

# NETWORK MAGAZINE

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network and systems management ::::

## DESPERATELY SEEKING EFFICIENCY

By Andrew Conry-Murray

Network architects get help keeping the IT infrastructure lean without sacrificing performance.

“Do more with less” is one of those quasi-motivational phrases that financial officers throw around during budget cuts. What they don’t say is just how you’re supposed to achieve such a contradictory goal. But don’t despair: Our three innovators have a few ideas to help you create more efficient network operations, avoid unnecessary bandwidth usage, and track down and weed out redundancies in your application infrastructure. The result? A streamlined information infrastructure that does more—for less.

### The Master List

The Configuration Management Database (CMDB) is a simple idea with powerful repercussions for enterprise management. Developed as an industry standard based on the IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL), the CMDB is a central, trusted source that lists all the components of an IT environment and details how those components are configured and interrelated.

BMC Software’s Atrium CMDB articulates that value by providing a single source of information for all IT operations teams, including service desk, asset management, change management, and business development. These units can tap into this common resource to help streamline various essential functions, such as tracking and managing change, addressing system failures, and increasing control of the information architecture.

### Measure For Measure

Where the CMDB is a big-picture approach to network efficiency, Corvil’s CorvilNet is more like a microscope. The product measures traffic on IP networks to help architects predict how much bandwidth will be required to run voice or video.

While this is nothing new, CorvilNet differentiates itself by taking measurements every few milliseconds. Other products measure every second, or even every few minutes. Corvil’s argument is that because voice and video are so latency sensitive, they can run into problems with jitter and packet loss through spikes that can only be detected at microscopic levels. Using such detailed assessment, architects can avoid overprovisioning—and thus overspending—when they deploy a new service.

COMPANY & PRODUCT	INNOVATION
MOST INFLUENTIAL BMC Software: Atrium	Articulates the value of a configuration management database for enterprises
MOST VISIONARY Corvil: CorvilNet	Fine-tunes VoIP QoS and provisioning by measuring bandwidth usage in milliseconds
PRODUCT BREAKTHROUGH nLayers: InSight 2.0	Enables cost savings by identifying overprovisioned application architectures

### Apply Yourself

The tendency to overprovision isn’t limited to cutting-edge IP-based services. An enterprise’s application infrastructure is also a prime candidate. Overcautious IT professionals may be prone to bulking up on hardware components because they understand that nothing makes a phone start ringing faster than an underperforming or unavailable application, but such a habit can easily turn to waste.

Enter nLayers’ InSight 2.0. The product tracks how and when application components interact and looks for changes in demand, usage, and behavior. But rather than measure performance, InSight looks for ways to reduce costs by showing what resources are deployed and how much (or how little) they’re being used. Administrators can set policies to receive alerts based on these measurements, and the product can also suggest ways to reduce the costs in an application infrastructure.

InSight is an appliance that plugs into the infrastructure to passively monitor application traffic. Passive monitoring provides real-time analysis without affecting application traffic flows or the servers running the applications. Because of its unique focus on cutting costs and its passive, appliance-based form factor, InSight gets our pick for Product Breakthrough.

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