



IT Survey Results: Top Priorities Through 2010

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 1

- LOOKING AHEAD — WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT 2
 - » What Are the Priorities for IT? 2
 - » Plans for a CMDB 3
 - » Plans for Consolidation 3

- TACKLING CHALLENGING ISSUES 4
 - » Change and Configuration Management 4
 - » Incident and Problem Management 5
 - » Event Management 5
 - » Improving Support 5
 - » Process Documentation and Integration 6

- CONCLUSION 7

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What will be most important to IT organizations over the next 12 months? It's probably no surprise that cost control or reduction in spending is the key priority. Based on a recent survey of more than 400 enterprise-level IT management personnel and their teams in Europe and the United States, reducing IT costs is the number-one priority out of 15 objectives. The second most critical priority is addressing regulatory compliance issues. Improving the availability and performance of business services is the third most critical priority on the IT "must-do" list.

Other key priorities include incident and problem management, change management, virtualization, and capacity planning. Even if an initiative is not listed as critical over the next 12 months, all of the projects discussed in this survey are being worked on at various levels. Some initiatives are more critical now than others, but they all have some level of importance to IT. The survey results indicate that IT organizations must achieve many of their objectives in an environment where one of their biggest challenges is coping with staff and time constraints.

The challenge is to reduce costs and provide a high level of service while continuing to make investments that will position IT organizations to become more competitive and meet emerging business challenges. IT must continue to innovate and prove its value to the business. Service desk consolidation, Cloud computing/virtualization, and a variety of other initiatives discussed in this survey are helping IT organizations to meet these objectives.

This white paper looks at the near-term activities of the IT organizations surveyed by Tech Target, along with their constraints, issues, motivating factors, and strategies. The paper also explores how technology can help these organizations address their key priorities.

LOOKING AHEAD — WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT

WHAT ARE THE PRIORITIES FOR I.T.?

The need to reduce IT costs is the top priority of the IT organizations surveyed, primarily because of the challenges presented by the struggling economy. At the same time, these organizations are grappling with how to cope with the staff and time constraints that limit their ability to maintain and improve upon how they manage changes, events, problems, and incidents. They are also heavily focused on improving the availability and performance of business services and addressing regulatory compliance issues. In addition, more than 70 percent of respondents are in the throes of virtualizing their infrastructure, which can lead to significant cost reductions. Capacity planning is also an ongoing top priority. Most of the initiatives that are not as critical are still generally important to the people surveyed.

These are some of the key findings of the 2009 IT Market Research Survey, which was sent by Tech Target to members of its SearchDataCenter and SearchCIO.com list who have registered to be contacted for market research initiatives. The survey was sponsored by BMC Software. More than 400 people in Europe and the United States responded. Respondents represented enterprise-level companies across a wide range of industries, and more than half of the survey participants were from companies with 10,000 or more employees. About half of the respondents held IT management or executive positions, and the remaining respondents were consultants/systems integrators or held other IT titles. Overall, there were very minimal differences between the feedback from respondents in the United States and feedback from those in Europe.

Compliance emerged as a high priority, with nearly 70 percent of the respondents rating regulatory compliance as very important or critical. They also consider company-specific compliance requirements, which are focused on a company's internal compliance policies and business processes, as very important to their success.

Almost 80 percent of the people rated asset and vendor management as somewhat important, very important, or critical. Asset and vendor management is another area where IT organizations can achieve significant cost reductions with a rapid return on investment. For example, asset and software license reporting can provide information showing how many hours a day technicians spend working on issues related to servers, applications, user training, and other areas. Tracking that information can offer insight into the services IT offers a business and what those services cost.

Item	Critical	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not at All Important
Reducing IT Cost	34%	49%	14%	2%	1%
Regulatory Compliance	29%	40%	22%	7%	1%
Improving Availability and Performance of Business Services	22%	50%	23%	4%	0%
Incident and Problem Management	17%	49%	24%	9%	1%
Change Management	15%	44%	30%	9%	2%
Virtualization	13%	42%	33%	10%	2%
Capacity Planning	13%	42%	32%	11%	2%
IT Budgeting and Charge Back	13%	36%	35%	12%	3%
Data Center Consolidation	13%	33%	29%	19%	5%
IT Risk Management	12%	36%	40%	10%	2%
Improving Internal User Satisfaction	11%	45%	38%	5%	0%
Service Desk Consolidation	8%	26%	35%	25%	6%
IT-Enabled Process Improvement (ITIL, COBIT, ISO/IEC 20000)	7%	38%	36%	16%	3%
Asset and Vendor Management	5%	36%	38%	17%	4%
Cloud Computing (See Virtualization above, because Cloud Computing may be part of a virtualization initiative)	4%	16%	25%	37%	18%

Figure 1. IT priorities for the next 12 months based on a survey taken in September 2009

Cloud computing will ultimately lead to cost reductions. Although Cloud computing is reported as a lower critical priority in the survey, almost half of the respondents reported being involved in some phase of Cloud computing. In fact, the priority may actually be higher than reported, because many organizations may also consider Cloud computing as part of their virtualization initiatives and virtualization is a top priority. In addition, based on the industry excitement around Cloud computing, and the potential business benefits and savings, this area is likely to become a higher priority for organizations next year as management solutions improve the ability to manage the offloading of services into the Cloud.

As shown in Figure 2, respondents are spending a considerable amount of time implementing and/or maintaining and improving projects related to availability, change management, problem management, and virtualization of the IT infrastructure. All of these initiatives ultimately support ways to achieve cost reductions, as well as improve availability, which in turn enhances the quality of service and creates a positive business impact. For example, by investing in change and configuration management technology, IT organizations can improve availability and help the business by avoiding risks and disruptions that can occur when changes are not managed effectively.

PLANS FOR A CMDB

More than 70 percent of those surveyed are involved in planning, piloting, implementing, or maintaining a configuration management database (CMDB) or a configuration management system (CMS). The CMDB, a data repository that offers greater alignment of disparate IT functions to common business priorities, can play a key role in helping IT organizations meet their service management objectives. It provides a single source of truth for the IT environment, ensuring a consistent approach to maintaining IT processes, such as incident, problem, change, configuration, asset, and service impact management. The service catalog of available technical and business services is also part of a CMDB. A configuration management system may include various IT management tools and federated databases, such as an asset database, a change management system, or a CMDB.

Item	Maintaining & Improving	Implementing	In Pilot	Planning	Not Considering
Improving IT Availability	47%	23%	7%	16%	7%
Change Management	46%	17%	7%	17%	12%
Problem Management	44%	17%	9%	18%	13%
Virtualization of Infrastructure	34%	27%	10%	17%	11%
Consolidating Service Desks	32%	20%	7%	15%	26%
Consolidating Data Centers	30%	23%	7%	15%	24%
Automating Network/Server Configuration	29%	16%	8%	19%	28%
CMDB or CMS	28%	14%	11%	19%	28%
Cloud Computing (See Virtualization)	6%	8%	7%	25%	53%

Figure 2. Some projects that companies are working on or are considering

PLANS FOR CONSOLIDATION

More than 50 percent of the respondents said they are either implementing or maintaining and improving initiatives related to service desk consolidation and data center consolidation, as indicated in Figure 2. These initiatives will help IT organizations reduce costs while improving operational efficiency. With service desk consolidation, they can eliminate the maintenance, licensing, staffing, and vendor fees associated with supporting multiple service desks, for an overall reduction in IT support costs. Data center consolidation can help IT organizations control costs without sacrificing service level expectations and service availability. This includes consolidating not just servers, networks, equipment, and the space that houses them, but also applications, software licenses, management tools, utility costs, and even people-related resources and vendors.

Respondents' priorities were generally well aligned with their key motivating factors for IT projects. The top five motivating factors out of nine, in order of priority, were as follows:

- » Reduce IT operations costs
- » Reduce IT support costs
- » Improve quality of service
- » Increase positive business impact
- » Improve availability

While reducing costs is the key objective over the next year, the respondents are also focused on areas that will position them for future growth by improving service, availability, and business impact. This is evident based on the status of projects underway, which are referenced in Figure 2. According to Dr. Alexander Grous of the Centre for Economic Performance (CEP) at the London School of Economics, "Innovation deficits are extremely hard to redress. Organizations that recover best are those investing in areas of the business that can deliver long-term returns — areas such as IT."¹

Because they have so many areas that are considered critical or very important, IT organizations need to focus on many initiatives. Their challenge moving forward is to take on initiatives that will deliver multiple benefits throughout the organization. For example, by automating compliance, they can address both compliance issues and managing costs through the same initiative.

TACKLING CHALLENGING ISSUES

IT organizations are continuing to focus on, and invest in, some key areas. A common goal of these areas is to reduce the amount of time staff spends on particular tasks, particularly those that are routine or administrative. Automation of such tasks is one way to reduce staff hours.

CHANGE AND CONFIGURATION MANAGEMENT

Organizations continue to focus on improving change and configuration management, which has a direct impact on helping IT meet the overall key priorities. Improving change management can reduce the time staff spends on change, enable IT to become less reactive, reduce the cost of operations, help IT deliver new services in a timely manner, and avoid costly business disruptions.

Efforts related to change and configuration management are likely to be focused on helping to address the key challenges in this area: dealing with staff/time restraints, measuring and prioritizing potential risks, and working on compliance regulations and requirements, as shown in Figure 3. Respondents report that technology exists to address these challenges; a variety of other issues, such as process optimization and adoption, can impact their success in change and configuration management. (The number on the left column indicates number of responses selected).

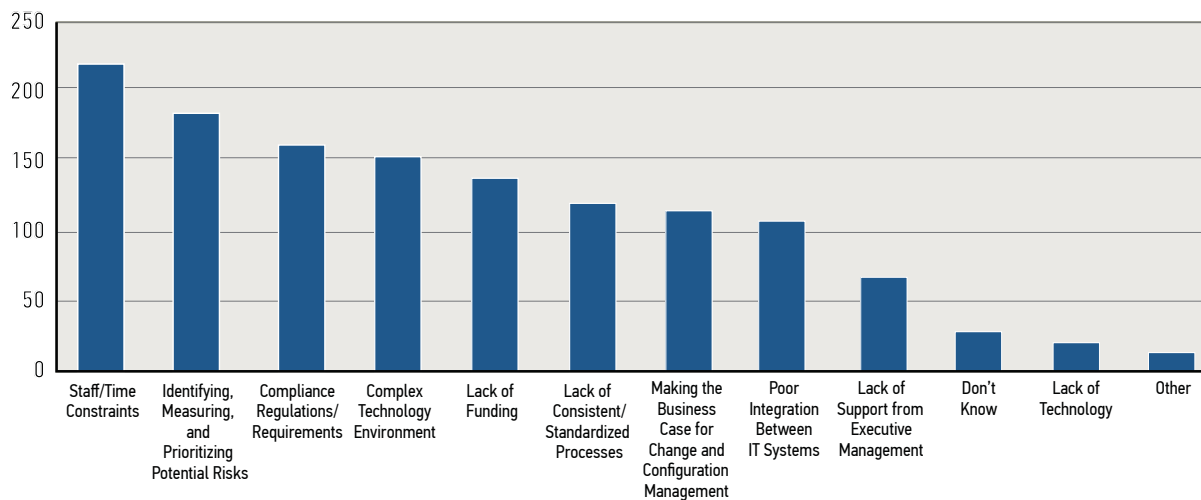


Figure 3. Greatest challenges related to change and configuration management

INCIDENT AND PROBLEM MANAGEMENT

Key issues related to incident and problem management have impacted IT organizations in the following ways:

- » Staff time spent on administrative tasks is increased.
- » IT is constantly in reactive mode.
- » Cost of support is increased.

Both incident and problem management directly address customer satisfaction, quality of service, quality of response, and service availability, since respondents' objectives are to quickly restore service and ensure that the service stays up by permanently fixing any problems that continue to arise.

EVENT MANAGEMENT

The top challenges related to event management are as follows:

- » Staff time constraints
- » Measurement and prioritization of event alarms
- » Complexity of the technology environment
- » Poor integration between IT systems and processes

Event management solutions that integrate with their incident/problem resolution processes and service desk solutions can help IT to address and manage these challenges. The solutions should be based on practices from the IT Infrastructure Library® (ITIL®) and address issues related to workflows and escalation processes. This technology can help IT organizations decrease the number of service desk calls, prioritize the calls that are reported, reduce escalations from first- to second-level support, and reduce overall costs.

IMPROVING SUPPORT

Staff and time constraints are the common challenges that impact the ability of IT to do effective change management, incident and problem management, and event management. These challenges, however, can be addressed by technology that automates support processes and is integrated with a federated CMDB.

The level of IT support can be improved with technology and training, as indicated in Figure 4.

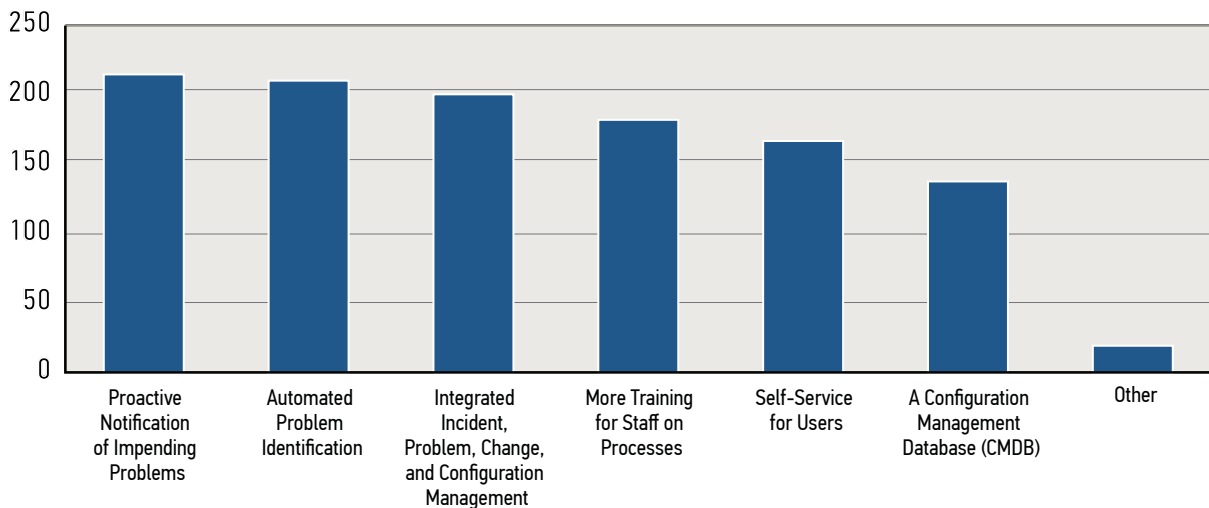


Figure 4. What would improve the level of support?

Technology is available that can address the key areas as follows:

- » *Proactive notification of impending problems and automated problem identification:* Through proactive incident and problem management, a solution can automatically determine normal operating ranges for every attribute of every IT resource in the IT infrastructure, as well as automatically identify performance abnormalities based on these ranges. This can help IT organizations reduce problem tickets and avoid downtime.
- » *Integrated incident, problem, change, and configuration management:* A CMDB can integrate these processes seamlessly across these disciplines to help increase availability and reduce the time staff takes to manage each separate process record.
- » *Self-service for users:* It is possible to eliminate more than 40 percent of the most repetitive incidents by offering self-service password management options, such as changes, resets, requests for access, and typical “how to” questions that can be routed to the correct department, taking IT out of such mundane tasks.
- » *Configuration management database:* A federated CMDB can offer a unified service view across all functions and processes, which can help IT make better decisions because it has a comprehensive view of how IT impacts the business.

Following an approach based on Business Service Management (BSM) will help IT organizations improve the level of support and enable them to plan, manage, and execute projects based on business priorities. BSM is a comprehensive and unified platform for running IT.

With BSM, technologies and processes are executed efficiently to deliver new services that create more business value while supporting existing services at lower cost. BSM can help IT organizations address multiple challenges that reach across various initiatives, as well as simplify and apply standard processes across IT. In addition to technology, online and instructor-based training can help IT staff achieve continual process improvement based on ITIL guidance.

PROCESS DOCUMENTATION AND INTEGRATION

About 90 percent of the respondents had some level of documented, repeatable, and measurable processes to enforce a change management process. About 35 percent reported they were well documented and repeatable.

When it comes to integrating processes with technology, only one-third of the respondents reported that they implemented integrated, enterprisewide IT management technologies to support their strategies. More than 40 percent had individual tools and technologies for each area with minimal integration, as shown in Figure 5. Placing more emphasis on process integration could help IT organizations address their core priorities.

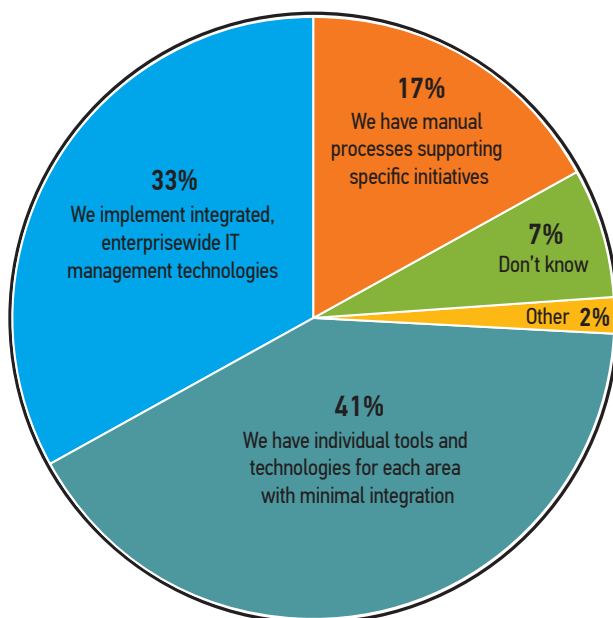


Figure 5. Process integration: Which describes the technologies supporting IT strategies?

Solutions based on best practices that leverage platforms can help IT organizations meet their process integration objectives. For example, solutions designated as ITIL® Process Compliant verify that certified software is driving true IT process

improvements and efficiency in accordance with ITIL best practices. To receive this designation, the software must successfully complete rigorous testing for achieving ITIL fundamental processes in the areas it is designed to serve, such as incident and problem management. The software solutions must also be used by IT organizations in accordance with these practices. Solutions that integrate best practices based on Control Objectives for Information and related Technology (COBIT) can also enable IT organizations to demonstrate effective governance.

CONCLUSION

In a challenging economy, IT organizations should look for solutions that will not only help address their immediate concerns for improved efficiencies and cost reductions, but also prepare them to grow their company's business when the economy recovers. The solutions should help these organizations leverage their existing investments and be based on best practices from frameworks, such as ITIL and COBIT. The technology and processes they are investing in today will help them to achieve the performance and availability needed to improve service delivery.

Based on the results of this survey, IT organizations' efforts are very focused on providing high-quality service at a reasonable cost. Their emphasis on compliance demonstrates the need for efficient processes and audit trail documentation for compliance. By having a clear understanding of the services being provided and their infrastructure dependencies, IT organizations will be in a better position to develop, automate, and integrate repeatable, measurable, and documented processes based on best practices.

One of the biggest challenges for IT is dealing with staff and time constraints. To address this concern, IT organizations should continue to focus on improving the prioritization of service tickets, process automation, and user self-service. Their service desk solution should provide the ability to reduce calls to the service desk through full automation of service requests. These actions can help IT to reduce operational expenditures — such as labor, facilities, and energy costs — which can make up a significant portion of IT costs.

Many IT organizations are virtualizing their infrastructure to reduce capital expenditures and improve agility. However, the very nature of virtualization increases IT scale and complexity. As organizations deploy more virtual machines, additional dependencies are created and changes become more frequent, thus compounding IT's management requirements. IT organizations can benefit from virtualization solutions that rapidly, reliably, and cost-effectively manage the complexity of virtualization, while helping them to address capacity planning requirements.

As the survey respondents indicated, IT must continue to maintain the level of service they've provided over the past couple of years with smaller budgets and fewer staff. They can meet the challenges of managing multiple initiatives by following a BSM approach and achieve greater value from their investment. Automation capabilities based on BSM — such as processes that impact everything from virtualization and configuration changes, to software upgrades and patches — eliminate the need for time-consuming manual work. This approach can help IT organizations to achieve the results they need to keep their companies competitive now and position them for growth.

END NOTES

- 1 "Important New Research: IT Innovators Beating Recession, Pulling Ahead of Competitors," BMC Software, www.bmc.com/en-GB/news/press-releases/2009/important-new-research-it-innovators.html, September 2, 2009.

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About the Author

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