Evolve Workload Management with Self-Service

Reduce IT operations support overhead by empowering business users to manage their own jobs.

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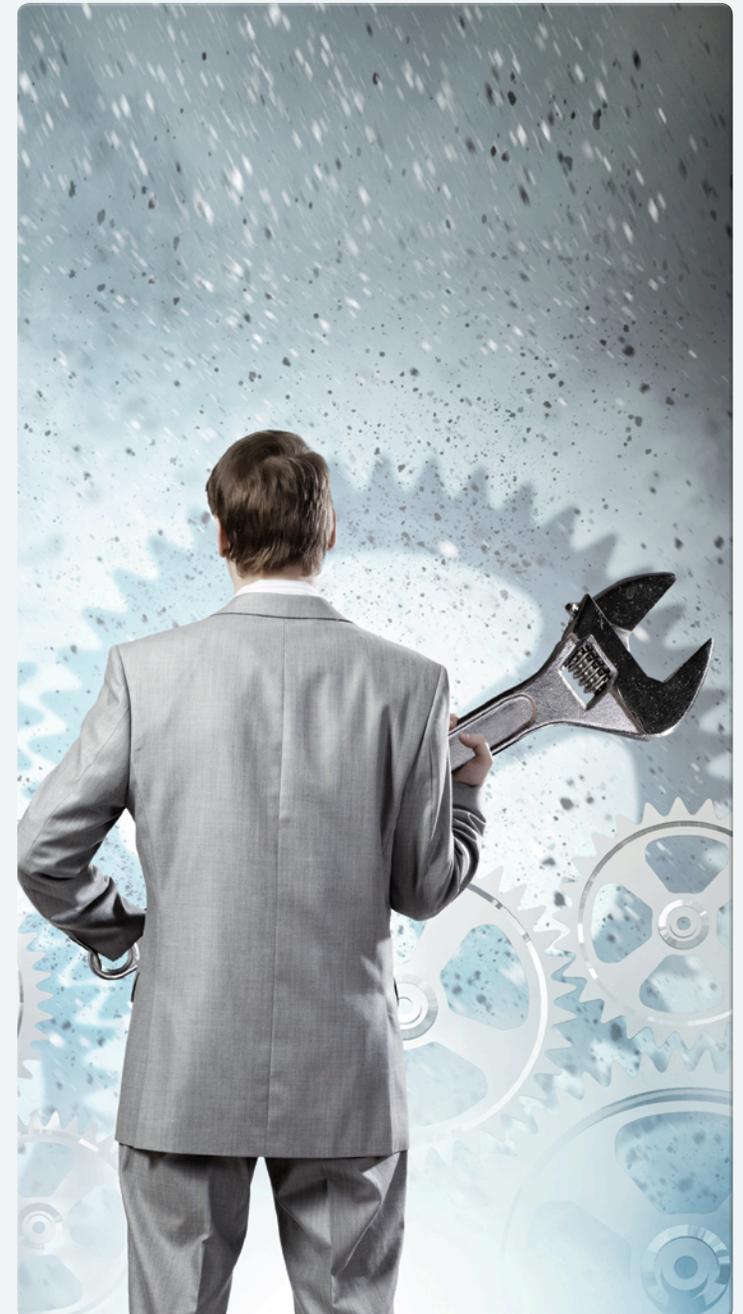
Why Provide Self-Service?

Self-service is making its way into more areas of business and personal activity. Technology enables self-service, and people embrace it because they don't like to be dependent on others. In business, self-service aligns with the widely pursued goals of making the enterprise more agile, responsive, and innovative.

So why haven't more enterprises provided automated self-service for routine workload management? There are three main reasons.

- **First,** many IT and business users are not aware of the extent of self-service that is possible.
- **Second,** self-service has challenges and risks. The service interface must be easy to understand and convenient to use, or else business users will ignore it and revert to submitting service request tickets or contacting a favorite IT support staffer. On the IT side, self-service systems must be designed so that each user can manage his or her own job without interfering with other workloads. The system must

also ensure that all enterprise compliance and security policies are automatically and consistently enforced.

- **Finally,** self-service should not represent reduced service — quality, speed, and other SLAs should not be reduced or compromised in order to enable self-service.

The rewards outweigh the risks because of the comprehensive self-service capabilities available today for workload management. Self-service is a proven way to save time for IT operations and business users alike, as examples presented later in this paper will show. A consequence of saving time for IT operations is a reduction in overall IT support costs. The time saved from non-value-added activity such as checking on the status of a report can instead be spent on proactively optimizing the production environment. IT professionals recognize the value. Self-service technologies are the top solutions that support teams want to acquire for 2016, according to HDI.[1]

Business users become more productive too. For example, they can answer

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Self-service has transformed many common tasks — ranging from how we make travel reservations to how we pay bills, schedule appointments, request time off, reset passwords, etc. — but self-service has not been extended to some time-consuming IT queries where it would be beneficial. Business users frequently contact IT operations teams to check the status of reports and other jobs or to lobby for priority handling. These routine requests are inconvenient for business users to make and often pull IT staff away from more important activity.

It is time to extend self-service to scheduling and status requests for the thousands of routine workloads that businesses run each day. Doing so will give business users the visibility, control, and responsiveness they desire, while freeing IT personnel to focus on essential operations that require their specialized skills. This white paper highlights the following:

- *The value of self-service for workload management*

- *Why it is becoming essential to provide automated self-service*

- *How it can be done*

customer inquiries instantly, without having to file a status request update with IT. Some self-service systems are accessible on mobile devices, taking responsiveness to another level. As Rusty Clark, data center supervisor for the city of Long Beach, California, said:

Business users are much happier when they have control over their jobs. And our staff is freed up from time-consuming tasks that users can easily handle themselves. People can also check the status of their jobs, so they no longer have to call us back to find out when a job will be done or when a report will be available.[2]

Self-Service Benefits to Business Users

When self-service programs are done right, business users don't see self-service as work but as a time-saving resource that gives them flexibility. Having the autonomy to bypass IT to get updates is one of the most popular and widely cited benefits among organizations

that have implemented self-service workload management programs. This quote from an IT professional at Unum, a benefits provider in the U.S. and U.K., nicely sums up the benefit of autonomy:

We can empower users to run their own work when they want to. They don't have to use our homegrown process to submit requests to run their work. They can log in to self-service, select the jobs we allow them to run, hit two buttons, and bam, it's done. It cuts down on the time to open a request, send it to us, and wait on us to process it for them. That's one of the biggest benefits we've seen.[3]

Along with autonomy comes convenience. Because business users do not need to rely on IT, they are not dependent on IT schedules. Users can access the information they
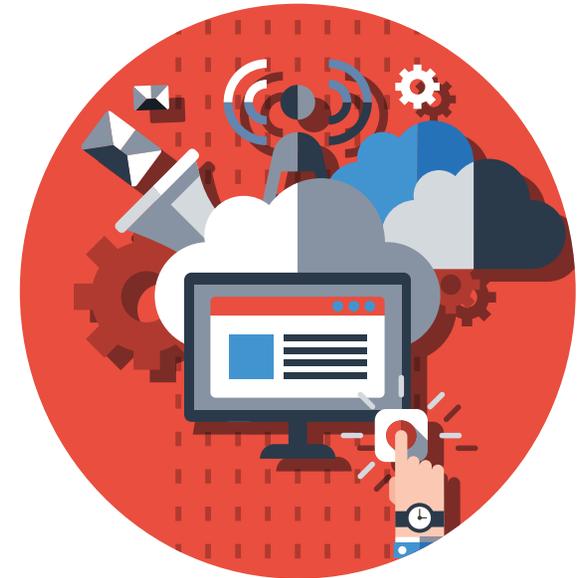
need at any time, and if the self-service program supports mobile devices, they can access information from anywhere. Anywhere, anytime information access allows businesses to run faster and raise their level of customer service. For example, a package delivery company in Europe monitors and tracks thousands of shipping transactions each day. Many of its employees that need access to automation are off-site and use the internet or mobile devices. With self-service, the delivery company can provide immediate, context-based access to users regardless of where they are.

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Self-Service Benefits to IT Operations

Workload automation self-service has proven to be a tremendous time-saver for IT organizations. Besides the direct cost savings from improving productivity, the time saved creates value because IT staff can keep working on tasks that add more value than answering update requests. That makes workload management self-service a strategic fit for enterprise strategies to run leaner and increase the pace of innovation. As the operations manager at Unum said:

> *We've seen a trend: As the services being ordered through self-service increased, our manual interventions have decreased. We're in the process of transforming mainframe operations. We want to automate as much as possible, so self-service really fit in with that vision.*

Saving time also saves money. To get an idea of how much your organization could save, multiply the average cost to process a level-one support ticket by the number of ticket requests for job updates and other tasks that could be handled by self-service. IT workers spend 75% of their time on level-one support tickets.

4 ORGANIZATIONS' SELF-SERVICE TIME SAVERS

• *Instituto de Informática,* which provides systems support to Portugal's social security agency, saved job schedulers up to two hours per day after giving business users the self-service ability to access job status details from desktop and mobile devices. "With self-service and the mobile interface for our project managers, we can do a better job of serving our customers while increasing our own productivity," said Wilson Lucas, applications support manager.

• *Aon Hewitt, a business consulting firm,* reported a 40% reduction in the number of phone calls its infrastructure and operations team had to respond to after implementing self-service.

• *A North American outsourcing firm* reduced the number of help desk tickets opened by 90% after implementing self-service for workload automation. At the same time, it significantly improved service delivery to teams around the globe. The firm has 300 client teams that regularly use automation services. When a user needed to request or change an automation service, he or she submitted one of 75 different help desk forms. The backlog of help desk tickets caused low customer satisfaction, and the overhead of processing those tickets was high. After implementing self-service, users could request and change automation services on demand, significantly reducing the number of help desk tickets required — and eliminating the associated overhead. Users have more control, and satisfaction levels have risen.

• *Unum* reduced ad hoc work requests to the IT operations staff by more than 60% less than a year after introducing self-service. The workload for the production control staff declined by a similar amount.

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Self-service may also help slow the spread of dangerous shadow IT: The less that users need to depend on the IT organization to get things done, the less likely they will be to go around the IT organization and its policies to find alternate solutions.

Obstacles to Workload Management Self-Service

The leading reasons workload automation self-service isn't more widely used are misperceptions about what is possible, plus concerns about security and control.

Misperceptions are perhaps the biggest obstacle. Most business users probably aren't aware of the full scope of workload automation's capabilities. In reality, there are proven solutions that provide enterprise-grade security and role-based controls to effectively automate tasks that account for a high proportion of help desk requests. It is important to have enterprise-class features with a convenient interface, because if self-service isn't easy for users, they'll revert to their previous, less efficient methods for requesting support.

Some IT organizations oppose self-service

because they worry that business users could interfere with the execution of mission-critical workloads. A related concern is that enterprise security and policies can't be extended and enforced at the business-user level. These are legitimate concerns but are not necessarily deal breakers. Enterprises have successfully avoided self-service security and execution problems by using solutions that provide role-based access and build in automatic enforcement of enterprise policies and SLA

requirements. The latter point is important. Offering self-service for workload management should not require enterprises to give up control or make compromises on performance, reliability, or policies.

Solution Requirements

The potential benefits from self-service workload automation and caveats to a self-service environment that have been described thus far form the guidelines of the functionality and protections that a self-service solution should include. Some solution requirements have been referenced, others are obvious, and still others can easily be overlooked. Here is a summary of the essential elements for a successful self-service solution and program:

- **Intuitive interface:** If the solution isn't easy for nontechnical professionals to use, it will go unused, which undermines the value of the self-service initiative.
- **Targeted information:** Today's workload automation solutions can provide a lot of details and performance metrics, but that doesn't mean they should. The purpose of self-service is to improve convenience.

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From the interface perspective, that means limiting what is presented to business users and making their most important information easy to find. As one IT professional said, "Self-service was very helpful for our directors and managers that have no interest in actually digging down into an application."

- **Limited access:** The system must be designed so that business users can only manage their own workloads without interfering with any others. IT operations must retain overall control over workload execution, including the ability to approve schedules and change them as needed.

- **Automated policy enforcement:** Business users can be expected or trusted to follow enterprise policies and regulatory requirements for security, scheduling, SLAs, etc. Those controls can be built into the workload automation self-service system and automatically applied and enforced for all activity performed by self-service users.

- **Broad support for services and job types:** The more types of applications, systems, jobs, and requests the self-service solution can support, the more valuable it will be. Work

that can be managed through enterprise self-service workload automation solutions includes report generation, workload scheduling, file transfer, ETL (extract, transfer, load) and data integration jobs, ERP output, new services requests, application-specific reports and tasks, and more.

- **Mobile support:** Business today is mobile, and self-service is used to provide convenience. Therefore it doesn't make sense for a self-service solution not to support mobile users. Mobile device support is not as widely available as other aspects of workload automation self-service solutions, but it has become an essential requirement. Some solutions offer an additional security layer for mobile access.

These are a few fundamental, nondetailed requirements. Investigate self-service solutions closely to determine what additional features and capabilities would be valuable for your organization.

Conclusion

The more IT support functions an enterprise can automate, the faster it can make progress on more strategic initiatives. For many enterprises, workload management represents an untapped opportunity to automate. It not only supports faster innovation by making more efficient use of IT resources, it benefits business users by giving them new levels of autonomy and convenience. That makes extending self-service to workload management an effective and valuable strategy in today's "do more with less, faster" environment.

1. "Tools Used to Provide Technical Support." HDI. Accessed July 1, 2016.

2. "Control-M Self Service." BMC website. Accessed July 1, 2016.

3. "Unum: Control-M Self Service." BMC website. Accessed July 1, 2016.

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