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Orienting AIOps and observability around the outcomes your organization hopes to achieve and following a few best practices will lead to a successful implementation.

Avoiding Pitfalls and Achieving Success with AIOps and Observability

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Questions posed by: Broadcom

Answers by: Nancy Gohring, Research Director, Enterprise System Management Observability and AIOps Software

Q. What does a successful implementation of AIOps and observability look like?

A. A successful implementation of AIOps and observability is determined by the outcomes and the impact on team members. Once in place, AIOps and observability should offer users of all levels, across IT domains, the visibility to answer questions about app and infrastructure performance, respond quickly to performance problems, and proactively optimize production services. Linkage of IT-level and business-level outcomes is crucial too: the goal should be supporting a high level of IT performance that drives customer satisfaction and the achievement of business goals such as new customers or revenue growth.

How an organization achieves this vision, however, often differs depending on the application and infrastructure, the level of importance of the app to the business, the skills, and the teams that are in place.

Q. What pitfalls have you seen customers hit as they modernize their approaches to monitoring by adopting observability and AIOps?

A. We see a number of common pitfalls. One occurs when an organization adopts tools that aren't a good fit for its current technology environment, in terms of scale and the ability to deliver full-stack visibility or the ability to evolve along with the organization over time. The result is blind spots that undermine the implementation, limiting value and slowing or stalling adoption.

Another issue is insufficient regard for the ways that different teams can and should collaborate with each other. The improved visibility delivered by AIOps and observability reduces disagreements between teams that are accessing different data sets with different perspectives on performance issues, allowing them to instead share knowledge and constructively solve problems. As a result, the adoption of AIOps and observability often leads to internal changes that may affect roles, responsibilities, how work is prioritized, and team structures. Companies that don't anticipate these impacts may slow down time to value as they implement observability and AIOps.

Finally, some organizations lack an understanding of the current and future potential of adopting observability and AIOps. To get the most from an implementation, organizations should take a holistic look at current and future needs and benefits to IT and business stakeholders and look for guidance about the art of the possible.

Q. From a tools perspective, are there any ingredients that you see as essentially required, regardless of the organization?

A. While there are nuances from one organization to the next, the following capabilities will benefit most users of AIOps and observability tools:

- Ability to collect rich telemetry and topology across the technology estate, including legacy apps and infrastructure and cloud-native technologies, from the front end to the back end
- Intelligent analytics that extract insight from a large volume of data and that serve a range of operations and business professionals
- Incorporation of business context to guide priorities
- Flexibility that allows integration across tools and ingestion of data from disparate tools — even as monitoring tools are added or change over time
- Support for the expansion of automation, including embedded automation capabilities or integrations to external automation tools

Q. What roles and teams are required for a successful AIOps and observability implementation, and can you share any tips related to roles and teams?

A. When evolving toward an observability and AIOps implementation, a smart approach is to establish short-term, midterm, and long-term milestones so that your teams can evolve as the implementation progresses. Building up expertise to get the most out of tooling and understand and incorporate best practices leads to a successful implementation. In some organizations, bringing SRE concepts on board or adding observability engineers to a platform engineering team establishes shared expertise that can benefit teams and roles across the company. We've seen success when an observability team or a center of excellence centralizes tooling and expertise, working with teams across the company to achieve the most value from observability and AIOps and eliminate the redundant work otherwise required when each team must manage its own observability implementations.

Individual roles that can benefit from observability and AIOps implementations include those on ITSM, ITOps, DevOps, SRE, platform engineering, and product teams. Orienting those roles around outcomes is beneficial. For instance, an individual might be tasked with improving latency or allowing only a certain number of errors, with the desired outcome of a more reliable application that delivers improved customer satisfaction.

Focus on enabling goals like these that will impact the effectiveness of your implementation, and then build up the skills required to achieve the goals. If you think about creating new teams like an SRE team or observability team, make sure they're given the level of decision-making authority required to allow for success. Throughout the process of change, always think about ways to support collaboration so that you aren't building teams that compete or otherwise impede each other. Plan for the adoption of AIOps and observability to affect how teams interact.

Roles and team structures will be different depending on the technology in use and the organization's culture: there isn't one model that will fit all companies. However, looking to peers in other organizations can offer guidance about possible approaches that will work for you.

Q. What is the future of AIOps and observability?

A. In the future, AIOps and observability will lead to a state where IT operations becomes a shared responsibility such that a variety of teams have access to the insights they need about applications and infrastructure in order to support performance and cost optimization oriented around the needs of the business. Over time, IT operations, in a broad sense, will blend even more with business operations for the digital enterprise, facilitated by the insights surfaced in AIOps and observability tools. The combined capabilities of AIOps and observability may be particularly useful in achieving this vision, making available a variety of telemetry data and customizable analytics capabilities in support of business and IT operations use cases.

In addition, automation will be applied more and more, across processes including management of tools, surfacing of insight, and remediating problems. Some of that automation will be driven by increasingly sophisticated forms of AI that make it easier to derive intelligence from telemetry data and that expand the utility of observability data to many more roles in the enterprise. Generative AI has a role to play here, allowing customers to use natural language to instruct tools to build dashboards or run queries, for instance.

About the Analyst

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Nancy Gohring is research director for IDC's Enterprise System Management Observability and AIOps Software service. She publishes research describing trends impacting the application, infrastructure, and log monitoring and observability sectors as well as AIOps. Ms. Gohring offers competitive intelligence and guidance to sector leading vendors, advises enterprises about the tools and tactics required to drive the top performance and user experience for their most important applications, and offers trend insights to the investor community.

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