

The State of IT Systems Management

IT professionals need to support users through innovative and cost-efficient IT services but currently lack the budget, staff and tools to meet their goals.



Kaseya

We're not gonna lie. Providing reliable and efficient IT services to a growing, increasingly-distributed workforce is hard.

Mountains of data are being created, stored and accessed by more users over a larger geographic area. IT infrastructure is becoming more complex as virtualization, cloud computing and on demand computing are re-engineering the way networks are deployed and configured. Federal, state and industry regulations are tougher than ever and require strict documentation. Users are demanding more data-intensive applications that they can access from virtually anywhere—whether they are in a branch office, working from home or checking in from the beach.

Kaseya is working with IT professionals around the world to better understand the issues and challenges associated with the dynamic world of IT systems management. We conducted a survey of IT professionals asking them about their priorities, concerns and goals for the rest of the year. We talked to directors, managers and administrators from small and large organizations who work in manufacturing, banking, retail, higher education, healthcare, government and professional organizations among other industries.

The following white paper is a culmination of the survey results, painting a complete and accurate picture of the most common IT issues and Kaseya's solution to solving these problems.

Without further adieu, here is the state of IT systems management.

Why Do We Exist?

It's a question philosophers have investigated for millennia: Why do we exist? For IT organizations, it's not as existential as all that. It's simple: What is the role of IT?

For some, the mission is clear with clear direction and expectations from your organization's management team. Others are left to make things up as they go along as long as users seem happy and the company isn't embroiled in some data breach public relations fiasco.¹

According to Kaseya's State of IT Systems Management Survey, the main goal of the IT organization is to improve user performance with 48 percent citing it as their top priority. And, frankly, that makes sense. Technology is pervasive in today's business world but if users cannot access the tools and information they need, all the technology in the world would be worthless.

What is the main goal of your organization?	%
Improving user performance	48%
Increasing IT efficiency	37%
Mitigating risk	7%
Other	9%

Increasing IT efficiency and improving user performance are the most critical goals for more than 80 percent of IT organizations.

However, more than one third of respondents said that increasing the efficiency of IT (improving IT productivity while reducing IT expenditures) is their main goal. And this makes sense as well. All too often, IT is seen as an inhibitor to success. Administrators are constantly interrupting users

¹ According to the State of IT Survey, 42 percent of respondents said the management team at their organization sets general IT policies but leaves the nuts and bolts to the IT staff while only 30 percent said that the management team is involved in every decision. Nineteen percent say that they are only involved in the budgeting process, and eight percent say the management team has no say in IT decision making.

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to update their computers, and a large part of the budget goes toward capital and operational IT expenses. A more efficient IT organization would help streamline operations and make the organization more nimble and more flexible when reacting quickly to dynamic market conditions.

So, what’s the answer? It’s both of course. The main goal of an IT organization should be to support users through innovative, cost-efficient IT services.²

User concerns seem to back up this set of priorities. According to the IT professionals we surveyed, their users are most concerned with systems performance and application availability. This isn’t surprising given this is the most visible responsibility of the IT organization. Users are unlikely to care about the nuts and bolts of IT systems management rather than whether they are able to access the network.

How would you rate user satisfaction at your organization?	%
Don't know	2%
Somewhat pleased	64%
Unhappy	8%
Very pleased	26%

User satisfaction seems good but lukewarm.

What is the most common IT user concern in your organization?	%
Application availability	57%
Data protection	19%
Energy consumption	2%
Poor performance	63%
Security	17%
User name or password issues	28%

Two-thirds of users cite poor performance or application availability as their main IT concern.

So, with a clear mission to support users with innovative, cost-efficient IT services, IT professionals should already have a clear roadmap as to how to do their job, right? Wrong. Saying you need to do something is much different from having the tools to execute on it. The fact is, the lack of staffing resources, training, specialized expertise and budget is severely hindering this mission.

What is the most annoying aspect of your organization's IT systems management strategy?	%
I often have to disrupt users to conduct maintenance	21%
I'm always on call and have to work nights and weekends	18%
There is a lot of manual, repetitive administration	49%
We're strapped by a small budget and staff	98%

Working within a limited budget and staffing resources is the most annoying aspect of IT systems management.

What Are We Doing Wrong?

It’s not necessarily what we are doing wrong when it comes to IT systems management; it’s how we are doing it wrong. We’re monitoring systems. We’re backing up data. We’re updating software and keeping track of inventory. These administrative tasks are all a critical component of IT systems management. However, it’s how we are conducting this administration that is grossly inefficient. Even with advances in automation technology, too much time is still being spent on basic administrative tasks using manual methods or relying on a patchwork of various solutions seemingly working independent of each other.

² Less than 20 percent of organizations count 'Mitigating Risk' or 'Other' as their top priority.

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What percent of your time is spent doing basic administrative tasks?	%
25-49 percent	25%
50-74 percent	36%
75-99 percent	6%
Less than 25 percent	26%
More than 75 percent	6%

According to our survey, half of IT professionals spend more than 50 percent of their time on administrative tasks, and 12 percent said they spend more than 75 percent of their time on administration. This is too much.

Upgrading software is often still conducted manually, one machine at a time. Backups take the entire weekend. Systems monitoring siphons off an entire administrator position that could be better allocated to another team. Patch Tuesdays require all hands on deck and are a marathon onto themselves. Help desk remediation is like fighting a five alarm fire with a SuperSoaker. Serious issues are getting lost among the deluge of password requests and basic configuration problems. And having four individual solutions from four different vendors only compounds these problems.

As a result of this inefficiency, basic, regular maintenance has a tendency to fall through the cracks, resulting in an inconsistent IT systems management strategy. As a result, problems crop up more often and take longer to resolve. Downtime increases. User performance suffers. The organization is put at risk.

The good news is that there is a better way, and organizations are aware. Nearly forty percent of IT professionals we surveyed indicated that they are likely to make a change in how they conduct IT systems management in the next year while another one third are also considering it.

How likely are you to make a change to your IT systems management strategy in the next 12 months?	%
Absolutely will	13%
Definitely won't	8%
Not sure yet	31%
Probably will	26%
Probably won't	22%

Thirty-nine percent of organizations plan to make a change in their IT systems management strategy in the next year while only eight percent said they definitely would not make a change.

How Can We Be More Efficient and Improve User Productivity?

Implementing an automatic and remote IT systems management strategy streamlines basic administrative tasks, allowing you to focus on other more strategic projects that improve user productivity or contribute to the bottom line.

Automation is the key.

Imagine pressing a single button that downloads the latest Windows patch, tests it on a single machine, then pushes it out to hundreds of desktops and laptops where it is automatically installed and configured. A process that used to take several administrators hours—or even days—now takes all of five seconds.

Imagine a new accountant is hired in the Baton Rouge office. You ask the local hiring manager to plug in a laptop, and you press a button. The 'Level 1 Accountant – Baton Rouge' user profile is pushed out to the machine. It automatically downloads required applications and drivers, loads preferences, sets up a new email account, sets authentication policies and emails the new employee a welcome packet from the IT department with training, help desk and policy information.

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Imagine setting preferences that automatically turn off inactive CPUs and monitors as the clock strikes 6:30 pm on the Eastern Seaboard. An hour later, machines in the Central time zone are shut off. By the time the sun sets over the Pacific Ocean, all inactive machines on your organization’s network in North America are off for the night, saving thousands of dollars in electricity costs and reducing your organization’s carbon footprint.

As you can see, automation is a powerful tool. Having access to comprehensive systems management capabilities in a single, fully integrated solution is even more powerful. And it’s within your grasp. By implementing an integrated and automated IT systems management strategy you can transform the way IT services are deployed throughout your organization, creating an efficient, consistent and transparent IT automation framework.

Efficiency Benefits

Your IT systems management strategy needs to streamline basic administrative tasks simply and intuitively. Only then, will you start to see the benefits. However, some management tools talk the talk but fail to walk the walk, requiring an advance degree in software engineering to write scripts. IT automation should be simple. The goal here is to manage more systems with less staff, freeing up resources to focus on more strategic projects. Adding complexity is simply counter productive.

Rate the importance of each IT task to your organization.	%
Helpdesk Issues	
Not As Important	8%
Not Important	1%
Somewhat Important	23%
Very Important	68%
Monitoring	
Not As Important	12%
Not Important	1%
Somewhat Important	38%
Very Important	48%
Data protection	
Not As Important	1%
Not Important	1%
Somewhat Important	12%
Very Important	87%
Risk management and compliance	
Not As Important	8%
Not Important	2%
Somewhat Important	26%
Very Important	63%
Systems management	
Not As Important	6%
Not Important	1%
Somewhat Important	39%
Very Important	54%
User state management	
Not As Important	14%
Not Important	3%
Somewhat Important	47%
Very Important	37%

Data protection and help desk issues rate the highest in importance for the majority of organizations.

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Consistency Benefits

Likewise, it is important that your IT systems management strategy covers the entire IT environment from the smallest mobile device to the largest supercomputer with everything in between. You should be able to set up groups of machines to standardize IT maintenance while recognizing that a laptop needs to be managed differently than a Web server. The user experience needs to be consistent as well—as an engineer in Bangladesh often needs the same level of performance and access to data as an engineer in Seattle.

Distributed employees often share data, so the data protection policies of your organization need to be consistent between regions and departments. Ultimately, viruses find their way into your network any way they can—often through the weakest link. It’s up to you to ensure there are no holes in the security net.

Transparency Benefits

Getting a handle on your IT environment is perhaps the most helpful and beneficial thing you can do to make IT systems management more robust and more efficient. Knowing what is out there, who has access to what and where they are accessing it allows you to better understand your organization’s and users’ IT needs. Only then can you effectively meet these requirements.

Having a reliable, accurate and efficient reporting mechanism is critical when creating transparency throughout the network. It helps with budgeting and planning and can be a lifesaver during an audit. Easy-to-run and easy-to-read reports also allow you to keep other stakeholders informed. It’s a lot easier to make the case you need more budget or staff if you can easily explain and show why the additional expenditures are necessary.

What roles do IT performance reporting play at your organization?	%
Keeps management staff informed of IT status	61%
Keeps users informed of IT status	42%
Helps with auditing and compliance management	50%
Helps with planning and budgeting	55%
Is strictly an internal tool for the IT organization	25%
Has no role whatsoever	8%

Sixty-one percent of IT professionals currently use reporting tools to update management staff, making it critical that your bosses understand what you are putting in front of them.

How Can We Create an Efficient, Consistent and Transparent IT Systems Management Strategy?

The Kaseya IT Automation Framework gives you a single powerful and reliable platform in which to implement an integrated and proactive IT systems management strategy. As a result, repetitive tasks are streamlined and you have complete visibility and access into all machines on the network from a central, Web-based management console. Repetitive tasks like patch management, security monitoring, backups and software updates are automated, dramatically reducing the time and effort you put into administration and allowing you to focus on more strategic, revenue-generating projects.

Much like preventative dental care, Kaseya’s proactive approach to IT systems management prevents major issues from occurring while giving administrators a single tool in which to quickly identify and resolve the small ones. As a result, IT is more productive and costs less, user productivity increases and the risk of security breaches, data loss or regulatory non-compliance is dramatically reduced.

Monitoring and Alerts

The Kaseya IT Automation Framework includes proactive, user-defined monitoring with instant notification of problems or changes. Administrators receive a system alert when critical servers go down, users alter their configuration or a possible security breach occurs. Instead of being a

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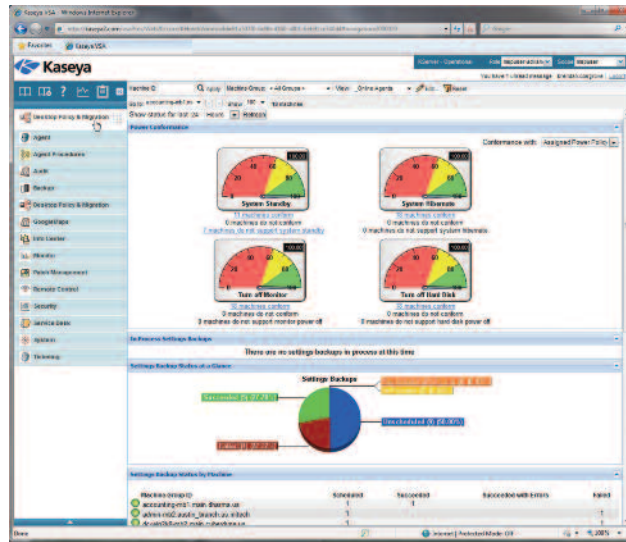
“...monitor, maintain, update, secure, back up and power down any machine on the network — regardless of physical location — from a single screen....”

slave to your management software, Kaseya works for you, letting you know when and where to focus your energy.

The platform also allows administrators to manage more machines. We have customers that manage more than 1,000 workstations per administrator. This makes IT more productive at a more efficient cost to the business, making your management staff more happy and more likely to support IT initiatives in the future.

Scheduling

The Kaseya IT Automation Framework allows you to schedule events—backups, security scans, software and patch updates—at a more convenient time for you, users and the organization. More importantly, you don’t have to be onsite during the evenings or over the weekend to execute the commands. Simply schedule the event and be alerted on your mobile device if an error occurs. Manually executing these commands takes time, and it’s likely you won’t get to all machines in a timely manner. Kaseya ensures this basic, regular maintenance occurs, making IT maintenance consistent across the entire organization.



Kaseya’s integrated dashboard allows you to monitor, maintain, update, secure, back up and power down any machine on the network—regardless of physical location—from a single screen.

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Nearly half of IT administrators cited manual repetition, working nights and weekends and disrupting users as inhibitors to their job, issues that are resolved through automated scheduling.

Scripting

Agent Procedures allow you to build virtually any execution, command or operation you want through an intuitive graphic interface with virtually no prior programming knowledge. It allows you to combine multiple scripts into a single, concise agent procedure, further streamlining complex automated operations while simplifying the process of writing, executing, updating and managing agent procedures.

For example, it typically requires up to five separate scripts to remotely defrag a hard drive. Kaseya allows you to roll all these scripts into a single procedure that 1) checks to see if users are online, 2) executes the defrag operation, 3) confirms execution, 4) tests for performance issues and 5) generates a report. Instead of manually firing off separate scripts one after the other, Kaseya automates the procedure with the touch of a single button.

Writing and managing the agent procedures is easy. Dozens of commands are built right into Kaseya, or you can write your own or import existing scripts. You simply drag and drop the commands to build agent procedures and schedule them daily, weekly or monthly. Consequently agent procedures can be managed as a whole or by individual commands and alerts can be set up to notify you of failures within an agent procedure.

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Help Desk

The service desk solution provides a comprehensive and flexible web-based helpdesk environment. Think of it as your Hub of Knowledge where your predefined IT processes flow through a central repository to create a fully-automated service desk strategy. The help desk module is integrated with the Kaseya IT Automation platform, so administrators have access to all the pertinent information they need to identify, troubleshoot and resolve each issues as it arises. They can instantly know how old the machines is, what is installed, when it was last defragged, when the last security scan and backup were conducted and who logged on over a period of time.

At the same time, users can be empowered through Kaseya’s end user portal, giving them access to documentation, ticketing information and commonly asked questions. This transparency further eliminates some of the more basic help desk issues, freeing administrators to focus on more serious issues.

What percentage of your help desk administrators time is spent on problem isolation and root cause analysis instead of remediation?	%
25-49 percent	26%
50-74 percent	25%
75-99 percent	10%
Less than 25 percent	32%
More than 75 percent	8%

Nearly half of IT organizations spend more than half their help desk administration time on problem isolation and root cause analysis instead of remediation.

Integrated under a single framework, the service desk solution speeds up the process of identifying the issue and gets administrators to the remediation process more quickly. As a result of this transparency, issues are resolved quicker, systems can go back on time earlier and users are more productive.

Reporting

IT professionals need quick and easy access to the details of their networks. The ability to accumulate, track and analyze data over time is invaluable for tactical and strategic planning as well as keeping the higher ups informed. The Kaseya IT Automation Framework provides comprehensive reporting for all data collected and stored in the system. From hardware and software inventory to bandwidth usage and server uptime, Kaseya provides you with the information you need to effectively manage and convey the status of the network infrastructure.

The Kaseya reporting mechanism includes:

- Detailed list, table and graphic style reports
- Complete and customizable reports
- Hardware and Software Inventory
- Complete Computer Changes
- Disk Utilization
- License Usage and Compliance
- Network Usage and Statistics
- Server and Workstation Uptime History
- Help Desk Trouble Tickets
- Computer Logs and Status
- Security Patch and Update Status

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Conclusion

The state of IT systems management is optimistic. Advances in remote and automated technology have made things a bit easier. However, inefficiencies still exist. Manual administration still prevents IT organizations from supporting users through innovative, cost-efficient IT services.

The Kaseya IT Automation Framework gives you a single, powerful and reliable platform in which to implement a proactive, preventative IT systems management strategy. As a result, IT is more productive and costs less, users have access to the tools and information they need and the organization is at less of a risk of security threats, data loss or non-compliance.

Kaseya State of IT Systems Management Survey Results and Methodology

As part of an ongoing market research initiative to identify systems management trends and evaluate best practices, Kaseya routinely contacts key IT representatives at a variety of companies located throughout the world. For this specific effort, completed in March 2010, we conducted an online survey of senior IT professionals at public organizations and private sector companies in the U.S. Using a sample population of more than 3,000 targets, more than 300 people responded to this survey. Approximately two thirds of the respondents represented the healthcare and education vertical market segments and more than 50 percent of the respondents are employed by companies with 10,000 or more employees.

About Kaseya

Kaseya is the leading global provider of IT Systems Management software. Kaseya solutions empower virtually everyone — from individual consumers to large corporations and IT service providers — to proactively monitor, manage and control IT assets remotely, easily and efficiently from one integrated Web-based platform.

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