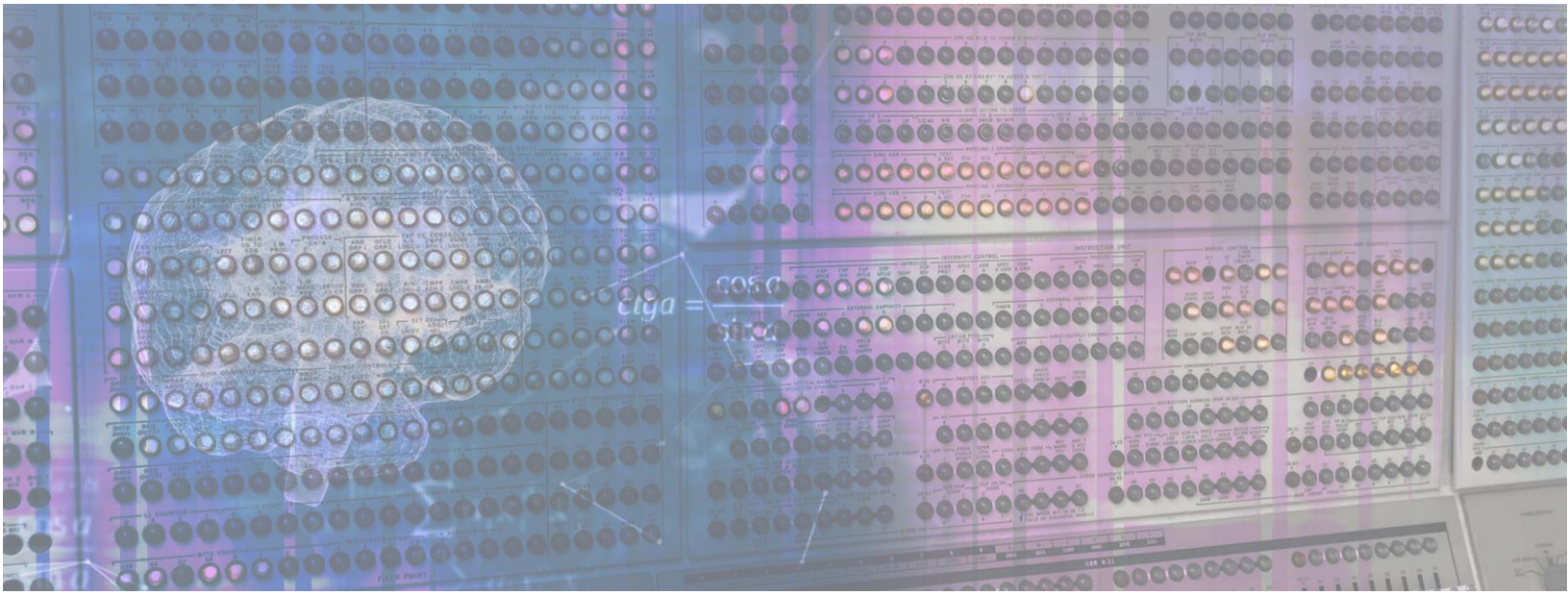

ServiceOps: More than the sum of service and operations management

An Intellyx Whitepaper for BMC
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ServiceOps is a movement that aligns people, processes and technology around the shared objectives of service management and IT operations management.

But wait, do we really need another "AnythingOps" term anyway?

Since the advent of the DevOps movement about a dozen years ago, developers and operators who were real DevOps devotees tried in vain to prevent the commercialization of the term by pundits, product vendors and employers. Now it's too late, and we have *DevOps* tools, *DevOps* platforms, *DevOps* managers and teams, and so on.

DevOps started out with the intention of building a movement, rather than a set of technology products. DevOps created a shared culture that encouraged faster and better quality software releases, by combining relentless optimization, automation and feedback cycles for development and operations teams, with a softer side of collaboration and empathy toward achieving common goals.

Of course, over time, certain solutions like Continuous Integration/Continuous Delivery (CI/CD) and Infrastructure-as-Code (IaC) and some Agile naturally became relevant to the DevOps movement and became part of the practice.

Thanks to the success of DevOps as a market, enterprises have been gradually submersed into even more *"-Ops-suffixed"* tech marketing terminology to include other capabilities and tools. So now you have *DevSecOps, TestOps, NetOps, FinOps, et.al, ad infinitum*.

An almost satirical concept called *noOps* even survived for a few months as a contrarian answer to so many buzzword-ops, the idea being that extensive automation could somehow replace humans in the IT Ops loop.

ServiceOps meets a challenging moment

Now, it's time for **ServiceOps** to have its day in the sun.

In 2022, ServiceOps entered the Gartner Hype Cycle for ITSM as "Service Operations" – at a point way, way over to the left, where unproven concepts appear on the enterprise event horizon. Then, in the latest Gartner Hype Cycle for ITSM, 2023, it progressed further up the Innovation Trigger wave. We're going somewhere.

*There's something very different about ServiceOps that makes it a movement with a better chance at sustainability – and more than just another *-Ops buzzword. ServiceOps offers an overdue solution to a very costly problem.*

Like DevOps, ServiceOps is a movement that brings together two groups that were once siloed, so they can work together to achieve more than the sum of their teams. Unlike DevOps, it would also bring together two different suites of technologies, so teams can collaborate beyond the siloed platforms they currently have in place.

ServiceOps is really all about serving customers, whether their issues come in directly as service requests or trouble tickets in an ITSM system, or as production-level incidents that are reported via monitoring and alerts for resolution in IT operations systems. Both are equally as important in contextualizing real customer problems.

No matter how the business inherits customer problems, it always seems to take too long to resolve them. It's a malaise that's easy to spot behind the scenes of any scaled enterprise:

- There are too many critical requests for the help desk to respond to.
- Turnover rates are high in customer and operations support teams.
- There's never enough SREs to directly follow up on each incident, much less bring the right teams together to solve them.
- Developers spend about half of their time finding and fixing reported bugs.
- Security issues and vulnerabilities appearing in production are hard to track to the changes that created them, and disaster recovery plans are ill-prepared.
- IT executives regularly call all-hands firefighting teams to resolve software issues with uncertain origins.

Unsurprisingly, all of the above challenges lead to flagging employee morale and a poor digital experience that can sink the business.

ServiceOps begins with data

With so many different sources of data, and billions of data points potentially feeding multiple platforms and tools that contribute to the detection and resolution of each customer experience issue, data is the best first place to start with ServiceOps.

In an ideal world, all of this data would be formatted and defined with compatible standards and a common ontology – but in reality, few enterprises with established application portfolios are in such a position.

Here's some ways companies are getting a grip on data for ServiceOps:

- **Respect data gravity.** Successfully informing a ServiceOps practice requires both historical and real-time data – which can often encompass multi-petabyte volumes and millions of streaming events an hour.

  There's no reason to create an up-front big-bang data migration or data processing constraint on getting productive data into the system, when AI Ops and data query workloads can instead normalize and filter data closer to each source, with less cost and project risk.

- **Enhance metadata to meet customer and employee objectives.** What information does the combined ServiceOps practice need to better meet requests? After looking for common data and definitions across multiple IT Ops and service management silos, additional metadata is mapped to customer or employee issues so they can be filtered by region, business unit, product or other criteria.

- **Ingest telemetry data into a common cloud platform** to inform service level indicators (SLIs) specific to the goals of ServiceOps. Since most companies have already invested in a wide variety of observability, SecOps and change management applications monitoring some part of their estates, additional filters to increase relevance and reduce redundancy across logs and metrics can help.

  For instance, BMC has an integrated data lake designed for ServiceOps that ingests observability data from third-party systems such as DataDog, Dynatrace and AppDynamics for cross-environment analytics.

- **Prioritize additional improvements.** Once service and production telemetry are in place on the most critical services, teams can repeat this data enablement process to expand visibility across more of the application estate based on anticipated value and efficiency improvements.

It would be outside of the scope of this paper to dig into specifics of whether one data lake, warehouse, streaming service or data integration and orchestration layer is better than another. That's an argument for integration architects to sort out.

Most companies have already invested heavily in data infrastructure and management tools that have been customized for their needs, and don't intend to replace them in a piecemeal fashion. To avoid the risk of stalling a ServiceOps transformation initiative, prioritize decisions about putting the most relevant ServiceOps data in front of professionals, rather than starting with major platform replacement decisions.

The ServiceOps engine: Bringing it all together

If your enterprise's IT estate is an international airliner, then it is constantly navigating through changing conditions using software, while looking ahead using an array of sensors and telemetry data, as well as communication between expert teams in the air and on the ground, to provide a successful customer experience and bring passengers to arrival.

To take this metaphor further, think of ServiceOps as a dual-intake engine, taking in data from service management and IT Ops management platforms essential to powering each flight, supplying the visibility, collaboration and automation needed to keep the business aloft.

I tried to encapsulate this concept of a dual-intake engine in this infographic:

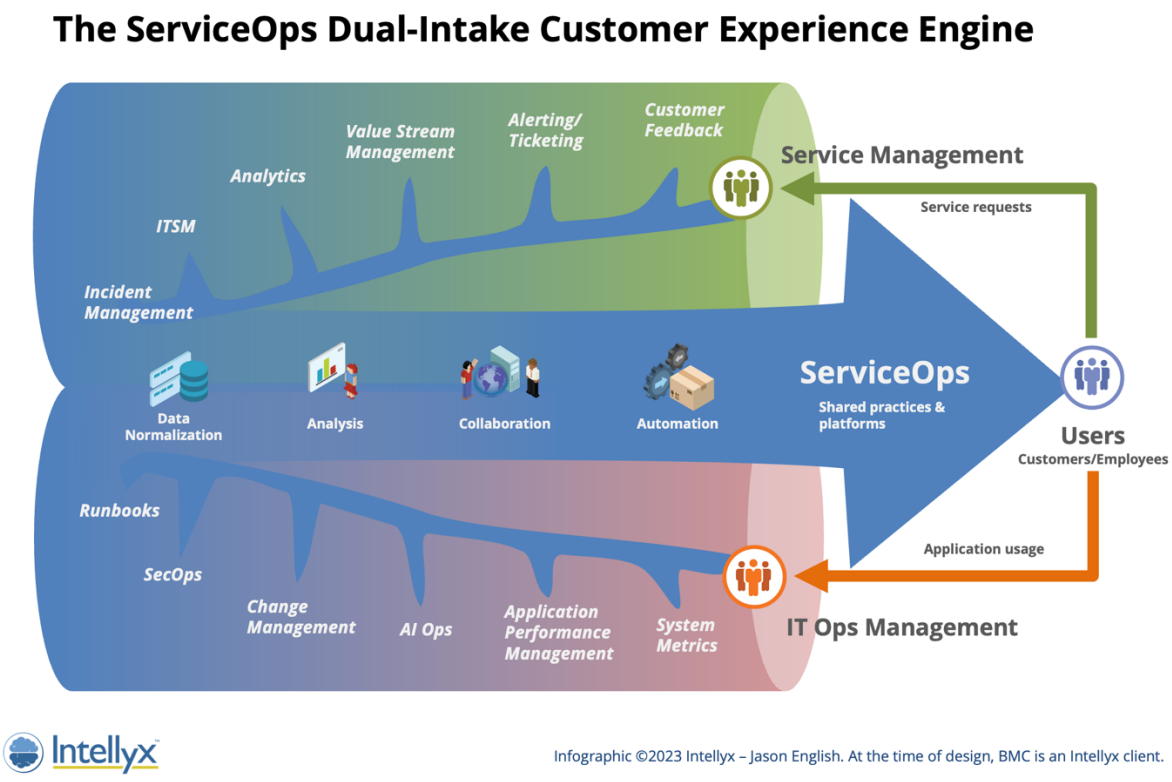

Figure 1. The ServiceOps Dual-Intake Engine. There are several platforms and existing technologies that exist underneath the Service Management or ITSM side of the enterprise, and IT Ops management. These two once-siloed technology stacks can be unified by combining data intelligently, and sharing common ServiceOps telemetry, analytics, collaborative goals and automation.

Transformative expectations of a ServiceOps solution

Flexibility is key. Every company is structured differently, and the people working within each department have very different responsibilities and needs. All stakeholders in a customer outcome participate in a ServiceOps workflow, so the technology stack shouldn't force a rigidly designed data schema or process onto different IT groups or lines of business.

Measure by business SLOs, not tickets. Service level objectives (or SLOs) are better at incentivizing improvement than the penalties of failing SLAs (or service level agreements). The best performing ServiceOps companies will measure what matters, instead of just measuring MTTR (mean time to resolution).

In some cases, more incidents can be a positive measure of ServiceOps, as it indicates better awareness of the customer experience, and likely forward progress on service improvements as incidents are found and resolved earlier. Linking service reliability and performance to business goals allows all employees and partners to know which SLOs they are responsible for, and the impact they are making with each new feature delivered or customer issue resolved.

Collaboration and integration. A key goal of ServiceOps is to reduce the complexity and variability of the intake of new service requests and incident reports. Manual ticketing and incident reporting create too many improperly prioritized critical issues, and automated alerts can generate too many duplicate and irrelevant requests.

With so many incoming sources of alerts and reported events, a shared ServiceOps environment would allow system operators, customer service groups, software development teams and executive management to finally get their arms around the risks and rewards of constant change in the environment whether driven by internal processes or external forces.

Shared automation and governance. This is where analysis and discussion are translated into action. However the ServiceOps team is organized, it should use the shared platform as a fulcrum for setting policies to govern the organization's response to disparate telemetry and alert sources – and what mix of automation and human attention should be applied.

For instance a shared platform like BMC Helix for ServiceOps can log incoming events and inspect changes, and trigger an automated AIOps triage policy, which may either

start an automated runbook to resolve a known issue, or kick off an alert process to assemble a tiger team of human experts on a call with all the relevant data ready for analysis and resolution.

ServiceOps results at work

What does ServiceOps success look like? Results may not seem evident until we look back on the collective impact of several improvements at once on the overall performance of the organization. But customers and employees can experience positive results right away.

Mphasis Limited, an Indian multinational consultancy and IT service provider, had a visibility gap impacting how they managed customer data on its infrastructure. Their monitoring tools could not correlate high levels of event noise, making identifying and solving actual problems tricky. Teams were manually entering trouble tickets into Mphasis' service management tool, wasting more time and effort.

To gain observability and better integrate with service management, Mphasis brought in BMC Helix Operations Management to improve MTTR, reduce SLA breaches to minimal, and get the required bi-directional integration with its service management system. After deployment, the company realized a 50% reduction in event noise, lowered MTTR by 50%, and reduced time spent on manual incident management by 80%, while reducing overall cost thanks to improved monitoring capabilities.

International infrastructure group **Balfour Beatty** has nearly 25,000 employees to equip, and a host of partners and suppliers working on multi-billion-dollar international landmark and infrastructure development projects. The firm was in the process of migrating its applications and data to cloud infrastructure when the Covid pandemic hit, accelerating the need for project collaboration among now-remote IT and management staff, and construction and service teams in the field.

To better service global customers despite this changing environment, the company moved off of its manual and phone-based collaboration processes, and away from the rigid processes of ITSM platforms to develop new digital services and manage the custom IT resources needed by a highly distributed workforce.

Balfour Beatty selected the BMC Helix suite to provide an end-to-end service management solution that takes new digital customer service capabilities to employees anywhere – on phones, tablets and laptops in the home office or the field. The company

has already equipped 85% of its workforce with this new IT application kit, resulting in a 61% reduction in incident resolution time, while doubling the number of year-over-year automated ticket resolutions.

The Intellyx Take

Organizations The DevOps movement was revolutionary when it came out, because for the first time it put our commitments to each other, and our empathy for fellow team members, on even footing with the need to deliver software releases that meet the needs of customers.

Once innovative new features are flying out the door with automation, we find ourselves in a continual post-release state of supporting a fast-changing digital business, as well as the employees responsible for supporting customers that interact with that business.

The long tail of post-release support and service – or Day 2 – is every day, as we seek to make our application estate deliver positive outcomes for all constituents.

Unlike many other -Ops-suffixed buzzwords, ServiceOps feels like a natural evolution of DevOps because it establishes a common ground for better serving customers, while meeting the needs of people, processes and technology, in that order, as it always has been.

About the Author

Jason "JE" English (@bluefug) is a Partner & Principal Analyst at Intellyx, a boutique analyst firm covering digital transformation. His writing is focused on how agile collaboration between customers, partners and employees can accelerate innovation.

In addition to several leadership roles in supply chain, interactive, gaming and cloud computing companies, Jason led marketing efforts for the development, testing and virtualization software company ITKO, from its bootstrap startup days, through a successful acquisition by CA in 2011. JE co-authored the book Service Virtualization: Reality is Overrated to capture the then-novel practice of test environment simulation for Agile development.

About BMC

BMC works with 86% of the Forbes Global 50 and customers and partners around the world to create their future. With our history of innovation, industry-leading automation, operations, and service management solutions, combined with unmatched flexibility, we help organizations free up time and space to become an Autonomous Digital Enterprise that conquers the opportunities ahead.