Bringing Visibility to Government Operations

Technology enables big improvements in IT and business operations. However, realizing these improvements requires visibility into all resources — applications, data, facilities, equipment, people and more — and the ability to automate how those resources are used in operational processes.

In this **Q&A, Chris Dilley** (left) **and Tom Yeatts,** chief architect and chief strategist for the state and local government and education markets at ServiceNow, discuss how a cloud-based service management platform can help governments transform IT and business operations with better visibility into technology and other assets; optimized IT and business processes; and improved resource utilization.

What are the challenges and drivers for IT to improve operations management?

Dilley: One driver is that IT needs visibility across all applications and infrastructure to understand their interdependencies and requirements for management and service delivery. This helps IT better manage operations, eliminate unplanned service interruptions and prioritize application development to improve business operations.

Another driver is enabling IT to be proactive and provide visibility to employees and citizens during a service issue or scheduled maintenance.

Yeatts: A big challenge comes from siloed applications and databases within departments. This creates a technical debt over time that becomes hard for IT to manage and citizens to navigate. However, if IT agencies are to serve as trusted advisers to customer agencies and departments, they must gain that visibility into their infrastructure and services.

How can a platform approach to delivering services improve IT and business operations?

Dilley: A service management platform helps IT identify and use different resources and elements to automate business processes. It can also help map the connections among data, applications and infrastructure resources that are needed to fully automate operational processes.

In addition, it helps IT be more proactive and transparent.

Yeatts: A configuration management database (CMDB) is a key component of a service management platform. It's typically used to track IT resources like servers and virtual machines, networking equipment and more. But this database can store information for any department. For example, a facilities department could store details about audio/visual equipment, conference rooms and other elements to help with building operations and maintenance. In turn, an automated process could use this information for room scheduling.

Dilley: Real-time visibility is achieved by populating your CMDB with data about your IT landscape and the structure of your service delivery. An accurate CMDB provides your organization with visibility to ensure your processes and services are operating as intended. At ServiceNow, we can both discover and map your services in context with the business. With that visibility, you gain decision support data to optimize processes and services and drive better decisions across the organization. This can include:

- Operational activities like incident response, vulnerability management and root cause analysis
- Tactical efforts like enterprise architecture, application portfolio management and capacity management

Operations to Consider

The following operations are particularly suited to management and automation within a service management platform:

- ☑ Assets with financial, contractual and inventory details such as IT hardware and device management, software asset management, and non-IT asset management such as fleet and lab equipment management
- ☑ Service notifications that must be communicated and coordinated among multiple departments and agencies, employees and vendors
- ☑ Preventive maintenance visits, training and recertification, equipment inspections and upgrades, follow-ups, meeting room use, and other activities that must be scheduled and completed within a specific timeframe
- ☑ Information that needs frequent updates to maintain critical accuracy about factors such as configurations, inventories, facilities and resource relationships

- Strategic decisions about application portfolios, business capabilities, business processes and technology landscape

How can an IT department begin the transition to a service management platform?

Yeatts: Look at which processes are ready to automate first; some may be so cumbersome they will need to be automated in phases. Spend the time to fully define all process steps, especially for processes that involve multiple departments. Another strategy is to focus initially on operations that already have well-documented processes.

Understand that automation is a journey that needs an executive sponsor. The budget justification needs to include quantifiable cost reductions and operational improvements.

How can a service management platform help IT departments drive digital transformation in their organizations?

Yeatts: Our customers asked us to provide a prescriptive method for leveraging the ServiceNow platform to plan, build, implement and operate customer service delivery. In response, we developed a standard, shared set of service-related definitions across our products and platform to enable and support true service-level reporting. We also have a standard, recommended CMDB Data Model across our products and platform to enable and support multiple configuration strategies.

This is invaluable for critical operational processes. Imagine a call comes in that a critical service is down. You can immediately understand everything tied to that service and quickly identify where to focus troubleshooting efforts.

Dilley: This visibility is critical to not only optimize how you do operations but provide a business-aware lens that helps the rest

What Governments Are Doing Today
A range of IT and business operations can benefit from the central visibility and automation capabilities in a service management platform.

One place for IT asset management. The Utah Department of Technology Services (DTS) must track more than 30,000 computers used in state agencies. The multiple spreadsheets previously used by technicians couldn't provide IT leaders a single, accurate and current record. Today, DTS uses the ServiceNow platform to capture barcode scans made whenever a computer is installed, moved or deactivated. This inventory allows DTS to comply with asset management standards, maintain accurate agency billing and improve security.

Streamlined processes for employee onboarding and IT procurement. Obtaining a computer, phone, email account and network access for a new employee previously meant multiple calls and requests for the hiring manager in a Tennessee state agency. To accelerate and streamline employee onboarding, the Tennessee Strategic Technology Solutions division created a standard process in ServiceNow to request all needed IT services. The process is triggered automatically when the new hire is approved in the state's ERP system. This single process has reduced service request tickets from seven to one and employee activation time from weeks to just five days. Timely activation is enabled in part by other processes defined in ServiceNow for IT procurement and managing the state's inventory of standard-configuration computers and spare equipment.

A single system of record for visibility throughout the agency. In Howard County, reliance on error-prone institutional knowledge for service mapping resulted in a four-hour service outage after a change was approved and implemented. The county IT department used ServiceNow to map infrastructure to services and automate internal IT processes. Now the team can readily understand the health of their IT environment, quickly evaluate service impacts and proactively fix problems. Instead of sending a broadcast message to everyone for every incident, alerts and status messages target only impacted users. The county has seen tremendous gains in productivity and in the team's ability to meet or exceed service level agreements.

of the organization make better decisions. For example, if a critical vulnerability is discovered, how can you quickly understand which business services might be impacted?

Yeatts: Business context also helps you prioritize relative importance when issues in the environment do occur. Which issues should be prioritized first? Which problems are directly impacting citizens?

Understanding business impact allows you to drive digital transformation across multiple business and IT functions within your organization. ServiceNow's integrated platform can help governments transform IT and business operations with better visibility into technology and other assets; optimized IT and business processes; and improved resource utilization.