

# Survey Says: Government IT System Outages are Painful, Not Uncommon



## How IT operations management solutions help agencies prevent—and quickly recover from—unplanned downtime.

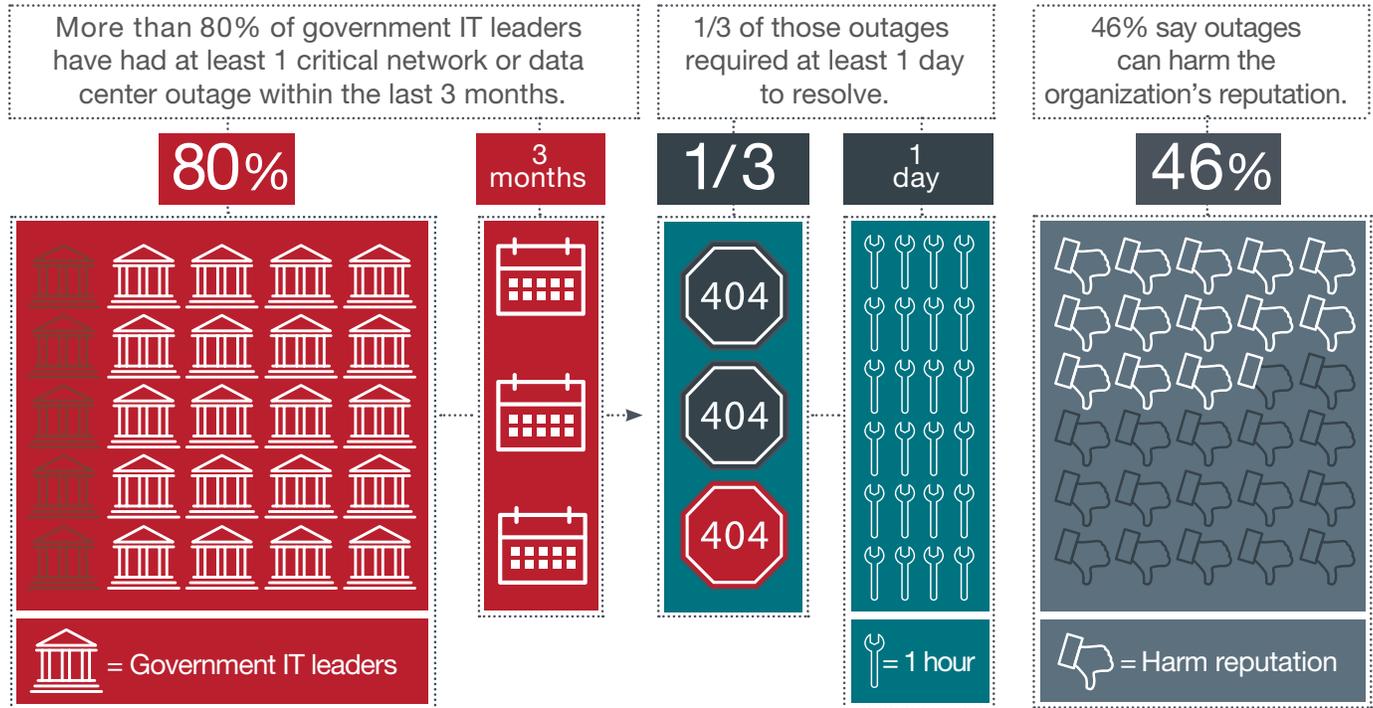
In a digital economy, system outages and website glitches are serious business. They can even move markets. When Facebook went down for 40 minutes in 2015, its stock dropped by 4% and cost the company an estimated half a million dollars in revenue.

Government systems outages may not hit the six-figure mark, but they do have serious consequences—and they happen on a shockingly regular basis. In late 2015, the Center for Digital Government (CDG) surveyed 127 state and local government leaders about IT system and website uptime. More than 80 percent of those respondents said their agency had experienced at least one critical network or data outage within the last three months.

While these outages cost money, perhaps the more important consequence is the impact on governments' relationships with citizens. For example, in February 2016—prime tax season—the IRS stopped accepting electronically filed tax returns because of problems with some of its computer systems. The agency warned the outage could affect refunds. They quickly discovered that hell hath no fury like taxpayers whose refund is delayed in receiving money the government owes them.

Government transactions have moved online, citizens expect instantaneous services—and leaders know what's at stake. Of the CDG survey respondents, 40% said outages negatively impact their organization's financial operations and 46% said they damage their agency's reputation.

## Frequency and Impact of Government IT Outages



Citizens today expect instantaneous service, making it more important than ever for agencies to implement a sophisticated, long-term IT operations management (ITOM) solution.

### What is ITOM and Why is It Important for Government?

To put it simply, ITOM is a set of solutions that helps keep the lights on—or, more precisely, keeps the various IT systems, applications, and networks that governments use up and running. ITOM helps government IT departments manage every aspect of IT and deliver services at a predictable quality and performance. According to one CEO, “ITOM is like a portal with a hybrid set of technologies behind it—and via this portal, it’s easy to manage and monitor the IT applications’ environments of your clients.”

For government agencies, system glitches and outages have human consequences, which makes ITOM all the more important. Outages can prohibit citizens from renewing their drivers’ license online, delay SNAP beneficiaries from receiving the money they need to buy groceries, or make it difficult for individuals to receive the unemployment check they need to pay their bills.

While no agency is immune to outages, it’s critical to quickly identify and resolve issues and resume services. CDG survey respondents noted the three primary challenges to resolving outages are: difficulties in pinpointing the root cause (56%), remediating issues quickly within service level agreements (56%), and coordinating with multiple teams (39%).

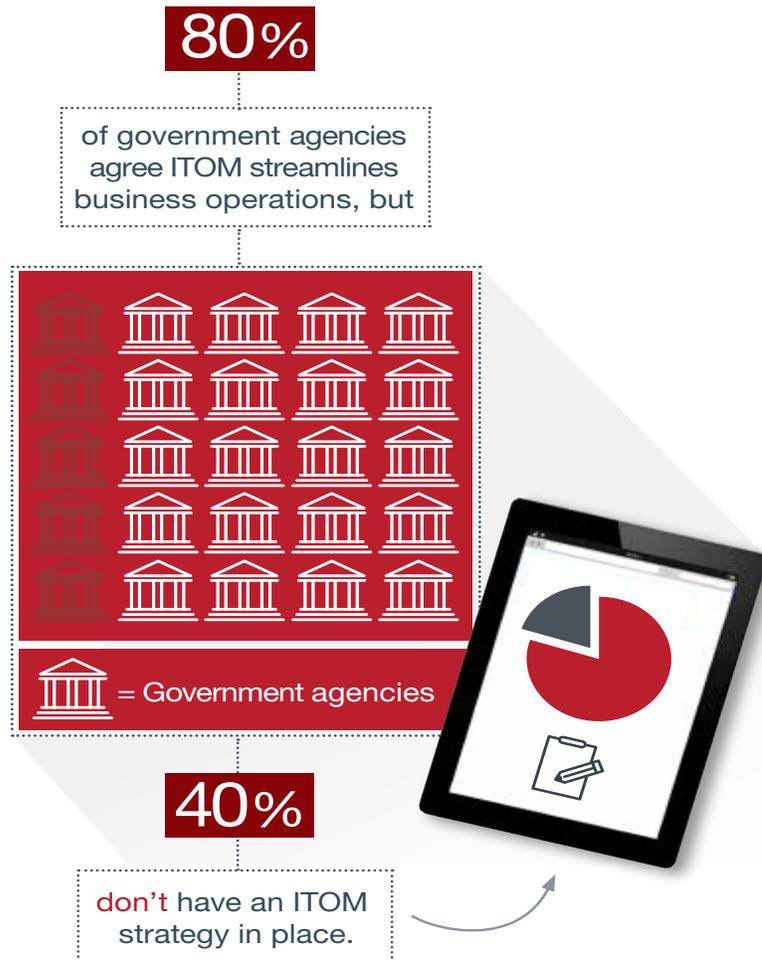
In an era when citizens expect to transact with governments electronically, IT departments need automated tools to manage and monitor applications across their life cycle—including development, deployment and operations—to keep important services up and running. Agencies need a unified platform that binds service delivery into a cohesive whole, driving standardized processes and stopping outages before they start.

While more than 80% of CDG survey respondents said ITOM streamlines business operations, 40% of them said their agency doesn’t have an ITOM strategy in place.

**The 411 on ITOM**

How can agencies improve service delivery and quality when IT staff time is spent dealing with day-to-day upkeep and crises? ITOM solutions help automate and streamline functionality, ultimately improving service delivery and providing agencies with:

- 1. A clear picture of the IT environment.** An ITOM solution can identify all elements of the infrastructure across the agency and reliably automate all system and business application processes.
- 2. Visibility into services.** Once a clear picture is built, agencies can immediately identify which business services are affected by system and service changes, outages, or performance issues. ITOM solutions allow agencies to create service maps to show how applications and IT components are interrelated to support a service.
- 3. Automation of provisioning, configuring, and managing the cost of requested services.** ITOM provides agencies with process automation that is superior to legacy systems. At the same time, agencies can avoid the expense of upgrading legacy software and reduce overhead by minimizing administrative costs.
- 4. Business continuity.** ITOM solutions often include a configurable dashboard to provide a consolidated view of alerts, incidents, and their impact. This snapshot ensures business continuity and minimizes the impact of service outages. IT leaders can monitor the health of the IT infrastructure in real time.
- 5. Stronger governance and IT operations processes.** ITOM strategies are not one-and-done implementations; instead, they should be updated regularly. Agencies should continually assess ITOM processes and their performance over time.



**Accelerating Innovation**

With reputation and financial considerations on the line, agencies must handle outages efficiently. Escalating demands for streamlined business services mean agencies must find smart ways to gain complete visibility and control, break down communication barriers, and automate time-consuming, error-prone delivery processes. A holistic, integrated ITOM approach can help to address the entire software delivery life cycle.

By automating service deployment and providing insights into the business performance of services, IT can transition from siloed development, deployment, and operations to a unified, end-to-end ITOM delivery model that accelerates innovation and enhances service quality.

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