

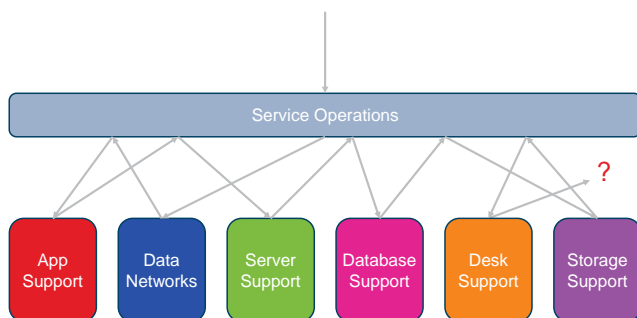
Enterprises that have adopted a multisourcing strategy to deliver IT services can struggle to resolve performance and stability issues. In this short briefing we discover the cause of the issue and investigate possible solutions.

The Issue

The primary driver for the issue is the Recurring Grey Problem:

- Recurring – the problem happens repeatedly
- Grey – the causing technology is unknown
- Problem – the symptoms are slow response times, errors, faults or incorrect output

The difficulty in identifying the causing technology means that the problem gets passed from one team to another, and so diagnosis generates a disproportionately high IT workload. These problems often take weeks, months or years to resolve, and in some cases they are never fixed.



Instances of Recurring Grey Problems are increasing due to the sophistication and complexity of IT systems. This is a challenge for in-house IT support teams and Managed Service providers alike.

Multisourcing (outsourcing, Anything-as-a-Service and Cloud) compounds the issue. When support is provided by in-house staff an IT Department will have a few Go To people who can leverage experience and back-channel relationships to investigate a problem. Typically, this type of agility disappears with the adoption of a multisourcing strategy because of commercial constraints.

Mythical Solution

With respect to problem investigation and diagnosis, the issue becomes a question of service ownership.

Who is responsible for the aggregation of the technologies into a coherent service?

Typically the responsibility falls to the retained IT staff, even though it's evident that some IT managers aren't aware of this. We have noticed that there is a slightly naïve belief that if technical support is outsourced the problems will be someone else's headache. This belief seems to stem from a lack of recognition or understanding of Recurring Grey Problems, and the assumption that all problems can be naturally and accurately allocated to the correct support team.

SIAM

The Service Integration and Management models could potentially offer a solution, but the SIAM documentation doesn't address Recurring Grey Problems.

If a SIAM-style Guardian or Independent Vendor arrangement is to address the issue, all outsource partners need to agree to accept a particular vendor's end-to-end troubleshooting remit. They must also agree exactly what will constitute proof that a particular technology or service is the cause of a problem.

To be clear, it's not just problem management that is needed with a SIAM arrangement. What will be needed is a technical team that can take a cross-technology approach to problem diagnosis – anything less won't work.

Conclusion

From observations across a wide range of company types and support arrangements we conclude that this issue is not being addressed. This is damaging the reputation of IT departments and Managed Service providers. We believe that a successful multisourcing strategy requires that the investigation, diagnosis and resolution of Recurring Grey Problems must form part of any service design discussion with an outsource partner.

Advance7

Advance7 works with enterprise IT departments and Managed Service Providers to troubleshoot Recurring Grey Problems – see www.advance7.com for details.