

# VISIBILITY THAT PAYS OFF: HOW THE BEST-IN-CLASS USE ACTIONABLE ANALYTICS TO BOOST THEIR INFRASTRUCTURE

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If you call something a black box, it's not a compliment on how easy that thing is to understand, manage, and optimize.

Actually, per Merriam-Webster Dictionary, a black box is any complex piece of equipment with contents that are mysterious to the user.

Interestingly, when it comes to IT systems, and storage infrastructures in particular, many organizations treat them as if they were black boxes. These businesses have limited or no visibility into their infrastructures, and the information they do have is often too old or stale to do anything about.

There is also an inherent level of complexity that comes along with the constant innovation of these infrastructures, adding so much specialization and tribal knowledge that it becomes impossible to share with other business units. And this element is often necessary to get a complete view into all application and IT performance and usage.

What makes these problems even more frustrating is that they are totally unnecessary. Storage infrastructures aren't black boxes; it's

just that many businesses are using the wrong tools and systems to try to understand them.

However, Aberdeen Group research has shown that, when organizations use tools designed to provide real-time, end-to-end visibility, they can have an agile IT process in place that prevents problems, boosts performance, and increases user satisfaction and business profitability.

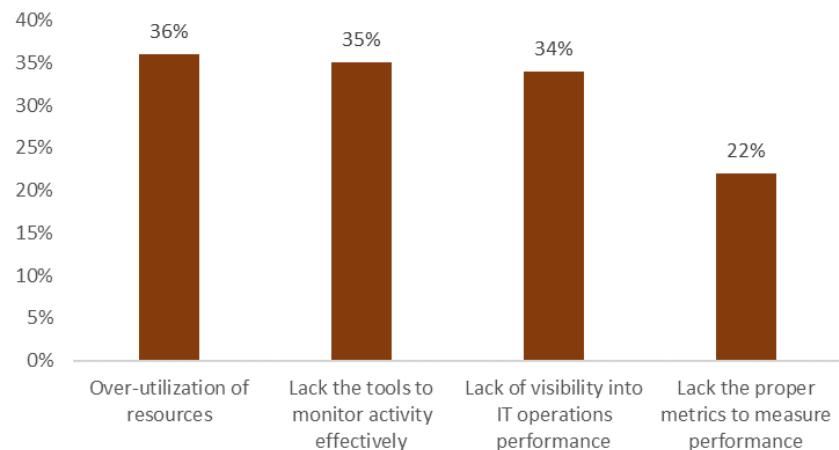
### *Piercing the Fog of IT Infrastructures*

It's not an understatement to say that managing IT operations today is harder than it has ever been. A wave of new and innovative technologies like cloud, big data, Flash-based storage, and Software Defined Data Centers are bringing transformative opportunities to improve performance and efficiency, but are also stressing the already limited IT resources and skill-sets at many businesses.

On top of this, modern users and business requirements demand applications and services that are fast, reliable, and constantly improving. In this agile and evolving environment, relying on old-school tools and processes designed to fix yesterday's problems tomorrow is a recipe for failure. It's no wonder that organizations are increasingly challenged when it comes to managing their IT infrastructures.

When we asked businesses about their top challenges in this area (see Figure 1), lack of visibility into IT operations and lack of tools to understand and measure performance were the top responses.

**Figure 1: The Top Challenges to IT Operations**



Source: Aberdeen Group April 2016 Percentage of respondents, n=74

When we asked about the top challenges when it came to storage infrastructures, we found that:

- ➔ 63% of businesses are challenged by the need to meet increasing demand for storage
- ➔ 44% need to support additional applications and users
- ➔ 32% are finding it difficult to manage and understand their storage infrastructure due to increasing complexity

Organizations are being asked to do more while they grapple with increasing complexity. In this kind of situation, the best recipe for success is having deep visibility that can cut through the complexity in order to help businesses act quickly, allowing their servers, applications, and infrastructures to perform at their best.

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### IT Can See Clearly Now

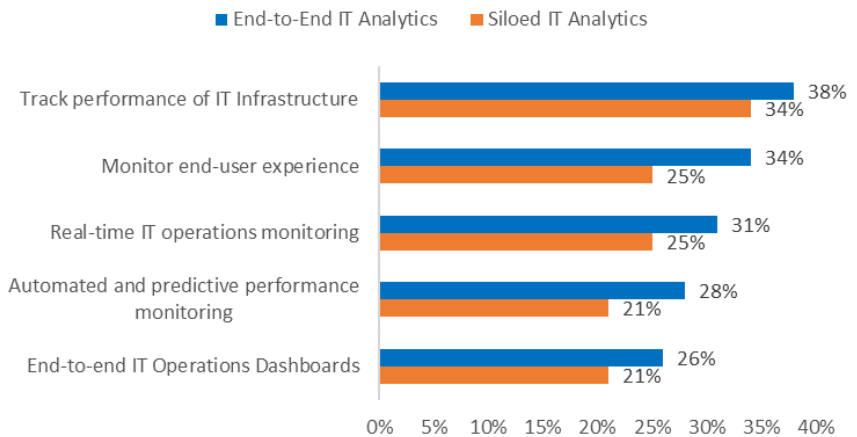
This kind of environment requires proactive, in-depth, and actionable analytics. Unfortunately, many traditional methods of monitoring storage and applications are reactive, invasive, and provide information too late to stop the negative impacts of a performance issue or downtime. In fact, some monitoring methods, like taps, can actually degrade performance or even become a point of failure.

However, just as many IT infrastructure technologies are experiencing innovation and improvement, so too are the tools and systems that organizations have available to analyze and manage these infrastructures. Newer tools and monitoring systems are easy to deploy and integrate while providing actionable insight that gives organizations a deeper understanding of their infrastructure.

With these tools, businesses can fully understand how their services are performing and can detect potential issues in real-time, making it possible to fix issues before they impact end users and the business. These tools are designed to provide information in a way that is understandable and can be shared throughout IT and the organization at large without the need for specific expertise in networking or storage.

In our research, we've seen that Best-in-Class businesses are taking many of these exact steps to improve their IT infrastructure and storage visibility to build a top-performing, agile operation (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Building an End-to-End View Into IT Operations**



Source: Aberdeen Group April 2016 Percentage of respondents, n=183

We've found that the top storage strategies taken by the Best-in-Class are:

- ➔ Implementation of tools to monitor all application performance across the IT infrastructure
- ➔ Ability to monitor all components of the infrastructure
- ➔ Use of analytics dashboards to provide easily-consumable and shareable insight into storage and IT infrastructure activity

And across all IT infrastructure areas, the Best-in-Class also leverage real-time IT monitoring, automated and actionable analytics and alerting, and end-to-end infrastructure monitoring.

With this deep and actionable visibility in place, these organizations are:

- ➔ **2.2 times** more likely to have high availability for IT systems and services, which means they have high uptime, meet service level agreements, and have a reliable infrastructure
- ➔ **2.6 times** more likely to have very low error rates for IT services, as their comprehensive and complete

view into IT means that things are implemented correctly

- **40%** more likely to detect problems before they are deployed, meaning that their unified and real-time view lets them detect issues at all stages of deployment and keeps them from impacting end-users and the business
- **3 times** more likely to reduce the time needed to fix problems when they happen, as their end-to-end view into the infrastructure lets them quickly find the root cause of issues wherever they occur

And when it comes to their storage infrastructure, there are even more benefits, such as:

- 39% have a reduced complexity in the management of their storage infrastructure
- 35% see faster deployment of servers and applications
- 35% have reduced IT expenses

It's easy to see the benefits of extensive visibility into IT and storage infrastructures. These leading organizations understand that these platforms aren't impenetrable black boxes, it's just that by using the wrong tools, businesses are blind to how these key systems are performing.

But with the right tools in place, tools that have deep and actionable visibility into all aspects of how applications and services are performing across storage and all IT infrastructures, a whole new level of visibility can be gained. Leading organizations can then become agile and transformative businesses that can leverage today's cutting-edge technologies to boost performance, reliability, and profitability.

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## About Aberdeen Group

Since 1988, Aberdeen Group has published research that helps businesses worldwide improve their performance. Our analysts derive fact-based, vendor-agnostic insights from a proprietary analytical framework, which identifies Best-in-Class organizations from primary research conducted with industry practitioners. The resulting research content is used by hundreds of thousands of business professionals to drive smarter decision-making and improve business strategy. Aberdeen Group is headquartered in Waltham, MA.

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