Ensuring High Service Levels in Enterprise Management

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Presentation summary

- Ensuring high service levels are defined and met
  – What is a "high service level"?

- Service Level Management

- Components
  – Infrastructure Management
  – Vendor Management
  – Business Impact Management

Service Level Management (SLM)

- Purposes of SLM
  - Maintain and improve IT service quality
  - Actions to eradicate poor service
  - Constant cycle of agreeing, monitoring and reporting upon IT Service achievements

- What SLM is *not*
  - Means of creating blame
  - Method to reduce cost of IT services
  - Wish list, unfounded in reality

Service Level Management (SLM)

- Need and benefits for SLM
  - Improve relations between IT Organizations and their customers through better expectations & communication
  - Allows weak areas to be identified, driving continuous improvement for service management, in-line with business objectives
  - Creates specific targets to aim for (Service Level Objectives), against which service quality is measured
  - Helps demonstrate the value customers receive for their money

Service Level Management (SLM)

- Critical requirements
  - SLAs must be created in partnership between the IT provider and the customer to avoid a culture of blame
  - A Service Level Manager must be appointed to own the process
  - Service levels must be concise, achievable, measurable and valuable to the business
  - Service levels must have executive sponsorship
  - Service levels must be communicated throughout the organization

Designing Service Level Objectives

- Ensure infrastructure is architected to meet service levels
  - Redundancy: too little? too much?
  - Selection of hardware and software to match service level
  - Further discussion beyond the scope of this session

- Service levels are best defined before launching a new IT initiative

- Ensure that meeting service levels are what drives
  - Infrastructure Management
  - Vendor Management
  - Business Impact Management
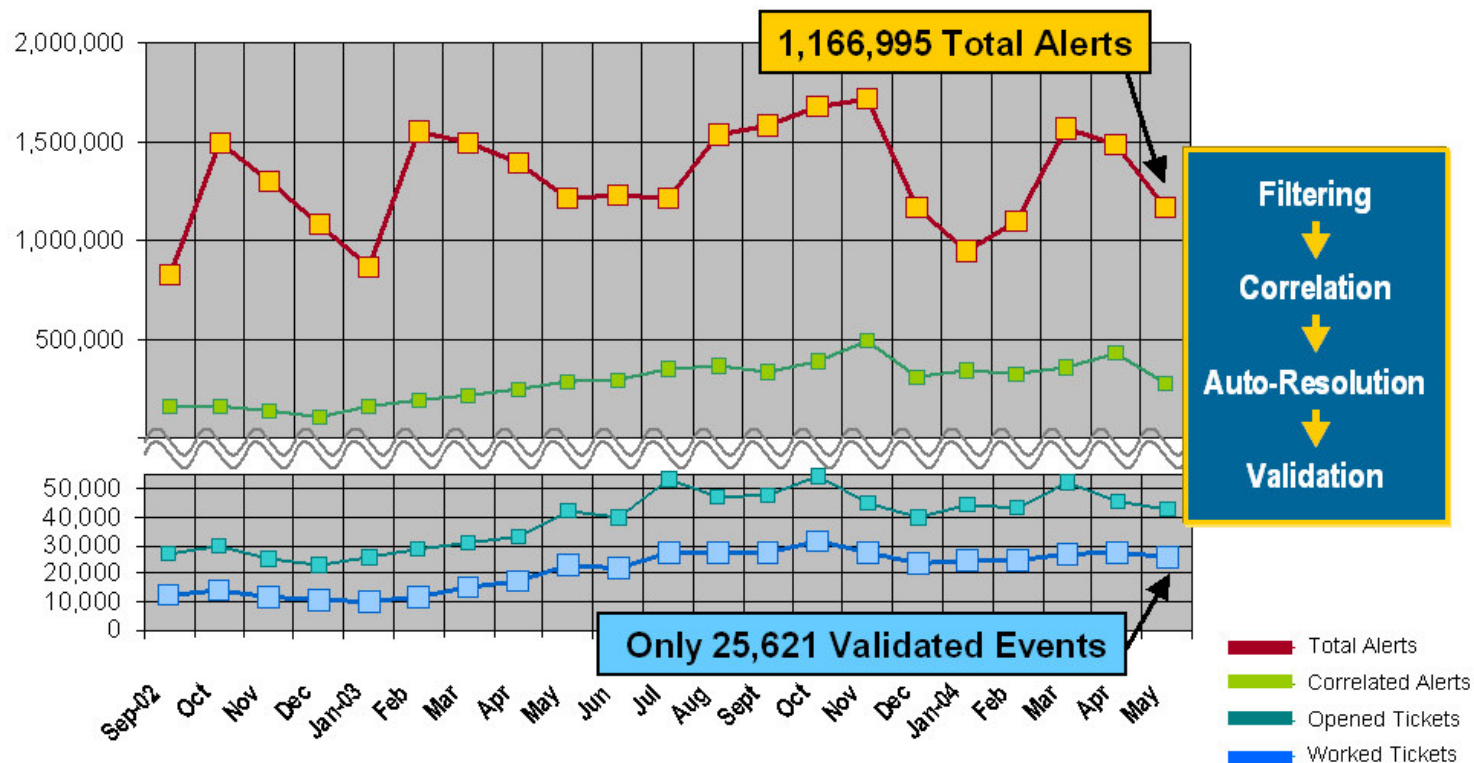
Infrastructure Management

- Service levels should drive infrastructure management
  - Scope is broad and is covered in depth in ITIL books
- Focus for this session is limited to Incident and Problem Management
  - Incidents will occur in complex IT environments; effective response will increase availability
  - Proactive problem management will also reduce chronic problems and improve performance

Infrastructure Management

- Automation reduces response time
  - Automation is usually applied to the Incident Management process first
  - Incident Management automation begins with monitoring tools
  - Agent vs. agentless monitoring
    - Security is tighter with agent-based monitoring
    - Asynchronous alerting possible with agent-based monitoring
    - Custom configurations are easier with agent-based monitoring
    - Network traffic is reduced with agent-based monitoring
    - Costs are higher with agent-based monitoring
    - Server resource utilization is higher with agent-based monitoring
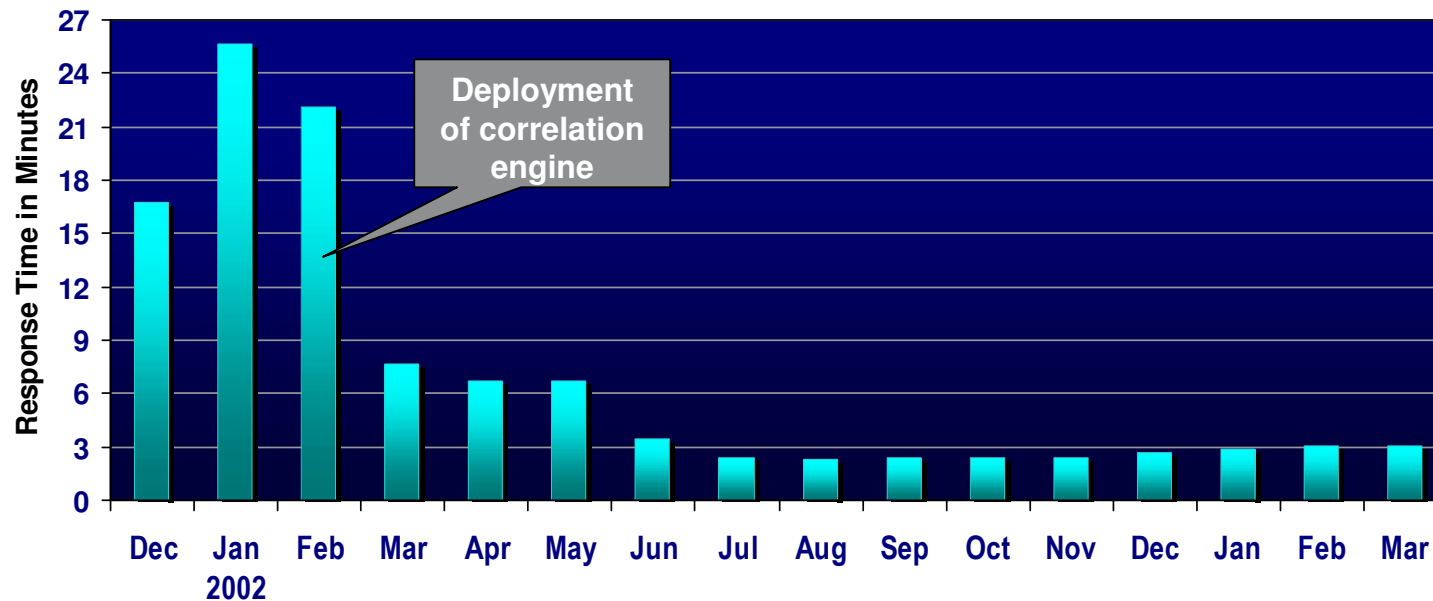
Infrastructure Management

- ## Automation reduces response time
  - Alarm filtering, correlation and auto-resolution makes service desks more efficient

Infrastructure Management

- Automation reduces response time
  - Alarm filtering, correlation and auto-resolution makes service desks more responsive, reducing incident impact

Results of Automation

Chart: Response Time in Minutes (y-axis 0–27) vs months (Dec, Jan 2002, Feb, Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Jul, Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov, Dec, Jan, Feb, Mar)

Callout: **Deployment of correlation engine**

Infrastructure Management

- Automation reduces resolution times
  - Integration with ticketing platform
    - Reduces staff training requirements for individual tools
    - Allows tracking and reporting on actions taken
    - Chronic tickets can be addressed to reduce future incidents

  - Integration with knowledge base of known errors
    - Response steps can be pre-defined for known errors
    - Enables rapid validation and identification of root cause
    - A documented resolution procedure allows more cost-effective deployment of technical resources

Infrastructure Management

- Process needed for dealing with incidents that have an unknown cause, i.e. problems
  - Also known as reactive problem management

- Process needed for dealing with chronic problems and preventing incidents
  - Also known as proactive problem management

Infrastructure Management

- Typical Service Level Objectives to consider
  - Availability
  - Reliability
  - Incident response times and hours
  - Throughput
  - Transaction response times
  - Batch turnaround times
  - Change response times
  - Service reporting and reviewing
  - Charges and performance incentives/penalties

Vendor Management

- Applicable whether internal or external resources are utilized

- Can also consider this as "Customer Management"
  – IT Organizations should not consider themselves customers of third-party vendors
  – End-users are customers and their perspective must drive the creation of service levels
  – Relationships with vendors will be significantly improved through a proper Service Level Management program
  – Choose vendors that show the flexibility to regularly modify service levels as well as the capability to deliver

Vendor Management

- Requirements include:
  - Must be metrics based to compare actual results with desired service levels – if you can't measure it, it's not a service level
  - Regularly scheduled meetings to review current reports
  - Flexibility to change Key Performance Indicators

- Service levels may or may not have financial penalties – document them anyway

- Consider a performance bonus structure along with financial penalties for vendors

Business Impact Management

- Most often neglected by IT Organizations
  - Results in misalignment of IT objectives with business objectives
  - Can be mitigated with an effective Service Level Management process
    - SLM drives communication between IT Organizations and customers
    - Helps to reduce a culture of blame
    - Helps to clarify expectations for all parties

Business Impact Management

- Requirements include:
  - Clear lines of communication between the IT Service Level Manager and business customers
  - Tools that can assist in organizing infrastructure elements into logical business groupings to provide a business impact view
  - Enough visibility into business plans for the ITO to succeed

Business Impact Management

- Suggestions to implement:
  - Allow the designated Service Level Manager to join planning meetings held by key constituencies
    - Develop rapport with customers
    - Stay current with business needs and objectives
    - Prevents surprises during regular service level reviews
  - Review both newly proposed service levels as well as existing service levels
    - Eliminate work that does not benefit customers
    - Additional service levels may be initially tracked for a period to determine feasibility before being promoted
    - Keep cost in perspective
  - Create a service catalog with standard service levels

Presentation summary

Service levels should be established for all IT services being provided. Define them as early as possible, preferably during a project's assessment phase to assist in the design. Service levels define expectations for both IT organizations and customers, resulting in improved service delivery and efficient use of IT resources.

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