



BMC: Tracking Transactions for Performance

The dependency of today's business success on IT operations is a well-established fact. Less talked about, but equally relevant, is the dependency of IT operations on the behavior of the business transaction. Business transactions are the 'coin of the realm' – unless they complete – no business gets done. Transactions, successfully, reliably and quickly completed lead to increased revenues, satisfied customers, lowered costs, and fewer issues in achieving compliance and better governance.

Successful transactions depend upon the smooth interaction and integration of infrastructure technology of escalating complexity. BMC Software's new BMC Transaction Management delivers a family of solutions that empowers IT to deliver improved business services by profiling the performance of business transactions as they move across the enterprise. Let's examine these new solutions.



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What BMC is Saying

The completed transaction – a customer completing a purchase and leaving satisfied - is the ultimate goal of every business effort. With all the management tools, applications, and solutions available, transaction management remains one of the least exploited yet potentially one of the most effective areas of control. Most enterprises are concentrating on management of the application infrastructure, neglecting the monitoring and managing of individual transactions. Those not measuring 'end-to-end' transaction performance cite a lack of appropriate tools as the major factor limiting transaction management. Another reason is the lack of an integrated solution that covers the total life-cycle of the transaction across the IT infrastructure – from desktop to mainframe to completion.

Historically, enterprises have chosen not to invest in transaction management because it is too expensive and time-consuming to detect, isolate, and resolve transaction problems in a truly end-to-end fashion. End-to-end includes all manner of technologies from web servers to mainframes. Time after time, enterprises have attempted the exercise only to find it is a resource intensive, project-based exercise based on cobbling together data from point solutions. For example, a J2EE transaction tracking solution loses the transaction once it crosses into the mainframe environment. This lack of transaction visibility as it crosses technology boundaries yields mediocre results, which deteriorate as the exercise repeats with some twists for each new incident. A complete, integrated toolset does not exist. In-house attempts to custom build an integrated solution have proven frustrating, time-consuming, and ultimately, unsatisfying.

Therefore, enterprises have decided to concentrate on application performance management at the expense of end-to-end transaction-based service level management.

PNA agrees with BMC on the value and importance of transaction management. The description of why such management is so difficult also explains exactly why such management is so important and necessary. IT needs more than end-user response times and application performance metrics to alert and react before misbehaving infrastructure disrupts business services. Relying on customer-complaints to uncover service problems is unacceptable as a standard business practice. At the same time, tracking individual transactions without a comprehensive view of application and service behavior can overlook costly systemic problem sources. Enterprises must implement and treat transaction management as a valuable extension of and complement to service and application management rather than a replacement for these functions.

The second reason PNA supports this approach is because it opens up and illustrates the power of new technologies such as the CMDB. Only a few years ago enterprises lacked the flexibility and power to efficiently correlate changing data from a dynamic and complex environment. With automated relationship tracking and data accessibility provided by CMDB, IT now has the ability to access and utilize disparate data sources to resolve problems distributed throughout the enterprise. Dynamic data aggregation, analysis and custom reporting processes allow enterprises to effectively manage and respond to escalating operational and business complexity. They illustrate and make viable the paths to Business Service Management's (BSM) promised benefits for enterprises operating at every level of IT maturity.

BMC's Transaction Management Approach

BMC starts from the blunt statement that organizations need an accurate, comprehensive and unified solution to manage transactions across the entire IT infrastructure – extending from the end user experience to problem isolation and root cause analysis. BMC believes a solution must be one that is:

1. Comprehensive – addressing market and customer demands for a multidimensional view of business transactions across the enterprise
2. Insightful– providing actionable and useable information about a transaction along with complete insight into the end user experience, the path a transaction takes across the IT infrastructure and specific IT domains
3. Beneficial to the end-user experience – improving the end-user experience based on platform expertise and knowledge gained from active, integrated enterprise systems and service management

BMC Transaction Management solutions collect and correlate data from transactions, end user experiences, and active infrastructure monitoring to improve and ensure the delivery of real-time business services. The solutions monitor and report on the actual path of the transaction through the infrastructure. They are not simply monitoring transaction response time performance, but rather the transaction's involvement and interaction with the IT infrastructure.

BMC's solutions provide a horizontal view across the complete mainframe, distributed and n-tier architecture to provide data on the behavior of both real and synthetic transactions. It expands and enhances mainframe transaction insight with exclusive diagnostics for root-cause analysis. By associating performance tracking with business services and SLA's, it ties business impact to performance to allow business needs to drive IT problem solving. With the power to analyze the entire end-to-end transaction path, BMC's solutions allow identification of the specific component causing a problem. Thus, problem solving can be prioritized by business goal whether the criteria is limiting the number of users affected, or focused on a critical client.

BMC will roll out the full capability of BMC Transaction Management over the course of 2006. However, BMC now delivers two products, BMC Transaction Management Application Response Time, and MAINVIEW Transaction Analyzer.

The BMC Transaction Management Application Response Time product uses a simulated end-user transaction to measure and set baseline metrics for the end-user experience. The product tracks transaction response time with a drill down to the first hop. It also builds a detailed history for later diagnosis by capturing full session details of failed transactions.

The second product is MAINVIEW Transaction Analyzer. This product tracks real transactions through the mainframe to correlate and consolidate transactional data as they traverse different subsystems. It displays the path taken for each unit of work tracking the logical order in which the various units are invoked. It uses existing MAINVIEW technology to support CICS, IMS, DB2, WebSphere MQ and WebSphere Application Server.

Future products will add capabilities ranging from real transaction monitoring to enhanced links to Service Level Management and unified transaction views for both mainframe and distributed environments. Further enhancements will allow for mapping of transaction topology and real-time transaction problem isolation and resolution.

Finally, BMC's transaction management solutions will integrate with existing enterprise management data collection and analysis tools. This allows enterprise customers to protect the

technology investments they have made as well as extend to true end-to-end transaction management.

BMC's solution approach moves beyond simply tracking reaction times. It will track and report on how a specific transaction moves and touches any piece of the IT infrastructure. IT benefits from detailed problem analysis for specific identification of the source of the problem allowing prompt resolution. Enterprise can relate IT infrastructure malfunctions to their impact on the business. IT staff will be able to show how infrastructure problems manifest themselves as business problems. Enterprise staff benefit by viewing the explicit link between business problems, e.g. poor customer service as a lost transaction, to the infrastructure cause.

The Final Word

PNA believes that one of the biggest problems for IT solutions today is the difficulty in quickly identifying their relevance and practical application to enterprise problems. There have been too many solutions that over-promised on capability, required advanced expertise, or require expensive add-on technology. BMC avoids all of these.

BMC's Transaction Management family can deploy either as a stand-alone solution or as part of a larger BSM implementation. BMC's strategy is to integrate with and leverage existing 3rd party (i.e. non-BMC) diagnostic tools for transaction problem analysis. This allows customers to protect their existing technology investments and extend them to achieve true end-to-end transaction management.

By explicitly linking infrastructure performance with successful completion of transactions, business management can see how IT supports business success. Beyond the visionary statements and promises, business managers need to see BSM working and contributing to achieving business goals. It is this practical link and demonstration of the reality of successful Business Service Management that will drive and accelerate the acceptance and implementation of BSM. BMC has a great story. They need to trumpet it loudly and clearly; to everyone they can possibly reach.

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With a belief that business success and IT success are inseparable, Ptak, Noel & Associates works with clients to identify, understand, and respond to the implications of today's trends and innovations on the future of IT Operations.

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About the Author

Jasmine Noel is a recognized expert in infrastructure management. Noel served previously as director of systems and applications management at Hurwitz Group, where she formulated and managed the company's research agenda. She was also a senior analyst at D.H. Brown Associates, where her responsibilities included technology trend analysis in the network and systems management space. Noel holds a bachelor of science from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a master of science from the University of Southern California.

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Richard Ptak has over 30 years experience in systems product management working closely with Fortune 50 companies in developing product direction and strategies at a global level. Previously Ptak held positions as senior vice president at Hurwitz Group and D.H. Brown Associates. Earlier in his career he held engineering and marketing management positions with Western Electric's Electronic Switch Manufacturing Division and Digital Equipment Corporation. His comments frequently appear in major business and trade press such as Investor's Business Daily, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Business Week, ComputerWorld eWeek, and InformationWeek. He is the author of "Manager's Guide to Distributed Environments," (John Wiley & Sons, 1998). In addition, Ptak was technical editor of "Cisco Internet Architecture Essentials Study Guide: Cisco Internet Solutions Specialist" by Mathew Recore, Jeremy Laersonson, and Scott Herrmann (Cisco Press, 2002). Ptak holds a master's in business administration from the University of Chicago and a master of science in engineering from Kansas State University.

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