

How to Improve Performance and UX

'ike (knowledge) level: Novice

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ServiceNow is a powerful platform that streamlines IT service management, but as organizations grow, performance can begin to degrade. If your ServiceNow instance has been running for more than three years, you may have noticed slower load times, a sluggish user interface, and less-than-optimal performance overall. This isn't uncommon, especially if the platform has been heavily customized and not maintained properly over time.

In this white paper, we'll dive into actionable steps for administrators to take in order to speed up their instance, modernize the user interface, and get the system back to performing at its best.

1. Identify the Causes of Slow Performance and Clunky UI

Before you jump into making improvements, it's important to understand what's slowing things down. A few common culprits include:

1.1 Technical Issues That Affect Performance

- **Over-Customization:** Custom scripts, integrations, and workflows can weigh down your system if they're not optimized.
- **Infrastructure Strain:** Your hardware or cloud resources may no longer be able to handle your instance's growing demand.
- **Database Issues:** Slow database queries, poorly indexed tables, and too much data in the system can all lead to delays.
- **Excessive Business Rules:** Business rules, especially custom ones, that aren't optimized or used too frequently can contribute to latency.
- **Third-Party Integrations:** Slow or outdated integrations with other systems can introduce bottlenecks.

1.2 User Interface Challenges

- **Outdated UI Components:** If your system is still using old UI frameworks (like UI15), it may look and feel outdated compared to newer UI16 features.
- **Non-Responsive Design:** Many older implementations lack a responsive design, causing issues on mobile devices or varied screen sizes.
- **Cluttered Navigation:** Too many clicks or a confusing interface can slow users down.
- **Heavy Dashboards:** Overloaded dashboards with too many widgets can contribute to slow loading times.

2. Steps to Improve ServiceNow Performance

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Once you've identified the issues, it's time to take action. Here are some practical steps to improve performance and the overall experience:

2.1 Conduct a Full Performance Audit

- **Use ServiceNow's Diagnostics:** Take advantage of Performance Analytics tools to get a clear view of which transactions or operations are causing the most strain. This will help you pinpoint slow queries, scripts, or workflows.
- **Check System Logs:** Look for errors or warnings in the system logs that could indicate performance issues.

2.2 Optimize Your Database

- **Improve Query Efficiency:** Review your database schema and optimize queries by adding indexes where necessary. This can significantly speed up load times.
- **Clean Up Your Data:** Over time, ServiceNow collects a lot of historical data. Archiving or deleting old records (e.g., completed incidents or resolved change requests) can free up resources and reduce query load.
- **Optimize Tables:** If you have large tables, consider breaking them up or restructuring relationships to improve performance.

2.3 Implement a Data Archival Strategy

Old data, while important for historical purposes, can bog down your instance. Archiving data not only helps with compliance but also improves performance by reducing the load on your production system.

Here's how to get started with data archival:

- **Identify What Needs to Be Archived:** Determine which data (e.g., incidents, requests, changes) can be archived based on age or frequency of access. A good rule of thumb is to archive anything older than 1-2 years.
- **Choose Your Archival Method:** You can use ServiceNow's built-in **Data Archiving** tools to move old records to an external system or to a separate table in ServiceNow itself. This way, they're still available if needed, but they won't impact daily operations.
- **Automate the Process:** Set up scheduled jobs in ServiceNow to archive data automatically, ensuring that old records are regularly moved out of the active database.
- **Make Archived Data Accessible:** While archived data doesn't need to be in the production instance, it should still be available for compliance or reporting purposes. Set up a system to pull archived data as needed, whether it's through external reports or ServiceNow's reporting tools.

2.4 Optimize Custom Scripts and Business Rules

- **Review and Refactor:** Work with your developers to review custom scripts, business rules, and workflows. Optimizing or refactoring inefficient code can yield big performance improvements.

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- **Use Caching:** If possible, implement caching to reduce the number of database queries required for frequent actions.
- **Avoid Synchronous Scripts:** Avoid using synchronous scripts or those that run unnecessarily during routine tasks. These can cause delays in workflows and slow down performance.

2.5 Review Your Hosting and Infrastructure

- **Assess Your Hosting Setup:** If you're not using ServiceNow's cloud hosting, you may need to upgrade your hosting infrastructure to keep up with the growing demands of your instance. Ensure that your server or cloud setup is scaling appropriately.
- **Scale Resources:** ServiceNow instances can scale vertically (adding more resources to the same server) or horizontally (splitting the load across multiple servers). If you're facing issues with increased load, consider scaling your infrastructure.

3. Modernizing the User Interface and Enhancing UX

A modern UI isn't just for looks—it can actually improve performance and make your ServiceNow experience more efficient. Here are some ways to improve the user interface:

3.1 Upgrade to UI16

If you're still using UI15, upgrade to **UI16**, which comes with improved performance, a more modern design, and better usability. UI16 uses a more streamlined, mobile-friendly framework that loads faster and looks cleaner.

3.2 Ensure Responsive Design

- **Go Mobile-First:** With more users accessing ServiceNow from mobile devices, ensure that your instance's design is responsive across different screen sizes.
- **Optimize for All Devices:** Update forms, catalogs, and dashboards to be fully responsive so users can interact with the system seamlessly, whether they're on a desktop, tablet, or phone.

3.3 Simplify Navigation

- **Streamline User Flows:** Simplify the navigation to make it easier for users to find what they need. Eliminate redundant steps, reduce clicks, and group related tasks together.
- **Personalized Dashboards:** Tailor dashboards based on user roles to ensure that they are showing only relevant information. This reduces clutter and speeds up load times.
- **Remove Excess Widgets:** If your dashboards are slow, it's often because of too many widgets trying to pull data at once. Keep only the most essential ones and ensure they're not overloading the system.

3.4 Optimize Service Catalog

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- **Streamline Service Requests:** Review your service catalog to ensure that users can easily request what they need without being overwhelmed by too many options. Simplify the catalog and remove outdated or unnecessary services.
- **Ensure Smooth Workflow:** Optimize the request fulfillment process to make sure users experience minimal delays when submitting service requests.

3.5 Leverage Virtual Agents for Automation

- **Implement Virtual Agents:** If your instance doesn't already use ServiceNow's **Virtual Agent**, implement it to provide users with quick, AI-powered assistance. Virtual Agents can handle routine requests, troubleshoot common issues, and direct users to the right resources—reducing wait times and improving the user experience.

4. Getting Started: Administrator Checklist

Here's a quick checklist to help you get started on improving your ServiceNow instance's performance and user experience:

1. **Audit Performance:**
 - Use **Performance Analytics** to identify slow transactions.
 - Check logs for errors or issues.
2. **Optimize Your Database:**
 - Review queries and add indexes where necessary.
 - Clean up data by archiving or deleting old records.
 - Evaluate and optimize large tables.
3. **Implement Data Archiving:**
 - Identify data to archive (e.g., older incidents, requests).
 - Set up regular archival schedules.
 - Ensure archived data is accessible when needed.
4. **Refactor Custom Scripts:**
 - Review and optimize custom scripts and business rules.
 - Implement caching and asynchronous processing where possible.
5. **Upgrade Your Infrastructure:**
 - Review your hosting environment.
 - Scale your resources based on usage patterns.

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6. **Update UI to UI16:**

- Upgrade to UI16 if still using UI15.
- Optimize for responsive design and mobile access.

7. **Simplify Navigation and Dashboards:**

- Streamline user workflows and reduce unnecessary clicks.
- Personalize dashboards and remove excess widgets.

8. **Review and Optimize Service Catalog:**

- Streamline and simplify the catalog.
- Ensure the service request process is efficient.

9. **Implement Virtual Agents:**

- Leverage ServiceNow's Virtual Agent to automate common requests and provide instant assistance.

5. Conclusion

ServiceNow implementations that have been running for a few years often need a little TLC to keep performance high and user experience smooth. By conducting a performance audit, optimizing your database, modernizing the UI, and implementing data archival strategies, you can breathe new life into your instance and ensure that it continues to deliver value. Regular maintenance, user feedback, and staying up-to-date with platform upgrades will keep your ServiceNow instance running at peak performance for years to come.

About Mana'o Pili

Mana'o Pili is a Hawai'i based technology consulting firm specializing in business automation through ServiceNow. Mana'o Pili provides its customers with individualized solutions. We reject the notion of one-size-fits-all solutions. Instead, we partner with you to craft a tailored plan that aligns with your unique needs, budget, and objectives. Our approach focuses on optimizing your existing platform while minimizing customization and reducing technical debt.

Here at Mana'o Pili, we treat our customers as 'ohana (family), listen closely to your challenges and deliver tailored attention with exceptional service.