

The CMDB: Building the Right Foundation to Deliver Business Value

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The CMDB: Building the Right Foundation to Deliver Business Value

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Few IT professionals would argue that traditional IT management practices are adequate for today's fast-moving business environment and complex IT infrastructures. That's why so many organizations are moving aggressively to replace outdated, manual processes with proven best-practice processes outlined in process, control, and quality frameworks, such as the IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL®) and Control Objectives for Information and related Technology (COBIT).

To ensure that such frameworks deliver the desired business benefits, however, you need to implement a systems-based solution that supports the processes and controls necessary to manage a complex and continually changing IT environment. To be effective, the solution must be based on a top-down IT management architecture that defines such factors as the parts required, the functions of each part, the interrelationships among them, and the interfaces that unite the parts to create a seamless environment. A configuration management database (CMDB) and automated discovery tools are core components of this architectural foundation.

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Taking a Systems-based Approach

To enable a business-aligned IT environment, your underlying architecture has to provide a complete, accurate, and up-to-date view of the people, processes, and technologies that make up the business and IT environment. That involves consolidating silos of data into an enterprisewide view that shows not only infrastructure components and their physical and logical relationships, but also the relationships of the components to business services. The architecture also must integrate IT management processes across disciplines and technology silos. This involves integration of the technologies, applications, and tools that support the processes. The combination of a CMDB and automated discovery tools that populate it and keep it up to date offers a relatively fast and effective means of building such a foundation. In fact, these two capabilities are essential to creating a business-aligned IT infrastructure.

A CMDB is vital because of its role in capturing and maintaining comprehensive information that describes the IT environment. The information encompasses configuration items (CIs), including the technology assets, IT processes, and people; CI descriptions, such as the configurations of client and server machines; and CI relationships, such as the physical and logical relationships of applications, application servers, database servers, and networking elements. A well-architected CMDB provides an integration point for IT management silos. It is a key component of ITIL in that it brings IT processes and technology management together, permitting more effective execution of IT processes. Finally, it provides a single source of truth that all ITIL processes can share.



Reaping the Rewards

If you are concerned about the investment of time and money required to implement a CMDB and automated discovery, take heart. While such an implementation is substantial, so is the payoff. A number of business benefits help ensure that you realize a solid return on your investment. They include:

- > *Stronger IT/business alignment.* Insight into the relationship of the IT infrastructure to business services and processes enables you to understand the impact of IT on the business and vice versa. Consequently, you make decisions and take action based on business impact, which translates into better services to end users and customers.
- > *Increased operational efficiency.* The physical and logical topology information maintained by the CMDB improves IT staff efficiency. In addition, business service and business process information permits you to prioritize activities based on business impact. As a result, you can focus on those activities most important to the business, maximizing efficiency.
- > *Enhanced regulatory compliance.* The CMDB maintains the relationships of the components of the IT environment and IT processes to the business processes they support. Compliance assessment applications can leverage this information to measure compliance of business processes, and audit reporting applications can tap into it to provide required audit trails.
- > *Fewer change-related business disruptions.* The change management team can leverage physical and logical dependency information in the CMDB to assess change risk and understand the impact that changing one IT infrastructure component will have on other components. The mapping of the IT infrastructure to business services and business processes helps the team minimize the impact of infrastructure change on the business. Moreover, people-related information helps team members identify who will be affected by a change, enabling them to notify people in advance and keep them informed of change status.
- > *Increased agility.* Insight into how business services and business processes map to the IT infrastructure enables the change management team to determine the effect of business changes on the infrastructure and, consequently, to readily adapt the infrastructure to changing business conditions.
- > *Improved service delivery.* The CMDB provides a point of IT process integration across disciplines and domains, strengthening collaboration among IT groups and eliminating siloing. The result is improved service support and delivery and lower costs.

Relying on manual efforts to populate a CMDB and keep it up to date are impractical considering the complexity of the IT environment and the rapid rate of change that occurs in most organizations. Automated discovery tools are essential. These tools collect and format configuration and relationship information and record it in the CMDB. They also periodically scan the infrastructure for changes and record those changes in the CMDB to keep it current.

Conclusion

Standard industry frameworks play an important role in enabling you to evolve your IT processes to meet today's business requirements. To automate those processes, however, you'll need a management architecture that provides an accurate, all-encompassing view of your IT environment and a point of integration for the IT management applications and tools that are built on the architecture. A CMDB supported by automated discovery tools lets you build a unified architecture that increases operational efficiency and helps you achieve and demonstrate compliance with internal corporate policies and external government mandates. As a result, you'll dramatically enhance the business value that IT delivers to the enterprise.

For more information about a CMDB and discovery solutions, visit www.bmc.com/discovery.



About the Author

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