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I&O Execs: It's Time To Rediscover BSM
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with Robert Whiteley and Alex Crumb
for IT Operations Professionals

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Look To BSM Point Tools To Improve I&O's Change Management And Incident Management Processes

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The original business service management (BSM) concept is founded on the capability to map business services to infrastructure components. This gives end users visibility into IT as well as bridges the way IT and users see applications. However, the foundational technology of application mapping discovery and the configuration management database (CMDB) or configuration management system (CMS) has not yet fulfilled all of its promises. Typically, the first generation of discovery tools failed on two counts: 1) The mechanism used does not allow real-time updates, and 2) the granularity of data is sometimes too coarse to be useful. These issues affect some key management processes such as incident management as well as change and configuration management. All hope is not lost, though: A new breed of solutions is appearing that will prove useful in helping IT operations professionals achieve their BSM goals.

TODAY'S BSM HAS MOVED BEYOND ITS ROOTS

BSM today has morphed into an Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) support solution rather than the pure infrastructure and application management vision that appeared seven years ago. Why? Because:

- **I&O envisioned BSM with a dependency mapping capability . . .** There was a strong conviction — and general promises from vendors — of the importance of application dependency discovery. It was the bridge between the user, who sees an application, and IT, which sees infrastructures.

- **. . . but vendors never embedded BSM in their operational products.** BSM promised tools that infrastructure and operations (I&O) could embed in IT management solutions to improve them. In this vision, the "repository" of application dependencies — later to become CMS — was not intended as a standalone solution. Yet, IT management vendors never capitalized on this vision.

BSM's Flaws Led To Change Management And Incident Management Challenges

To better understand why this happened, you must first understand that ITIL had a strong influence in making BSM what it is today, and especially in shaping the CMDB and CMS concepts. BSM now embodies IT service management (ITSM) as the dominant concept in IT management. In this evolution, two flaws in dependency discovery solutions became obvious:

- **The discovery of application and infrastructure dependencies is too slow.** Last month's application dependencies are as good as yesterday's newspaper when it comes to root-cause analysis

or change detection. Today's discovery solutions are too slow to be effective in supporting processes such as incident management, performance management, change and configuration management, and release management.

- **Reworked tools still don't properly integrate with the CMDB/CMS.** BSM's discovery capability added a level of visibility and intelligence that existing batch of monitoring and management solutions sorely lacked. Although many monitoring tools currently use application dependency models, most of these models are built either manually or through embedded features — not from the CMDB/CMS. Why? Because on top of being yesterday's news, the CMDB/CMS mapping often lacks the granularity of information that key IT operations like release management require.

I&O see the consequence of this failure in two major processes: incident management and change management. This has three implications for I&O teams:

- **Incident management requires a rapid identification of components at fault.** Because end users usually state their problems in application terms, an accurate mapping of application to infrastructure is the best way for I&O professionals to sort through events and identify where the problem lies. This speeds up the incident process as the problem is directed to the right support person.

- **Change management is a collateral support to incident management.** I&O professionals the world over know that many incidents are a consequence of changes that have been mistakenly applied to the application infrastructure. I&O can streamline the process by looking at the changes applied to all components of an application.

- **Change management requires an impact analysis.** I&O teams should change configurations, update a software version, or apply a patch only when they have assessed the consequences on the rest of the application components. Here again, an accurate dependency mapping helps the process and reduces the chance of errors.

Incident management and change management are closely linked when it comes to inaccurate or obsolete information. Incident management usually leads to a change; change, unfortunately, is often the source of incidents. Moreover, these incidents actually suffer from inaccurate and missing real-time information. A prime example of this happened to the most technical of sports: Formula One (F1) racing. One critical application provided by the official F1 website is the timing of cars on the track. For the season opener on Sunday, March 27, 2011, this application appeared to have "benefited" from Java updates that not only crashed the system, but the outage went unidentified for the whole race, leaving millions of fans around the world extremely frustrated.

Three Vendors Exemplify A New Breed Of Tools To Help Incident And Change Management

No one solution encompasses all that BSM embodies today, but several point products exemplify the original BSM concept. Namely, they're effective products that provide immediate results by building a bridge between the end user and IT operations. Look for tools that offer both real-time and granular discovery to help support a better incident and change management process. Three such products from these vendors you should shortlist include:

- **BlueStripe Software for full dependency maps linked to proactive alerts.** BlueStripe expanded its dynamic discovery tool to map applications through the cloud and to include mainframe protocols such as CICS, IMS, and MQ. It also provides these dynamic maps to Microsoft SCOM.

- **Evolven Software for a change control solution that discovers all changes in real time.** Evolven analyzes change impact through application dependency discovery, detects the rogue ones, and proposes an actionable dashboard for remediation. It connects to the service desk to determine which changes were authorized.

- **Neebula Systems for a real-time discovery solution that continuously updates itself.** It's embedded into an intelligent event and impact analysis monitor. Neebula works also for I&O teams looking to discover applications in the cloud.

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S

EFFECTIVE AND PRAGMATIC SOLUTIONS MUST PREVAIL

BSM is a step forward in IT management, but its effectiveness in day-to-day operations has suffered. It's devolved from a strong focus on process workflows to monitoring tools to support incident management and change management. I&O executives looking to make their incident management and change management processes more effective must:

- **Look at solutions that do the job and support the key processes.** Bring together processes, supported by a workflow implementation in your service desk, to better define roles and responsibilities. But this alone won't significantly improve the time it takes to resolve issues. There'll still be time wasted in finding the correct answers from inadequate tools. Avoid this by adopting an analytic and pragmatic approach to the problem and asking: What type of information is needed to make the process effective, and how can it be delivered, regardless of whether or not it affects your IT management software strategy?

- **Favor point solutions, as they won't disrupt a consolidated IT management tools strategy.** Most I&O execs are trying to reduce the number of management tool vendors and create a consolidated IT management software strategy. In this context, I&O professionals are

reluctant to use yet another point solution. They must consider that these best-of-breed products are targeted to specific steps in management processes. Because of these clear boundaries, using point solutions in this instance improves the process without threatening the whole I&O management strategic initiative.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

Companies Interviewed For This Document

BlueStripe Software

Evolven Software

Neebula Systems

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