

## **Integrated approach to service management ensures maximum return on asset investment**

*Visibility, control, automation. Thanks to the economic downturn, these previous IT "nice to haves" are now a management imperative. With company budgets set to remain under pressure well into the future, ensuring optimal service availability has become a business priority. As such, industries throughout South Africa are re-evaluating service management solutions looking specifically at how to support their business processes that make up both IT asset and service management, in a cost-effective manner. Francois Marais, business development executive: IT service management at Powertech IST Data, maintains that an integrated approach to service management is the only way to maximise return on one's asset investment – regardless of the state of the economy...*

There is no replacement for effective service management. In an ideal world where a company's service desk has access to asset detail (including contract and procurement information), not only will service request handling be streamlined, but incident and problem resolution will be expedited, and service levels and customer satisfaction are guaranteed to improve. IT asset management will additionally benefit from access to this service desk data. Having information on the frequency and nature of issues with IT assets will allow management to red flag and address challenges. It will simultaneously increase cost-effectiveness and boost efficiency. Without integration however, the potential of one's service management will never be fully realised.

Although more organisations are making a concerted effort towards integration in the service and asset management space, the reality we continue to see in the field is that most departments still operate in silos. While the operational arms of a business will naturally remain distinct from one another, they still need to be managed cohesively. No matter where in the organisation an asset is being deployed for example, one has to know where it is, who is using it – and at what cost. This is because each of these aspects has a very real monetary and budgetary implication for the business both from a lifecycle management point of view, as well as in terms of making strategic purchasing decisions and controlling procurement costs.

The challenge facing many businesses when it comes to integration of their service desks however, is managing IT and enterprise assets with a single solution. Typically using a series of different platforms, companies are often relegated to manually

tracking and managing inventory data. Records are thus usually inaccurate, incomplete and error-prone. While this has budgetary and planning implications, it also creates a significant challenge when it comes to compliance.

With numerous “solutions” available on the market to address the issue of ITIL Service Management, Powertech IST Data’s strategic response has simply been to migrate clients to IBM Tivoli asset management for IT and Tivoli Service Request Manager. Unified applications, workflow, reporting and user interfaces ensure that Tivoli’s process automation engine simultaneously addresses issues of enterprise asset management, asset management for IT, service request management and change and configuration management. Possibly more important though is that this unified solution grows with clients’ needs ensuring a faster time to value and measurable return on both the company’s investment in the solution – and in the assets it is now allowing them to monitor and control.

When it comes to maximising return on all asset investments then, before simply purchasing an “integrated” solution, determine what exactly it will integrate and how it will do this. Only invest if your service provider can demonstrate the value and extent of the integration, and if you will subsequently be guaranteed maximum visibility, automation and control. By viewing your service desk as a strategic asset, and leveraging it as such through the use of a product such as IBM’s Tivoli service request manager, you’re sure to discover a new level of efficiency and cost-effective asset management in your business: good news no matter the state of the economy.

Ends.