



Why your company needs a CMDB

Michael Jannery of Entuity Inc promotes the ITIL CMDB as the component that can bind standalone applications into a broader end-to-end solution

Organisations are demanding more efficiency and integration from their IT systems and processes, and therefore are increasingly realising the value and importance of the methodologies and best practices of the Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL). As companies are increasingly dependent on technology to meet their business needs and goals, the ITIL framework helps them to manage their IT systems better.

Approaches to IT management have taken a variety of forms over the years, and today's focus on end-to-end IT service management needs a business service orientation and a level of management integration not offered by any single management tool. The ITIL Configuration Management Database (CMDB) has been gaining acceptance as a viable mechanism to achieve the ITIL goal of a central and trusted data source to support IT service management.

The CMDB offers a mechanism for various management systems to share information and provide a holistic view of the company's IT. It contains information about the different components of the organisation's IT infrastructure and the relationships between them.

By collating and organising data, and allowing the user to view it from any perspective, the CMDB provides a vital stream of information about the performance of the company's IT at any

time. For example, it integrates information from disparate IT management systems such as network management, configuration management, or application management tools, to clearly show the status of how these systems are running, both individually and in relation to each other.

As well as providing an integrated view of the IT systems, CMDB is also a convenient mechanism to combine best-in-class solutions to address end-to-end business needs. By viewing the CMDB as a methodology rather than a result, a world of possibilities is achievable beyond the traditional aggregation of data. In this way, the CMDB offers organisations the ability to combine already productive individual applications to help solve initiatives including; change, capacity, service and infrastructure asset management, security, IT governance and service delivery.

In this case, the CMDB provides a standard structure for sharing and integrating the data and events necessary between the applications. A good example would be the integration of a network infrastructure management application with a configuration management tool. The infrastructure management application provides information about the infrastructure assets that are on the network at any point in time, which is passed to the configuration management tool using the CMDB, where the authorisation for these changes could be determined and managed.

Standalone applications upon which companies rely, can now contribute to a broader end-to-end solution for business services management when using the CMDB as the integration methodology. These quick-to-deploy solutions each have a depth of functionality beyond the comparable functional set of the larger framework applications, but lack the breadth to solve the broader business service management problem.

Using the standards-based approach of the CMDB, smaller applications would be "connection ready," offering dramatically reduced connection times. Companies would not only receive the benefit of the more functional individual applications, but also faster time to value and less implementation costs of deploying broader solutions. The CMDB provides the connectivity to solve business problems across IT disciplines and deliver IT best practices.

The CMDB could very well be the mechanism that will finally achieve the goal of multiple management systems collectively providing integrated IT service management. Most will agree that the CMDB, although gaining support across the industry, is in its early stages of evolution. As the different management tools that feed into a CMDB evolve to monitor more parts of the IT infrastructure, in a proactive and ongoing basis, the CMDB will be able to provide more valuable and insightful data to the IT department - after all, it can only be as good as the information it receives. **NC**