Introduction
For a majority of businesses today the IT department manages numerous mission-critical processes that support core business operations. The findings in this report reinforce the fact that businesses are negatively impacted within a few minutes of an IT outage. Yet these findings are alarming in that locating the right person to investigate an IT issue often takes as long as, or longer than, resolving the issue. While IT searches for the right individual, the business is often suffering.

This research project investigates how IT professionals actually respond to the IT alerts and communications they receive, and what effect they have on issue resolution. Better alerting and communications management can reduce IT downtime and business impact significantly. With the growing reliance on digital business processes and internet enabled devices, the IT team must be ready to assume an even larger role. A better IT alert and communications solution will provide immediate benefits while providing a platform for IT’s growing role and responsibilities.

Key Findings
- **The business is affected often before the right individual can even be identified**
  - 45% Stated the business is negatively affected if IT is down fifteen minutes or less
  - 60% Required more than fifteen minutes just to identify who should respond to an IT issue
  - 47% Revealed finding the right person takes as long as, or longer than, resolving the issue

- **IT professionals enable and protect the business today but are willing to do more**
  - 90% Stated IT can offer more strategic services to the business
  - 74% Indicate IT expertise should be leveraged for other automated systems
  - 77% Acknowledge that the business thinks IT is too slow in resolving key issues

- **Improved IT Alerting Systems will benefit the business**
  - 91% Indicated that poor incident communication increases downtime
  - 87% Indicated that guaranteed alert delivery would accelerate issue resolution
  - 85% State issue resolution would be accelerated with single click conferencing
Detailed Findings

Nearly half (45%) of all participants surveyed indicated that their business was impacted if IT was down just fifteen minutes or less. But a full 17% indicated that their business was negatively affected the instant IT had any service interruptions.

Regardless of ITs’ effort to quickly resolved issues, 77% of IT professionals surveyed have been told that IT is too slow to resolve key issues that are likely impacting the business.
When participants were asked how long it takes to just identify who the right individual is to respond to a particular issue, 60% indicated fifteen minutes or more. That means for most companies their business is being negatively affected before IT has even identified who should respond to a particular problem.

47% of IT professionals shared that it actually takes as long as, or longer, to identify the right individual as it does to resolve the actual problem. So nearly half the time it takes to mitigate any IT issue is just finding the right person, and meanwhile the business is being impacted.
91% of IT professionals stated that poor incident communication increases downtime. A key to faster issue resolution and greater uptime is faster identification of the proper IT resources to resolve issues.

Over the past many years the role of IT has expanded from basic system support to enabling the business to facilitating online business, while supporting employees’ numerous devices. Should the role of IT continue to broaden? 90% of the participants think so, and stated they should provide additional strategic services beyond classical support of IT infrastructure and applications.
IT teams often work with very complex automated systems, and 74% of participants said IT’s experience with automated systems should be leveraged with other automated systems. With the rapid migration of devices, and machines and systems also connecting via the internet or a network, IT believes its experience will benefit the business by expanding its role even further.

For businesses, digital data has firmly replaced traditional brick and mortar assets as being the most valuable. 80% of respondents indicated that loss of digital data would have a more significant impact than the loss of buildings, vehicles or goods.
IT is clearly aware of the high business value digital data represents, as IT professionals indicated that 73% of security resources are focused on securing digital data. The findings back this up. 45% think digital data has more security measures dedicated to it – more than twice those focused on physical assets (27%). Thus the IT team not only keeps businesses’ critical systems up, but must provide resources and expertise to protect those systems and the data within them.

Given the high importance of IT responsiveness to issues, it was shocking to see that 41% of IT professionals have ignored IT alerts and communications. This may be one key factor in why the business is impacted and a delay occurs between IT issue discoveries and IT resolution efforts.
81% of the survey participants shared that they would respond to an IT alert if it was specifically directed to them. This finding combined with the preceding information provides evidence that IT alert systems that spam email to large numbers of individuals are often ignored. But targeted alerts generate better response rates, likely resulting in faster issue resolution, less downtime and reduced impact to the business.

81% of IT professionals indicated they are more likely to respond to an IT alert if failing to do so would notify their boss. This is further evidence that spamming team members with IT alerts reduces accountability and presents greater opportunity to deny or defer responsibility.
The value of accountability not only affects the individual but the team as a whole. 87% of participants stated that knowing that alerts were in fact delivered and that someone responded would accelerate issue resolution. This finding indicates that a trusted system is needed to ensure individuals are reached and to only notify additional resources if primary individuals did not respond.

Part of the challenge with IT alerts and mass notifications is that often those notified had personal events that may compromise their responsiveness. A dynamic and automated system that could be updated based on team availability could generate better response by IT professionals, leading to better accountability and faster resolutions and minimized business impact.

Where is the most inconvenient place you have received an IT emergency alert?

“I was at the hospital with a family emergency”
“Christmas”
“At Disneyland”
“I was at a wedding and I was a groomsman”
“In the outback camping, I was three hours away from a computer”

“At a funeral”
“Middle of the night”
“On a holiday”
“During birth of our child”
“While taking a shower, in bathroom or having sex”
85% of IT professionals showed that issue resolution would be accelerated by the ability to have single click conferencing. But the ability to quickly enable collaboration of the right individuals will have a positive impact on issue remediation.

Summary

Businesses trust IT to keep critical systems running smoothly while securing highly valued data. But when issues arise business stakeholders overwhelmingly feel that IT isn’t resolving them fast enough. Furthermore, the business is being negatively impacted often before the right individual can even be found to begin resolution. This is not lost on the IT team who indicated that current IT alerting processes and solutions are not effective nor do they drive accountability. But IT’s role has expanded significantly over the years, and IT professionals remain willing to do even more. But that growing role puts even more emphasis on IT’s ability to respond quickly and effectively to issues. Fast issue remediation will require that the right people be contacted efficiently based on availability and expertise. This may indicate that the communications management alerting systems that have served IT in the past may simply not be able to support IT’s growing role and that a new solution is required.
Survey Methodology

IT professionals from an independent database were invited to participate in a web survey on the topic of mobile device apps. A total of 304 respondents across Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Mexico, Netherlands, United Kingdom, and United States completed the survey. Roles ranged from front line professionals to IT executives. The survey was administered electronically and participants were offered a token compensation for their participation.

Participant companies provided a good distribution from large enterprises with over 10,000 employees to medium-sized businesses with over 1,000 employees. A solid range of industries were also represented with the technology and financial services segments leading the way.
About Dimensional Research

Dimensional Research® provides practical marketing research to help technology companies make their customers more successful. Our researchers are experts in the people, processes, and technology of corporate IT and understand how IT organizations operate. We partner with our clients to deliver actionable information that reduces risks, increases customer satisfaction, and grows the business. For more information visit www.dimensionalresearch.com.

About xMatters

xMatters’ cloud-based communications solutions enable any business process or application to trigger two-way communications (text, voice, email, SMS, etc.) throughout the extended enterprise during time-sensitive events. With over a decade of experience in rapid communication, xMatters serves more than 1,000 leading global firms to ensure business operations run smoothly and effectively during incidents such as IT failures, product recalls, natural disasters, dynamic staffing, service outages, medical emergencies and supply-chain disruption. xMatters is headquartered in San Ramon, CA with additional offices in London and Sydney.