

ITAM Fundamentals – Research Policies and Procedures Before Linking Your ITAM Repository to Legacy Systems

A Management White Paper by:

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HIGHLIGHT

You may be setting yourself up for long term accuracy problems and little or no recourse for correction if you're not careful in how you link to legacy systems – and to which legacy systems you choose to link.

DETAILS

It is common practice to link ITAM repositories to legacy systems such as Human Resources and purchasing, in order to share data that has already been entered and is being kept up to date by other processes. When doing so, however, you must take care to investigate the existing processes and the tenacity with which data is kept up to date – don't just assume it will be accurate enough for your needs.

Consider a client who linked their asset repository to the Human Resources system in order to automatically refresh name and location information. The company maintains a highly consistent employee ID that all employees know, so the asset repository and ensuing ITAM procedures only focus on collecting that ID. All other name and location information is then fed nightly from the HR system using the employee ID as the key.

The problem, however, is that existing HR policies and procedures for keeping the data source updated are based on the employee's best efforts. That is, the employee is supposed to keep their own information up to date using a web-based tool. Not all employees, however, are diligent in keeping their information up to date.

This has led to a consistent 10+ percent accuracy problem in the name and location information in the asset repository, which is translated to actual cost since the information in the ITAM repository is being used to deliver managed services.

At this point, the fix is complicated. HR doesn't need more accurate or up-to-date information in its system, so HR is not inclined to revise or revisit any of its existing policies and procedures. ITAM either needs to duplicate the effort with more diligence, or find another, more up-to-date and accurate data source with which to connect.

Therefore, when selecting an existing legacy system, don't just look to the fields of information available – look beyond that to the policies and procedures used to keep that data up to date. Also, look to how the host organization uses the data. Do they have the same or higher accuracy needs as you? If so, then the system should serve well as a source for ITAM data augmentation. If not, continue looking. Also, be selective in which fields you take. Take time to understand

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which fields are key to the host activity and will be, therefore, kept up to date with the most diligence.

Some things to consider. An HR system is often times not as accurate as a payroll system. If possible, you may want to take feeds from the payroll system for certain demographic fields. The purchasing system is often not the best source for initial asset information, such as manufacturer, product description, and serial number. That information may be best solicited directly from the vendor.

About the Author

Brett Husselbaugh has over 20 years of experience primarily in the IT industry. He has consulted with over 25 of the leading Fortune 500 companies on strategies for optimizing the IT investment. With experience as both a CIO and a CEO, Brett brings a unique and practical perspective to IT management, promoting the concept of operating as a "business within a business" to deliver measurable value. Brett is a proven business leader, an innovative thinker, a highly effective writer, and an enthusiastic and motivational public speaker.

Brett has experience as founder and CEO of TOBEK Technical Services, an IT Asset Management firm which he started with no outside investment and grew to 80 people in three years. He then positioned the firm and sold it to Inacom, a Fortune 500 company. Brett also has experience as a CIO, Managing Partner for Managed Services, VP of Strategic Development, VP of Services R&D, Principal Consultant, Industry Analyst, and Program Manager.

Brett has published several magazine articles as well as over 50 industry white and position papers. He has spoken on numerous occasions to audiences of senior and executive management teams on optimizing IT investment, developing strategy, and effective IT management.

Brett holds a Masters of Science in Electrical Engineering from the University of Texas at Arlington and a Bachelors of Science in Electrical Engineering from the University of Maryland at College Park. He is currently a member of American Mensa.

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