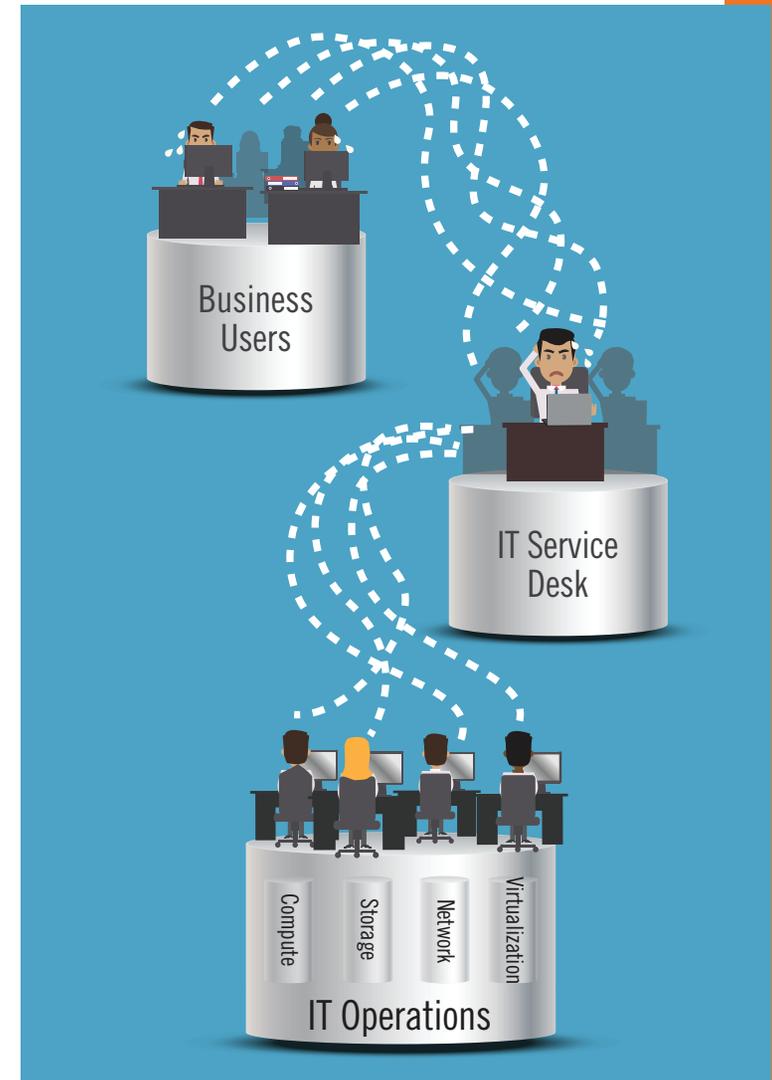
Monitoring tools generate a slew of alerts. But these alerts are often ignored because they lack context and intelligence. Even if someone in IT Operations does detect a problem before users start complaining, ticket creation is a tedious process. And tickets from IT Operations always seem to have their own set of problems. Missing or incomplete data. Inaccurate speculation about the root cause of the issue. Issue duplication.

Service quality is on a downward slide. You're missing your SLAs. Your IT Service Desk and Operations teams barely speak.

At the end of the day, nobody outside of IT cares about the difference between the Service Desk and IT Operations. They only care about getting their jobs done. Business executives don't know about all of the departmental tool and process silos within IT. And quite frankly, they don't care. They just want your team to get its act together, stop the churn, and get things done.

Isn't there a better way?

If you use ServiceNow as your Service Desk solution, the answer is a resounding "YES"! In this guide, we'll outline 6 steps you can take to align your IT Service Desk and Operations teams. Follow these steps to get past the churn and get down to your business — providing IT services and ensuring service quality.



STEP #1

Reduce the Number of Monitoring Data Sources

THE PROBLEM

One of the biggest challenges with aligning your IT Service Desk and Operations teams is getting all the different tools IT Operations uses integrated with ServiceNow. Given the sheer number of monitoring tools the typical enterprise uses — 10, 20, or more — getting all these different tools integrated can be a costly, time-consuming process.

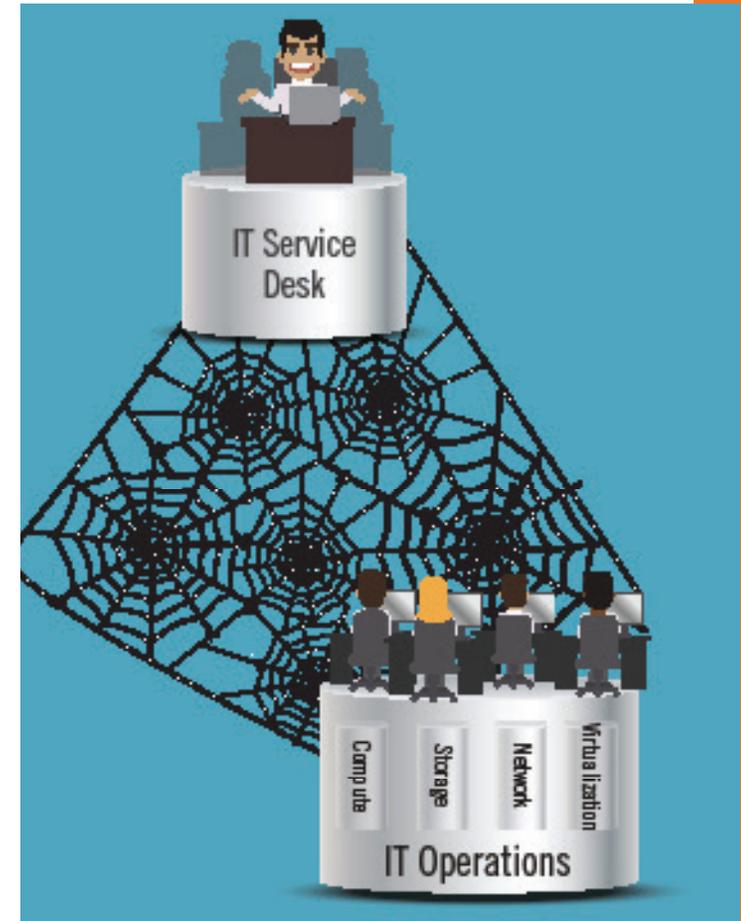
If you're using a legacy monitoring framework from one of the "Big 4" (BMC, CA, HP, or IBM), you're dealing with a group of products all acquired from different companies over the last 10-15 years, loosely bundled together. If you're using several different monitoring point solutions, you're stuck using a bunch of narrow, siloed device- and technology-centric point-products from lots of different vendors. Connecting up all of these different tools to ServiceNow is costly and time-consuming process.

Let's look at a couple of example scenarios....

Scenario #1: ServiceNow Expert Responsible for Integrating 10+ Monitoring Tools with ServiceNow

In this scenario, assume your IT Operations team is using 10 different performance and availability monitoring tools to try and cover all of the various components in your IT infrastructure (applications, compute, network, storage, virtualization, converged infrastructure, and so on). Now assume that you have one dedicated ServiceNow expert responsible for integrating all of these different monitoring tools with ServiceNow. Finally, assume it will take this person one week to install, configure, and test each monitoring tool integration with ServiceNow.

10 tools x 1 week/tool = total time of 10 weeks, or 3+ months to integrate all of the various monitoring tools with ServiceNow



Scenario #2: IT Operations Team Responsible for Integrating 10+ Monitoring Tools and ServiceNow

In this scenario, still assume your IT Operations team is using 10 different tools. However, now assume that each tool has one person is responsible for integrating their tool with ServiceNow. Each person is an expert with their monitoring tool, but not a ServiceNow expert. And they also still have their day job. Therefore, let's now assume that it will take each person one month to learn about ServiceNow, and then install, configure, and test their monitoring tool integration with ServiceNow.

10 tools x 1 month/tool = total time of 40 weeks, or 10 months to integrate all of the various monitoring tools with ServiceNow

Scenario #3: Integration Maintenance

Regardless of how you ultimately end up integrating your monitoring tools with ServiceNow, don't forget that once all 10+ monitoring tools are integrated, each integration has to be maintained. Each time one of your 10+ monitoring tools is patched or upgraded, the integration between the monitoring tool and ServiceNow might break or have to be reconfigured. Also realize that each time someone changes something in ServiceNow, all 10 monitoring integrations might need to be updated! Of course, if you have turnover, also realize that one or more new people will be stuck figuring out how to make the one or more integrations they inherited work. And also realize that each of these 10 different monitoring tools are all feeding different types of information into ServiceNow, which results in a lot of inconsistency all around (more on this in a minute).

Isn't there a better way?

THE SOLUTION

Traditionally, Service Desk products from the Big 4 have been cumbersome, expensive, inflexible, and outdated. However, ServiceNow changed this playing field by delivering a more flexible SaaS-based solution. If you are currently using ServiceNow, it means that you have already decided that using cumbersome legacy service desk products was not the right choice for you.

Traditional legacy monitoring frameworks from the Big 4 are also cumbersome, expensive, inflexible, and outdated. If you are still using one of these Big 4 legacy monitoring frameworks, moving to a more modern, flexible unified monitoring solution built on a single platform will help you break down silos between your IT Service Desk and Operations teams. Using a single unified platform makes it much simpler and more cost effective to integrate ServiceNow with your monitoring tools. You can reduce the number of monitoring silos that you have to configure in order to feed into ServiceNow. However, you can still give your Service Desk team the information they need (more on this in a minute). Don't use one of the Big 4? Then you probably have multiple point products in different departmental silos, so moving to a unified monitoring system will also make it much more simple and cost effective to integrate your monitoring with ServiceNow. Instead of having to integrate 10+ monitoring point products with ServiceNow, you can pare this number down to one. This greatly reduces your integration costs while still giving your IT Operations team the same level of insight — if not more insight — than the Big 4 frameworks or device-centric point products can provide.

STEP #2

Automate ServiceNow Ticket Creation So You Know About Issues Before Users Call In

THE PROBLEM

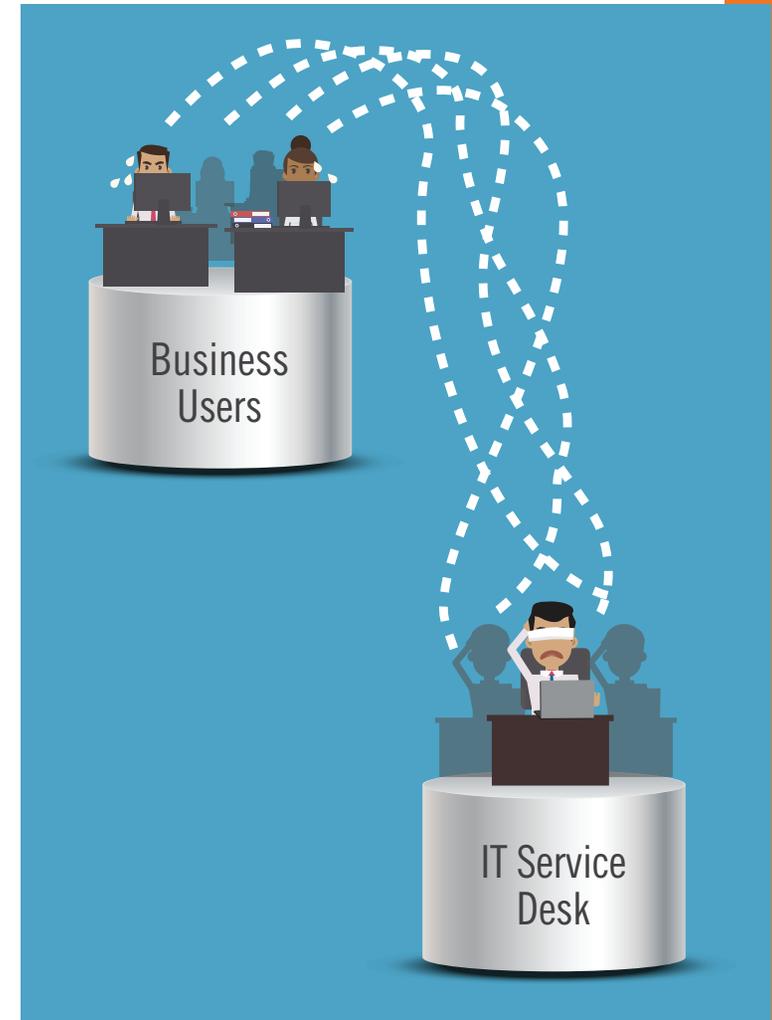
Due to their high business costs, service issues quickly get attention.

When business users start calling or emailing in to IT to report a service issue, they expect your IT Service Desk to already know 1.) what the issue is, 2.) who's fixing it, 3.) when and how it will be fixed, and 4.) when service will be restored.

If your Service Desk doesn't yet know about the issue, or has only vague or partial information, business users start to think their IT organization is clueless and incompetent.

Your Service Desk team also feels blindsided and frustrated when the first time they hear about service issues is when business users call in. Why doesn't someone else in IT already know about this issue? Why hasn't IT Operations been more proactive about giving them information, so they know what's going on and don't look like idiots when they have to talk to irate business users?

Why isn't your IT Operations team more proactive? It's because they are currently off drowning under a never ending stream of events from the tens of thousands of various devices and components in the IT infrastructure that they must watch over — applications, network, compute, storage, virtualization, and more. With all of these various systems chirping away and generating events, they are in a race against time to sort through the noise, figure out what they need to pay attention to, and what they can safely ignore. Also, each monitoring tool provides varying levels of depth and insight into infrastructure issues (more on this in a minute).



When someone on your IT Operations team does find an event related to an issue that needs attention, they have to jump off the monitoring tool they are currently using, jump onto ServiceNow, and manually open up a ticket. Sorting through thousands of events. Figuring out which events are important. Jumping between tools. Manually opening up tickets. Copying and pasting information out of events in monitoring tools and into tickets. Trying to ensure tickets contain the right information. Getting tickets assigned to the right team to work. All of this activity leads to delay.

End result? Business users are on the phone, demanding to know what is being done and how long service issues will last. Your Service Desk team has no information to share. Business users get angry, and immediately start complaining to their management about “IT’s lack of responsiveness”.

Isn't there a better way?

THE SOLUTION

Improve the communication and alignment between your Service Desk and IT Operations teams and reduce churn by automating ticket creation in ServiceNow. When the monitoring tools used by your IT Operations team identify performance or availability issues in your IT infrastructure, your monitoring tools should automatically generate ServiceNow tickets.

Automating ticket creation when certain parameters or triggers are met means your Service Desk knows more about existing issues and their current status before users start calling in. Using a unified monitoring solution will also make it easier for you to configure automated ticket creation. You only have to configure two solutions — ServiceNow and the unified monitoring solution — instead of the 10+ different monitoring tools that you have to deal with if you are still using one of the old Big 4 legacy monitoring frameworks or using several different device-centric monitoring point products.

Automated ticket creation helps your Service Desk team know more. It improves alignment between your Service Desk and IT Operations teams. They can act faster when issues that impact service delivery are identified.

STEP #3

Make ServiceNow Tickets More “Intelligent”

THE PROBLEM

Simply integrating the monitoring tools your IT Operations team uses so tickets can be created in ServiceNow doesn't automatically solve all of your problems.

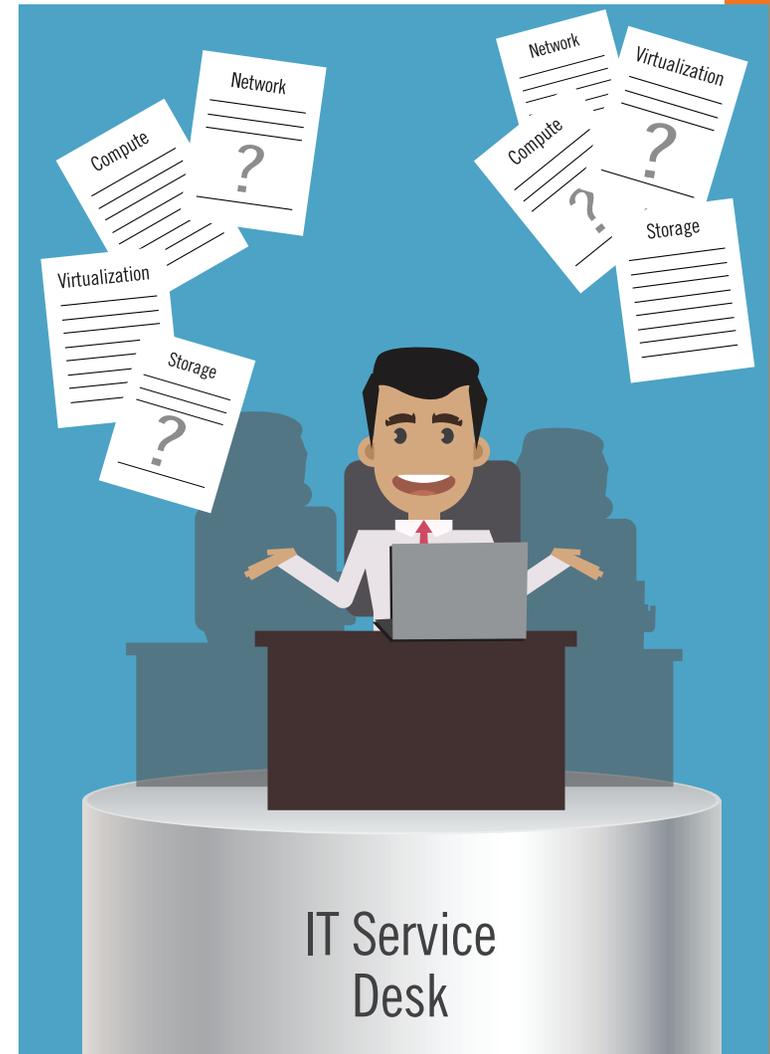
It does eliminate manual work and human errors and accelerates incident reporting. However, you now run the risk of having your Service Desk team go from under-notified to over-notified.

With 10+ monitoring products integrated, tickets come flying over the wall into ServiceNow faster than your Service Desk team can process them. And all too often the tickets opened still have incomplete data. They lack the guidance and actionable information your Service Desk team really needs in order to quickly resolve incidents and restore service.

All of the different infrastructure monitoring tools your IT Operations team are using each provide their own, unique sets of information — with wildly varying degrees of depth and detail. Each tool has to be tweaked and tuned differently in order to try and get a consistent level of depth and detail injected into ServiceNow tickets. In many cases, the siloed tools are so different that true parity can never actually be achieved.

So while your Service Desk team is no longer completely clueless about IT infrastructure issues, they still need more useful and consistent information included in tickets.

Isn't there a better way?



THE SOLUTION

Reduce churn and better align your Service Desk and IT Operations teams by making ServiceNow tickets more “intelligent”. Making ServiceNow tickets more intelligent improves resource coordination and communication between teams. It also reduces the amount of time it takes to resolve service-impacting events.

Intelligent ServiceNow tickets:

- ✓ **Automatically include all of the relevant event data collected by the monitoring tool.** Ensuring tickets are auto-populated with event details straight from the monitoring tool eliminates wasting cycles trying to get details about the issue.
- ✓ **Provide information about all of the different events related to the ticket.** Including information about all of the different events related to a ticket gives your Service Desk team better insight into issues and helps them identify ways to avoid them in the future.
- ✓ **Provide actionable information.** When a service-impacting event occurs, intelligent ServiceNow tickets include a prioritized, confidence-ranked list that shows which event is the most likely root cause. Providing a de-duplicated, prioritized, actionable list helps your Service Desk team know what to focus on first.

Unified monitoring solutions improve the consistency of the intelligence provided in ServiceNow tickets. You only have to configure things in one place — not across several different monitoring silos and tool sets.

More intelligent ServiceNow tickets help your Service Desk team know more about the originating events that are causing the service issue. More intelligent ServiceNow tickets also help your Service Desk and IT Operations teams act faster by giving them the details and actionable information they need in order to quickly resolve service issues.

STEP #4

Reduce the Number of Duplicate Tickets and Escalations Generated by “Sympathetic” Events

THE PROBLEM

Integrating monitoring with ServiceNow, automating ticket creation, and making tickets more intelligent are all great steps. However, if you don't have unified monitoring, you can end up with a lot of duplicate tickets and escalations.

When you integrate lots of different monitoring tools with ServiceNow, “sympathetic” events can end up increasing, rather than decreasing, service desk noise. “Sympathetic” events are events that symptomatically related to the root cause of a service issue, but are not the actual root cause of the issue itself.

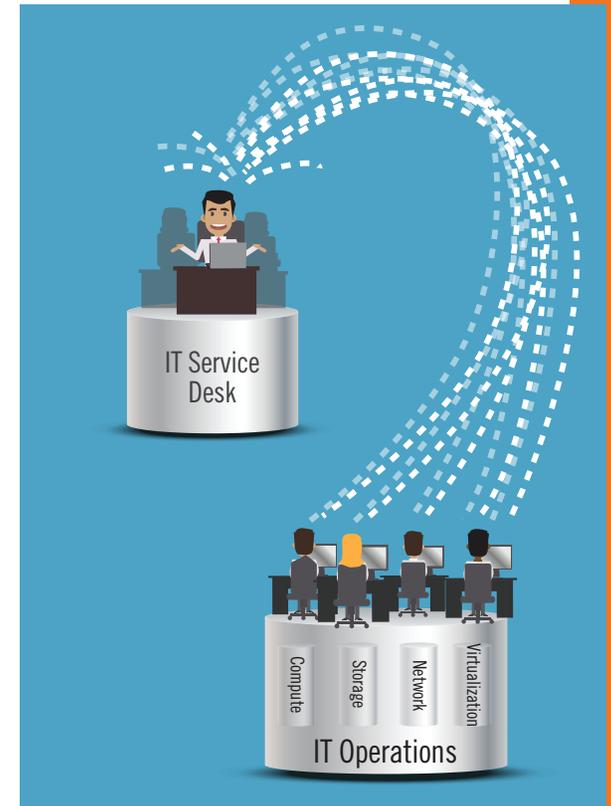
When sympathetic events cause duplicate tickets, lots of time and effort are wasted before someone realizes that the different tickets are really just symptoms of one underlying root cause. Reviewing each ticket. Figuring out how to handle it. Assigning the ticket. Getting the person working the ticket the information they need. Prioritizing the ticket against other tickets and projects. All of this consumes far too many cycles. Escalating tickets generated by sympathetic events only compounds the churn. Escalated tickets are assigned to different team members in different silos. Each person rushes off of to address what they perceive to be the root cause of the issue. Only later do you discover that multiple specialists were all running around trying to resolve the same issue.

This duplicative activity occurs because nobody can:

1. Clearly identify which events are related to the most likely root cause, versus which were “sympathetic” symptoms.
2. Do a cross-domain root cause analysis of events in order to identify the real root cause of the issue and what should be done first.
3. Figure out that different specialists are all off troubleshooting what is essentially the same issue.

All of this ill-timed, unnecessary, duplicate activity has a negative impact on IT productivity.

Isn't there a better way?



THE SOLUTION

The only way to reduce the number of duplicate tickets and escalations generated by sympathetic events is to do a unified root cause analysis across all of your different IT infrastructure silos — compute, network, storage, virtualization, converged infrastructure, and cloud. This helps you see which events are most likely to be the root cause of an issue versus which events are simply symptoms related to the root cause.

Use a unified monitoring solution with fast, precise, cross-domain root cause analysis to reduce churn related to duplicate tickets and escalations. Unified monitoring solutions can quickly and precisely perform root causes analysis across the different types of technologies in your IT infrastructure — compute, storage, network, operating system, database, etc. — to identify the most likely root cause of an issue. Then, instead of creating multiple tickets, one for each sympathetic event, only a single ServiceNow ticket is created. This one ticket contains all the actionable information your Service Desk team needs to start effectively working the ticket, including a triaged, confidence-ranked list of possible root causes, as well as a list of related sympathetic events, all right within one ticket. Unified monitoring solutions can also provide service-centric insight versus endpoint centric insight (more on this in a minute).

Eliminating duplicate ticket creation reduces the amount of noise in the service desk. Your Service Desk team knows more about the most likely root cause of service impacting events. And they no longer have to deal with the churn and confusion that result when one or more duplicate tickets are incorrectly escalated to too many different people across too many different silos.

THE PROBLEM

Let's assume that the integration between the monitoring tools your IT Operations team uses and ServiceNow is complete.

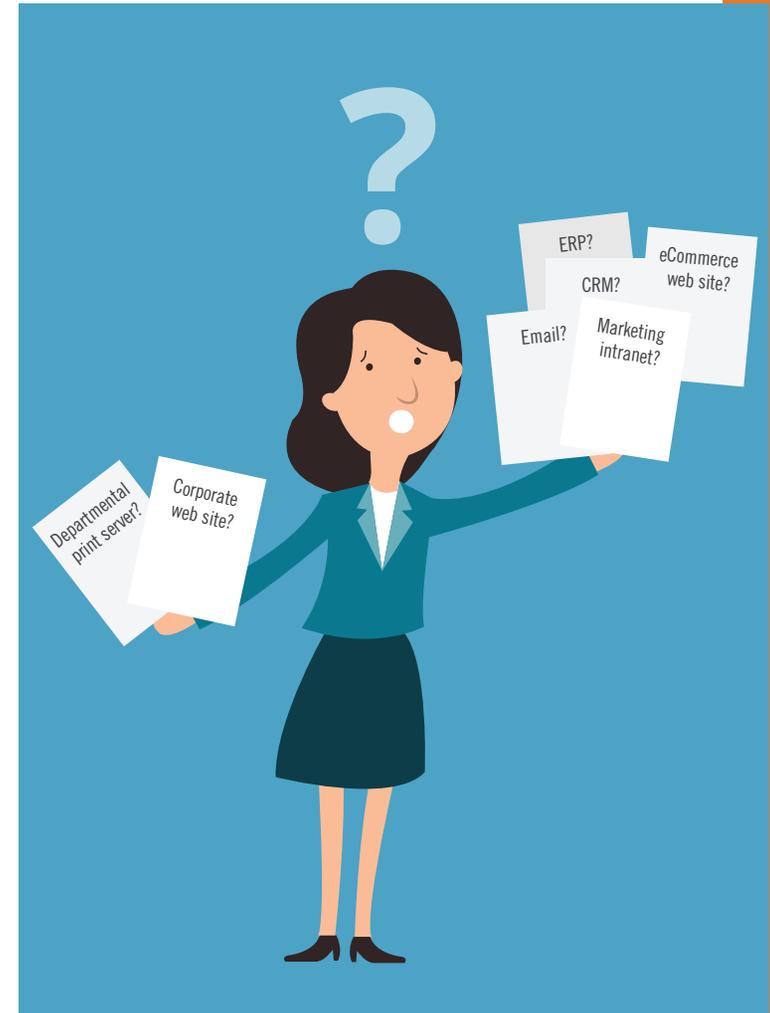
Tickets are automatically generated in ServiceNow when infrastructure issues occur. Your Service Desk team now knows about problems before users start calling in. Tickets are also intelligent, so your Service Desk has better information the root cause and related events. You are also now using some type of unified monitoring solution that provides fast, precise root cause analysis, which has reduced the number of duplicate tickets and escalations in ServiceNow.

You've come a long way! But wait — you're still not done.

Remember, from a business perspective, it's all about service delivery. At the end of the day, some applications or IT services are more important than others. When a ticket comes through, how can your Service Desk tell if it is related to a high-priority service, like your company's e-commerce web site, versus a ticket related to an old intranet site everybody has forgotten about?

If your IT Operations team is still using one of the Big 4 legacy monitoring frameworks, or has 10+ different monitoring point products, even if you are eventually able to get all of these different tools integrated into ServiceNow, typically none of the frameworks or point products will have any understanding of which applications and IT services are important to the business. They can't provide information about which events or alerts are related to which business services and why they are important. However, this is critical information your Service Desk needs.

Isn't there a better way?



THE SOLUTION

Reduce churn and get down to business by ensuring your tickets in ServiceNow include *business service context*.

How do you get business service context information into ServiceNow? By using a unified monitoring solution with service models that show how performance and availability issues impact critical business services.

Now, if you've tried to work with service models before, you might initially roll your eyes at the whole idea of building service models. Creating a service model means looking at all of the underlying infrastructure — applications, supporting devices, and device components — that make up the service. In the past, building out service models was a manual, time-consuming process. In addition, in dynamic enterprise datacenter environments, the underlying infrastructure elements in the service model change frequently, resulting in a mismatch between service models and the current operational reality. This manual approach to building service models also means that you then have to go back in and manually reconcile service models each time the underlying infrastructure changes — a repetitive, time-consuming process.

Go find a unified monitoring solution that includes service models and built-in service context. When you do, you will quickly see that things have changed. Real-time service models automatically build and maintain service dependency mappings for dynamic virtualized and converged infrastructures. You can quickly build out cross-domain service models for virtualized and converged infrastructures by focusing just on the very top level of the service. The unified monitoring solution then uses its built-in cross-domain intelligence to quickly and automatically build out the remainder of the service model. This includes automatically building out the relationships between compute, storage, network, and virtualized devices and device components in virtualized and converged infrastructure environments. It also dynamically maintains service models and device dependencies when underlying infrastructure in virtualized and converged infrastructure changes.

What does this mean for your Service Desk? When you use service models, when ServiceNow tickets are created, the ticket is automatically pre-populated with the name of the application, business service information, a problem description, and a direct link back into the unified monitoring system, where all of the relevant data to the event is also available.

Your Service Desk team has near real-time awareness of the issue. They can quickly understand the impact the issue has on IT service levels and SLAs. They can clearly see what events are putting critical services at risk. The right person on the right team can be put on the right problem first. They have the context and information they need to know more and act faster and properly prioritize and remediate issues before business users are impacted.

STEP #6

Ensure Bi-Directional Ticket Updates So Everyone Knows Where Things Are and Who's Doing What

THE PROBLEM

Simply integrating all of the monitoring tools used by your IT Operations team with a Service Desk solution like ServiceNow doesn't automatically mean alignment.

Even after you integrate your monitoring tools with ServiceNow, your IT Operations and Service Desk teams will continue to use their own tools as a part of their day to day work as they process tickets and resolve issues.

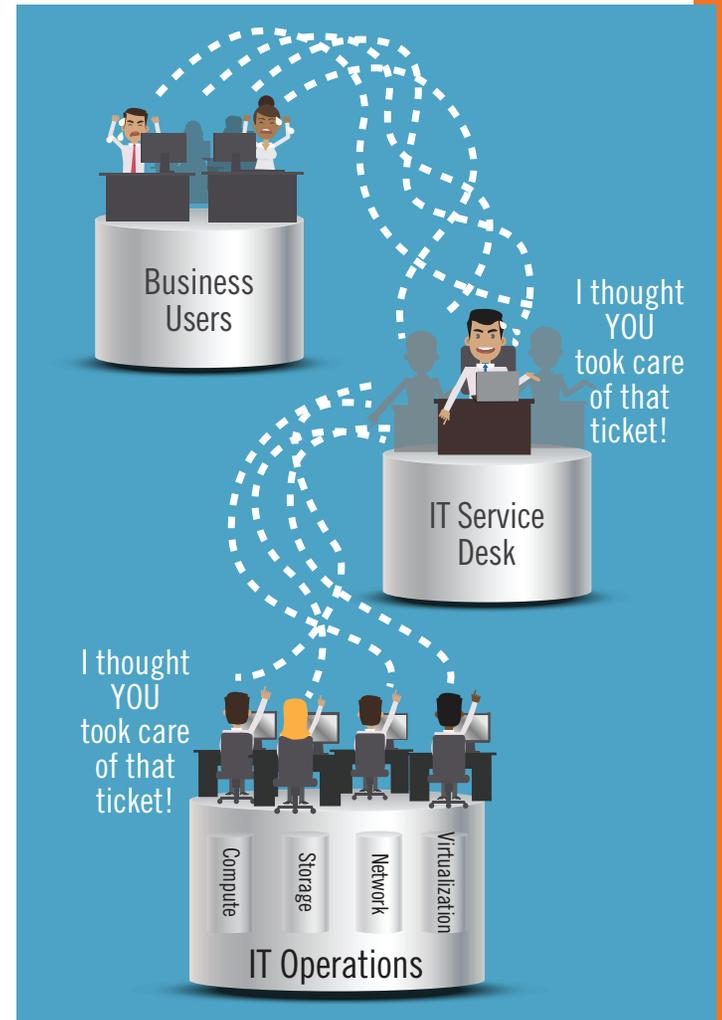
However, if each team continues to use their own siloed tool sets, how do members of each team know who is doing what, and how can teams tell what the real status of an event or ticket is at any given point in time?

Isn't there a better way?

THE SOLUTION

Use a unified monitoring solution with bi-directional updates to ensure everyone on your IT Operations and Service Desk teams always knows who is doing what. Bi-directional ticket updates ensure incident resolution is fully documented from end-to-end. Instead of manual, repetitive tasks and lengthy service desk procedures, you can now have a closed-loop automation process that accelerates incident resolution.

When updates occur, the integration between ServiceNow and your unified monitoring solution means that changes are tracked in both ServiceNow and in the monitoring solution where the event originated. Bi-directional communication between ServiceNow and your monitoring solution also means that everyone on the Service Desk and IT Operations teams can automatically be kept in the loop as tickets are updated, resolved, and closed.



When IT Operations opens tickets in ServiceNow, the number of the ticket created in ServiceNow is automatically displayed as a link as a part of the event in the unified monitoring solution. IT Operations team members can simply click the link right from within their unified monitoring solution, which automatically displays the ticket in ServiceNow.

Your Service Desk team can see a complete event history, including an event summary, device name and component, event severity value and priority in the monitoring system, and a link to the event details. Clicking the link displays the event details page in the unified monitoring system that includes all of the event information collected by the monitoring system. If you are using a unified monitoring solution with service insight, you will also see additional actionable information, including a correlated, de-duplicated, confidence-ranked triage list right from within the ServiceNow ticket.

When the issue is fixed, the unified monitoring solution automatically detects that the issue has been resolved, the event in the unified monitoring solution closes and clears, and the unified monitoring solution updates its business service view to display that the service is once again working correctly. At the same time, due to the integration between the unified monitoring solution and ServiceNow, the ticket in ServiceNow is also updated and closed as appropriate.

Automatically updating the ticket with all relevant information ensures all data is available for future review. Closing the ticket when the event clears can also be done with no manual intervention.

If you use ServiceNow as your system of record for what has happened in your environment, your ServiceNow tickets automatically include a complete event history and the details about the event or events related to the issue. You have information in your incident system of record about not only incidents, but also the detailed information about how it was resolved. You can then use this information during later analysis to see how many times specific events and issues have occurred in a specific time period (for example, monthly or quarterly), along with rich details about the events related to the ticket.

Conclusion

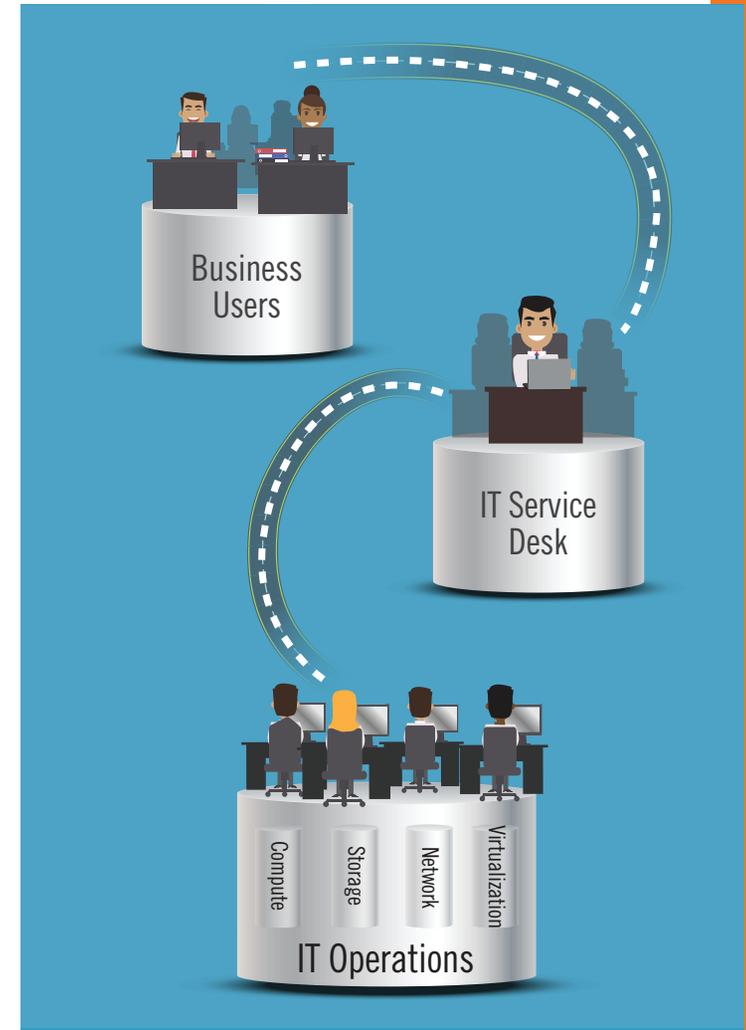
We hope that some of the simple steps we have laid out for you here will help you break down the silos between your Service Desk and IT Operations teams, reduce churn, and improve overall alignment.

When Service Desk and IT Operations teams are aligned, they can pinpoint and understand issues quickly, make informed resource decisions, reduce MTTR, meet service levels, keep the business happy, and have a positive impact on your company's bottom line.

With the right bridge, or integration, between the tools that your Service Desk team uses, like ServiceNow, and the monitoring tools the IT Operations team uses exists, these two teams can improve communications, manage IT services more holistically, and fix problems faster.

Unfortunately, managing IT holistically is the exception rather than the rule. Far too often siloed monitoring creates silos of information, hides important relationships, and makes root causes difficult to ascertain. Monitoring silos severely hamper IT's ability to quickly identify, investigate, and resolve issues, and minor problems can quickly lead to critical service disruptions or outages.

Break down silos in your IT organization and achieve better alignment by using a modern, unified monitoring solution that provides unified service insight, fast, precise root cause analysis, and can be integrated with a minimum amount of churn with IT Service Desk solutions such as ServiceNow.



About Zenoss

Modern Monitoring for Your Hybrid IT Environment

Zenoss works with the world's largest organizations to ensure their IT services and applications are always on. As the leader in software-defined IT operations, Zenoss uniquely collects all types of machine data to build real-time IT service models that train machine learning algorithms to deliver robust AIOps analytics capabilities for all data types, including metrics, dependency data, events and streaming data. This enables IT Ops teams to predict and eliminate outages in hybrid IT environments, dramatically reducing downtime and IT spend. Zenoss is recognized as a Leader in [The Forrester Wave™: Intelligent Application and Service Monitoring, Q2 2019](#).

For more information about Zenoss:

[Watch our webcast on The Power of Full-Stack Monitoring and AIOps](#) »

Join Zenoss product experts for a demonstration on how the Zenoss approach to combining full-stack monitoring and AIOps can help IT teams solve issues more effectively.

[Read 2019 Forrester Wave Report on IASM](#) »

Forrester identified the 13 most significant intelligent application and service monitoring providers in the market today, with Zenoss ranked amongst them as a leader. Get your complete copy of The Forrester Wave™: Intelligent Application and Service Monitoring, Q2 2019 to learn more.

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