

CA Focuses on Simplified Delivery and the Service Desk

Abstract

CA, Inc. (CA), a leading provider of management technologies, is turning its attention to the service desk market space. As noted in recent impact briefs, the service desk market is heating up and CA has recognized the need and opportunity to focus on this anchor in ITSM deployments. The company announced the launch of CA Service Desk Manager Release 12, the CA CMDB Release 12, and some key EITM integrations at CA World, 2008 in Las Vegas, Nevada and plans to launch the solution in December 2008. Simplified delivery is central to this series of announcements. In the vein of simplification, CA has made a number of changes and product enhancements for service desk and CMDB customers. Customers and prospects alike will be pleased to find aggressive new packaging, enhancements in usability, analytics, knowledge management and the CMDB system. This brief discusses the details of this announcement in the context of the broader service desk solutions market.

Service Desk Activity Rises

Enterprise Management Associates (EMA) is seeing soaring activity in the help desk market as it evolves to become a more full-service service desk. The increased interest and resulting investment is directly related to the aging of help desk deployments and increased investment in best practices, and in particular, the IT Infrastructure Library

(ITIL). Many, if not most, help desk deployments are reaching their end-of-life having been in place in some cases for nearly twenty years. At the same time, best practices and IT Service Management (ITSM) strategies are expanding. The help desk has evolved into a service desk with many new responsibilities and interfaces to other important IT disciplines. Prospects and existing customers are demanding much more from their service desk solutions to support these requirements.

These dynamics create great opportunities for service desk vendors, especially those with comprehensive offerings. In the traditional help desk market, one of the decision points for buyers has been whether or not they wanted to invest in customization and ongoing maintenance of these solutions. It is and has been a double-edged sword. While customization enables companies to tailor the solutions to particular needs and perhaps integrate with obscure management technologies, at the same time it demands an ongoing maintenance requirement. Each new revision of a product drives the need to update the customization. The fact that the service desk has more responsibilities simply exacerbates this need for customization. Buyers are in the process of getting their arms around this and looking for vendors that can accommodate these requirements in a streamlined fashion.

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CA Investments in Service Desk and CMDB Solutions

CA has been a leader in the service desk market for more than a decade. The top-tier vendors have remained largely the same, influenced primarily by acquisition. At CA World 2008, CA announced the most recent investments in its CA Service Desk Manager Product Release 12 and the CA CMDB Release 12 (which is included with CA Service Desk Manager). The company put its energy into making these releases more accessible to buyers through simplification. The company began the beta cycle for this release on September 15th and has been continuing through the process since that time. It will make the offering generally available during December 2008.

Key CA Service Desk Manager Release 12 Enhancements

- **Bundling** – Perhaps the most significant change was in the packaging of its solution into a holistic and cohesive product set that will serve the needs of most customers. The new product bundling strategy brings together problem and incident management, knowledge tools, support automation, change management, the CA CMDB, application discovery and analytics, and reporting. In addition to this simplified bundling is a pricing strategy that provides a per user price for all of the products included. Breakpoints occur when capacity is exceeded. The bundling is a single, cohesive product, under a single license with one release schedule, support, etc. CA is no longer selling these components separately.
- **Role-based UI** – The CA Service Desk role-based UI provides users with 21 pre-defined roles aligned to ITIL v3. The idea with this addition is that users will still want to do some customization, yet not necessarily from scratch. CA has taken a “configuration” approach rather than one requiring development. Customers can choose varying “configurations” as described in the CA Green Books with configuration options fully supported to migrate forward to future releases.
- **Change management scheduling** – Change management was also a priority for CA Service Desk Release 12. Scheduling capabilities were added to ease the process of managing a multitude of planned changes using a calendar view.
- **Reporting and analytics** – “Business Objects” is CA’s choice for value-added reporting capabilities and analytics. This release uses an out-of-the-box Business Objects Universe with predefined filters and an adaptable schema. It also includes a full version of Business Objects XI Premium with Web Intelligence. Benefits of this approach work for both customers that want reporting and analytics out-of-the-box, and also for more advanced and technical users who have the experience with Business Objects’ technology, minimizing learning time and investment in training.

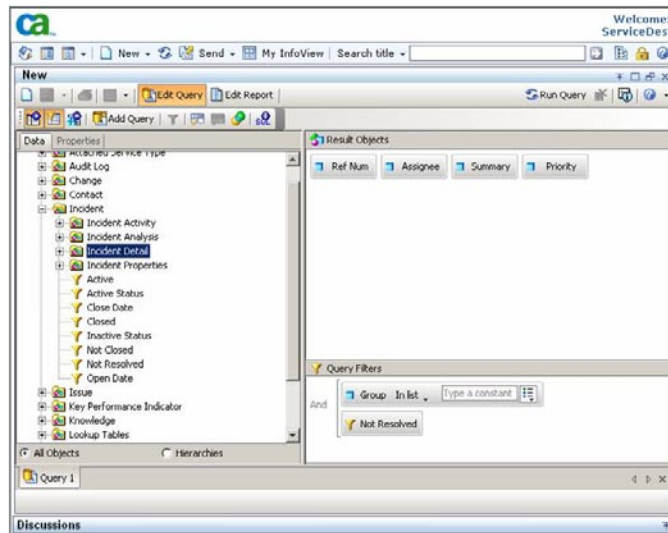


Figure 1: CA Service Desk Reporting/Analytics Interface

- **Knowledge management** – CA Service Desk Release 12 knowledge management includes the use of a third-party search engine to extend the knowledge management search capabilities and now includes the ability to search external documents. Other changes include additional support for managing the knowledge management lifecycle, support for KCS best practices and document versioning.
- **Multi-tenancy support** – The ability to support multiple clients/customers with a single implementation of the service desk has been added. This multi-tenancy support completely separates data, processes and roles such that no access is available to other tenants.
- **Deployment Playbook** – The Deployment Playbook provides CA Services and ultimately select CA Partners with instructions, documentation, and tools that aid users in accelerating deployment activities. These tools work to take users from project design to configuration, and include real-world scenarios as described in the CA Green Books.

Changes for CA CMDB Release 12

Many changes also were made in the CA CMDB Release 12. These changes are characteristically related to simplification and support for the new CMDB Federation Workgroup specification from DMTF. Enhancements such as multi-tenancy and role-based interfaces have straddled both the new release for the service desk as well as the CMDB. A summary of other investments in the CA CMDB r12 include:

- **Visualization** – A multi-layered approach has been added using pre-defined filters to screen for potential change impacts and root cause analysis.
- **Configuration Item versioning** – To track the status of particular CIs more completely.
- **Standards support** – Support for Distributed Management Task Force (DMTF)'s CMDBf specification and Web services that support it.
- **Localization** – Local language support is now included for French, German, Italian, Japanese, Spanish and Brazilian Portuguese. Operating support was also added for simplified Chinese and Korean operating systems.

EMA Perspective

CA is attacking some key pain points for customers in this release. The service desk is an area of significant investment at this time. Replacements are occurring regularly in enterprise IT shops. Consideration of alternative solutions is the norm as buyers look to expand the role of the historical help desk. CA's moves to simplify the decision and the practical operation of the service desk are smart at this time. Similarly, EMA is continuing to see investment in the CMDB. Easing integration abilities and any technology that supports federation will help ensure this investment continues.

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In CA Service Desk Release 12, EMA views the knowledge management additions as being particularly useful. Knowledge management is coming into its own in the market. Knowledge of all sorts represents not only efficiencies in the service desk to resolve issues more quickly, but it also is the intellectual capital of the enterprise and can serve as a key competitive edge. Knowledge management is high on the list of priorities for ITSM investments.

CA is clearly demonstrating support for the CMDBf as it has worked closely with other leading management technology vendors and demonstrated a prototype with IBM at ITSMF Fusion. This prototype used open source software from Eclipse COSMOS and is an indication of commitment to the concept of making CMDB federation a reality. EMA believes that federation is truly critical – across multiple brands for the CMDB System concept to fully emerge.

Integration is a bit of a mixed story. The service catalog modeling is being addressed, but has some maturing to do and requires services at this time. Yet, CA's Business Objects integration – where it has mapped its own data model into Business Objects – is significant. This approach aligns with the EMA architectural vision for the future representing “federated data stores in support of cooperative analytic engines.”

This is a strong release for CA, addressing real buyer needs – usability and simplification, but also cost, as it has bundled essential components all for one single, user-based price. Role-based interfaces and role-based access address “time-to-value” requirements and help enterprise IT to address the varying needs of individual groups while multi-tenancy is a wise choice to support managed service providers (MSPs) and others needing to clearly segregate their constituencies. Native integration with ITIL process workflows should help to accelerate both CMDB and service desk deployments. Those enterprises planning to replace their service desk will want to give this release careful consideration.