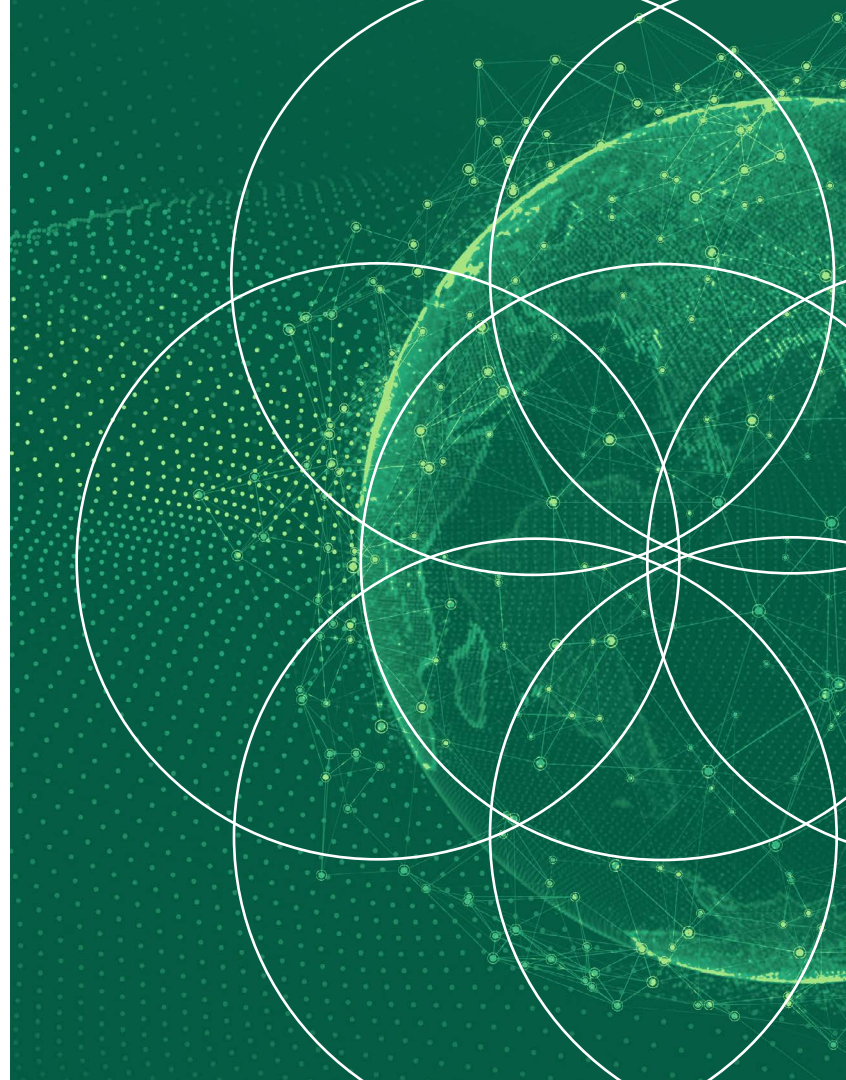


Decoding AIOps And Observability Roles In Driving IT Resilience

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Overview

The IT industry often conflates artificial intelligence for IT operations (AIOps) with observability, despite their distinct scopes. As technology environments grow increasingly complex, IT professionals struggle with system visibility and its connection to the broader enterprise IT ecosystem. This confusion hinders effective problem-solving and optimization efforts due to false expectations about each practice.

It is crucial for IT professionals and business leaders to differentiate between AIOps and observability and understand how they can use each to drive positive business outcomes. With the right expectations and underpinning technologies, both can empower IT teams to effectively manage complex systems, improve overall IT performance, and position enterprises for the future of IT operations.

Key Findings



Forty percent of IT leaders consider AIOps and observability to be interchangeable, 35% view them as separate, and 25% view one as part of the other.



Seventy-five percent of IT leaders want to be more proactive with system data use, and 73% agree that AI and automation are essential for analyzing and applying internal business data and insights.



IT leaders expect that better understanding and implementation of AIOps and observability approaches will have a substantial impact on improving service availability.

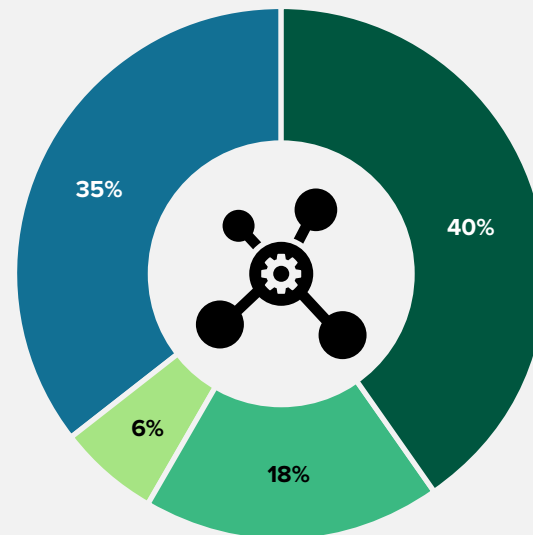
Confusion Exists Around The Distinction Between AIOps And Observability

Most IT decision-makers can define “AIOps” and “observability.” In a survey of 436 IT decision-makers responsible for applications, systems, network, and/or infrastructure monitoring and improvements, 75% said they were very familiar with AIOps and its meaning, and 69% said the same about observability. These percentages reflect strong recognition of the individual terms — the challenge lies in distinguishing between them.

For example, when the same respondents were asked if they considered AIOps and observability to be the same, responses were split. Forty percent consider the terms interchangeable, 35% view them as separate, and 25% view one as part of the other. This suggests that the true function of each term warrants further explanation and clarification.

“Do you consider observability and AIOps to be the same thing?”

- Yes, the terms are interchangeable.
- No, AIOps is part of observability.
- No, observability is part of AIOps.
- No, they are separate but often utilized together.

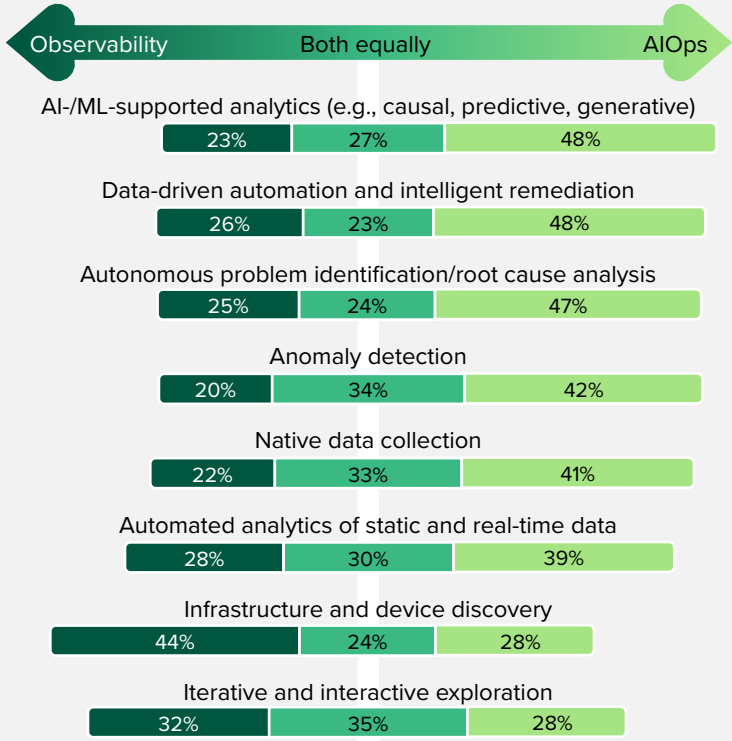


IT Teams Clearly Conflate AIOps And Observability Solution Capabilities

When we asked IT leaders to identify their top five AIOps and observability use cases, the results overlapped substantially. Among the top five for both were AI/ML-supported analytics; data-driven automation and intelligent remediation; infrastructure and device monitoring solutions; and automated analytics of static and real-time data.

To further clarify where IT leaders see AIOps and observability as distinct or overlapping, Forrester asked each to categorize data use cases as either an AIOps or observability function. Overall, respondents more strongly associated the suggested use cases with AIOps functions, which aligns with their top five most desired AIOps and observability use cases. In short, IT leaders want the outcomes envisioned and understood as associated with AIOps but often use observability terminology instead.

“For the following capabilities, please indicate if you view them more as an observability or AIOps function.”



Base: 436 IT decision-makers responsible for applications, systems, network, and/or infrastructure monitoring and improvement
 Note: Not all responses shown
 Source: Forrester's Q3 2024 Observability And AIOps Survey [E-61654]

Defining AIOps And Observability

Forrester defines AIOps as a practice that combines human and technological applications (or AI/ML), advanced analytics, and operational practices with business and operational data. It's fueled by coalescing and transforming data into AI-enriched, actionable, and contextual information.

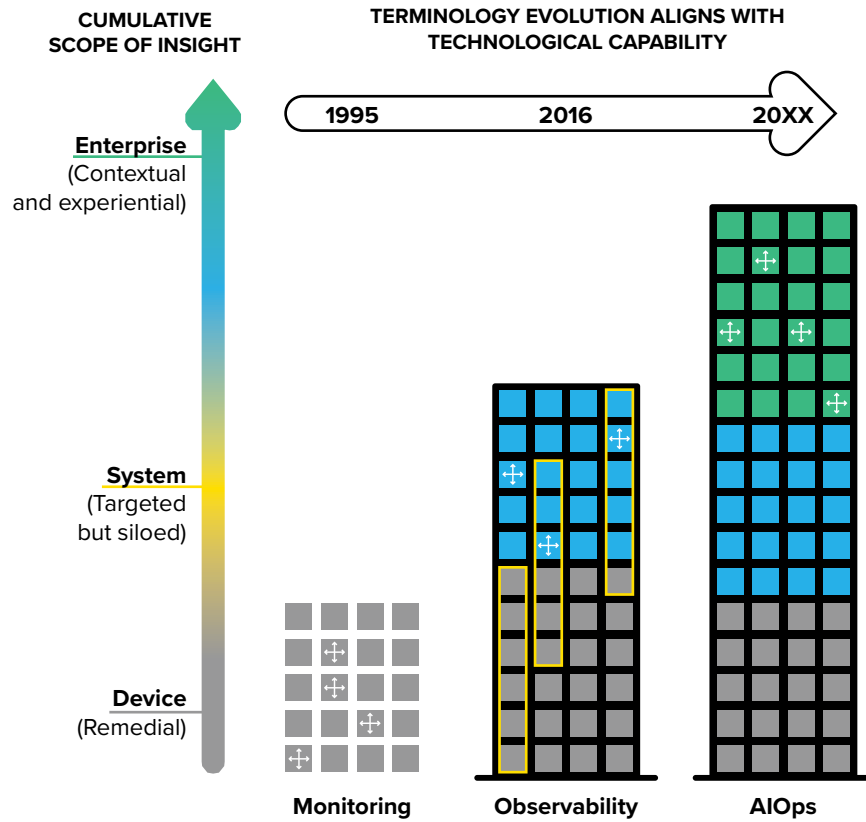
Forrester defines observability as the inherent ability of an entity to allow exploration and analysis through immutable externalized outputs. Exploration of system behavioral patterns provides real-time visibility; real-time and historical analysis interprets and infers the internal state to provide insights and actionable information.

AIOps and observability are separate but have overlapping purposes that are valuable in improving business systems. AIOps take a broader, enterprisewide view looking into and across systems, while observability focuses on visibility at an individual business system level looking outward.



AIOps And Observability Overview

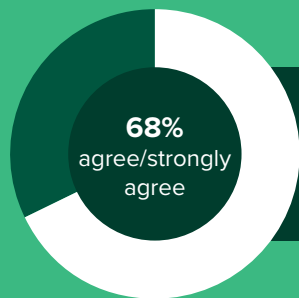
CAPABILITIES	DESCRIPTION	ACHIEVEMENTS
AIOps	Enterprisewide interests encompass vertical (system) and horizontal (environment) scenarios inclusive of context and experience. The focus is on overarching enterprise resilience and enabling the IT ecosystem regardless of the orientation, scope, or complexity of the situation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IT optimization Proactive operations Autonomous operation
AIOps and observability	Overlapping interest descriptions share similar names but do not have the same scope or authority.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> System availability Root cause analysis Active issue investigation
Observability	System-specific interests focus on the performance and/or remediation of selected system(s) only within a system's scope and independent of the broader IT ecosystem.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance optimization Capacity planning System stability
Device	Device-specific interests focus on the explicit and remedial operation of discrete technology devices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource utilization Error handling
Edge/IoT/OT ↕	A diverse array of IoT devices, sensors, and non-IoT devices that communicate to a network in real time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robotic controls Preventative maintenance



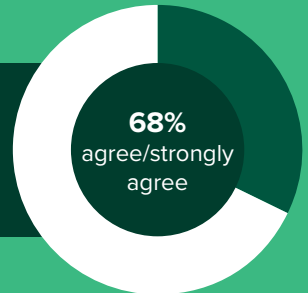
Organizations Need To Improve How They Gather And Use System Data

Understanding the role of AIOps and observability tools can help organizations address key challenges with using system data. For example, 67% of surveyed IT leaders agreed that it's difficult to use data to drive improvements without the broader context of the entire IT ecosystem. In addition, 68% agreed that their organization needs a better shared view of data across business functions — which AIOps tools are well suited for.

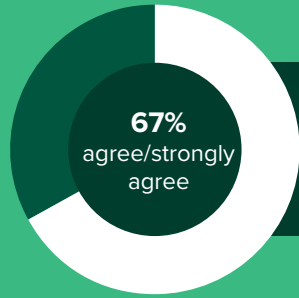
When considering observability, 68% of leaders agreed that their organization should focus on collecting the right data rather than more data. Observability solutions can help organizations uncover real-time and historical data about internal business systems, providing actionable insights and information to drive improvements and proactive business system care.



My organization needs to focus on collecting the right data rather than more data.



My organization needs better shared views or persona-based views of data across business functions (e.g., DevOps, dev, service management).



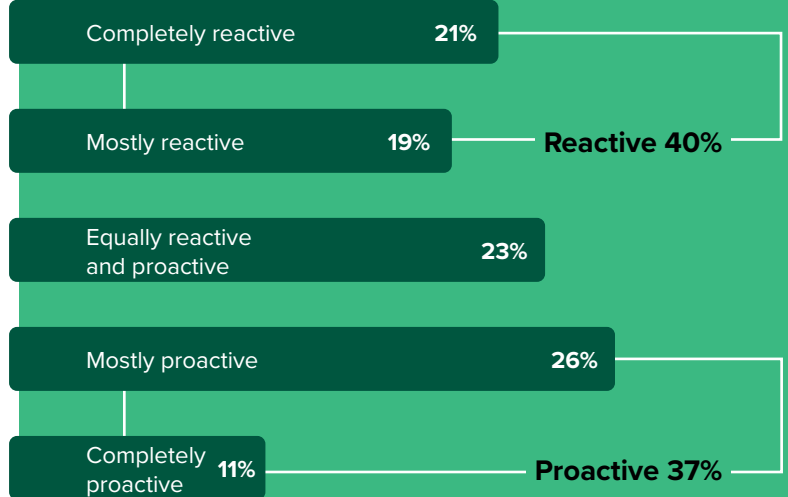
Using my organization's internal data from applications to drive business improvements is difficult without the broader context of the whole IT ecosystem.

Proactive System Maintenance And Support Is The Ideal State

IT leaders want their organizations to be more proactive in using system data to drive improvements. From our survey, just over one-third of IT leaders consider their company’s approach to using system data as proactive (e.g., taking steps to prevent certain events from occurring). In contrast, 40% view their organization as more reactive (e.g., responding to incidents as they occur), with 23% somewhere in the middle.

However, most IT leaders surveyed are not happy with their current approach, with 75% agreeing their organization needs to more proactively use system data. Using data to predict, anticipate, and correct potential system issues is the ideal purpose of AIOps tools. Seventy-three percent of IT leaders agree that AI and automation are essential for helping their organization analyze and apply internal business data and insights.

Approach To Using Core Business Systems Data



75%
agree/strongly agree

My organization needs to be more proactive with using systems data to maintain and support its core business systems.



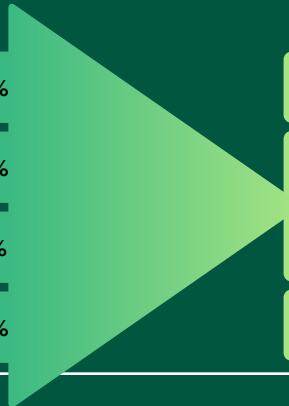
Getting More Value From Data Starts With Understanding And Simplifying The IT Environment

As IT leaders strive to be more proactive with their business systems and get more value from the data they collect, most begin with simplifying the IT environment. Simplification makes it easier for organizations to be more intentional with their data collection, including from primary and ancillary systems. Along with these improvements, IT leaders also plan to establish more rigorous data privacy and governance to mitigate the risks of data misuse, which will help their organizations adhere to regulatory and compliance requirements.

To support these changes, IT leaders are making several tactical investments, including increasing analyst training for IT staff, increasing infrastructure budgets for data storage and analytics tools, and hiring more IT staff to manage data.

Top Next Steps To Improve The Value Of Data From Core Business Systems

Establishing more rigorous data privacy and governance processes to ensure data is accessible and secure	49%
Being more intentional/selective with what data is collected and where it's collected from	48%
Simplifying the IT environment for easier ongoing management	47%
Applying more predictive analytics and modeling to be more proactive with system improvements	46%



Top Areas Of Investment Needed To Execute On Next Steps

Increasing analytics training for IT team	54%
Increasing infrastructure budgets for data storage	46%
Reducing IT system complexity	44%
Increasing budgets for analytics tools	43%

Effectively Using AIOps And Observability Solutions Bolsters System Reliability

Most IT leaders gauge the success of data collection and analysis efforts against one primary metric: the service availability of core business systems. Subcategories within service availability that also contribute to the larger outcome include mean time to resolution, incident volumes, and root cause analysis rates.

Forrester anticipates that better understanding and implementation of AIOps and observability approaches will have a substantial impact on availability metrics. Top advantages include improved IT incident prevention, more informed business decision-making, and increased reliability and resilience. Other benefits include enhanced productivity and employee experience as tools simplify and automate data management and analysis workflows.

“How do you anticipate that a better understanding and implementation of observability and AIOps approaches will benefit your organization?”



Base: 436 IT decision-makers responsible for applications, systems, network, and/or infrastructure monitoring and improvement

Note: Multiple responses accepted

Source: Forrester's Q3 2024 Observability And AIOps Survey [E-61654]

Conclusion

AIOps and observability solutions play a critical role in monitoring and improving business systems, and IT leaders do themselves a disservice by viewing the two as interchangeable terms or practices. These solutions are distinct in purpose yet interdependent in mission.

Observability solutions provide foundational visibility into the key business system data essential for understanding critical system operations. However, this data is most valuable when connected with data and insights from across an enterprise to enrich context and experience. This is where AIOps shine — by connecting, analyzing, and applying the full spectrum of IT systems data along with business and operational context to drive proactive improvements, bolster system service availability, and deliver positive business outcomes.



Resources

Related Forrester Research

[Start With The Right Strategy And Approach For AIOps And Observability For IT Operational Insights](#), Forrester Research, Inc., January 17, 2024

[The State Of AIOps And Observability](#), Forrester Research, Inc., January 31, 2024

[AIOps: A Crucial Component Of High-Performance IT](#), Forrester Research, Inc., June 28, 2024

Project Team:

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Principal Market Impact Consultant

Contributing Research:

Forrester's [Technology & Architecture Delivery](#) research group

Methodology

This Opportunity Snapshot was commissioned by BMC. To create this profile, Forrester Consulting conducted an online survey of 436 IT decision-makers responsible for applications, systems, network, and/or infrastructure monitoring and improvement. Respondents were from organizations with 1,000 employees or more in the US, UK, France, and Germany, as well as across all industries. Respondents were in IT roles (manager-level and above) and had decision-making responsibility for applications, systems, cloud, infrastructure, and/or network management, monitoring, and improvement. The study began and was completed in September 2024.

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Demographics

COUNTRY	
United States	50%
United Kingdom	17%
Germany	17%
France	16%

COMPANY SIZE	
1,000 to 4999 employees	48%
5,000 to 19,999 employees	32%
20,000 or more employees	20%

IT ROLES	
Operations	49%
Application development	26%
Software engineering	14%

TITLE	
C-level	15%
VP	22%
Director	35%
Manager	29%

Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.



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