

The Future of IT Operations: 5 Principles to Empower IT Professionals

A Thought Leadership White Paper





Embracing the Human Element

There is a fundamental disconnect in IT operations these days between the service management tools provided and the needs of IT professionals who use these tools.

That's because most IT operations and service management tools have been busy trying to eliminate the human element by focusing on automating processes and refining existing technology. Perhaps this approach is a result of attempting to eliminate human errors. Or perhaps it is an attempt to save money. But, although automation is critical, we believe that the knowledge and human element is equally critical to IT operations.

The vast majority of existing tools have hit a wall when it comes to handling the diversity and complexity of today's social enterprise with its mix of new technologies and newly empowered users. The market needs new and innovative solutions.

One result of current approaches is IT professionals often waste lots of time searching for information they need, not trusting much of the information they find, and spending considerable effort trying to locate, communicate with, and extract key information from colleagues or other stakeholders to do their job.

This situation has unfortunately become "normal" operating procedure in many IT departments. And, it is to a large extent a reflection of the vested interests by major and minor service management vendors on promoting the legacy architectures they have built in the past. There has been a striking lack of appreciation for how IT teams actually have to deal with the challenges they face every working day, including responding to incidents, resolving problems, and anticipating or reacting to the impact of changes in an environment where they must meet increasing business demands and assume more risk.

That's not to say that their existing tools don't work to document what occurs. Rather, the problem stems from the expectation of users that their legacy tools should be able to provide more value in today's world. Tools originally designed to be a "system of record" cannot effectively take advantage of modern communication paradigms, nor are they designed to provide analysis to users to gain better insights or anticipate problems. The vast majority of existing tools have hit a wall when it comes to handling the diversity and complexity of today's social enterprise with its mix of new technologies and newly empowered users. The market needs new and innovative solutions.

While some recent attempts have been made to "tack on" social media functionality into existing service desk tools along with admonitions to "collaborate" more, these are relative band aids when it comes to fixing the real problem. Until now, no one has really understood or developed a flexible yet scalable solution that can holistically combine the necessary people, process and technology elements into a new way of understanding and managing their current, highly complex IT environments. ***Until ITinvolve.***

At ITinvolve, we turned the current obsession with process and technology in IT ops on its head, and put the human or people component front and center in the proverbial people-process-technology equation. In doing so, we've developed a solution that is designed to capture both the human and machine knowledge necessary to understand our complex, hybrid, and distributed environments. A tool that actually helps the humans involved to improve decision making by providing intelligent analysis and combining it with collaboration processes in the context of a specific issue or problem. Just as important, we've made sure this new tool integrates with existing infrastructure investments so there's no need to rip and replace.



In creating this unique cloud service offering called ITinvolve, we developed our solution according to several key principles that we believe will drive—are driving—the future of all IT operations.

① Principle 1: Capture all kinds of knowledge for better understanding

In conversations with hundreds of IT professionals, we heard that IT team members working in complex environments needed a better understanding of critical dependencies and relationships when responding to incidents, resolving problems and making changes. Too often the knowledge supplied by current service management tools was fragmented, incomplete, out of date and simply not trustworthy.

The IT Ops professional now and in the future needs easier access to knowledge (both structured and unstructured information) without having to spend hours searching for it.

We also discovered that every team member possesses sources of information and expertise about managing his or her particular realm that serve them well as an individual but are not always shared or available to the wider team. Whether its access to a CMDB or special database, detailed VISIO diagrams of a particular application or service, or simply a sharp memory in recalling a relevant incident from the past, IT professionals use a wide range of knowledge to accomplish tasks and solve problems every day—much of it outside of the scope of their existing service management tools.

Therefore, the IT Ops professional now and in the future needs easier access to knowledge (both structured and unstructured information) without having to spend hours searching for it. This knowledge should not be required to conform to any one particular source, nor should it depend on purely auto-discovered content. IT professionals need a kit where they are provided the right information fast, tapping into all kinds of sources, so they can leverage the key information best suited to the issue at hand.

② Principle 2: Find better ways to see the IT environment and how it relates to others

One of the key advantages that humans can use to assess and solve problems is the ability to visualize. White boarding or drawing a picture is often the fastest and clearest way to understand relationships and dependencies in a very complex situation. IT operations is no exception.

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IT professionals told us they are looking for better ways to see their entire IT environment from their particular point of view, without having to sketch it out in VISIO every few weeks as it evolves and changes. And, just as important, they want a way to look at what is going on from the point of view of other colleagues and stakeholders who share the IT environment.



To genuinely grasp and manage the complexity of today's constantly evolving, highly diverse and complex IT environments, IT professionals need better ways to visualize the vast array of evolving relationships between systems, applications, services, policies, people, physical or virtual devices, or functional areas. When assessing and resolving incidents, searching for the root causes of problems, or proposing changes, IT team members would benefit enormously from being able to see relevant relationships and quickly understand the dependencies and potential impacts from a variety of perspectives.

③ Principle 3: Present intelligent and relevant analysis to stakeholders automatically

Current service desk tools simply do not have the analytic functionality needed to present information required by IT professionals to do their jobs more efficiently and effectively today.

What is needed is a way to take the collective knowledge of individuals and data sources involved, analyze the relationships and dependencies related to a specific issue, and then provide the relevant information to the IT operations users to help them make better decisions.

Service management tools need to stop making IT users spend valuable time searching for information among multiple sources, and then forcing them to spend even more effort to sort out and analyze key information once they've found it. Rather, the tool itself should help each IT professional analyze key relationships and dependencies and then automatically present this information to stakeholders.

④ Principle 4: Enable IT individuals and teams to collaborate in context

Much is being made of the social media revolution we are experiencing in the workplace these days, making it difficult to separate fact from hype.

We heard that IT professionals don't necessarily need more chatter in their IM or email in-box. Instead, they want to collaborate and exchange information in the context of a specific issue at hand. They told us how important it is to cut out all the extraneous noise so each team member can follow and participate in a discussion thread related to a specific problem important to that individual and his/her role.

The future of IT operations will be shaped by In-context collaboration that leverages familiar social media-style formats but is focused on specific channels of communication around the things they care about.

While everyone agrees about the benefits of collaboration, IT professionals need a more practical means to collaborate with each other virtually. They don't have time to sit on the phone for hours in mind-numbing reviews of changes or struggle with locating the right people to bring together to address an incident or problem. They need to be automatically notified when a change, incident or issue affects something in their area of responsibility.

The future of IT operations will be shaped by In-context collaboration that leverages familiar social media-style formats but is focused on specific channels of communication around the things they care about. This is the only effective way to help ensure all the right people are effectively communicating in the specific context of the issue,



without extraneous noise or chatter. Giving each stakeholder the ability to review related information, including in-context comments from all participants combined with relevant analysis and visualization, would go a long way to streamlining decisions, and helping responders resolve incidents and make decisions more quickly and effectively.

Just as important, these collaborative engagements with other stakeholders need to be recorded and captured for reference in the future so that collective knowledge builds over time and lessons learned through first-hand experience can be shared with others down the line so they never have to be re-learned.

⑤ **Principle 5: Access to the collective knowledge of people is a fundamental imperative for operational success**

We believe that to operate IT with the utmost efficiency and least risk, IT professionals need to operate within a context where everyone is responsible for the accuracy of his own key information, and accountable for sharing it with the rest of stakeholders involved in a specific problem or issue..

That means designing a tool where individual IT team members are responsible for the content and accuracy of the data surrounding their role and responsibilities. This is not to say that all current information sources are not utilized. Rather, a single environment is needed to effectively capture that information such that it is effectively utilized by all those that need it.

Introducing ITinvolve: The Operations Tool of the Future

With ITIL (the IT Infrastructure Library), and a number of other standards and methodologies capturing a lot of attention these days, it seems as if IT has become obsessed with 'process', often to the exclusion of everything else. This often distracts us from the key to delivering service excellence – people.

People are a critical source of knowledge, people deliver processes; people operate in specific roles and have unique responsibilities; and it is people that make the difference in delivering superior service and value.

At ITinvolve we have created a new tool that makes the daily operational tasks of IT professionals dramatically easier by helping them make decisions in the context of understanding, collaborating, and getting relevant information presented to them when they need it. We have created a solution that takes us into the future by transforming how individual IT professionals do their job on multiple levels with:

- A better way to understand your own realm of responsibility
- A better way to understand how you impact others
- A better way to communicate and collaborate with each other and other stakeholders
- A better way to make decisions with information presented when you need it, notifying you about who needs to be involved, and giving you a trustworthy process to review, discuss and decide together

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Our goal at ITinvolve is to help you easily manage and anticipate, not simply react to or merely document what happens when dealing with the daily challenges of IT operations.

You can learn more about ITinvolve solutions and their many unique advantages by visiting our website or by contacting us:

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