451 Research

Business Impact Brief

Tool Sprawl Is Real, Leading to Wasted Money and Lost Opportunity

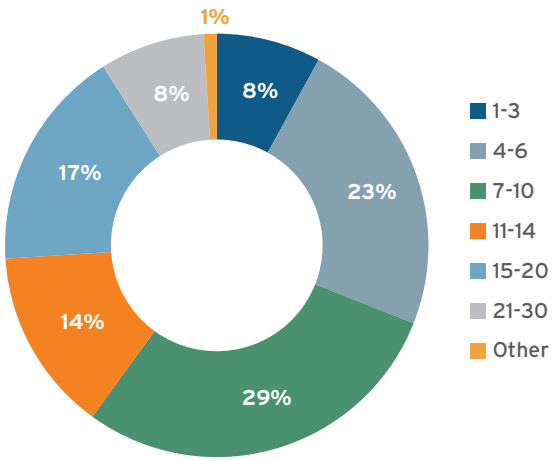
The 451 Take

Many forward-thinking organizations are embracing new technologies such as public clouds, containers and microservices architectures. As they adopt these technologies, they often also begin using new tools to ensure visibility into the performance of the increasingly complex applications they build.

In a recent 451 Research survey, we found that 39% of respondents were juggling 11 to 30 monitoring tools in an effort to keep an eye on their application, infrastructure and cloud environments – with 8% using between 21 and 30 tools. But rather than offering better visibility, having too many tools creates inefficiencies and lost opportunity. Businesses we talk to that reduce the number of tools in use, often by choosing those that can serve multiple use cases, are able to cut costs and speed the time it takes to identify and solve problems.

Number of Monitoring Tools in Use

Q. How many tools does your company use to ensure visibility into your application, infrastructure and cloud environments (e.g., tools for APM, server monitoring, log analytics, event correlation, etc.)?



Source: 451 Research (N=250)

Modern businesses are using a variety of new technologies to drive important goals, such as to quickly meet customer demands, but doing so often adds significant complexity to their application environments. Where once an application was static, composed of a monolithic software stack running on an on-premises server, a modern app might be made of microservices running on scores of containers that span on-premises datacenters and public clouds. Today's environment may be much more dynamic, with containers spinning up and down and new resources being quickly and easily added to meet scaling needs.

In an effort to get better insight into such complex environments, businesses often add performance monitoring tools. Further adding to this 'tool sprawl,' some businesses are enabling new organizational models, including DevOps groups that are given the autonomy to choose the technologies and visibility tools that suit their needs. Over time, the result is too many siloed tools, none of which delivers real insight into the performance of modern applications.

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Organizations that are juggling too many monitoring and troubleshooting tools typically complain about a number of challenges:

COST: Not only does each tool have a hard cost – either in software licenses or as-a-service billing – the tools require internal resources to manage and employ. With dozens of tools in hand, the associated costs begin to spiral, without a commensurate boost in visibility.

DATA SILOS: Using a dozen or more tools usually means that data is spread across a dozen or more locations. The result is the lost opportunity that businesses could otherwise gain from correlating and analyzing all or most of their operations data. Correlating data across systems can help reduce alert storms, speed the time it takes to identify the source of a problem, and introduce new use cases, including some that might serve line-of-business users. For instance, product managers might be able to correlate IT ops data with customer information in order to proactively reach out to high-value customers that might be impacted by a service degradation.

LACK OF COLLABORATION: When different teams only access different data sets via siloed dashboards, they lose the benefits of collaboration. IT ops teams begin wasting time as users of different tools try to rationalize the different information they're being presented – a situation that often devolves into unproductive finger-pointing scenarios. By sharing tools, teams are better able to work together to identify and solve problems.

Looking Ahead

Organizations won't reduce the number of tools they use for visibility to just one, and we believe that employing a handful of tools is healthy for most businesses. Some organizations may embrace specialized tools that meet their particular needs. But they may be able to centralize most of their operations data to gain the benefits of running analytics across a broad data set. Doing so will speed the incident response process by better pinpointing the source of problems and making it easier for individuals with different areas of expertise to work together.

There are different approaches to centralizing operations data, including choosing a platform vendor that offers multiple monitoring, troubleshooting and analytics capabilities. We're seeing a clear preference for platform vendors, and we anticipate continued interest in the approach as one way to solve some of the problems stemming from using too many tools.

Reducing the number of tools in use and centralizing operations data can also open the door to new use cases. We see more organizations discovering that correlating business data with IT operations data can deliver important insight to line-of-business users and senior-level executives. At a time when software is increasingly crucial for companies to meet their goals, offering business leaders insight into software performance is a powerful capability. Many businesses are already realizing the benefits of reducing siloes in monitoring tools, and we anticipate that not only will more businesses move in this direction, but they'll also begin to recognize additional use cases that may support additional business goals.

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