

The “Complete IT Dashboard” for Enterprises.

Complete Visibility and Control for a More Agile and Proactive IT Department

Discover how to manage the entire IT environment from an IT Dashboard that acts as a ‘*Single Pane of Glass*’ to deliver highly valuable and easy-to-use information from both *physical and virtual* environments. Learn the importance of implementing simple processes that turn Dashboard data into *actionable* IT decisions. Learn how to turn IT metrics into reports that business units *want* to see, and how Service Level Management can highlight the value of the IT Department.

Learn the five ways IT Dashboards can help IT managers and users better communicate the value of IT.

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IT management is faced with the daunting task of quickly turning complex data into accurate, actionable information, which in turn generates informed decisions that support the organization's overall business strategy. At the same time, IT management is responsible for ensuring high availability and performance of mission-critical applications, while continually working to prove the value of the IT department to the organization and not being seen as just a cost center.

True enterprise IT dashboards are integrated views that collect and communicate key data in a simple-to-understand way. They monitor, measure and manage IT services and performance to help executives and managers make informed decisions that support the strategic objectives of their organizations. A solid IT dashboard will effectively handle all the day-to-day needs for performance, availability and capacity, regardless of platform, application, or environment (physical and virtual), and still provide the high-level views and reporting needed in today's leading organizations.

"In an era of hyper-connected businesses, few enterprises will meet their strategic objectives without integrating business and IT strategic decision making."

- *Gartner*

The Real World Challenges

Each day, IT managers are faced with the formidable task of effectively managing and optimizing a diverse and complex IT infrastructure environment. They are under great pressure to deliver high-performance and high-availability business-critical applications from e-mail, to Web, to on-demand applications – all essential to business competence. Virtualization has many benefits but has clearly made IT even more complex to monitor and manage.

The challenge is further exacerbated by systems performance data that is becoming increasingly unmanageable. As the number of an organization's servers, applications and networks grow, IT managers must find a way to convert metrics on server performance and IT service and application availability into effective business intelligence that drives good IT decisions and accountability.

The reality is that IT services are becoming more closely linked to overall business objectives. Service level Agreements (SLA) are becoming the norm for most IT departments in order to help them better communicate the value of IT to the business units. High performance and 24/7 availability are essential to delivering on and supporting the SLAs and business goals. Transparent and easy-to-understand reporting is needed to provide clear results to the business units to back up the IT departments' hard work. Without consistent and clear Service Level Agreement reporting that links to business metrics, even high-performing IT departments have trouble showing their contributions to the business.

What IT managers need is an accurate and well-organized snapshot view of systems performance, availability, and capacity data that gives them the clarity and insight to make the best possible business decisions **quickly** and **effectively**. They need to see this information across both physical and virtual environments together, and they need tools that can help them communicate the performance of IT to the business.

At the highest level, IT executives and managers face the challenge of finding a better way to sync decision making with the objectives of the business units. IT Dashboards provide the key.

This alignment of visibility and accountability between the business and IT has been labeled "The Discomfort Zone" by Gartner. Gartner continues to drive home IT and business integration by saying, "in an era of hyper-connected businesses, few enterprises will meet their strategic objectives without integrating business and IT strategic decision making."

The IT Dashboard Aligns the Organization

One solution with great potential for meeting these challenges is a complete, enterprise IT dashboard, referred to as the 'Single Pane of Glass' view. Over the last several years, the dashboard has evolved as a replacement for traditional, static, pre-formatted reporting. The key to their value as business tools lies in the real-time, actionable metrics that display in an intuitive, interactive, user-friendly GUI format that can be customized by role.

Measuring and monitoring such factors as Service Level Agreements, IT service health and application availability, server performance, network performance and total resource capacity, IT dashboards need to offer multiple hierarchical views, from performance and availability "snapshots," to detailed, drill-down metrics for fast trouble shooting and root cause analysis when needed. Dashboards also need to provide alerts into performance, availability and capacity issues across the entire IT service delivery stack of servers, applications and networks to enable fast proactive and reactive response and resolution. At a glance, IT managers need to gain key information about what is really going on across the enterprise (which includes various platforms such as Windows, Linux, UNIX, VMware, etc.), and to react immediately and decisively. The results are informed decisions that not only improve IT processes, but impact the organization as a whole. The net result is fast problem resolution

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According to Gartner, providing the right information to the right people at the right time is essential. Part of the right information includes identifying the objectives and metrics through Gartner's simple methodology for action by making each metric "SMART:" **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ction-oriented, **R**elevant, and **T**imely.

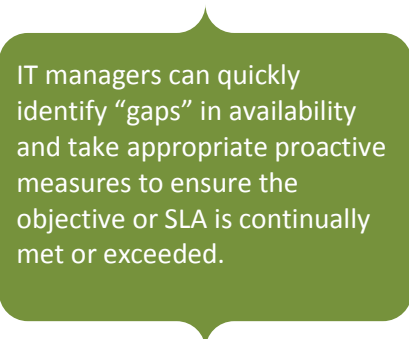
Five Critical Reasons Why Dashboards Are Essential in Today's IT Operation

Simply put, the IT dashboard can deliver tremendous strategic value in **five critical ways** to the business, its customers, and its shareholders, that assures IT service/application availability, optimized enterprise server capacity, and a proactive system health strategy.

1. Easier Service Level Agreement Management

Research has shown that while many companies want to leverage the value of SLA management and reporting, too many are running into complex requirements, long timelines to deploy, confusing reporting, and escalating costs. It's important to find a solution that includes the dashboards and reports that both IT and the business want, but is within budget and has faster time-to-value with a short deployment cycle.

The business units aren't worried about servers or network issues; what they do care about are mission-critical services and applications like Email, Payroll, CRM, etc. That's a big problem for IT departments to manage, especially when trying to meet aggressive Service Level Agreements (SLAs). Dashboards should be a high-level view for SLA Management, and with accompanying reports, they should provide the business units with the information they need and can understand. At the same time, IT should have the tools to map business needs to IT infrastructure in order to spot and fix any server, network or application issues **before** they negatively affect the SLA. With this type of solution, IT can generate simple and easy to understand reports and graphs that the business wants.



IT managers can quickly identify "gaps" in availability and take appropriate proactive measures to ensure the objective or SLA is continually met or exceeded.

SLA monitoring and reporting also benefits from additional capabilities such as proactive 'what-if' SLA modeling based on historical data

(that helps **remove the risk** of setting overly ambitious SLAs) and intelligent alerting that shows if an SLA is trending to meet, exceed, or miss its target in the future.

For more on SLA Management, please visit the Gartner Podcast on Easy Service Level Agreement Management here: www.uptimesoftware.com/gartner.php

2. Assuring IT Service/Application Availability

As IT becomes more and more user facing, mission-critical application and service downtime cannot be tolerated. Continuous availability is simply the standard in IT management. To keep systems up and running, IT must have a clear, consolidated, big-picture view of the enterprise. IT dashboards provide this real-time, service outage data and offer a fast, accurate, and comprehensible way to “see the whole picture,” get to the root cause of an availability or resource problem, and help IT staff solve issues quickly.

Example A: An SLA dashboard with access to all metrics’ historical performance data can be used as an SLA “Crystal Ball” for predicting how an SLA will perform **before** it is agreed to. Why is this important? It shows IT how a potential SLA will act based on historical data. This helps remove SLA setting risk for IT departments, as this modeling ensures that IT won’t sign up for an SLA of 99.5% uptime if the last 6 months IT only achieved 97% uptime. An IT manager without this insight might agree to a 99.5% SLA for uptime and be doomed to fail. Additionally, if 99.5% uptime is a must for the business, IT management can now initiate a discussion on the additional resources required to hit 99.5%, based on the proof that 99.5% has not been historically achievable. Performing a gap analysis, the dashboard quantifies actual historical and current performance for measurement against goals and Service Level Agreement (SLA) metrics. With this information, IT managers can quickly identify “gaps” and proactively take the appropriate measures to ensure the objective or SLA is continually met or exceeded.

The IT dashboard can also serve to improve the perception of IT across the enterprise. The ability to provide critical information and reporting across the business in a transparent and accountable manner will build trust and confidence. This, in turn, leads to an IT department that is highly valued by all the business units.

3. Combining the Physical and Virtual IT Worlds

Research estimates a growth in virtual infrastructure of close to 100% year-over-year. Will companies be able to cope with such a quickly growing virtual environment (from a labor or monitoring perspective) and maximize the full cost savings and productivity gains of virtualization? Do you have the management, monitoring, and processes in place to cope with this trend?

IT Directors, IT Managers, and System Administrators need dashboards that include virtual infrastructures as a natural part of IT delivery. In reality, business users don't care if an application is on a physical server or on a virtualized one; it just needs to work. An IT dashboard needs to monitor, measure and report on the entire IT service delivery process, regardless of vendor, platform or environment (physical, virtual or even cloud).

The same dashboard should be able to monitor, alert, and report on the entire virtual infrastructure with in-depth metrics.

With this simple fact in mind, IT dashboards need to incorporate the virtual environments from VMware and Microsoft, as well as UNIX platforms like AIX LPARs and Solaris Zones as part of an enterprise "Single Pane of Glass" view. Dashboards that don't help IT Managers plan, manage, and monitor their virtual infrastructure in concert with the physical environment will continue to cause headaches as virtualization grows at such a rapid pace.

4. Optimizing Enterprise Server Capacity

IT management needs a way to quickly determine server capacity and identify resource trends to make accurate capacity management decisions that will positively affect both performance and future budget requirements. The IT dashboard should offer quick and intuitive views on critical enterprise server resources such as CPU, Memory, I/O, and storage capacity on both a real-time and historical basis. Gone are the days of historical performance data being limited to last week or last month. Dashboards should store complete historical performance data that spans many months and even years, allowing more accurate trending of capacity for better capacity-oriented decisions.

This simplified "enterprise capacity view" helps management identify trends and forecast infrastructure requirements – critical to evaluating future needs and justifying future resource budget requests.

The IT dashboard should also help with identifying opportunities for server consolidation and virtualization. This can help reduce costs dramatically and improve the management of existing resources. In some cases, a dashboard can actually **identify and flag** servers that are **candidates for consolidation** and virtualization, then continue to watch over, monitor, and report on all the virtual instances once the consolidation is complete.

Identify opportunities for server consolidation and virtualization.

Example B: An IT manager in a large investment bank is considering consolidating onto VMware, but needs to know which of the hundreds of servers are qualified candidates for virtualization. With one simple report, the dashboard locates and flags servers across the infrastructure that are prime candidates for consolidation. This report saves hundreds of hours of manual work to isolate and qualify potential servers. The same dashboard can then monitor, alert, and report on the entire new virtual infrastructure with in-depth metrics.

Example C: Consider how a large insurance company's IT manager might need to report on the number claims per hour to help determine its impact on capacity. With a fully functional IT dashboard, analyzing current and historical systems data with trending graphs makes capacity decisions more accurate. Moving forward, maintaining ongoing communication on this issue with the business units (with either service level agreements or IT departmental objectives) is as simple as scheduling automated reports and graphs that can be sent daily, weekly, or monthly.

Example D: In a global Telecommunication company's call center, the business issue is handling a certain volume of calls per minute. There are concerns about the infrastructure handling these demands and, at the same time, increased corporate pressure to go "Green" to save energy and costs. The IT dashboard allows the IT manager to be proactive by viewing historical and current data on the systems that affect the call center's ability to handle call volume. The IT manager is then empowered to make recommendations about potential infrastructure upgrades or consolidations where necessary to save the department money and energy costs while ensuring high levels of availability. Add in automated monthly availability/IT Service reports that are automatically sent to the Call Center Manager and Executive team, and it becomes clear how IT starts to be seen as a business value contributor and not just a cost center.

5. Creating a Proactive System Health Strategy

As is the case with human healthcare, prevention and early problem detection can save time, money, and pain. A proactive system health strategy empowers IT to drive decisions based on a proactive, rather than reactive, model. The IT dashboard provides the information needed to implement this type of strategy. IT managers can get instant overviews of lower-level outages and how they impact higher-level business functionality. This quick and easy-to-find information gives managers the insight to prevent serious outages now and in the future.

The dashboard views also allow base-lining an IT infrastructure -- an important first step in being able to identify out-of-scope behavior in order to take action to prevent future problems.

Example E: An IT manager in a bank uses the dashboard to quickly identify a failed server in a branch, and determine what caused the server to go down. Armed with this information, the manager easily views similar servers in multiple branches across the company to investigate if other servers might be in a similar predicament. This alone can help save hundreds of thousands of dollars in IT outages each year and help avoid a major failure that can result in lost revenue, lost credibility, and lost customers.

Example F: A Web-based retail operation is experiencing slow response times. The dashboard helps the IT manager quickly pinpoint and rectify the problem in minutes before it escalates into a major outage and crashed shopping carts..

In All Cases: IT Dashboards = Strategic Decisions

In all five areas, the enterprise IT dashboard makes it possible for CIOs, Directors of IT, IT managers, and IT staff to have a real-time, accurate, global overview of the enterprise, understand problems and opportunities, and react immediately. It enables IT managers to budget smartly, plan resources more proactively, and make more intelligent decisions about long-term IT planning.

From Dashboard Data to Actionable Business Decisions

To leverage valuable IT dashboard information, enterprises should have policies to ensure that insights gained from the dashboard lead to actionable measures and, ultimately, improved IT availability and performance.

To put such processes in place, the IT manager might use the Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) framework of best practices for delivering high-quality IT services. These vendor-neutral management procedures provide support in achieving quality and value and guidance on IT infrastructure, development, and operations.

The next step would be Control Objectives for Information and related Technology (COBIT), which provides managers with measures and processes to maximize the benefits of the processes and developing appropriate IT governance and control in the company.

Used strategically, IT dashboards can underscore the business value of IT, define a proactive environment, manage IT risk and change, and identify opportunities for continuous improvement. The key is to develop a way to communicate these results both vertically and horizontally across the organization,

and map your critical focal areas with overall business objectives. This strategy creates a highly valued IT department that is seen as much more than a cost center.

In the end, you should find an IT dashboard that satisfies the needs outlined above in a simple and easy-to-use manner. Be careful not to waste money on heavy frameworks and expensive consultants. Find a dashboard that can be run by your staff and one that provides all the views and systems that both the IT end users and the IT executives need to drive IT value to the organization without sinking the budget.

Summary

The demand for high performance and high availability of business-critical applications is fast becoming a cornerstone of business competence. Properly used, an enterprise IT dashboard can effectively track and communicate performance, availability and capacity across the datacenter (including all servers, applications, network and IT services) at both a high, strategic level, and a granular level, providing a mechanism for clarity, insight, and better decision making on important IT-driven business issues.

Change the organisation's perspective. Create a highly valued IT department that is seen as much more than a cost center. Communicate IT as a unit that delivers business value.

There are key reasons why IT dashboards are essential in your IT operation: managing and monitoring Service Level Agreements; the assurance of IT service/application availability; combining the physical and virtual IT worlds; optimal IT capacity; and the benefits of a proactive system health strategy. In these key areas, dashboards can be highly effective in turning complex data into accurate, actionable information that helps IT management make informed decisions quickly and proactively, manage IT change, ensure high availability, and support continuous improvement and strategic objectives across the enterprise. Monitoring has never been more critical. The effective monitoring of servers and the network is essential to ensure your business and its applications are running. If you're responsible for the performance, availability and capacity of the datacenter, your job is tough and getting more complex every day.

Free IT Dashboard Checklist:

If you are considering evaluating IT Dashboard solutions, this "IT Systems Management Vendor Evaluation Checklist" is an excellent way to start. It's designed to be vendor agnostic and customizable to help you compare different products. A free download is available here:

Download Here: [IT Systems Management Vendor Evaluation Checklist](#)

up.time's Complete IT Dashboard: IT Systems Management Made Easy



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Who is uptime software?

uptime software is the creator of up.time, the complete IT dashboard for watching over servers, applications, networks and IT services. Powerful, affordable and easy-to-use monitoring, alerting and reporting that provides unified performance, availability and capacity management across the enterprise datacenter. Over 120,000 IT professionals and managers in mid-enterprise and enterprise companies across 40 countries have downloaded up.time to increase IT performance while consistently saving IT staff time and budget.

✓ **A Complete IT Dashboard:**

An IT dashboard that scales to monitor 50,000+ elements and services across all platforms and multiple datacenters. Dashboards, granular root-cause analysis and reporting tools, SLA management, IT automation and more.

✓ **Powerful:**

Granular monitoring and reporting without the complexity of “Large Enterprise” tools. Monitor across VMware, Windows, UNIX, Linux, Novell and more.

✓ **Easy:**

Browser based and installs in 15-minutes or less. Do-it-Yourself deployment in just days.

✓ **Affordable:**

Licensing designed for maximum value with everything included and easy to understand per-element pricing. Deep performance, availability and capacity monitoring and management included for all licensed elements. Unlimited free application and service monitoring, alerting and reporting on all licensed elements.

