ORACLE FUSION SERVICE AS INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TOOL: A NEW PARADIGM

Abstract

Enterprises depend heavily on IT applications to run their operations and deliver timely services and products to customers. However, monitoring performance and outages across the entire IT application infrastructure is arduous without a comprehensive incident management tool. Most organizations engage third-party vendors for incident management software, which has its own challenges.

This paper describes how Oracle Fusion Service (CX B2B Service) doubles up as a useful incident management tool to handle errors and events within enterprise IT applications. It lists out the main ways organizations can repurpose Oracle Fusion Service into an incident management application and enjoy a variety of business benefits and cost savings.

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Introduction

Organizations have evolved beyond the days when they depended on humans for all business operations. In today's digital age, IT applications form the organizational backbone, and are proven to improve productivity, flexibility, dexterity, service levels, and reliability. They are used in nearly every business area, right from document storage to communication flows and data security. However, managing IT applications requires care. Once live, every IT implementation will have 'incidents' created by users that must be resolved.

About Incidents and Incident Management

Any event which is not a part of normal operations and impacts operability is termed as an 'incident'. Some examples are failures in infrastructure, service, or functionality; user access related issues; user errors; and training issues. Identifying, tracking, and resolving such incidents and consistently ensuring optimal service levels is a challenge. Fortunately, here too, IT delivers value in the form of monitoring systems and incident management applications.

- **Monitoring systems** collect and register a broad spectrum of performance data from various sources like applications, networks, servers, user experience, and more. The output of monitoring systems can be used to either log data or to trigger an alarm from an event-triggered alert.

- **Incident management applications** consume the output of these monitoring systems and take inputs from other sources as well in-order to quickly detect, prioritize, and log issues that disrupt normal services and operations. Incident management tools allow different types of users to log or report service disruptions, outages, and other user issues via a self-service app/portal or helpdesk.

Leveraging Oracle Fusion Service for Incident and Helpdesk Management

Why choose Oracle Fusion Service?

Oracle Fusion Service is primarily a customer relationship management (CRM) solution. But the underlying platform and application capabilities are extremely useful for incident management and helpdesk management. It possesses strong functional capabilities such as ticket creation, workflow management, queue management, assignments, automation integration capabilities with monitoring applications, as well as self-service and omni-channel capabilities for user engagement. For instance, Oracle Fusion Service:

- Offers API-based integration with external monitoring systems to create and track incidents based on system alerts and events regarding errors in platform, infrastructure, network, and security.

- Allows users to track SLAs and receive automatic updates.

- Automatically routes incidents to the right queues, creates multiple tasks for an incident, and assigns these to multiple working groups.

- Provides a self-service portal, chatbot, and assisted chat to log incidents, check status, and seek help.

When to use Oracle Fusion Service?

There are several scenarios where leveraging Oracle Fusion Service for incident and helpdesk management is an excellent solution for enterprises because it delivers an optimal combination of functionality, scalability, and cost.
Examples include:

1. Organizations that only require incident management and helpdesk capabilities, and not the complete range of Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) capabilities. Here, Oracle Fusion Service or its helpdesk stock-keeping unit (SKU) is best suited as it provides a comprehensive set of capabilities.

2. Organizations that use Oracle Fusion Service for customer service functionality and want to link customer service tickets and sometimes mass customer service tickets to incidents. In many industries, customers face system issues or outages due to problems with underlying applications, infrastructure, and services of the organization. In such cases, it is extremely helpful to co-relate the system incidents with customer tickets in order to accelerate ticket management, streamline customer communication, and meet SLAs. Such correlations are also possible between Oracle Fusion Service and any ITIL tool, however, there may be situations where using Oracle Fusion Service for incident management is a good solution:

a) ITIL application cannot be customized to manage very specific business requirements related to the particular business function.

b) ITIL licenses are not available.

A Real-world Case Study: Repurposing Service Request Object from Oracle Fusion Service (CX B2B Service) as inbuilt Incident Management tool

A leading utilities company in the UK engaged Infosys to implement Oracle Fusion Service. The client was already using a third-party incident management tool. Deploying innovative thinking, an innovative approach of using a single application for business functionalities and Incident Management was proposed. Extensive rounds of Requirement gathering, incident management were conducted and deep analysis of Service Request Object from Oracle Fusion Service was done. This was necessary to demonstrate to the client the hidden benefits of using Oracle's Service Request feature for incident management.

A customized Oracle Fusion Service was successfully delivered with Service Request Object repurposed as an incident management tool. The single solution is already delivering efficiency gains and ensuring zero operability issues, eight months post go-live.

How to Use Oracle Fusion Service for Incident Management

Based on our experience from the above implementation and client feedback, here are some of the key considerations for organizations looking to repurpose a Service Request object from Oracle Fusion Service as an in-built incident management tool:

- **Map features** – The table below shows how to map common incident management features with Service Request features in Oracle Fusion Service.

Common incident management features	Service Request feature
Incident number	Reference Number
Short description	Title
Description	Problem Description
Channel	Channel
Opened by	Reported By
Urgency	Severity
Assignment groups	Queues
Assigned to	Assigned To
Assignment group members	Queue Members
Comments	Internal Messaging
SLA	Milestones
State	Status

- **Monitoring system** – Oracle Cloud Infrastructure (OCI) Logging Analytics is a machine learning-based cloud service that monitors, aggregates, indexes, and analyzes all log data from on-premises and multi-cloud environments. In the context of incident management, it acts as an effective monitoring system in this solution.

- **Error Classification Object** – A custom objects is created in Oracle Fusion Service with error attributes such as title, problem description, severity, source, target, classification (technical/business), etc. Next, Oracle Integration Cloud (OIC) is mapped to these error codes, thereby avoiding hard coding of error details in OIC scripts. This makes the solution flexible as any changes in error details will not require code change. It will only require a simple record update for Error Classification object in Oracle Fusion Service.

- **Automatic Incident creation** – OIC is being used to post any errors as Service Requests (SRs) or incidents in Oracle Fusion Service. An event listener in OIC captures errors and posts these as SRs using the attributes read from the Error

Classification custom object in Oracle Fusion Service. OIC has also been integrated with OCI Logging Analytics so that all errors found during monitoring are logged as SRs in Oracle Fusion Service.

- **Identify and route business errors** – Errors impacting customer service directly such as data-related errors are classified as business errors. Such errors are automatically routed to the business queue in Oracle Fusion Service. Specific business users are added to this queue to maintain correct data visibility as per out-of-the-box (OOTB) Role-Based Access Control (RBAC) features of Oracle Fusion Service.

- **Identify and route technical errors** – Errors generated out of technical codes/scripts, hardware, network, security, infrastructure, integration failures, and timeouts are classified as technical errors. These errors are automatically routed to the technical queue in Oracle Fusion Service. This has a technical support team, thereby enabling appropriate segregation of incidents.

360-degree data view

Transactional and service request data reside in the same Oracle database. Thus, business, and technical agents can quickly and easily navigate to the transactional data entities associated with the incident, thereby saving time in resolving issues with the entities. It also ensures a smooth user experience as there is no need to log in to multiple applications.

Compatibility

Most third-party incident management tools require regular compatibility checks with the browser, ODBC driver, operating system, etc. Avoiding third-party incident management tools eliminates the need for such external compatibility checks and ensures smooth compatibility with all Oracle applications like Oracle Fusion Service, OIC, and OCI.

External integration

Oracle offers various connectors and adapters to ensure lightweight integrations with Oracle Fusion Service. This helps in real-time data flow, thereby avoiding any delays. Using Oracle Fusion Service as the incident management tool removes the need for any additional integrations with the third-party tools. However, data model changes will require some integration effort.

Periodic maintenance

Oracle applies regular quarterly upgrades and patches as per the maintenance schedule for Oracle Fusion Service. Since no third-party Incident management tool is used, there are no additional maintenance costs or upgrades to be taken care of.

Unexpected downtime

Typically, third-party tools have their own maintenance windows, downtimes, and unexpected failures. Oracle Fusion Service is managed by Oracle and, hence, there is no risk of unexpected failures or unplanned maintenance or downtime. Further, without the use of external third-party tools, there is no need to pre-plan maintenance schedules and align internal activities with these.

Data security and privacy

Since a single database and application is used for data retention and incident management, there is no threat of data privacy or data breach issues. This is particularly useful for enterprises handling sensitive and personally identifiable information (PII) details.

Licensing and pricing

Since the incident management tool is built into the Oracle Fusion Service application, there is no additional cost incurred on purchase of third-party tools or separate user licenses.

Data visibility

Oracle provides strong RBAC in Oracle Fusion Service, which can be leveraged while using Oracle Fusion Service features for incident management. As RBAC restricts system access to authorized personnel only based on the assigned roles, no additional RBAC features need to be implemented. This eliminates concerns over the data visibility features available in third-party applications and their efficacy.

OTBI reports

Details regarding the error message, incident, and transaction all reside in the same database, making it is easy to build (Oracle Transactional Business Intelligence) OTBI analysis and reports linking all relevant objects. It also provides the flexibility to create any number of custom subject areas and dashboards.

Skillset

As the incident management tool is built into Oracle Fusion Service, developers do not require additional training or reskilling to manage third-party incident management tools. This further reduces customization efforts around incident management.

Conclusion

Incident management is an essential activity for organizations to ensure that all IT applications are running smoothly and efficiently. Most enterprises engage third-party vendors for incident management software, presenting challenges with integration, data security, maintenance, higher cost, etc. Leveraging strong experience as an Oracle partner, Infosys has found that Oracle Fusion Service encompasses robust functional capabilities that allow it to act as a comprehensive incident management tool.

Organizations that want to leverage Oracle Fusion Service for incident and helpdesk management can begin by mapping common incident management features to service request features within Oracle Fusion Service, using the internal monitoring system, creating error classification objects, automating incident creation, and identifying and routing business and technical errors. With this approach, they can benefit from reduced licensing costs, 360-degree data views, access to OTBI reports, and strong compatibility since there is no need for additional integration.

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