



# **ARE YOU IMPLEMENTING A CMDB OR A PROCESS?**

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## 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Yeah! We are getting a Configuration Management Database (CMDB). All of our problems will go away....well this is the thought of some organizations. In reality, the CMDB is only one aspect to gaining control of an organizations infrastructure.

When organizations make the decision to develop and implement Service Asset and Configuration Management (SACM), there is often a critical mistake made at the beginning of the project. The project becomes a tool project instead of a process improvement project. The emphasis is placed on implementing a CMDB. This decision is also often made in a vacuum without consideration of how the CMDB should be a part of an integrated IT Service Management (ITSM) solution. The CMDB / tool is a very important part of a successful implementation; however, the CMDB will not be accurate and provide the real value if there aren't controls in place to ensure effective and timely updates to the CMDB.

Development of the SACM process is often overlooked and not taken seriously as the tool becomes the silver bullet and will fix all the issues an organization has. Without a process that controls updates to the CMDB, the accuracy will always be in doubt. Besides the SACM process, there needs to be strong integration with the Change Management process, as Change is another control process and the output of the Change Process should be providing input into the SACM process as when to add or modify Configuration Items and Attributes.

When supporting a SACM development project, this author often finds himself asking the organization many times, "are we implementing a CMDB or a process?" This question needs to refocus the organization so that the project is not simply a tool project but is a process project. Otherwise, there is a tendency to spend the majority of time focusing on the tool and the lack of an effective and efficient process becomes a risk to the whole project. If you find your organization going down the tool path, be sure to ask the same question.

This paper's objective is to show that developing and implementing Configuration Management should be a holistic activity, taking into consideration the process and the CMDB.



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## **2 SACM DESIGN ACTIVITIES**

As shown below, there are many design activities that need to take place when developing and implementing the Service Asset & Configuration Management (SACM) process.

### **2.1 SACM Planning**

There needs to be some initial SACM planning that looks at the scope of SACM, defined policies, basic minimal requirements for CI levels, Attributes and Relationships. High Level identification of roles such as the Process Owner / Process Manager can also be a part of the initial SACM planning activities. One of the keys to a successful SACM implementation is to manage the scope very carefully. Too large of a scope will create a lot of complexity and will often kill the project before it can even get off the ground.

### **2.2 SACM Process**

The SACM and Change Management process is the heart of what makes for an accurate CMDB. The SACM process needs to be tightly integrated with Change Management. The SACM process is responsible for the following high level activities.

#### **Configuration Identification**

This is the initial identification of CIs, labeling of these CIs and initial registering of the CIs in the CMDB.

#### **Configuration Control**

Configuration Control is ensuring that only authorized Changes to CIs and attributes are added or modified within the CMDB.

#### **Status Accounting & Reporting**

Status Accounting is responsible to ensure that the CI details are updated as the CI goes through the normal CI Lifecycle, i.e. from development to test to production and ultimately retirement of the CI. This activity is also responsible to ensure standard reports are generated and that there is the ability to request reports.

#### **Verification & Audit**

This process activity is responsible to ensure that what is in the CMDB is accurate with what is in the production environment. Any exceptions are noted and managed.



### **2.3 Additional Process Design Activities**

From the process perspective, it is important to define the high level process workflows and activities, the detailed roles, responsibilities and the authority matrix (RACI). Process design activities will also develop the more detailed process policies, detailed workflows, procedures and often the work instructions required.

Another output of process design is to define tool requirements for the CMDB and integration with other processes.

Finally, it is important to develop and get agreement on process metrics such as Critical Success Factors, Key Performance Indicators and activity metrics to help judge the health and success of the SACM process. The measurement and report requirements will drive additional tool requirements.

#### **Data & The CMDB**

From a technology perspective, there are two areas that will require focus. One is the data elements and the other is the tool / application itself.

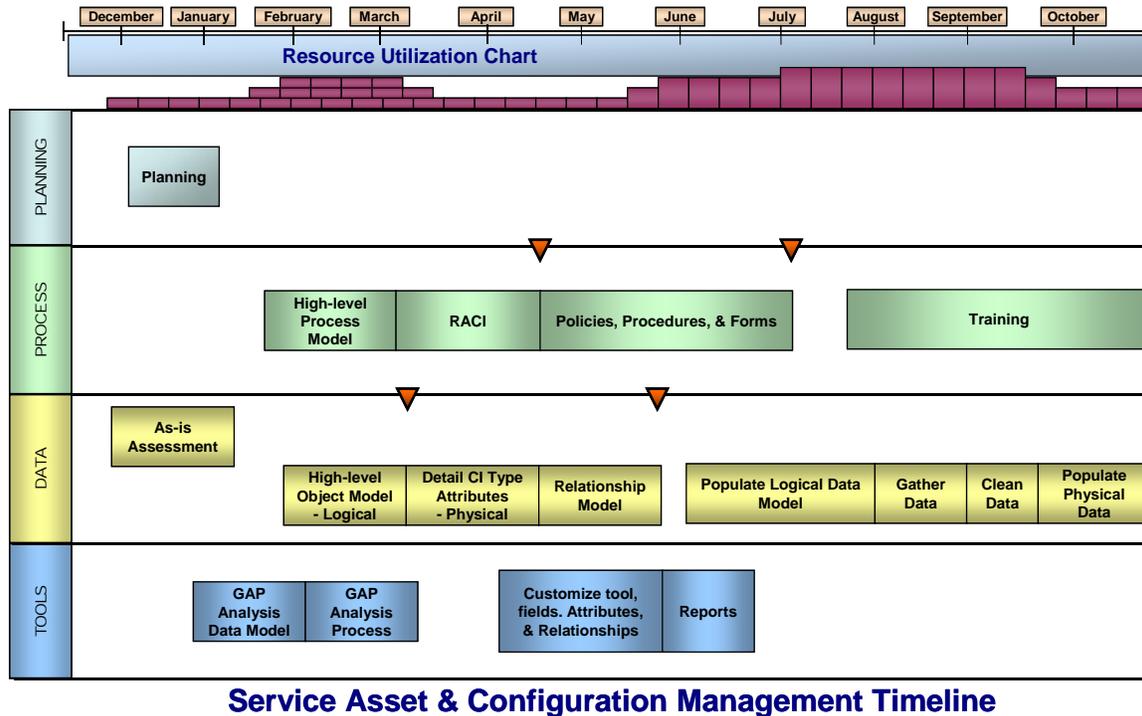
One of the first activities around the data is to conduct an AS-IS assessment. This is going out and discovering what type of data is currently being captured, who is capturing it, how is it being captured and where is it stored? Another question to ask at this time is how accurate is the data? In other words, are there any control processes in place to ensure the accuracy of the data? Don't be surprised when you find the data in spreadsheets, on drawings, in other databases, in word documents or simply in people's heads. It is also important to understand what data elements they use in decision making vs. what data elements they capture simply because they can capture the data. This becomes input in creating the object data model that will portray what level of detail is required for CIs and attributes.

Don't overlook the importance of using Incident, Change and Problem Management as input into CI detail level to support the need to conduct impact assessments, risk assessments and root cause analysis activities.

The tool will require some personalization to meet your process requirements as well as auto discovery requirements. Try to stay away from tool customization whenever possible, as this usually leads to more problems than solutions.

Population of the data, finalizing attributes and relationships will also have to be completed.

## Are You Implementing a CMDB Or A Process



The above timeline is only an estimate, as this could change based on the number of resources assigned to the project, the need to purchase or modify a tool, the scope of the project, and the amount of data clean up that has to take place.

The key is to understand that there are multiple design activities that will take place simultaneously throughout the project. You may find that the team members working on the data and tool element may be different than the team members working on the actual process design; however, there needs to be some overlap to ensure that the process and tool integration is properly designed.



### **3 CI AUTO DISCOVERY – BE CAREFUL**

One of the key ways to initially populate a CMDB is to use auto discovery tools. This can work well for organizations that know exactly what can be discovered, such as CIs, attributes, and also relationships; however, organizations need to consider that not all CIs can be discovered. Think about your services that are logical CIs. These are not discoverable, so from a process perspective you need a way to manually create and register CIs, attributes and relationships.

Also, keep in mind that it is important to use your Change Management and SACM processes for controlling changes to the CMDB and not rely upon auto discovery to update the CMDB.

Auto discovery is often used in support of the Verification and Audit activity of Configuration Management. Remember that there are CIs that cannot be discovered through auto discovery.

It is also important that whenever auto discovery is utilized for Verification and Audit, an exception report is created and, through the SACM and Change processes, an investigation is conducted as to why there is an exception.

Bottom line is you don't want to rely upon Auto Discovery as your only means to manage the accuracy of the CMDB.



#### 4 CONCLUSION

The CMDB is very important in helping an organization manage and make decisions regarding their IT Services and infrastructure that enables the IT Services to be delivered to the Business. The key is to have an accurate database that can be used for planning purposes, conducting impact and risk assessments and also conducting root cause analysis. An accurate CMDB also provides benefits around governance issues.

An integrated Change and SACM process is what provides for an accurate CMDB so please don't think of the project as a tool project, but as a holistic project that provides a process for controlling additions, modifications and removing CIs, attributes and relationships.

Good luck on your Service Asset and Configuration Management process design and CMDB implementation!