OPALIS WHITE PAPER

"IT has done a terrific job of automating processes around developing software, but the opposite is true when it comes down to automaton in operations and production environments."

Jean-Pierre Garbani, Forrester Research
Network World Executive Guide: The New Data Center

PROCESS AUTOMATION, MOVING BEYOND SCRIPTS IN OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT

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With increasing pressure to keep costs down, improve performance and service delivery, IT departments are looking for solutions that automate operational processes, standardize best practices and improve efficiency.

In the beginning... there was only scripting

Traditionally, scripting and custom programming were the only real method to automate tasks. In fact, even system management products like backup, event monitoring and helpdesk tools ship scripts which are meant to be customized to automate peripheral tasks. Naturally IT tries, with limited success, to use these methods to automate operational processes such as incident and problem management procedures. However they quickly recognize that although scripting is sufficient for simple tasks, it is not well suited to automate processes that involve multiple products, in an environment that has frequent changes to both infrastructure and business processes.

Scripts Require Programming Expertise

The problems IT encounters when using scripting to automate operational tasks varies based on the complexity of the process and the availability of programming experts. Most operations teams have limited access to development resources, when they do, IT Managers prefer to have developers working on strategic projects that add value to the business instead of maintaining infrastructure components.

Scripts Lack Agility & Flexibility

Most scripts that are packaged in management tools tend to be task-specific and are not very adaptable. For example, a script that filters critical events and creates a trouble ticket will have highly specialized (and often proprietary) code pertaining to the products involved. That script cannot be used for a different type of vendor or event type; in fact the script usually has to be updated if the monitoring tool or helpdesk is upgraded.

Scripts Are a Management Burden

Operational environments are under constant change, new systems are added, old systems are upgraded and staff responsibilities change. Every time a change like this occurs new scripts have to be developed and existing scripts have to be modified with new business logic. Change can also add unplanned downtime and costs as experts or consultants have to be called back in to write or fix scripts. Further, every change to a script can create cascading problems that are not understood by anybody but the person who originally wrote them. Unfortunately, the reality in many script-based shops is that the amount of effort required to manage the change often prevents improvements from happening at all.

> "Opalis' unique value-add is its ability to rapidly integrate and streamline IT operations workflows without the need for programming or scripts."
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> **Mary Turner, Summit Strategies**

Scripts Are Not Designed for Process Automation

A process is a set of individual tasks that are coordinated into a logical sequence of events, usually involving multiple tools, applications, and data sources. With the constraint and fragility scripts introduce to simple tasks, it doesn't take much imagination to predict the results of using scripts to automate a process. Automating a process with necessary decision-making, dependencies, and business logic using scripts is the equivalent to programming an entire application. In the end, IT Managers do not want operations staff maintaining home-grown applications.

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Requirements for Automating Operational Processes

A good automation tool must provide an easy way to automate processes, coordinate tasks, and move data between systems. It must also provide the flexibility and agility required to support a constantly changing environment, where operations staff are able to design, implement, and manage their own processes – without programming specialist or professional services.

Opalis Solution

Opalis provides a robust automation platform to automate operational, production, and maintenance procedures without programming or scripting.

With Opalis, IT staff can design, implement and control any system in the data center. Opalis also provides visibility into automated processes with its visual workflow policies. These policies illustrate the actions that will be carried out and are easy to modify and extend when needs change.

Opalis Benefits

Opalis automates repetitive, manual processes into IT Best Practices, enabling companies to increase performance and availability, reduce operating costs, and provider greater service levels.

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