

New Technologies Attempt to Meet ITSM Demands of IT Operations Group

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New categories of tools have entered the market to help IT organizations deliver business-oriented IT service management. But different technologies share features in common, raising the likelihood that products will merge. To decide what to buy, IT departments must assess their process maturity.

ANALYSIS

A recent spate of inquiries shows that clients are confused by overlapping capabilities and similar prerequisites among the new technologies and tool categories that have entered the market to address some of their IT service management requirements. Most vendors claim these tools will enable some improved alignment of IT with the business and help IT run itself more like a business. In this set of Research Notes, we provide definitions of product capabilities for these emerging tool categories and cut through the hype to detail realistic potential benefits that can be achieved by using these tools. We highlight the overlaps in functionality and possibilities for integration in the emerging categories: IT service portfolio management (which includes service catalog), business service management, IT service dependency mapping, and service-level agreement monitoring and reporting. In addition, we have included the more-mature IT service desk and IT asset management products, because many of these vendors have refocused on some of their original functionality claims with renewed vigor; thus, their marketing messages are beginning to overlap with some of these new, emerging tool categories.

"IT Service Portfolio Management Tools Encroach on IT Service Desk and ITAM Markets" defines the emerging category of IT service portfolio management (ITSPM) products, which are intended to help the IT organization document its portfolio of standardized services underpinned by repeatable process methodologies for service delivery. With their process workflow management and their ability to report on financial data such as service cost and funding, ITSPM tools overlap with the more mature technology categories of IT service desk and IT asset management, creating the possibility of product integration.

"Business Service Management Software, SLA Monitoring and Reporting Tools Likely to Merge" defines the functional criteria that a product must meet to be considered in the business service management (BSM) or service-level agreement (SLA) monitoring and reporting category. BSM and SLA monitoring and reporting are closely related categories that, over time, are likely to merge into a single toolset with an integrated set of both real-time and historical capabilities.

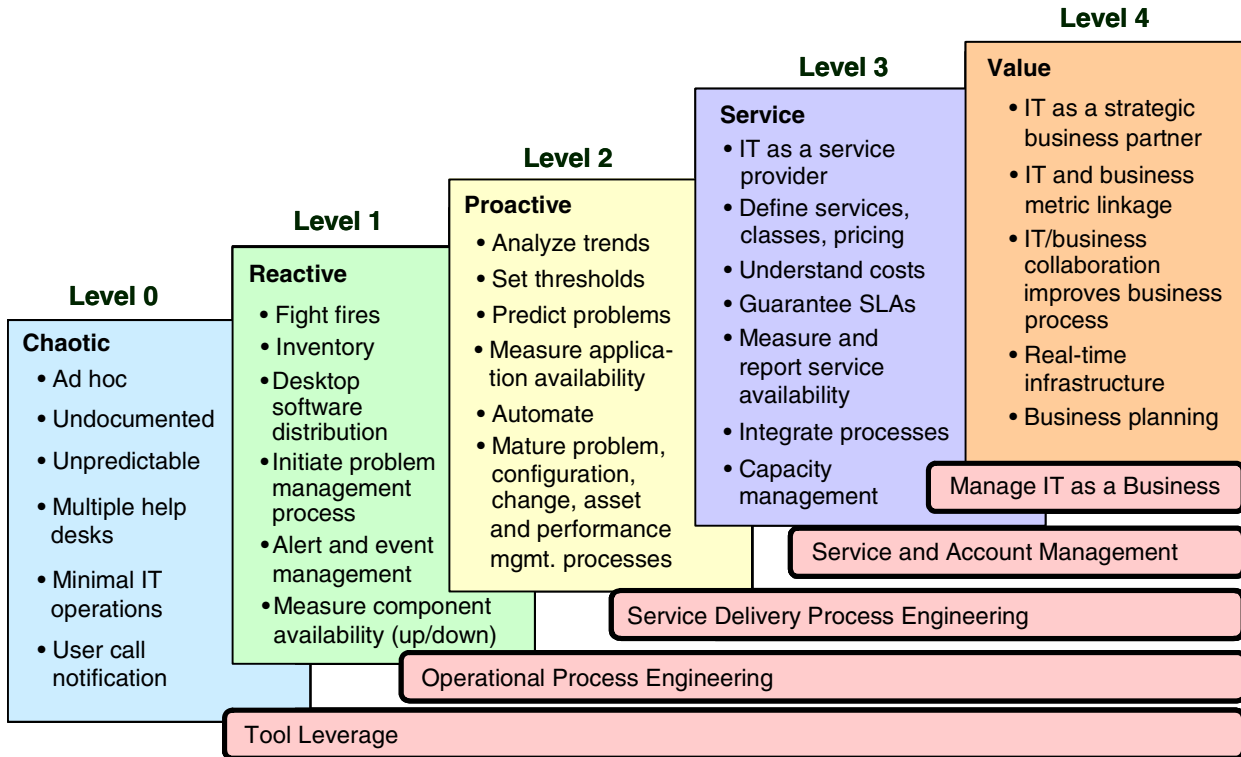
"IT Service Dependency Mapping Tools Provide Configuration View" defines this new functional category, which falls under the configuration management discipline. IT service dependency mapping tools discover IT configuration items (CIs) and automatically map the dependencies from IT services (or business applications) down to the CIs that enable those services. This foundational data can be exploited by tools in many other IT operations management disciplines to help evaluate the risk and business impact of IT problems or proposed changes. As a result, this category will probably be subsumed by other product types and be short-lived as a separate market segment.

"Emerging ITSM Technologies Create Market Overlaps and Opportunities for Integration" As clients evaluate these various emerging IT service management (ITSM) tools, several overlapping functions often materialize from the marketing descriptions, sometimes causing confusion. Here we document the overlaps, but more importantly, point out the differences (or lack of overlap) between the tool categories. Anytime new capabilities emerge in the market that a vendor feels are required to complete its product, there is the possibility for the vendor to develop, partner or acquire the new function. We document the opportunities for integration in this Research Note to provide clients with a view to the future partnerships and alliances that can be expected.

Be forewarned that many of these new technologies are near the Technology Trigger or high on the Peak of Inflated Expectations on the Gartner Hype Cycle (see "Hype Cycle for IT Operations Management, 2005"). This Research Note set can help you manage expectations down to a more realistic level. Despite the inflated expectations, there is no ITSM miracle cure here. Your IT

organization must attain the proactive level of IT management process maturity (see Figure 1) and be well on your way to service management to successfully deploy these emerging ITSM technologies.

Figure 1. IT Management Process Maturity Model



Source: Gartner (November 2005)

In response to business pressures to increase service quality while reducing costs, many IT organizations are searching for tools that help them document their IT services, understand service delivery costs, and measure and report service quality. None of these emerging tool categories provides a complete solution, and there is a high potential for market consolidation and acquisition as some of these categories begin to blend or disappear into other categories. When evaluating whether you should invest in these tools now or hold off until products become more mature and integrated solutions emerge, focus on tools that correspond to the level of IT management process maturity that your IT organization has attained. Many groups will need to work on IT service definitions and IT management process documentation prior to deploying any of these emerging IT service management technologies. Verify that the new tools will work in conjunction with your established management software deployments.

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