



## Get a Holistic Prescription for Service Support

By Doug Mueller, Corporate Architect, BMC Software

The word “holistic” often is associated with healing or medicine, because holistic medicine is about treating all aspects of a patient — emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical. The concept of “holism” dates back to Aristotle, who told us that “the whole is more than the sum of its parts.”

Savvy IT organizations today are taking a holistic approach to service support — that is, treating the individual functions within service support as an integrated whole. Holistic service support is about replacing the traditional siloed approach to incident, problem, change, configuration, and asset management with a unified service support strategy. Companies that are already doing this are achieving greater IT efficiency and reducing costs:

- > When consolidation increased help desk call volumes by 25 percent for a global pharmaceutical company, the service desk absorbed the increase without hiring additional staff and still maintained its 75 percent first-call resolution rate.
- > A large insurance company cut \$2,500,000 out of its service desk budget by redeploying 25 percent of its service desk agents to other jobs. Today, the slimmed-down staff easily handles the same volume of calls that came in prior to the reduction in staff.

Just what is the secret behind the successes? These organizations transitioned to a collaborative, unified environment that optimizes and integrates service support processes; provides all service support functions with a comprehensive, holistic view of the IT environment; and expands the level of process automation.



### OPTIMIZING AND INTEGRATING

In siloed environments, disparate tools and databases are used by the service desk and incident management, problem management, change and release management, configuration management, and asset and inventory management teams. Process integration across functions is limited or nonexistent. Manual handoffs interfere with coordination among functional groups, resulting in inefficiencies and errors that drive up costs.

Process integration is a central theme of the IT Infrastructure Library® (ITIL®) framework, which offers guidance for optimizing IT service management processes. Integration of these processes allows for seamless workflow within and across functional groups in an end-to-end, closed-loop manner. Efficiency increases, the service support staff is more productive, and costs go down.

### SEEING THE BIG PICTURE

Silos create tunnel vision. Each service support function is limited to a partial view of the IT environment. Service desk agents can't see support contract information maintained in the asset database. Consequently, they don't have the user support entitlement information that would allow them to quickly direct calls to the proper support source. Asset analysts don't have access to incident and problem information. As a result, their total-cost-of-ownership calculations are inaccurate because they don't include the cost of supporting assets.

In contrast, a single, comprehensive view of the IT environment ensures that all service support staff members have the information they need to perform their jobs efficiently and effectively. All functional groups work with the same consistent data. The staff

easily rolls up metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs) that span functional areas, enabling IT to communicate the value of service support using metrics and KPIs that are meaningful to the business.

A holistic view shows how IT resources relate to the business services they support, providing service support teams with a customer view of the services IT delivers. Consequently, the staff can operate from a service perspective instead of a technology perspective. This is a fundamental concept of ITIL V3, and it's essential for achieving effective Business Service Management (BSM) — an approach for managing IT based on business priorities. BSM combines best-practice IT processes, automated technology management, and a shared view of how IT resources directly support the business. This comprehensive approach and unified platform for running IT reduces costs and maximizes business value.

## EXTENDING AUTOMATION

Point solutions automate actions within specific processes. As a result, they help reduce costs. Incident matching is an example of automating an action within an incident management process.

A holistic approach, however, extends automation to include not only actions within processes, but also entire processes within a service support function. Automating incident flow from capture to resolution is an example of automating a process within a function.

Holistic service support also extends automation to process sets that span multiple functions. Automating the entire procedure — from receipt of an event-based incident through problem management to change management — is an example of

the end-to-end automation of a process across support functions.

By eliminating mundane and repetitive manual tasks, automation frees up substantial staff time for strategic endeavors and also enforces the use of best practices. Cost-saving capabilities such as self-service become possible. Service request and fulfillment — enabling people to request services and check the status of their requests on their own — is a great example. In a fully automated environment, submission of a request kicks off a series of processes, gathering approvals, initiating and orchestrating the necessary fulfillment tasks, and tracking progress. Self-service slashes the number of calls coming into the service desk, which further reduces staffing requirements.

Automation can also encompass the documentation of processes and audit trails. The result is an enhanced ability to demonstrate compliance and a significant reduction in the cost of compliance audits.

## A POWERFUL PRESCRIPTION

Aristotle's idea that the whole is more than the sum of its parts applies directly to service support. When service support disciplines are isolated in silos using disparate tools, they deliver only moderate gains in terms of greater efficiency and lower costs.

The best prescription is a holistic service support strategy in which service support functions are integrated into a unified whole that delivers substantially more value than the individual silos could ever achieve.

A holistic approach lets you look at the big picture, enabling you not only to drive down costs, but also to increase the business value of the service support organization and communicate that value to your business users.

For more information about BMC Solutions for service support, visit [www.bmc.com/bsm](http://www.bmc.com/bsm).

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Doug Mueller is a corporate architect at BMC Software and cofounder of Remedy (acquired by BMC). He is the subject matter expert for BMC Remedy Action Request System and the applications based on it. Mueller is involved with product architecture/development and works with technical leaders in the BMC Service Support and BMC Atrium organizations, driving architectural consistency. Mueller actively works with and advises enterprise customers to help with their corporate IT strategy around BMC's BSM solution set, focusing on the BMC Atrium CMDB and BMC Service Support solutions.

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