

# The Top 10 Ways IT can Increase Performance and Reduce Costs

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## Testimonials:

### Inertia IT

*"We achieved a massive productivity increase of more than 50%, and now capture 100% of our time & expenses"*

### McGuigan Simeon Wines

*"We identified a 50% positive increase in the attitude of the organisation to our completion of tasks"*

## The Top 10 Ways IT can Increase Performance and Reduce Costs

For every IT Department, be it a one, five, ten or fifty person department, today's challenge is to find the Holy Grail for IT service. That is to say, to look for a seemingly impossible quantum leap, where the IT Department is expected to perform more work in less time, have less errors and make wiser purchase decisions. All the while, subject to a constantly decreasing budget.

If this sounds like your situation, then this report is for you.

### 1. Web incident reporting

#### Problem:

When we analyse the typical IT team workload, we discover that one of the major sources of incoming phone calls is from customers reporting their issues. Typically, it is standard practice to try to resolve the issues on first call. While this is convenient for the customer, it is not always in the best interests of the organisation, because it is possible that more important but complex jobs are kept waiting. So while solving issues on first contact is a good approach for some issues, it is not appropriate for them all. How do we achieve the best of both worlds?

#### Solution:

We must implement an easy to use and effective web based reporting portal that interacts directly with a smart task management system. It must be fully integrated, not just a web form, to deliver maximum benefit. We must be able to inherently categorise and automatically prioritise work so as to enable the IT team to achieve higher productivity and give earlier attention to situations of higher business importance.

Raised Time: 14/07/2005 5:27:47 PM	
Title:	Invoice printer not working
Nature:	Hardware >> Printer >> Workgroup Laser >
Urgency:	4 Hours <input type="checkbox"/> Request
Impact:	Accounts Department
Related task:	
Summary:	Power light on but not printing. Print queue Paper OK.

It is common to presume, "our staff won't use it". But when we review the fact that The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) survey of 2002 revealed that 85% of adults employed in management or professional positions and 76% in sales and personal services, were regular users of the internet. We must therefore change our view.  
<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/94713ad445ff1425ca25682000192af2/560a5e4843ebca94ca256d97002c86441OpenDocument>

Today, that figure must be even higher. We can therefore conclude that our users are no different, provided our solution has a familiar look and feel to traditional internet systems they are familiar with. If we conservatively say that only 20% of your customers take up the alternative reporting system and we estimate that a typical telephone issue report lasts between two and ten minutes, then we have some idea just how much time can be saved.

#### Outcome:

- Productivity is improved for both the IT team and your customers
- Tasks can be grouped by similarity or locality, enabling increased output
- Urgent tasks receive earlier attention
- Service standards are improved
- Work is aligned with the organisations real business priorities



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[www.seratec.com.au](http://www.seratec.com.au)  
Tel: 1300 851 866

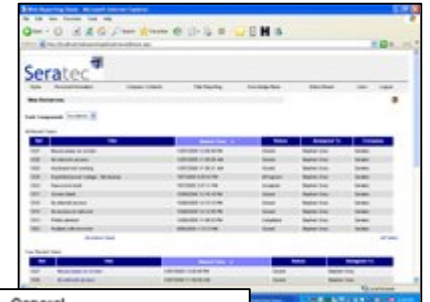
## 2. Customer self-help

### Problem:

Customers also tend to call the IT team regularly to ask for advice on software applications or equipment use. This information is generally available in manuals or user guides, but they are either not easily accessible or they are perhaps in a remote place away from the customer.

### Solution:

- a) Implement a self-help knowledge base that acts like a search engine
- b) Use this as a one-stop storage system for all this type of information
- a) Be similar to Yahoo and Google, using keywords or categories
- b) It must search text within documents content not just added keywords
- c) When searched, it must deliver an instant result
- d) It must permit external links to be created to web pages as a solution
- e) It must permit extra keywords to be added to help with searching
- f) It must be fully linked to the IT knowledge system
- g) Include noticeboards for advising of current or future major IT issues, company announcements, up-coming events etc



Knowledge Base General

Title:

Type:

Category:

Uploaded Date:

Modified Date:

Results per page:

Sort By:

### Outcome:

- Reduction in phone calls to the IT team
- Provides knowledge 24x7x365 for no extra cost
- Reduces out-of-hours support calls for trivial information
- Excellent place to store all types of company information
- Easy to update by direct link to the IT knowledge system
- Can be integrated to the organisations existing intranet
- Or is a powerful intranet for those who don't have one
- Improves organisation wide communications

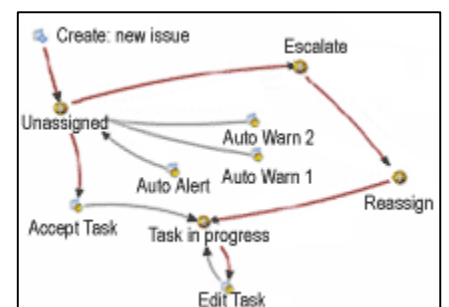
## 3. Web portal & automated notifications

### Problem:

Customers also call the IT team to ask about progress on their reported issues. This is understandable when you consider that the customer has no visibility of job progress after their initial report. Customers may also call in to advise of a change in their issue, such as a change in severity or urgency, or to add more detail that was requested.

### Solution:

- a) Implement a system that delivers automated progress reports to customers;
  - i. On official confirmation of issue lodgement (by the web or phone)
  - ii. When the task is actually accepted by a technician
  - iii. When the task is re-assigned or escalated to someone else
  - iv. At the conclusion of any key phase
  - v. On job completion
- b) Provide customers a portal to view up-to-date detail on task progress
- c) Provide customers the ability to attach a note to a previously reported issue. The system should automatically link the new note to the job and forward the information directly to the assigned technician.



### Outcome:

- A distinct reduction in phone calls to the IT department, directly resulting in IT staff having more time to devote to issue resolution rather than communicating progress
- Reduced pressure on IT staff from having to explain or justify the steps being taken
- Faster and more informative job progress available to the customer
- Both customers and IT staff have a more predictable and effective communications method
- Customers' perception and confidence in the delivery of service is greatly improved



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#### 4. IT team knowledge sharing

##### Problem:

There are times when an IT team member is working on an issue that has, unbeknown to them, previously been solved, or perhaps has a solution readily available on a support site such as Microsoft. It may even be that the person themselves solved a similar issue before, but has forgotten what they did last time. When specialised knowledge is held in one persons memory, it reduces the multi-skilling capability of the team and increases risk and reliance on individuals and their memory. In addition, training of lesser skilled staff often requires a senior staff member to sit with them for extended periods, to impart knowledge. This is a significant drain on productivity.

##### Solution:

Implement a fast and efficient knowledge base system that can;

- Easily capture, store and index clever fixes that any IT staff have performed
- Store and index page links to external web pages (Microsoft, Sun Systems etc.)
- Store and index documents (PDF, Word, Text files, HTML etc)
- Search within the content of these documents, not just added keywords
- Deliver instant search results, by using keywords or categories
- Permit extra keywords to be added in order to improve the search
- Provide an automated approval process for new knowledge base entries
- It must be integrated with the customer self-help, but allow different wording



##### Outcome:

- Issues will be solved faster, with much greater reliability
- Reduction of business risk by storing knowledge, means the knowledge is held even if the employee leaves
- All staff will be able to perform well beyond their personal knowledge, especially junior staff
- Learning will be an every day natural occurrence, without down time or loss of productivity
- Less supervision will be required as an increasingly higher percentage of solutions will be readily available

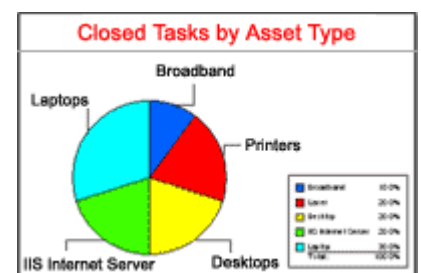
#### 5. Trend analysis

##### Problem:

Most IT teams spend so much time fighting fires that they have little or insufficient time to find the underlying root causes of the issues. After all, to find the root cause requires wide knowledge of all the contributing factors that must be evaluated before making any changes. Such information is often not easily accessible, if at all. The larger the IT team, the harder it is to identify common issues, because different people are doing tasks of similar nature but are not aware of the combined relevance.

##### Solution:

- Implement issue tracking with categorisation of the nature of the issues
- Implement a powerful and intuitive reporting capability to facilitate the easy identification of trends that are not necessarily apparent
- Use a reporting tool that allows easy drill down into report aspects
- Ensure the data is appropriately stored for maximum advantage
- Regularly run routine reports that highlight such trends
- Allocate resources to these issues which will reduce the volume of future issues and will increase infrastructure stability



##### Outcome:

- Ability to formulate better solutions by taking into account more of the issues that affect problem resolution
- Reduce future incidents by the systematic removal of root causes of repetitive problems
- Continuous reduction of workload on the IT team
- Identify sources of unnecessary expense and time usage
- Identify assets that should be replaced, or avoided in future purchases decisions
- Identify customers with specific training needs
- Increase infrastructure stability
- Increase customer satisfaction



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## 6. Job prioritisation and SLA's

### Problem:

With the constant influx of tasks in your IT Department, it is understandable that manually keeping track of the changing business priorities of every job, is simply unachievable without mistakes. Everyone can think of an instance where a task was incorrectly prioritised and as a result, caused undue business stress and anguish for all parties. Some organisations handle IT tasks on a first come first served basis, but that is not really considering the organisations real needs. For example, if two similar computer issues are reported within minutes of each other, one is for a low importance general admin PC and the second for the main accounts receivable PC. Because the business impact is markedly different, the first come first served basis is simply not appropriate. The importance of such a situation may not be readily apparent at first glance to the IT person, and thus escape correct prioritisation.

### Solution:

Implement an incident management system that includes;

- Automated job prioritisation based on a range of scientifically calculated criteria, including the nature of the issue, severity and company impact.
- All system calculated times should be based on hours of service
- Provide fast and easy data entry to reduce the time in keeping records
- Provide a range of integrated tools that help the IT team be efficient
- Incorporate flexibility for system modification to suit your changing needs



### Outcome:

- Guaranteed improvement to all service standards
- The ability to achieve best practice standards easily, without major cost
- Delivers a much more stable infrastructure environment
- Dramatically reduces the workload on the IT team, even if staff number become reduced
- The IT Managers job is simplified and many sources of stress eliminated

## 7. Time Escalation

### Problem:

No matter how good a person or team is, when human beings are busy or under pressure, they will inevitably overlook one task or another. IT staff are no different. Likewise, the IT Manager is under pressures from all directions and has little time to spend checking on the task by task performance of the IT team. As a consequence there are bound to be some unwelcome surprises as a result of a team member not completing a task in a reasonable time. Often, the first time the IT manager hears of it, is when the disgruntled customer rings to complain. The Manager has little or no defence. More importantly, the customer is unhappy.

### Solution:

The IT task management system must automatically monitor every task, and;

- If any task is in danger of exceeding its appropriate time allowance for attention, perhaps 70% of the total allotted time, the system should first remind the worker
- If a task exceeds perhaps 85% of the allotted time without action, the system should alert a supervisor or other team member
- If a task exceeds 90% of the allotted time, the system should alert the IT Manager



### Outcome:

- The complete and total elimination of unknowingly overlooked tasks
- Reduction in the number of tasks going over time by giving IT staff ample opportunity to take corrective action or to reassign work well before a service standard is breached. If work must go over time, the customer can be advised ahead of time, meaning less likelihood of a complaint
- Complete visibility for the IT Manager without taking up any time whatsoever
- Improved standard of service for customers
- Reduced stress on staff in evaluating changing task priorities
- Increased customer and staff confidence in the IT issue management process



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## 8. Issue re-assignment

### Problem:

There are many situations where an IT team member, after working on a task to some degree, needs to re-assign the task to someone else. When the task is passed on there is significant opportunity for lack of clarity about what has already been done, or what exactly is required of the new assignee. The more people involved in any one issue, the more likelihood of mistakes, misassumptions and work double-up. Not only is there a problem with the resultant error rate, but also in the waste of valuable resource time. To compound issues, in such situations there is increased difficulty for the IT Manager to evaluate each individuals performance and to be able to identify training needs.

### Solution:

- Implement task management to accurately track individual pieces of work
- It must facilitate changes to the assignee without losing detail of previous responsibilities
- Reassignment should automate notification and require an acceptance
- We must be able to clearly identify training needs by producing reports on work re-assigned, showing nature of the issue and the "from and to" names



### Outcome:

- Delivers a simplified, orderly and dependable re-assignment process
- Total track of responsibility of changes made and work performed
- Reduction of unnecessary duplicated effort and mistaken assumptions
- The ability to identify training needs of staff regularly reassigning work
- Improved service to customers due to the consistency of issue management
- Simplifies team management for the IT Manager, with greater clarity of individuals performance
- Ability to maximise the benefits of multi-tiered support structures – eg., first and second level support

## 9. Automated reporting

### Problem:

All business systems have reporting capabilities, but few really serve their users the way they should. Advanced reporting capabilities are therefore an implicit requirement of any system we implement. Further, when we consider the collective time spent producing the wide and varied range of reports used regularly by IT team members and the IT Manager, be it for their personal daily workload, service analysis, task over-runs, trend analysis or Board and Executive reports, it's easy to see that a lot of time is consumed doing relatively unproductive work. There is also an issue with the interpretation of summary data reports, when we try to evaluate the components that make up the totals. Getting to the right detail and making such evaluations using separate reports can be very time consuming and prone to errors.

### Solution:

Utilise a reporting package that;

- Provides complete on screen drill down capabilities
- Automates regular reports to be sent by email or to a network printer
- Is intuitive and uncomplicated for even the most junior or infrequent user
- Allows easy creation of new reports, for individual or general use
- Allows reports to be output in various formats, Word, Excel, PDF etc
- Eliminates additional reporting license costs
- Has the ability to schedule reports for other databases in the organisation



### Outcome:

- Measurable time saving for everyone, inside and even outside of the IT team
- Ability to guarantee Board and Management reporting on time every time
- Ability for team members to have their daily work list on their printer or email before they arrive for work
- Ability to quickly and easily drill down to sub details in any report, thereby reducing errors and saving time



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## 10. Audit trails of work performed

### Problem:

There are several key issues that necessitate good audit tracking of IT work performed. Any changes to IT systems can have ramifications that are not evident until some time later. Consequently, leaving it to human memory to determine who did what, where, when and why, will lead to compounding problems. No change should ever be made to infrastructure or systems without a full understanding of all previous work, otherwise we may unintentionally cause the reoccurrence of previously solved issues. When we don't keep adequate track of work it is entirely possible to fail to identify problem assets or customers in need of training. We may also find it near impossible to identify all sources or repeat problems. The IT Manager may be unable to effectively evaluate the performance of individual team members, assess their training needs or to get to the bottom of any errors caused by the team.

### Solution:

The solution is to employ task tracking that enables;

- a) Capture and full dissection of all work
- b) Have the ability to segment issues by various criteria, such as the nature of the issue, impact, symptoms, root cause, who did which piece of work, actions taken, costs expended, time expended, which assets and customers were affected

### Outcome:

The outcome of having this capability includes;

- Ability to better manage change so as to deliver increasing system stability
- Reduction in the reoccurrences of previously solved issues
- Easy identification of problem assets
- Easy identification of customer training needs
- Simplified performance appraisal of all IT team members

Worklogs <small>top</small>		
Worker	Start Time	Duration (Minutes)
Gray, Stephen	13/07/2005 11:43:00 AM	35
David, Virasinghe	14/07/2005 10:24:00 AM	25
Gray, Stephen	15/07/2005 11:44:00 AM	15
Onur, Toker	17/07/2005 07:45:00 AM	20

Task Interactions <small>top</small>	
Content	
Task: "No internet access" has been closed.	
Ref: 1016	Summary: can browse intranet but not internet
Work Logs:	

## Conclusion

**Central.IT** is the ideal solution that delivers proven results. When you combine the range of outcomes from using this fully integrated suite of tools, as described above, you can be guaranteed of achieving the quantum leap you have been looking for. You will be able to dramatically reduce the workload on your IT team, speed up restoration times, increase dependability of service, simplify your team management, improve service standards and genuinely reduce the real cost of IT. You will be able to make better informed purchase decisions that result in a lower cost of ownership and reduce outages. You also will be able to identify the most appropriate customer training needs.

For a no obligation discussion on these and other ways that **Central.IT** can streamline your IT Department, call Seratec today on **1300 851 866**. You can download the product brochure from our website.



**Contact Seratec today, phone 1300 851 866 to learn more or to schedule a demonstration**