Best Practices in Defining Configuration Items for a CMDB

INSIGHT #ITMS5109
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IN THIS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY*
This IT Management Service document provides actionable advice to enable IT organizations to make better business and technology decisions relating to CMDBs, notably for the creation of a configuration item life-cycle approach as the foundation for establishing a federated CMDB data schema.

*This executive summary is an excerpt of the full report, and does not include the key benchmark findings or essential guidance recommendations. To inquire about purchasing the full report, or subscribing to the IT Management Service, please contact Shellie James at 508.988.7566.

IT MANAGEMENT SERVICE OPINION
Change management database (CMDB) deployments require enterprise IT organizations to define and create what data schema will be utilized to manage configuration data, often encapsulated within a configuration item (CI). These discussions often involve several stakeholders, and the plethora of information that can define a configuration item is overwhelming. Adoption of CMDB is in its early phases; however, a critical success factor in reaping its benefits is correctly defining CIs. Enterprise IT organizations, notably those involved in change and configuration management, should consider the following definition for a CI: a consistently defined, updated, and maintained collection of configuration and/or related data organized together as an item. The CIs should be enabled to associate dependencies among items and to a defined IT service. CIs will span multiple disciplines across an IT infrastructure, often creating singular focused data repositories (e.g., network, application). Enterprise IT organizations should execute the following recommendations as a foundation for CMDB success:

Stakeholders should consider the key areas of collecting and updating the CI data definition, data accuracy, data maintenance, and the process surrounding data workflows.

For successful CMDB deployments, IT organizations should consider the notion of a CI life cycle as change management and asset management become foundational building blocks for CI organization. A CI life-cycle approach offers IT professionals a workflow that can streamline the intersection points of asset, change, and configuration management processes and helps manage the definition, creation, correlation, and retirement of a CI.

SITUATION OVERVIEW
This research is based on 25 in-depth surveys that spanned large companies in multiple vertical markets. This research also utilizes numerous in-depth interviews with end users from large IT organizations that have deployed or are considering a CMDB technology.
FUTURE OUTLOOK
Enterprise IT organizations planning to implement a CMDB should consider the CI creation and definition as a core requirement for success and a key factor in driving business value and alignment through the CMDB. This focus will support the need to get further funding for a CMDB project as it is often implemented in phases. The focus on data accuracy, maintenance, and reliability is also required for success. IT stakeholders must consider their existing discovery mechanisms and potentially augment them with new capabilities that address various levels of data discovery and update requirements. The life-cycle perspective for a CI is getting some attention at a few early adopters but still must mature as organizational challenges and process immaturity must be solved to drive an end-to-end life-cycle perspective. From a process standpoint, ITIL remains strong in IT operations teams and is assisting IT organizations in managing problem, change, and incident management processes, among other areas. IT organizations should continue to invest in ITIL and map its progress as it relates to the CMDB strategy, incorporating both in an integrated fashion.