8 Steps to CMDB Success
Introduction

According to Gartner, “Configuration management databases (CMDBs) can help I&O leaders deliver higher quality services. Yet industry statistics indicate that 75% of CMDB efforts fail to deliver such value.”

Lead a Successful CMDB Initiative by Aligning With SACM Capabilities
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Why Do CMDB Initiatives Fail?

Successful CMDB initiatives depend on many factors, including the commitment and support of key executive stakeholders. If an organization is dedicated to designing and implementing a well-structured and usable CMDB, they must first understand why these initiatives fail so often.

- Over scoped initial projects.
- Immature inventory and discovery tools used for CMDB population.
- Redundant CI data due to poor reconciliation.

Why Bother with a CMDB if the Failure Rate Is So High?

Organizations are becoming increasingly complex due to advancements in technology, mobility, and virtualization. As your business grows and becomes more innovative with technology, accurate insights into your IT environment are even more important.

If you position yourself for success in your CMDB initiative, you will reap the promised benefits of measurable improvements to IT service quality, improved change success rates, decreased downtime, and reduced costs.
Obtain Management Buy-in

Don’t overlook the importance of upper management to help you gain momentum, secure time and resource commitments, and encourage support from peers. A clear, concise explanation of the value the CMDB will bring to your business, including increased control, reduced downtime, proactive and preventative IT management, and how all of this impacts productivity and the bottom-line will help gain management support for your project.

Without their buy-in, your project may be “dead in the water.” It’s a simple truism: if the CIO and management approve and support your endeavors, so will the rest of business. In order to maintain on-going support, be sure to communicate successes, even small wins, to the leadership team and your peers.

Take Time to Plan

Before jumping into your CMDB initiative, put a plan together to ensure you have a clear understanding of the scope of responsibility. Take the time to review ITSM best practices and methodologies, such as ITIL. One size doesn’t necessarily fit all, so remain open to alternative or complimentary methodologies such as Six Sigma, COBIT, Lean, Agile, ISO, and DevOps.

In addition, identify roles and responsibilities to ensure you have team support and processes are in place and enforced. Roles may include the CMDB Owner, CMDB Manager, Database Administrator, and CI Owners.

Finally, consider the primary use of the CMDB and develop a roadmap for the design and implementation.
Align with Organizational Goals

It's likely that your organization goals include some or all of these:

- Increase profits.
- Achieve competitive advantage.
- Differentiate.
- Adhere to governance and compliance requirements.
- Improve customer satisfaction.

Your CMDB initiative should align with the goals of your organization. Ask yourself how the CMDB will impact profitability, contribute to competitive advantage, help the business innovate, ensure compliance, and result in satisfied customers.

The project will be a success if you can demonstrate the alignment and positive impact on business goals.

Start Small and Be Selective

When configuring your CMDB, think about CIs as more than just technology. Configuration items include everything IT supports. CIs may be hardware, software, services, documentation, locations, and vehicles. It is common for CMDB projects to fail when the initial scope is too large. In order to avoid this, you can start with a focus on a single service or application and then add services one by one as you streamline the process.

In addition, be selective with the configuration items you choose to populate in the CMDB. Identify the CIs you want to control, those that add value to your business, and those that are available for you to manage.

Avoid data overload. The fewer CIs you have in the CMDB, the better chance you’ll have at successfully keeping them up to date.
Implement a Thorough and Accurate Inventory and Discovery Process

The accuracy of CI data is a fundamental element of CMDB success. CI data is relied upon by the IT team to track status, perform root cause analysis, make decisions, and resolve issues. Without accurate information, the CMDB is useless.

Technology is constantly changing and it is nearly impossible to manually track the state and attributes of each and every device and service. Automated inventory and discovery make the initial and ongoing job of detecting assets and populating their details quick, precise, and easy.

Utilize Application Dependency Mapping

A configuration management database (CMDB) that incorporates automated application dependency mapping is critical to IT decision making. Application dependency mapping provides a holistic picture into infrastructure interdependencies from applications down to the network.

Without visibility into your infrastructure, decisions are made blindly and can result in repeated and expensive service outages that are detrimental to productivity and your bottom line. Manual application dependency mapping is an option, but not a long-term solution. With automated application dependency mapping, you save time, improve change control, ensure accuracy, reduce outages, and decrease workload.
Establish and Enforce Change and Configuration Management Procedures

Accuracy is king when it comes to data in your CMDB. With accurate data, changes to IT services will be coordinated and minimally disruptive. A change and configuration management policy is important for any organization making the journey to implement a CMDB. The policy should contain procedures for system or software changes, identify process owners and their responsibilities, include compliance requirements in order to preserve the integrity and stability of data, and it should highlight the importance of documentation in order to prevent replication and conflict.

Re-evaluate for Continual Improvement

As with all processes, it is good practice to evaluate your process structure, roles, responsibilities, and tools in order to continually improve. Key performance indicators should be developed to measure both the successes and the failures of the configuration management process. For example, a measurable metric such as an increase in system availability may be useful in gauging overall effectiveness. After defining the parameters, manage all measurements in a single place so that you can use the information to define trends and make changes to improve.
Not getting what you need out of your CMDB tool? Discover the four must-have features that influence success.

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