

The Move to Interlink's Automated Service Intelligence (ASI): Two Perspectives

Introduction

Interlink is a well-established technology leader in service management with unique capabilities in service modeling, analytics, and data assimilation. Interlink has also distinguished itself through its responsive attention to customer partnerships. ENTERPRISE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATES® (EMA™) dialogs with Interlink customers over the past few years consistently substantiate the company's attentiveness and attention to shared innovation.

Interlink's BSM foundational capabilities with its Business Enterprise Server (BES) and Service Configuration Manager (SCM) have set it apart as one of the industry's most effective solution sets for enabling a tiered approach to advanced service management, including analytics and visualization. Customers have turned to Interlink, for instance, when they seek to avoid the pitfalls of an all-or-nothing platform commitment, or a dependence on stove-piped best-of-breed tools working largely in isolation. Its new capabilities for Automated Service Intelligence (ASI) extend that lead and add new dimensions in terms of business-to-IT analysis and alignment.

With Automated Service Intelligence (ASI), Interlink brings its core BSM foundation into a more business-friendly way of combining present, past and likely future insights into operations and business outcomes through a single, cohesive solution set. ASI delivers a clear and well-directed set of reports and insights on such factors as *service health*, *historical norms*, and *current and future performance*. And it does this with easily deployable capabilities for real-time analysis and reporting to create what it calls "intelligence solutions" optimized to individualized business models and IT environments.

The case studies in this report illustrate how two established Interlink customers are making the move to ASI. They also reflect Interlink's broader value proposition in delivering a truly seaworthy Business Service Management (BSM) solution set.

Case Study One: Service Management for an Airline with Complex Operational Requirements

Q: Can you share a few details about the business side of your operations?

A: We are a recognized global carrier with a significant travel business. The most important application for us is the application that serves as a public face for the airline system we support—an application that supports e-commerce for purchasing seats on flights and for hotel rooms, or other travel or touring-related requirements. And so it generates a lot of revenue. The rest of the applications we support are mainly internal. We have four lines of business, as well as payroll, health and safety systems. We also support operational systems for fueling and systems checks, catering systems and dispatch.

Q: How was it that you and your organization moved towards a BSM strategy?

A: Historically we'd been doing BSM for quite some time. You might say we were something of BSM visionaries moving towards it initially in the 1999-2000 timeframe. I had just finished a piece of work in high availability with our Strategy Group—through which we generated several patents. At that time

our monitoring was 100 percent Patrol, with a primarily Windows server base. But as we progressed we targeted what we call now the *Dynamic Data Center* – one that was more service-centric and more responsive to change, and this of course required a more dynamic approach to BSM. So we retrained Patrol for much of the monitoring and began deploying Quest Foglight for the application monitoring. But when we saw what Interlink could offer, we turned to BES to tie our infrastructure and application monitoring together for a more unified view of how our business services were performing.

Q: Could you say more about how you came to choose Interlink and how your Interlink deployment is progressing?

A: We really liked Interlink's data-driven approach over competitors. Their ability to populate service models on a data subscription basis. We started with Interlink as far back as 2001, and we may have been their very first customer. BES rather quickly became our manager of managers linking Quest, Patrol and other tools such as Microsoft – what's now Microsoft SCOM. To do this, we adopted a tiered structure—with monitoring at the *Commodity Layer*, and *Event Consolidation and Enrichment* and *Service Impact Analysis* as layers two and three. Interlink largely enabled those two top most layers.

We currently have Interlink's SCM licensed and through a successful Proof of Concept and are beginning to actively deploy it in production. In fact we helped to influence the development of SCM through our own in-house design. But we needed to scale well beyond a spreadsheet approach to keeping track of what are now more than 400 applications, and 4,000 service objects making up those applications, and norm of 150,000 CIs that we manage every day.

Q: What do you see that's new and valuable in Interlink's Automated Service Management?

A: We see ASI as a much richer interface that will allow us to operate in a more cost-effective manner. We have an Agile Data Center strategy coming out. And ASI is a key part of us trying to plan and position Interlink to support that more business-adaptive and dynamic strategy. Part of this strategy will also include SCM for creating dynamic, top-level services based on pre-defined policies. In conjunction with that, the new ASI dashboard will allow us a much more granular way of accessing services and service components based on selection query criteria. But with ASI, we'll also be able to more effectively link our application services to business outcomes such as the number of bookings, tickets due, or what the state of a given ticket service is. We'll also be able to review IT performance in context with other variables such as increased marketing activity or increasing customer volumes on our Web sites.

Case Study Two: a Financial Services Transaction Enabler seeks greater Resiliency and Business Alignment

Q: Could you describe the business environment you serve?

A: We're in the financial services sector and support payment transfers on one of the biggest ATM networks in our geography. With only about 800 employees, we have to enable the transfer of about 900,000 transactions per day, and mind boggling figures in terms of monetary values changing hands. And it's very critical that all these transactions go through in a timely fashion. We also have a Faster Payment Service with a guarantee of no more than 15-second turnaround time. This can be quite a feat depending on volumes and other factors. We also have a capability to switch completely from a live production infrastructure to a disaster recovery systems within fifteen minutes.

Q: Can you say a few words about your IT organization and your role within it?

A: We have four data centers and two Operation Bridge teams. To support these, we have an Infrastructure Delivery group that looks at all the new projects and tools that come our way. And then we have an Operations Unit that participates in reviewing these things and evaluating them in terms of service management functionality and their own end-user requirements. I more or less sit across both these areas, along with running the systems management. I try to make sure that our toolset investments coalesce with our project and business requirements overall.

Q: How did you and your organization move towards a BSM direction?

A: I've been involved in evaluating solutions to support our Business Service Management initiative for about ten years now, and worked in the company for just under twelve. When I first joined Operations—all we had were lists to consolidate our technical events. The company was fairly small at that time and our infrastructure wasn't all that complex, so the Operations guys could get to know which alerts were most important and what systems and services were impacted through their own personal expertise.

But as our company grew from five to ten fold—that way of working was no longer possible. And depending on expert knowledge without support from more advanced management software was becoming dangerous. We had a few tools from BMC – Patrol Enterprise Manager, but we needed something to bring our monitoring more cohesively together. Interlink first brought in what they called a “Power Pack” around 2004 which was a value add on top of Patrol Enterprise Manager. Soon we adopted Interlink's Business Enterprise Server (BES). It turned out to be a surprisingly straightforward migration.

Q: Can you dive a little more deeply into the Interlink Solutions you have deployed currently?

A: We are in full deployment with BES and early stage deployment with their configuration management and CMDB solution, Service Configuration Manager (SCM). We also have Interlink's Enterprise Dashboard Studio deployed and are very excited about the move to Automated Service Intelligence (ASI).

BES is currently the central tool connecting to all our data sources—which still include some BMC Patrol integrations as well as HP NNM monitoring for the networked infrastructure. BES brings everything together in a more cohesive service management context so we can really understand impact and prioritize accordingly. Their modeling and reconciliation is very strong. And Interlink's Service Level Agreement reporting is also very powerful.

We had a very effective Proof of Concept with SCM last year, although SCM isn't fully live yet. Its primary usage will be to look at configurations between sites, as we have multiple data centers – and we need to manage these more effectively as a unit including support for automated Disaster Recovery. We also want to have a more effective way to highlight unauthorized changes and relate these to possible performance issues. SCM will also help to sharpen our awareness of interdependencies and even allow us to run simulations – so that we can quickly see the impact of elements that we might have to take down for updates, changes, data center consolidation efforts, or maintenance-related issues. Going forward over time, we also see advantages in SCM to support some of our asset management and capacity planning efforts. Our strategy there will be to federate the information rather than keeping it all in one place.

Q: What is your vision for Automated Service Intelligence as you plan to bring it on board in the coming weeks?

A: We're very excited about the look and feel of ASI. It should appeal to a much wider array of professionals beyond technical professionals. It's very professional or business-oriented in its look and feel. And very sharp in how it presents information. We see it as a huge step forward.

We want to start using it before the end of the year (2011) and gradually expand how it supports our various constituencies. In one basic area we see huge improvement – and that's managing alerts so that we can prevent alert floods on the one hand, and possible loss of data on the other. ASI offers more advanced capabilities for preserving data and contexts for alerts across past/present and future. Once we have our technologists on board, we'll expand to other roles including more business and executive-oriented roles.

Q: You've been a solid Interlink customer now for going on eight years. What's it like working with Interlink—having Interlink as your service management vendor?

A: Overall, we're very, very happy with Interlink. They really concentrate on the customer service side of things. If you have a new requirement, they take it very seriously and try to put it in their solution far more proactively than any of the other platform vendors probably would. Their support is also excellent. 24x7. I have rarely seen a live issue that took Interlink more than an hour to fix, which has not been my experience with IBM or HP. Interlink's approach has always been to work with us as a partner.

About EMA

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