

# Reinventing IT in Troubling Times

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Even in the best of times, getting the most out of overworked and understaffed IT departments is a challenge. And now that we live in a period of economic uncertainty, it's become pretty clear that most IT departments will have to rise to the challenges of IT management with either the existing number of people they have, or, more likely, even fewer.

That means that IT organizations can ill afford to waste precious IT staff resources on relatively mundane tasks. What's required is a methodical approach to automating as many IT processes as possible, with an eye towards creating a set of processes for managing core technology assets that frees members of the IT staff to concentrate on activities that add more value to the business.

All too often, IT organizations find themselves caught up in a cycle of IT service and support that is anything but efficient. In fact, an ad hoc approach to IT support more often than not leads to a demoralized IT staff that begins to resent having to repeatedly perform the same mundane tasks.

As the economy worsens, it's also becoming clear that any help in the form of additional IT personnel is not likely to come. That means that existing IT personnel have to find a different approach to supporting the needs of the business without compromising the quality of the services they provide.

With those goals in mind, it's critical for IT organizations to think smartly about their approach to delivering IT services by relying more on tools that proactively solve problems and resolve issues before they first generate a trouble ticket, and secondly, inhibit end-user productivity.

More importantly, there also is a wave of new emerging technology challenges on the horizon that will require IT managers to develop an approach that reflects the rise of virtualization, green computing concerns, and a host of compliance and security issues.

Top technology trends that will affect the way we approach systems management include:

**VIRTUALIZATION:** Virtualization is an enabling technology that adds tremendous flexibility to the processes of protecting and managing information. It allows the separation of information from the underlying infrastructure so that it can be proactively managed and protected throughout its lifecycle. While virtualization offers huge benefits, it also brings new challenges, including increased complexity brought on by virtual server sprawl. This creates a requirement for new approaches to common tasks like storage management, backup, disaster recovery, and security. However, under the right management framework, virtualization provides unparalleled opportunities to automate common processes and remove IT resources from many mundane tasks, all while being more responsive to the needs of increasingly dynamic application workloads while providing substantial cost savings. Some common benefits of smart virtualization include more stable systems with fewer support calls, self-service application delivery, proactive license compliance and license cost optimization, roaming desktops for mobile professionals, and many others.

**GREEN COMPUTING:** As fond as everybody is of the idea of reducing our collective carbon footprint, the savings to be derived by reducing electricity consumption is now at the top of the green computing agenda. Customers large and small are clam-

oring for hard-cost savings via significantly reduced utility bills and rebates afforded by green computing strategies. That means that IT managers are increasingly being challenged to come up with new approaches to systems management that give them much more granular visibility and control over what devices are running, and how much power each of them is consuming.

**COMPLIANCE:** As the economy continues to reel, there is more pressure than ever to come up with approaches to systems management that automate the processes associated with compliance. That means ensuring the business has the tools required not only to monitor activities, but also ultimately enforce policies that make sure that all aspects of the business are continuously and seamlessly in compliance.

Taken together, these three macro technology trends, coupled with rapidly changing economic conditions, will require IT organizations to strive to embrace the following concepts:

**SELF SERVICE:** The more IT departments are able to come up with service models that encourage end-users to solve problems themselves, the less pressure there will be on IT personnel. To achieve that goal, IT organizations need to transform their help desks into service desks that allow end-users to intuitively discover the solutions to their problems.

**PROACTIVE REMEDIATION:** Most of the problems that end-users experience have already been experienced and resolved elsewhere in the organization. The problem is that there is no set of processes in place for automatically transferring that knowledge to the rest of the organization. What IT organizations need to do is create a set of processes that leverage an integrated approach to systems management. This set of processes should take hard-won knowledge of potential problems and automatically distribute the fixes to those problems before any other user experiences that same issue again.

**OPEN EXTENSIBLE FRAMEWORKS:** The simple fact of that matter is that the knowledge needed to proactively remediate issues exists in any number of system management tools and products. To access that information, IT organizations need to make sure that they avail themselves an open systems

management framework that can be easily extended to other tools and products by leveraging well-documented application programming interfaces and associated industry standards.

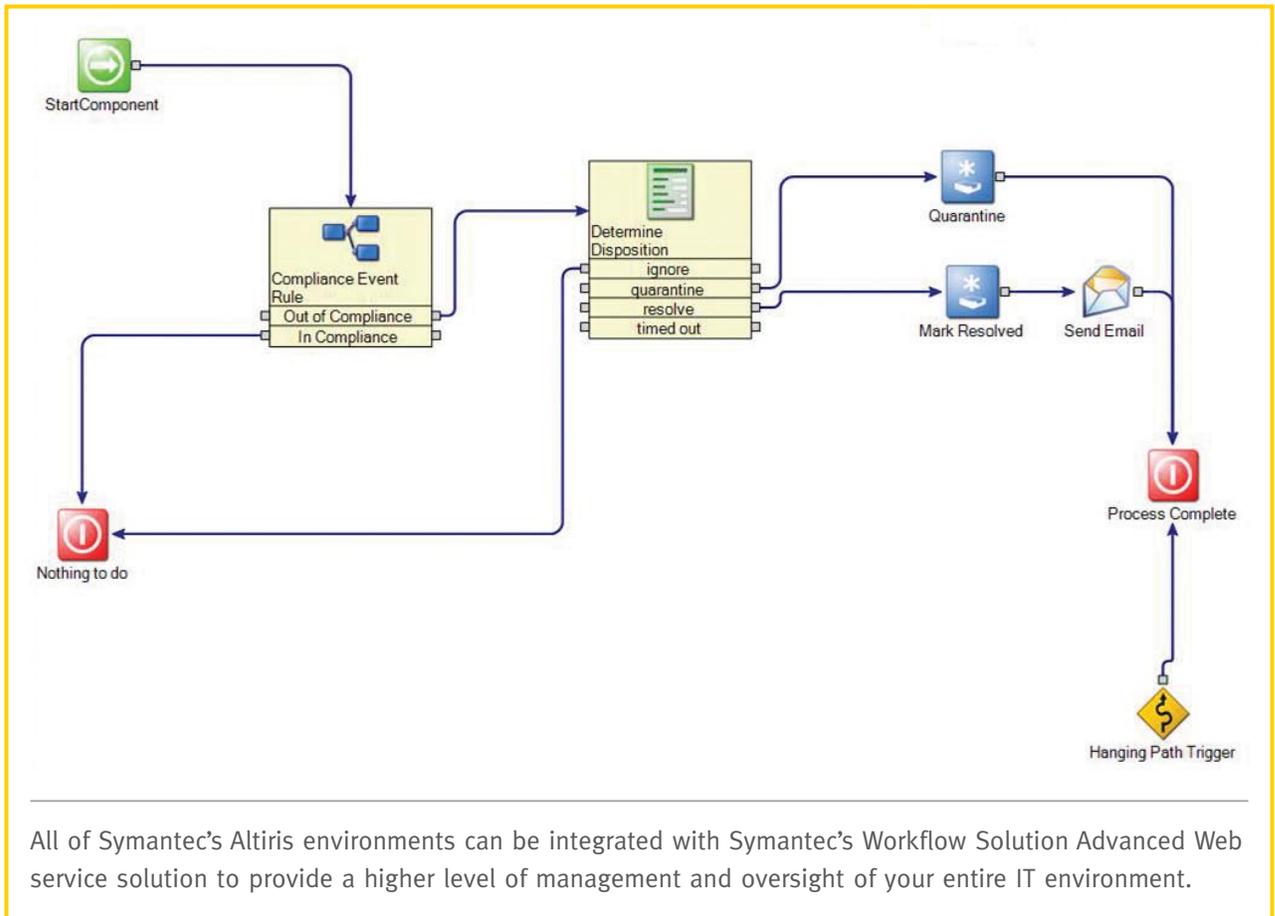
With these critical requirements in mind, Symantec has assembled a portfolio of tools under its Altiris brand that are designed to address all the rapidly evolving facets of systems management today. By embracing Symantec's portfolio of systems management tools, Symantec customers are positioning themselves to take advantage of state-of-the art workflow processes powered by best-in-class IT automation tools.

What that means for IT organizations is streamlined efficiencies in:

**CLIENT MANAGEMENT:** A zero-touch approach to managing clients that allows customers to maximize the time of their IT professionals to its fullest potential by automating most tasks. That also translates into improved productivity for employees, because physical disruptions to their systems are kept to the absolute minimum.

**SERVER MANAGEMENT:** This class of tools not only should aid when it comes to automating server configurations and managing changes. They need to provide a foundation for executing policies that continuously manage all aspects of the enterprise computing framework. To that end, Symantec has created a suite of tools that not only manage underlying systems, but the applications that reside on them and all the licenses associated with each of those applications.

**ASSET MANAGEMENT:** Beyond just simply counting and tracking the number of devices in the infrastructure, the Symantec approach proactively diagnoses potential issues and problems by alerting IT administrators about potential problems based on information gleaned from Symantec's client and server management tools. This means that IT administrators can proactively manage assets by analyzing which products and technologies are experiencing recurring problems, then linking that information back to specific cost centers and identifying asset trends. The carry-through benefits of asset management to the overall business are compelling, as they can add tremendous value to accounting departments when projecting IT spending.



**SERVICE MANAGEMENT:** Symantec is transforming the notion of what a help desk is by defining a new standard for service excellence based on proactively responding to potential IT problems. That means that instead of waiting for something to happen that requires help, the help desk concept is replaced by a service desk that leverages all the knowledge accumulated across the entire portfolio of Symantec products and technologies.

Today, IT is on the cusp of innovation more so than any time in the last 10 years. These changes coincide with the advent of new period of economic instability that will require IT orga-

nizations to rely more on an integrated systems management framework. Symantec is committed to providing customers with an open framework that keeps pace with IT innovation, while reducing costs by eliminating a large number of the vendors that customers need to rely on so as to create a holistic approach to managing IT. Moreover, it does so in a way that gives customers the ability to transform the economics of enterprise computing once and for all in their favor. ●

For more information, see [www.symantec.com/altiris](http://www.symantec.com/altiris) or click [here](#) to view a free Ziff Davis Enterprise-hosted eSeminar entitled "IT Automation: Reinventing IT in Challenging Times."