

ITAM Fundamentals – The Three Classes of ITAM Data

A Management White Paper by:

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HIGHLIGHT

When designing the process for any ITAM solution, start with a data dictionary that lists all data elements that must be tracked. Classify each data element as either Static, Dynamic, or Component. These classifications are important in designing and analyzing proper processes.

DETAILS

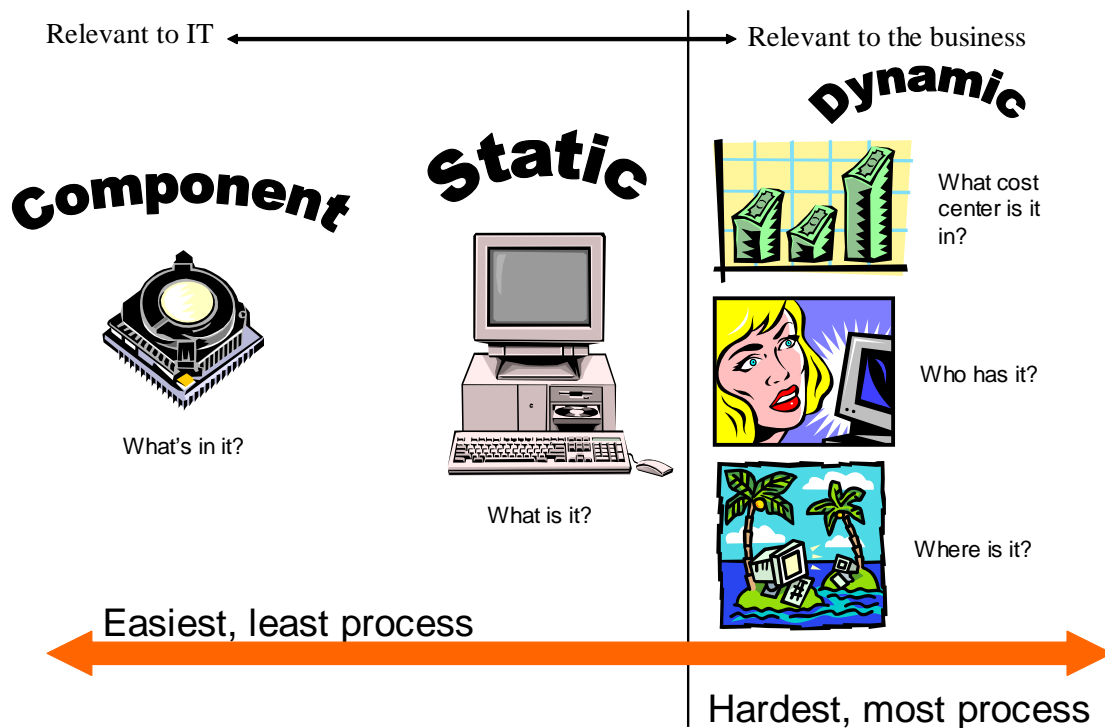


Figure 1. Three Classes of IT Asset Management Data.

When listing the data elements to be tracked in an ITAM solution, each element can be classified in one of three ways:

1. Static – data will never change over the life cycle of the asset. Examples include Manufacturer, serial number, asset number, Purchase Order number, purchase price, purchase date, lease number, product description, warranty duration, and model

number.

2. Dynamic – data is likely to change one or more times over the life of the asset. Such elements include cost center, location, person to whom the asset is assigned, department, and division.
3. Component – data that describes the internal configuration of intelligent assets. Such elements include processor, speed, hard drive size, IP address, MAC address, and installed software.

These categorizations are important when designing process to ensure accuracy. Processes should be designed to capture static elements once, usually at the front of the life cycle, and only once. Attempting to capture static elements, such as the serial number, many times over the life cycle generally does more harm than good. The reason is that subsequent capture attempts tend to overwrite previously good data with bad. See *ITAM Accuracy – Assigning “Trust” Levels to Various Sources*.

Component elements are the least challenging from a process perspective. Component elements are captured using some sort of autodiscovery tool, or not at all. Other than installing and managing the autodiscovery tool, there is very little to be done from a manual process perspective in order to continually capture component elements.

Dynamic elements are the most challenging from a process perspective. They cannot be captured automatically (otherwise they would be classified as component elements) and therefore require manual processes in order to maintain accuracy. Dynamic elements must be analyzed for how and when they can change, and business process created and/or modified to ensure accurate capture at each change point. Most ITAM implementations struggle with the accuracy of the dynamic class of elements.

By classifying each of the data elements that the ITAM solution will track, a picture will begin to form as to the likelihood of maintaining accuracy over the lifecycle of the asset. The more dynamic elements, the stronger the process needs to be. If process is currently weak or ill defined, it may be beneficial to drop tracking some of the dynamic elements for now and reset organizational expectations. Performing this exercise *before* implementation can save loss of solution, and personal, credibility.

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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