



Can Automation Plug the Holes in Business Service Management?

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Business service management (BSM) tools aim to help IT operations and business analysts to visualize, analyze and document the impact of real-time IT performance on business process productivity and value creation. The best tools detect business affecting conditions, before they impact end users, and help IT operations teams stay in front of business requirements.

BSM User Satisfaction Can Be Higher

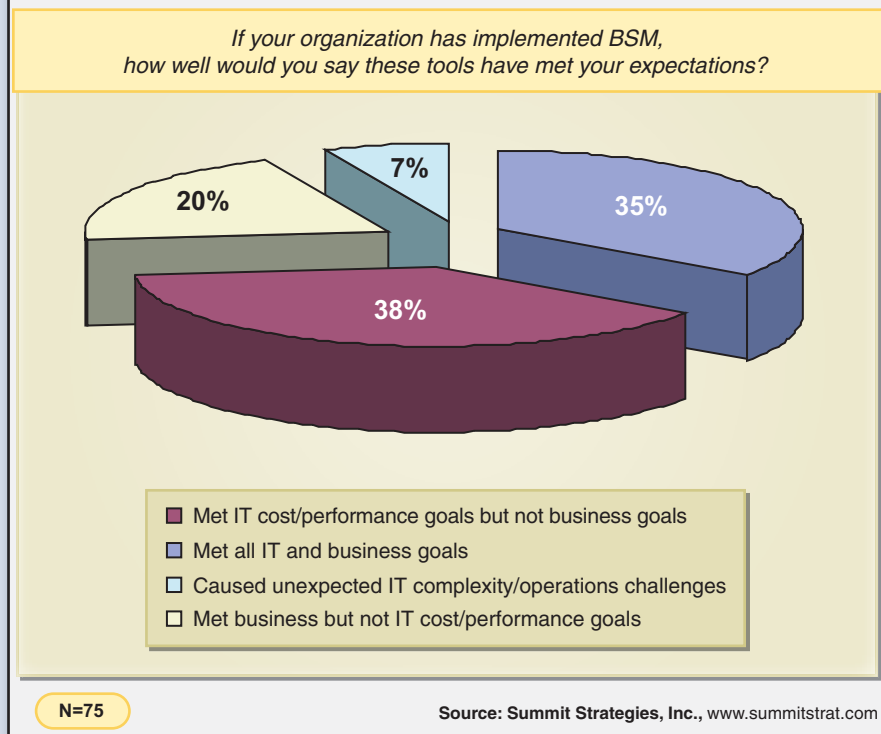
Traditionally BSM tools have relied on a “bottom-up” approach to getting data, where proxy agents, synthetic transactions and enterprise event monitors feed data up into the BSM tool in order to drive the tool’s performance reports and impact analyses.

For the most part, first-generation BSM tools were often little more than static hand-coded containers reflecting IT’s understanding of the relationship between IT assets, business processes workflows and application performance data. When an IT component failed, these first-generation tools alerted IT to the potential of a negative business service event. But they provided little

detail as to the real-time impact on the business either in terms of revenue or business productivity. As a result only 35% of experienced enterprise BSM users believe their current BSM tools meet all IT and business goals based on a 2005 survey by Summit Strategies.

Figure 1
BSM Users Report Tools Often Fail to Meet All Goals

Only 35% of experienced enterprise BSM users report these tools meet all business and IT goals. An additional 38% report the tools meet IT cost and performance goals but not business objectives.



Second-generation process-aware BSM tools bring increased sophistication to the analysis. These newer tools provide improved visualizations, real-time analytics and relationship mapping across increasingly virtualized IT infrastructure and component based application architectures.

Key Implementation Challenges Remain

Despite the increasing sophistication of their analytics and the growing range of available data feeds, most BSM tools still rely on synthetic transactions, manually coded process flow maps, and agents embedded in code to create and maintain business service and IT infrastructure relationship maps and status reports. As with first-generation business service representations, these models can be difficult to maintain in an accurate and timely manner as IT environments become more flexible and virtualized.

As a result, the time and money required today to launch and maintain BSM tools limits their applicability to only a handful of mission-critical transactions or business process flows. For BSM to become a widely used, valued IT management tool, the relationship mapping and status reports connecting IT assets and business services must become more automated.

Can Top-Down Automation Fill the Gap?

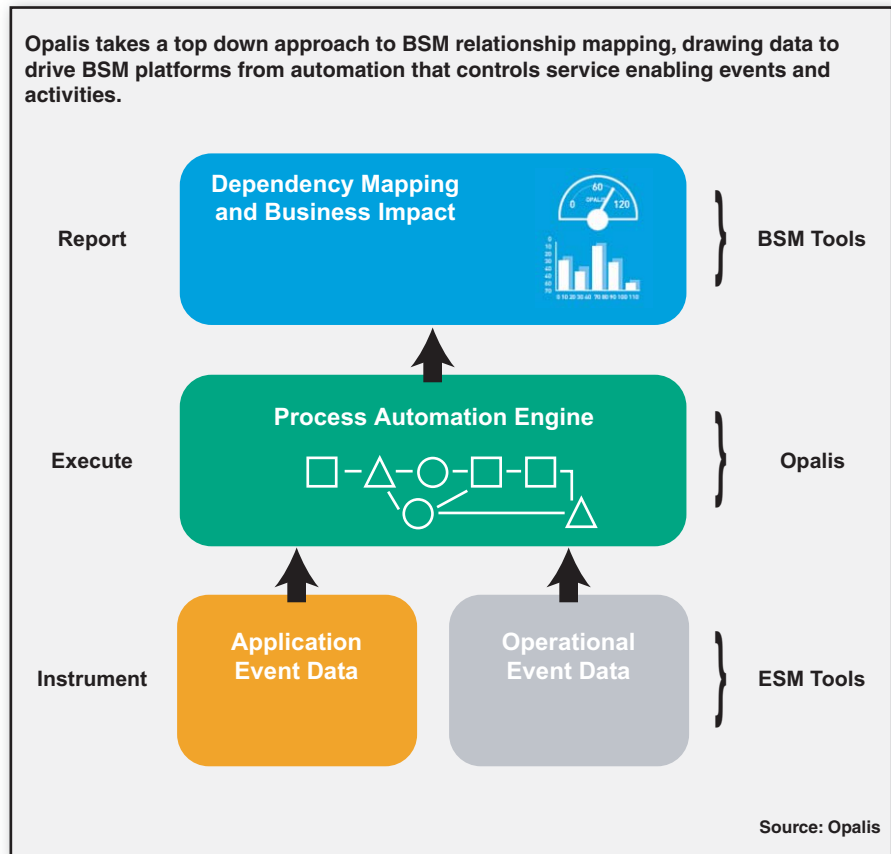
Opalis, an IT management automation innovator based in Toronto, Canada, offers BSM vendors and their customers a new option for tracking the real-time status of business services. Unlike the traditional BSM data collection agents, Opalis takes a “top-down” approach that eliminates the need for custom coding, synthetic agents or other business service proxies. Rather than building service models from the bottom up, Opalis begins by automating the service execution processes that run and control the business service itself.

Using the Opalis automation platform, customers can automate a

few simple business service execution functions at a time, building more elaborate, integrated cross-platform automation and reporting environments gradually. One major advantage of the Opalis process design is how simple it is to use. Users can automate existing runbook procedures and business process workflows in just a few hours. Once a process is designed, no additional software development or scripting is needed to automatically execute the specified services and workflows. Automation designs can be updated as needed with minimal effort.

Opalis automation can be used to create new business services from scratch, or incorporate existing scripts. Once a process is instrumented and automated, the Opalis system will document the status and outcome of each business service execution to meet compliance goals. This business service execution information is published as a real-time data feed, to be consumed by existing BSM analytic programs and dashboards. This provides BSM users with business-relevant data and

**Figure 2
Opalis Process Engine Feeds BSM Tools**



metrics, which clearly indicate the health of key checkpoints within the business process.

This type of business process-centric data provides the missing link between the component status and health data, long analyzed by BSM tools, and the higher level business process impact proxies and transaction monitoring information provided by application performance management tools.

Adding
automation information
to BSM moves enterprises
one step closer to true
business service visibility

Early Adopters Report Success

Successful business service execution automation adopters include retailers Harley Davidson and Woolworths that use Opalis software to automate and instrument such complex business services as global inventory and sales report generation. Financial services customers such as State Street Financial automate the collection of partner data feeds, data transformations and transaction processing to enable real-time investment decision making. Health care providers such as Blue Cross Blue Shield and University of Pennsylvania Medical Center have automated and instrumented insurance claims billing and remittance procedures.

“Opalis software enables us to integrate and coordinate applications and business services, and implement corrective actions when problems occur. Opalis software is the most cost-effective solution, and was implemented rapidly to meet our urgent needs,” said a Senior Systems Administrator at Chico’s, a woman’s clothing retailer.

These customers report that the ability to add real-time business service execution data to their broader BSM environments has definitely increased the ability of IT to stay in synch with the business.

Opalis is still in the early stages of partnering with BSM tools providers to enhance their ability to automate and report on real-time business service execution activities. Opalis currently has alliance partnerships with EMC, BMC, VMware, HP, IBM, Microsoft, NetIQ, Remedy, Peregrine, VERITAS, Symantec, and Cognos to ship more than 200 IT process automation connectors ready-to-go out-of-the-box. To support BSM, Opalis is gearing up to work with a range of BSM vendors to pre-build many key business service execution operators, along with an OEM version of the Opalis Business Service Execution Engine.

This approach to enhancing BSM dashboards and tools requires IT organizations to rethink their strategies for automation, scripting and business process execution and reporting. Today, businesses grappling with complex, script-based business service execution environments may find the Opalis automation approach a life-saver simply due to its ability to integrate and streamline existing processes. Over time, if this technology successfully finds its way into commercial BSM tools, it should noticeably enhance both the relevancy of BSM installations large and small. ▽

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