

Getting Unstuck: Implementing CMDB and Service Catalog

Use lots of pooh imagery – going after hunny – stuck in hole, knows what he wants and where it is, but his haste has gotten him into trouble. How does he get out, what should he do?

Are You Ready for a CMDB or Service Catalog?

Step right up, hurry, hurry, be the first on your block to own this shiny new piece of technology. You know you want it, you know you need it...but are you ready?

Don't jump head-first into re-engineering your processes or re-tooling with the latest and greatest technology until you know how to execute your plan. Make sure you know what "done" looks like"! This article will help you weed through the myths and hype and get to the truth so that you can make an informed decision.

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What is a CMDB?

To start with, it is most helpful to understand what a CMDB is NOT. A CMDB is not a single, all-powerful database with amazing abilities. It doesn't come in a box, and isn't software or hardware. So, what is it?

A CMDB is a databank that links together collections of information you use in your day to day activities. It references and relates repositories of Configuration Item (CI) information; everything from model and serial numbers to financial and service

What is a Service Catalog?

The ITIL® defines a Service Catalog as a list of services that an organization provides, often to its employees or customers. Each service within the catalog typically includes:

- » A description of the service
- » Timeframes or service level agreement for fulfilling the service
- » Who is entitled to request/view the service
- » Costs (if any)
- » How to fulfill the service

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White Paper

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A Service Catalog provides an overview in business terms of business and infrastructure services offered by an IT provider.

So, both the CMDB and Service Catalog are tools, constructed of hardware and software and containing data and information. But, before these tools can be created and made to work properly in your environment, they must have a solid foundation for their design, creation and operation that is built upon your defined services.

What is a Service?

Now comes the fun part – identifying and defining services.

Are you ready?

Preparing to implement a CMDB or Service Catalog is a simple 3-step process:

- » Find out what you know.
- » Find out what you don't know.
- » Know what you don't know.

OK, stop scratching your head; I'll walk you through each step. First, find out what you know. In the case of the CMDB, you will need to identify the sources of data in your organization. The hardware and software purchase order database that accounting keeps, and the spreadsheet of server configurations that is kept by the guy who runs the server room are good places to start. Look around your office; do you have software, manuals and documentation? These are all items that should be included in the design and definition of the CMDB.

The exercise for creating a Service Catalog is similar. What defined services does your IT organization offer? How are those services measured? What are your SLA's, SLO's and Underpinning Contracts associated with delivering those services? What is the value and the associated costs (if any) of those services?

After you've finished step one, we can move on to the second step. Now you will need to find out what you don't know. This is a little more time consuming than the first step. Once you have identified your data sources and/ information about your services, share them. Ask other people in your organization, especially and specifically business users, what things you might have missed. This is where you will learn

some fascinating things, like services you support that you don't know about. You'll find out other sources of data about your CI's, and about CI's that you didn't know about, like that test server under the desk of someone in accounting. You will also learn what services the business values and what it does not. Since services should be defined by their value to the business, this is a critical activity.

Once you've uncovered the hidden information that you didn't have before, and found out what the business values, we can move on to the third step. Now it is time to take the information that you gleaned in the previous steps to define your services, and to begin building your CMDB and/ or Service Catalog.

Since you now have a solid baseline of the configuration items and/or services you provide, maintain, and how these are valued by your customers, you can start defining your processes and procedures for maintaining this information. Building a CMDB or Service Catalog or any tool requires planning for the maintenance and upkeep of the information provided. Just as phone companies review and revise their listings on a regular basis, you will need to plan to review and revise the data in your CMDB and Service Catalog at regular intervals.

Conclusion

You may be ready now, but before you take the leap take a step back and make sure you have the correct staff and processes in place to support the new technology. This small exercise will save you a lot of time, money and pain in the long run.