

The Move Toward ITSM Mobilization

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New research reveals that companies that have already made business applications usable, or mobilized, for mobile devices are now ready to mobilize IT service management applications for improved productivity, efficiency and customer satisfaction.

Research conducted by

IDG Research Services



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Executive Summary



By 2010 about 90 percent of the world's population will live within range of a wireless network. Sales of smartphones are already four times those of mobile phones with fewer features. Smartphones now combine portability, computing power and battery life in a way that makes extending the functionality far beyond the desktop not just possible but also probable.

It all adds up to what some mobile computing experts are now calling Mobile 2.0—a term that reflects the next generation of mobility, when mobile devices will be our primary means of accessing data. Even now, computing-intensive tasks that once required a PC are becoming simpler to carry out on a smartphone, a process known as mobilization.

IT service management (ITSM) applications, which incorporate problem and incident resolution, change management and/or asset management, are especially ripe for mobilization. For example, giving IT technicians on-the-go access to service applications helps them do their jobs faster and more efficiently. But the results of mobilizing ITSM applications go beyond the tactical benefits; enabling technicians to address infrastructure issues more easily and quickly means that more-strategic business objectives such as improving customer service, increasing productivity levels and reducing IT costs can be realized.

IDG Research Services recently surveyed more than 200 CIOs and senior IT and business executives at companies of all sizes to examine the benefits of giving employees mobile access to strategic business applications, including ITSM applications. The survey, which includes respondents from a wide range of technical and non technical industries, also describes the challenges IT executives face in mobilizing these applications and suggests how to address them.

Key findings include the following:

- Respondents hope that mobilizing ITSM applications will help them achieve goals in service management operations.
- Although they are optimistic about the potential benefits of mobilizing ITSM, they have concerns about issues such as security, cost, reliability and integration.
- When respondents decide to mobilize an application, they prefer to work with the expert software vendor that provided the application in the first place.

The Benefits of Mobilization

The potential of ITSM applications to improve IT's ability to deliver high-quality service effectively and efficiently while controlling costs is not lost on survey respondents. Almost 25 percent report that ITSM applications have already helped them achieve their primary goal of better alignment between IT and business, and 61 percent say they expect to reach that goal in the next 12 to 18 months.

Across the board, regardless of role and company size, they anticipate that ITSM will help them achieve a variety of other important benefits, including improved customer service and response time, lower IT support costs, better compliance and improved SLA performance (see first chart).

Atwell Williams, solutions architect, Office of the CTO, BMC Software, says the Houston-based enterprise management software company has seen firsthand that enabling ITSM to mobile devices also delivers competitive advantage.

"If you look at recent weather disasters, the only network up during Hurricane Ike were the mobile devices," says Williams. "Having the ability to continue operations and react to any condition places those customers ahead of the game."

Notably, the research reveals that respondents who have mobilized ITSM are more likely to be achieving multiple service management goals. One example is Holcim Inc., a leading cement maker with more than 200 offices and manufacturing facilities across the U.S. and Canada. Holcim’s IT systems administrators had to return to their offices in the company’s Dundee, Michigan, headquarters between assignments to receive and update trouble tickets. As a result, they spent more time on the road, generating significant travel expenses, than resolving incidents under Holcim’s service-level agreements.

After mobilizing its ITSM system, Holcim is seeing measurable improvements: lower costs, increased hardware and software uptime; more up-to-date and accurate incident reporting; real-time insight into IT trends; and most critically, a 12 percent to 15 percent increase in SLA compliance in just one year, for appreciably higher productivity.

Mobile Expansion Plans

Given such optimistic expectations and promising results, 65 percent of all respondents are either already in the process of extending the functionality of strategic applications to mobile devices or planning to do so in the next 12 to 18 months. Among that group, the leading candidates for mobilization are field service, help desk applications and customer service.

Further, when the research data is broken into industry segments, the three largest industries represented are finance/banking/accounting/insurance, manufacturing and government/education. Here the data reveals that the manufacturing sector is twice as likely as the other two groups to have already mobilized applications, IT help desk functions in particular. This group is also more likely to be planning mobilization implementations in the coming 12 to 18 months.

Across business as well as IT departments, 52 percent of survey respondents say their organizations’ IT service or help desk functions are merely “somewhat effective” or “not at all effective” in diagnosing and resolving problems or incidents. Those figures become more informative when broken down by company size. Among those companies with fewer than 500 employees, 73 percent say that their IT services and help desk are extremely (15 percent) or very effective (58 percent) and 24 percent call them somewhat effective. However, in larger enterprises—those with 500 or more employees—those figures are much less positive: just 43 percent rate IT services and the help desk as extremely (7 percent) or very effective (36 percent), whereas 53 percent say they are somewhat effective. Perhaps this difference is because in larger companies, the IT service organization is more likely to have more demands on its time and to have a greater need to travel to respond to trouble tickets. Mobilizing ITSM has significant potential to fill what is clearly ample room for improvement.

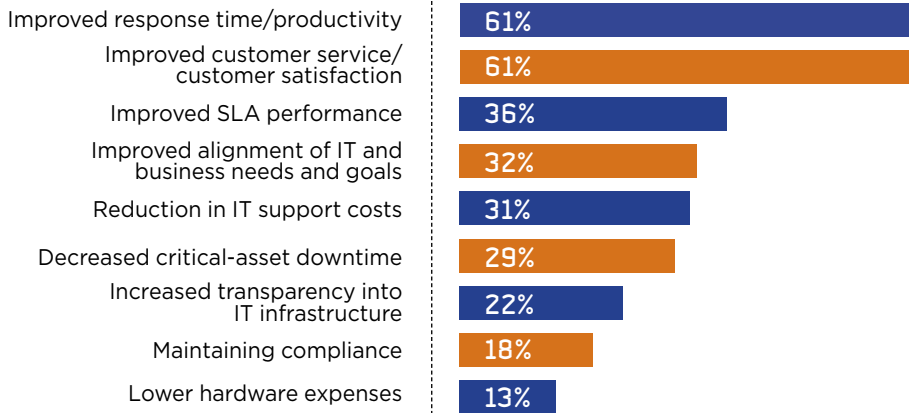
Strategic Approach

The IDG survey respondents indicate that mobilizing ITSM is a reasonable approach to lifting IT service and help desk functions to higher realms of effectiveness, thus giving them larger roles in the enterprise’s strategic plan.

And yet business does not clearly perceive mobilizing ITSM as strategy. In fact, the survey reveals a disconnect between what respondents cite as their ITSM goals and what they expect as benefits of mobilizing ITSM. For example, CIOs and IT leaders report that their top objective in adopting ITSM applications is to improve the alignment between business and IT. However, IT/business alignment ranks fourth on their list of expected benefits, a list that is topped by improved response time/productivity. Also interesting among the expected benefits of mobile ITSM is that improved SLA performance ranks third in importance, and yet when asked about ITSM goals, respondents put SLA performance as their sixth priority.

So, although ITSM is seen as a strategic solution, mobilizing it seems to be considered a tactical move rather than a strategic one that frees IT to focus on innovation. To shift this perspective, IT needs to bolster the confidence of corporate by presenting a clear case for the business benefits of mobile

Expected Benefits of Mobilizing ITSM Solutions



Source: IDG Research Services, October 2008

ITSM and corporate needs to remember that IT has much to contribute as a strategic partner.

In spite of any such disconnect, BMC’s Williams says the demand for mobile ITSM solutions is still increasing, even as operating budgets and annual revenue projections are decreasing.

“Many customers have already invested in mobile devices, and now is the time to maximize the productivity of customers’ employees using them,” says Williams.

Asked specifically about their interest in using software to help mobilize IT service management, however, 31 percent of respondents, regardless of company size or job role, say they are extremely or very interested and another 43 percent say they are somewhat interested. This discrepancy between expectations and actions may be due to worries about the potential challenges of mobilizing strategic applications.

Barriers to Mobilization

Across all categories, companies face similar barriers to mobilizing strategic applications, especially cost (41 percent) and the inability to measure ROI (36 percent). However, IT executives are more likely to consider the inability of wireless devices to support applications a particular challenge (28 percent). In addition, respondents at companies with more than 500 employees are more likely to point to lack of executive buy-in and the bandwidth of available wireless networks as obstacles.

Among those enterprises planning to mobilize ITSM, interest is higher among those that have already mobilized other strategic applications, most likely due to positive experiences and the benefits already achieved. Despite their expectation that mobile ITSM can deliver higher productivity and lower costs, respondents in all industries, company sizes and roles express concerns about:

- Security (60 percent)
- Integrating new technology with the existing infrastructure (57 percent)
- A cost increase (51 percent)
- Reliability (47 percent)

It’s not surprising that security tops this list, especially considering the financial and regulatory consequences when security and confidentiality of business-critical data and customer information are compromised. Viewing the security issue in greater detail, 62 percent say they worry most about

CIOs' ITSM Objectives for the Next 12 Months

Improving alignment of IT and business needs and goals	58%
Improving customer service and customer satisfaction	54%
Improving response time and productivity	48%
Reducing IT support costs	47%
Maintaining compliance	37%
Improving service-level agreement (SLA) performance	37%
Lowering hardware expenses	32%
Decreasing critical-asset downtime	27%
Increasing transparency into IT infrastructure	26%

Source: IDG Research Services, October 2008

securing data on mobile devices, 42 percent are concerned about securing the connection between mobile application and enterprise application, 41 percent cite the security of the device itself as an issue and 38 percent are concerned with the security of the wireless connection between device and server.

Interestingly, company size affects the way respondents rank their concerns. Among enterprises with 500 or more employees, security and integration top the list. At smaller businesses, integration and cost rank equally as the primary barriers to mobilization, with security closely following.

Again, regardless of company size, business executives are far more worried than IT executives about cost increases (72 percent versus 46 percent, respectively). On the other hand, senior executives on the IT side report significantly more concern about security

than their corporate counterparts. Although the survey does not specify, it makes sense to assume that IT considers itself responsible for being aware of and proactive about data security, whereas the corporate side of the business trusts IT to take that responsibility seriously.

The Decision to Mobilize

IT executives say they most want a single mobile platform that connects to and mobilizes multiple back-office applications, from ITSM to CRM and ERP. In this ideal wireless world, users would be able to use any smartphone on any carrier to access and manage any data. However, most companies are not prepared for the complexities of a corporate-wide mobile deployment and instead select a point solution—that is, one built to mobilize a single specific application.

The majority (33 percent) of survey respondents say they will return to their current software vendors when they want to mobilize specific applications. They trust that the original vendor is most experienced in transforming its own data into a less bandwidth-intensive but still full-featured form that can be accessed and updated by smartphone. What's more, they feel more confident that by working with the original vendor and its technology partners, they'll receive a point solution that integrates with the desktop application completely, securely and reliably, at a reasonable cost.

That was the approach taken by Lennox International, one of the world's largest makers of heating and cooling systems. Although its chosen service management solution, BMC Remedy, was powerful, Lennox's process required the company's 50 IT service technicians to return to their desks after each call to log the resolution of each trouble ticket and receive their next assignments.

To streamline the process, Lennox deployed Aeroprise Mobility for BMC Remedy Service Desk, which delivers a fully mobile version of the ITSM solution to BlackBerry smartphones. Today, the manufacturer's service technicians use their smartphones to create, receive, update, reassign and search trouble tickets, assets and change requests from any location with an available wireless or cellular signal.

As a result, they now resolve IT service requests in half the time, which, in turn, reduces IT costs, increases factory uptime and improves SLA compliance and performance. Aeroprise also delivers alerts and summaries to IT executives, putting the most up-to-date infrastructure status reports literally in their pockets for on-the-go analysis and action.

 Visit www.aeroprise.com/cio for more information about mobilizing ITSM.