Business services provider boosts SLA compliance

HP software enables management improvements, reduced downtime of mission-critical applications

"By linking business services to infrastructure we now have visibility into which business services are affected by any problems in the infrastructure. This helps us prioritize our problem analysis and resolution to meet the needs of the business."

—Gerard Imhoff, Corporate Vice President, Director of Global Infrastructure Services, Business Services Company

HP customer case study: Using HP software, one company reduces downtime—and with it, the risk of financial penalties associated with missed Service Level Agreements (SLAs)

Industry: Business services

Objective:

Improve ability to meet service levels and customer expectations, and reduce risk of hardware and software outages

Approach:

Implement an enterprise technology management framework to enable improved collaboration and problem resolution
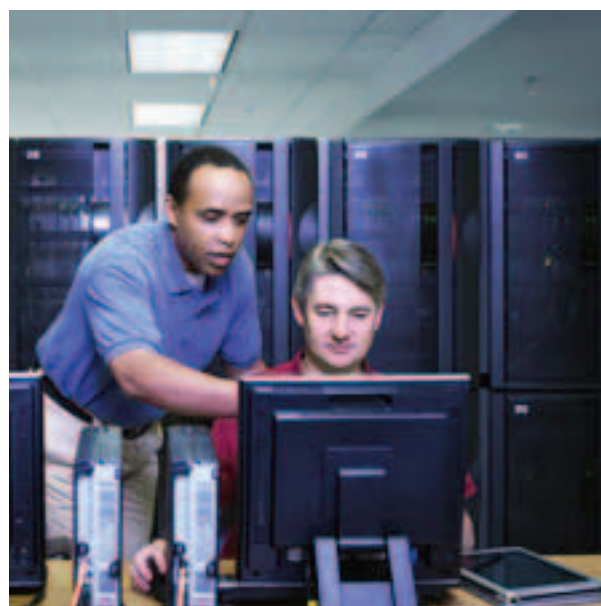
IT improvements:

- No more need to create infrastructure maps manually
- Application maps, dependency reports generated in minutes, instead of weeks
- Easier to create, maintain business service views of the infrastructure
- Agentless platform reduced compatibility and performance issues

Business outcomes:

- Reduced mean time to repair
- Reduced downtime of mission-critical applications
- Relationships between components easily identified
- Issues easier to identify before customers experience performance degradations
- Reduced exposure to financial penalties due to missed SLAs
- Easier to satisfy PCI compliance issues

Any company that offers business services must harness the power of business technology. But for one company, which has established a leadership position in the business services industry, that business technology must be state-of-the-art. It must enable the company to automate and improve services to its internal and external constituents.

The company with web-based applications serving 80 percent of the Fortune 100 is aware of the close relationship between effectively managing the IT environment and maintaining its service levels.

That's why it has chosen HP business technology optimization software to manage its technology infrastructure.

Customer solution at a glance

Primary application
Infrastructure management

Primary software
• HP Universal CMDB software
• HP Business Availability Center
• HP Release Control (formerly HP Change Control Management)
• HP ServiceCenter

HP Services
HP software implementation services

Incurring penalties for missed SLAs

Gerard Imhoff, the company's Corporate Vice President and Director of Global Infrastructure Services, explains that the company began by moving from a mainframe environment to a more customer-facing, distributed environment based on Windows and UNIX systems. As a result, the company's technology team now manages a large and diverse infrastructure to support more than 5,000 internal users, several CTI-enabled contact centers and a large, mobile workforce. Technology components include more than 1,700 data center devices (hosts, switches, routers), more than 100 applications serving over 1,000 active websites, several thousand SQL and Oracle databases, and more than 150 TB of SAN storage.

"The HP UCMDB with dependency mapping is very powerful. You can do so much with it that isn't possible with other vendors' tools. It demonstrates a lot of extensibility and provides extremely powerful visualization and mapping capabilities."
Gerard Imhoff, Corporate Vice President, Director of Global Infrastructure Services, Business Services Company

This new infrastructure has enabled the company to meet the continuing increase in customer requirements and service expectations. However, managing this extensive, diverse environment was also challenging. There was no overall business service view linking applications to underlying infrastructure and network availability. Monitoring was limited to infrastructure components such as device and network availability.

And because the monitoring was incomplete, the company's technology team used several home-grown tools.

Without a common business service view or cross-silo monitoring tools, it was difficult for the company's technology professionals to collaborate and resolve performance and availability problems.

"We were starting to incur penalties for missed SLAs due to technology failures," explains Imhoff. "We were limited in our ability to correlate an outage with its impact on an SLA. Each group—web, network, database and application development—monitored its own environment and did not understand the interrelationships between infrastructure components used by other groups. We had plenty of data, but very little useable information."

To cope with this situation, the technology team created maps of their applications and infrastructure manually. They identified all assets and then documented the interdependencies between configuration items (CIs). "These maps took multiple weeks to create and were subject to significant inaccuracies," says Imhoff. "And once created, the maps were outdated in just a matter of days."

It was clear to Imhoff and his team that they needed a new approach.

Extremely powerful visualization and mapping

After an extensive multi-vendor search, the company selected HP business technology optimization software. The foundation of the solution is HP Universal CMDB (UCMDB) software. The HP UCMDB delivers discovery and dependency mapping

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capabilities that enable the company's technology team to create and automatically maintain business service views of the technology infrastructure.

In addition, the company implemented HP Business Availability Center to measure the performance and availability of business services and to measure SLAs; HP Release Control (formerly HP Change Control Management) to proactively analyze change impact and assess risk; and HP ServiceCenter to manage incident and change management processes. All these HP software solutions integrate with the HP UCMDB and leverage its capabilities.

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"Another important aspect of the HP solution is that it is an agentless platform," Imhoff adds. "In the past,
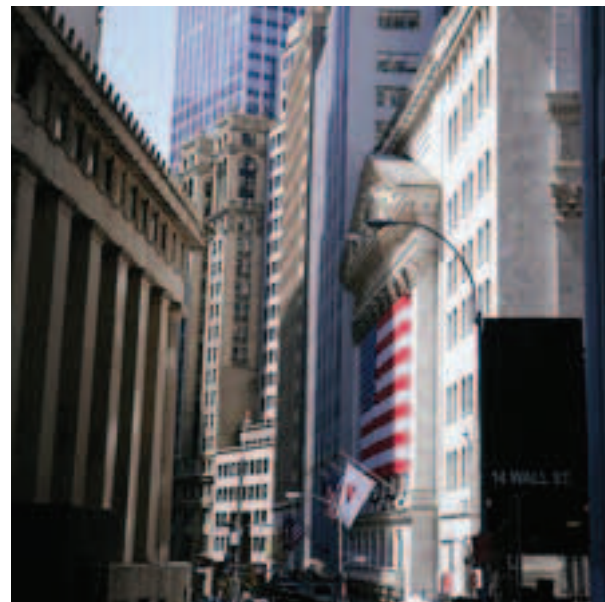
when we had to install agents to use other vendors' solutions, we experienced numerous compatibility and performance issues. This isn't an issue with the HP software."

The dashboarding feature of HP Business Availability Center enhances the capabilities of the UCMDB by bringing information from it into a single view. Individual application owners can see whatever pertains to them without being confused with information overload from the rest of the infrastructure. "The ability to drill down in a graphical format to identify the root cause of issues is extremely powerful and significantly reduces our mean time to repair," notes Imhoff.

"The tight integration of the suite of HP solutions has enabled us to merge three separate projects into one combined initiative. And this, in turn, dramatically increases the value of our CMDB investment."
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Since the company's highest business priority was improving SLA compliance, its technology team also engaged HP Services to do the implementation. "I felt extremely well-taken care of by the HP team—both the onsite personnel and the people behind the scenes," says Imhoff. "They were strong from a project management and technical perspective, and extremely efficient during the actual implementation. They brought great skill sets to the project and jelled quickly and easily with our IT team. And from a timeline perspective, this couldn't have gone more smoothly."

**Outages minimized, exposure to financial penalties reduced**

In the first two months after implementing the HP UCMDB software, the company discovered over 474,000 separate CIs—70,000 in the first hour alone. They also automatically discovered and mapped over 500,000 relationships between the numerous infrastructure components. "We currently have over 100 applications in-house and have already finished mapping three of them," says Imhoff. "We plan to complete maps on all of our applications after we have all of the CIs identified. The HP UCMDB has validated our decision to deploy an agentless solution. We can now easily identify the relationships between components and automatically maintain them as the infrastructure changes."

Using the HP Business Service Management (BSM) solution, the company has reduced downtime in its mission-critical applications. Before, the company's monitoring tools were very infrastructure-biased. They were not effective at monitoring applications or overall service levels. But with HP UCMDB software, the technology team can identify issues before customers

experience performance degradations. "We have minimized the number of outages that affect our SLAs, reducing our exposure to financial penalties by a significant order of magnitude," says Imhoff.

The company also uses the HP UCMDB application maps to show PCI compliance auditors the exact locations of firewalls and demonstrate that specific applications reside behind them. And it no longer has to create Visio sheets or manual diagrams—processes that used to take weeks. Now, generating the necessary application maps takes only minutes.

As a result of the success of the initial project, the company is now implementing HP Release Control for proactive change impact assessment and plans to incorporate HP ServiceCenter to help manage the company's incident and change management processes. "The tight integration of the suite of HP solutions has enabled us to merge three separate projects into one combined initiative," Imhoff concludes. "And this, in turn, dramatically increases the value of our CMDB investment."
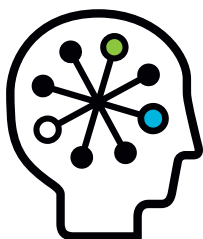
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