

OVUM OPINION

Evolgen tackles change and configuration management in the cloud

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OVUM VIEW

Summary

Over the last decade, IT service management (ITSM) has matured as a discipline, but new and popular disruptive technologies are incompatible with some of the practices and procedures that have been established. The complexity of change and configuration in an increasingly dynamic and virtualized environment requires a cross-domain approach to change and configuration management that is optimized for performance, risk, and service assurance. The ultimate conclusion of increased use of these disruptive technologies, such as cloud computing and virtualization, is to shift from a supply-side to a demand-led IT environment. Evolgen, a change management vendor, is one of a small number of vendors that have recognized the need for a shift in thinking in terms of how change and configuration management is executed in highly dynamic, consumer-focused environments.

Cloud computing creates the "change twilight zone"

The ITIL change and configuration management processes define the steps needed to ensure a consistent approach to the delivery of IT as a service. However, while these processes have made IT more reliable and efficient, they have not done much to help the customers of IT exploit new disruptive technologies. In a cloud computing environment these ITIL processes, along with incident management and continual service improvement, appear to leave open-ended loops that



require manual intervention to close. As the systems become more complex, the processes become more bureaucratic, and hence slower. The net result is that in a more dynamic environment the efficiency of these processes is diminished and downtime and the mean time to repair (MTTR) increases, which results in customers receiving a poorer service for longer than is considered acceptable.

Consider how in the early days of the Internet, search engines were simply providing a directory service that was updated off-line at regular intervals. Compare that to the services these search engines perform today: effectively returning dynamic results with actionable information. Applying these principles to the change and configuration management space, it is possible to see how the current ITIL processes will not translate very well to the dynamic cloud environment. Therefore, Ovum believes that change and configuration management in the cloud will see a similar transition where processes will need to operate at machine speed, and be fully closed-loop systems.

The "change twilight zone" is defined as the intersection of key processes where critical questions remain unanswered. For example, if an incident is reported and a retrospective software bug fix is needed to solve the problem, the key question of what exactly happened to cause the incident remains unanswered. Getting an answer to this question requires analysis of the continual service improvement and change process to identify who did what, and did it solve the problem. These may still not completely identify the reason, which could have to do with configuration drift that made the application behave differently to that observed during testing.

This twilight zone in the current non-cloud era is managed by people communicating with each other, typically at a regular service support meeting. However, in a more dynamic environment this people-centric approach will lead to increased downtime risk and higher MTTR, which in turn will lead to increased inefficiency of the IT department.

Evolgen applies analytics to transform change and configuration management

The Evolgen approach is to collect low-level granular data and apply analytics to it. By using analytics tools, such as statistical algorithms, comparison engine, and configuration impact knowledge bases, this data is turned into actionable information. This analytical approach reduces the noise by identifying the important elements and reporting these, not all of the information captured. Effectively, Evolgen automates the steps that fall into the twilight zone, across the entire environment from the hardware layer up to the application layer. This approach not only resonates with the original business service management (BSM) thinking of ten years ago, but combines a



new, more dynamic approach to controlling complexity of configurations in a highly virtualized environment, effectively making it BSM for the cloud.

APPENDIX

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