

The Anatomy of an Effective CMDB Implementation

CMDB Essentials

A centralised data store for your entire IT infrastructure.

Considered best practice by industry standards such as ITIL and COBIT

Information is fed from many IT systems, discovery tools and management databases.

CMDBs are kept up to date through regular updates from a variety of IT support systems

Information currently maintained on spreadsheets should be moved into the CMDB and updated through the CMDB interface.

All aspects of IT Asset Management should be manageable through your CMDB product base.

CI's are configuration items – hardware, live installations, installed software and other tangible IT infrastructure components.

The CMDB should be capable of representing the relationships and dependencies between your CI's and other "assets".

What is a CMDB ?

A CMDB is a single, centralised data store representing your IT infrastructure. CMDB's are generally implemented by larger organisations who have structured their IT into services, and best practice standards such as ITIL are built on the core concept of a centralised CMDB.

Having a single centralised database of your IT infrastructure enables a holistic view of your hardware, network, applications, users and services, and is known to ease the problem of managing, maintaining, controlling and developing complex IT infrastructures.

Therefore implementing a CMDB should be considered for organisations of all sizes even if standards such as ITIL have not been implemented yet. CMDB implementations can usually be phased.

xAssets extends the traditional concept of a CMDB by storing information on all IT assets, configuration items, services, applications, users, agreements and contracts in a single central database.

Effective CMDB implementation

An effective CMDB has the following attributes:

- Core information is fed centrally from discovery tools, backup databases, storage databases and monitor software
- Automatically kept up to date through regular, batched updates
- Supports your existing business without forcing substantial change
- Provides the decision support and reporting information needed to allow you to manage change, availability, problems, vendors, contracts and services
- Replaces existing spreadsheet and other IT infrastructure information stored outside of databases
- Provides the reporting needed to allow you to effectively manage all BAU (business as usual)
- Provides the business intelligence needed to identify potential problems before they happen
- Total implementation cost should be considerably lower than savings (positive ROI)

White Paper

Integration and Configuration are Key Capabilities

CMDB Integrations

- Active directory
- SNMP based discovery tools
- Windows and *UX based discovery tools
- Monitoring Agents
- Backup and Storage Management Systems
- Replaces spreadsheets
- Agentless discovery technologies such as WMI
- Service deployment processes
- Service management processes
- Accounting systems

Integration Capabilities

A CMDB should be capable of importing core asset, service, incident, process and CI information from core systems across to its central datastore. From there certain attributes are updated manually and others are maintained by regular updates from discovery tools and other systems.

However it is not always desirable to import information from every IT system. A CMDB which stores data on every BMC monitoring agent event or every successful backup would quickly become large and difficult to manage

The correct approach is to select a CMDB toolset such as xAssets which allows dynamic query integration at runtime and where appropriate can store monitoring information in summary form. From the xAssets browser interface it is possible to list backup runs without having that information copied across to the CMDB central database.

CMDBs should integrate into as many systems as possible to ensure a complete and holistic view of your IT infrastructure. Without that the business intelligence needed to make effective decisions and manage business as usual becomes difficult to access. Therefore, selection of a tool such as xAssets CMDB which allows easy integration into virtually any data source is a key requirement.

Asset Management Capabilities

Asset Management should be a key driver to your CMDB strategy. By storing only CI's in your database you would be excluding half your infrastructure and restricting your business intelligence capabilities.

Software Assets should be reconcilable against CI's to enable you to establish not only whether you have gone under or over licence but also which computers are licenced. Separation of key business compliance drivers such as software licence compliance from your CMDB causes undesirable duplication of information and will inevitably lead to inconsistencies and waste valuable IT and personnel resources.

Contracts and SLAs should also be reconcilable against CI's, so that you know which computers, servers and users are covered by service and support contracts and you can assess business risk associated with suppliers, leases, contracts and other agreements.

The CMDB should also be central to key lifecycle events including procurement and obsolescence processes. xAssets CMDB incorporates a purchasing module which covers request, approval, receiving, build, deployment, training and disposal processes.

xAssets CMDB is unique in the way it can shape its functionality around your business and processes without a long development project. We use the configuration capabilities to create menus, queries, reports, lists, forms and views to build a system that matches your exact requirements.

Encapsulate all your IT Infrastructure

Key Goals

- All spreadsheet usage should be retired
- Services, servers, users and applications, fully documented including inter-asset-dependencies
- Build a stable and extensible base for all future Service Management functions
- Accessible from any PC in the organisation without deployment
- Integrated into key applications including Active Directory
- Custom reports developed for Service Deployment Processes and Server Management
- Only Minimum user training required
- Ability to extend the system in-house

Summary

It is essential that your CMDB can access historical information so that you can track changes over time. IMACS reporting (installs, moves, adds and changes) is only possible if you can baseline your inventory at a certain date and then report on changes as they occur.

A CMDB should report on more than just your CI's. A CMDB should encapsulate all contracts, licences, agreements, users, applications, services and business processes. By storing your services as assets and holding inter-asset relationships between CI's, services and other entities a single, centralised, holistic view of your organisations IT infrastructure becomes accessible and easy to maintain.

xAssets CMDB can meet most requirements through configuration and can be implemented through a structured and phased approach without any substantial business impact or change project.

