

Usage analytics

Advancing business alignment with IT

Usage analytics takes business alignment to an advanced, clear-cut understanding that provides a new and improved level of insight for IT planning and investments.



Introduction

Today's IT organisations are faced with an increasingly complex dilemma on how best to meet the demands of the business and deliver services that stay continually aligned to its changing priorities. In an ever more competitive, globalised business landscape, identifying and maintaining a careful balance between everyday operational IT and the development of new and innovative services has never been more critical – and at the same time – more difficult to realise.

Understanding demand and behaviour

A fundamental part of the dilemma lies in gaining an accurate understanding of how IT services are consumed by the business, so that service delivery can match demand, and where possible, be better tailored to meet the specific needs of different user groups. By understanding the correlations between IT supply and business demand, far more accurate assessments can be made on aligning IT with the requirements demanded by the business. This not only leads to refinements in the service portfolio by optimising applications, technology and resources, but releases funding for innovations that advance the enterprise and increase top-line growth and competitiveness.

More aligned and tailored IT services enable employees to perform their jobs more productively and for business processes and their transactions to run more efficiently, resulting in an all-round better performing business. In order to achieve this, organisations need to gain a more advanced appreciation of the dynamics between IT supply and business demands, taking into account how different employees and transaction types consume IT. If there is insufficient understanding on alignment with the business, IT organisations are less likely to understand how they should be planning to meet strategic growth targets such as those from workforce or market expansion. For example, if the enterprise was planning to increase its workforce by 20%, what impact would this have on the IT services that need to meet this extra demand? Similarly, if the business wanted to launch a new online service, how much IT capacity is required to satisfactorily meet demand?

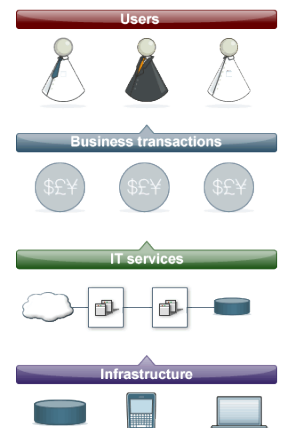
Many IT organisations have attempted to understand this demand by implementing aggregate-level infrastructure monitoring tools and basing their planning requirements on best-guess judgements, but this paints only a portion of the picture and does not provide enough across-the-board business visibility to make accurate assumptions



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on. Effective alignment is not just about demand it is also about understanding how user/transaction behaviour impacts demand on IT services.

To gain a precise picture of IT service demand that can be used for operational service delivery and strategic decision making, a higher degree of examination is required to show the relationships and correlations between IT service, users and transactions. This examination requires the capture of data from multiple sources across the business - data at infrastructure, business transaction and end-user layers. By connecting these disparate layers of information and applying analytical modelling, enterprises can realise a significantly higher degree of visibility and operational transparency. To facilitate this, Sumerian has developed usage analytics that takes visibility and demand reporting to an advanced, clear-cut understanding that provides a new and improved level of insight.



What is usage analytics?

Usage analytics provides the ability to identify how user behaviour, business transactions and demand impact IT services at a level of granularity that reveals valuable and practical evidence. By combining IT services utilisation data, user access, or transaction data together, a quantified profile is established, detailing the IT services and resources consumed. Usage analytics can provide visibility of IT utilisation and behaviour by different criteria – whether it be transaction type, job role, grade, location or any combination of these. This type of analytics is often used in combination with other analytical dimensions Sumerian employs – such as capacity planning, performance optimisation and understanding the impact of change. By using usage analytics to identify trends and correlations from the business side of the IT supply-business demand equation, organisations can gain the necessary insight to not only optimise IT services, but to make a dramatic impact on the business's strategic goals.



Applying usage analytics

Usage analytics can be applied to a plethora of IT and business challenges that require pertinent insight on how IT is being consumed. The following section provides some practical examples of its application.

Optimising IT services

Usage analytics enables teams to gain complete transparency of the IT supply/business demand dynamic at play. Armed with this knowledge, IT organisations can make reliably informed decisions on aligning IT services accurately to the needs of the business. By examining business behaviour in this way, whether it be user or transaction related, IT organisations can decide how best to align IT applications and services to this quantified demand. For example, by understanding how BlackBerry implementation has increased productivity within certain sample user types (see Fig. 2), roll-out plans can be targeted at specific audiences to optimise the productivity improvements.

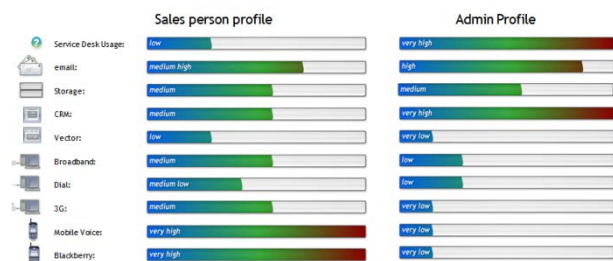


Fig. 1 – Example of Sumerian IT consumption visualisation comparing job roles

Similarly, by understanding the demand profile for a particular type of business transaction, IT services can be better optimised to meet the expected demand levels. For example, by understanding the precise demand that a new type of business transaction places on each IT service and how this demand consumes end-to-end infrastructure resources, the capacity planning process can be simplified substantially. The resulting benefits from applying this type of intelligence are two-fold: IT organisations benefit from being able to target their services, optimise their service delivery and streamline their costs. And in parallel, the business, its employees and customers experience improved levels of IT service performance and productivity.

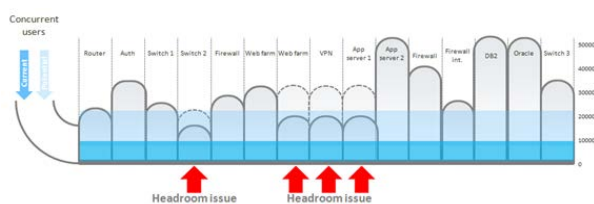


Fig. 2 – Example of Sumerian visualisation for capacity planning, which correlates end-user or business transaction demand to IT service utilisation, revealing available headroom

IT budgeting and justification

Results provided from usage analytics can also deliver the fact-based evidence that has often eluded many IT organisations when planning budget requirements and forecasting future demand. By understanding the correlations between the demand for and cost of services by user type or transactions and how these patterns are evolving over time, IT organisations can make far more accurate predictions and present their budget requirements to the board based on detailed assessment.

Communicating value to the business

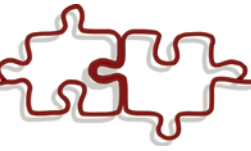
Demonstrating proof of the value that IT brings to the business must be based on the language of business rather than that of IT if that proof is to be successfully understood. When IT organisations make presentations based on IT terms (and speak of issues such as server and network infrastructure, data and bandwidth), the language used is incompatible with that of the business, who express strategy in terms of business processes, revenue, products and services. Because usage analytics is based on a business-centric view of IT services, it is easily represented in terms that the business understands, and consequently provides a common language for IT-business dialogue.

Change management

Usage analytics can be used to deliver the accurate assessments required for changes and integrations. Pre-planning phases, scenario modelling and sizing requirements can be based on more exact data, enabling the business impact and ROI to be determined more accurately. When new services are deployed, regular monitoring with usage analytics will determine usage and uptake levels, and reveal the impact of any planned service enhancements or further roll-outs. For post-deployment, improved assessments can be made on the business value delivered and provide ROI evidence on whether further deployments are justified. Additionally, usage analytics can be used in end-of-life and migration planning, as identifying the declining use of services becomes far easier to ascertain. For example, if an application's usage by specific key user groups is found to be slowing, this could have an important bearing on whether further investment should be made in this application. Similarly, if plans are being made to relocate staff from a single location to other offices, the precise impact of this change on IT services can be accurately determined.

Supplier management

Usage analytics can deliver significant evidence when planning and negotiating services with suppliers. For example, as part of a software asset management strategy, it can accurately determine if applications are, in fact, being used by all types of users that licences are supplied for. Cost savings can be made by aligning the



right software to the right user - resulting in reductions in shelfware wastage. Applied in much the same way, negotiating mobile network tariff arrangements can be improved as more accurate predictions can be made on expected levels of usage.

An often overlooked issue is the question of how suppliers' products themselves impact user productivity. For example, the results delivered from usage analytics may indicate that users are struggling with some parts of a supplier's application. Used as part of supplier engagement negotiations, enterprises can use this type of evidence to ask suppliers how they can help reduce process issues and improve quality and productivity across the workforce.

Applying usage analytics for business use

Whilst the benefits of usage analytics are clear for IT services, other non-IT resources consumed throughout the business can be dramatically impacted by its application. Combining IT and non-IT resource information using usage analytics techniques uncovers the dynamics between these two seemingly disconnected resources.

Facilities management

Using data from office swipe card door entry, the demand for and social interactions across office locations can provide revealing information on working patterns. For example, usage analytics can identify trends that may highlight opportunities to reduce wasted office space and facilities, or a need to centralise certain employee groups in a single location or improve transport links between offices. With the estimated number of UK mobile workers at around 15 million people, flexible working practices are fast replacing the traditional 9-to-5 office desk worker.

Similarly, rising energy prices and environmental concerns are now impacting businesses to the extent that many are examining ways in which they can reduce running costs, and meet environmental targets on waste emissions and carbon footprints, pre-empting future corporate and social responsibility legislation. Equipped with these answers, enterprises can start to assess the effectiveness of their current facilities and make informed decisions on whether changes can be made to improve efficiencies and running costs.

Realising the benefits

IT decision making should be based on optimising the alignment between IT services and the business. Without a strong focus on this alignment, many enterprises are not capitalising on the potential to improve productivity and streamline costs within their operations. By implementing usage analytics to accurately monitor the demand and behaviour of their users, enterprises can realise a superior level of intelligence that can deliver fact-based evidence for current and

forecasted planning requirements. By regularly reviewing the impact of user demand on an ongoing basis, IT organisations can refine service delivery, drive new innovative IT solutions, and successfully prove the value they bring to the business.

More information

For further information on Sumerian or to arrange a demonstration of our services, contact us on 0141 229 7580, e-mail us at info@sumerian.com or visit our Web site at www.sumerian.com

