

Track and Orchestrate All IT Assets Across Their Complete Lifecycle

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Introduction

In today's enterprise technology landscape, IT teams are tasked with tracking and managing a growing array of asset categories. Across servers, laptops, mobile devices, connected devices and peripherals, on-prem software, SaaS, and cloud-based infrastructure, the complexity of tracking and managing all assets across their entire lifecycle has grown exponentially. Each asset category has its own set of management solutions designed for the specific needs and characteristics of those categories. For example, endpoint security tools require integration with incident management and threat intelligence tools but not necessarily with human resources systems, but to deploy any endpoint it must be noted in the inventory of devices associated with an employee in their HR records in (e.g.) Workday.

When the matrix of required tools sprawls into the dozens or hundreds, IT teams are forced to spend more and more time on the manual task of synchronizing data and processes across different silos. The assets become harder and harder to track over their lifecycles due to loss of visibility or simply bad data hygiene. Enterprise Technology Management platforms were designed to handle this challenge by creating a data and orchestration layer that can unify disconnected silos and enable automated management of all technology assets across their entire lifecycle.

A decorative graphic in the bottom right corner consisting of a light gray curved shape.

Data and Processes are Spread Across Disconnected Siloes

	 Purchase	 Deploy	 Secure	 Monitor	 Maintain
 Endpoints					
 Applications					
 Infrastructure					
 Networking					
 Accessories					

How Assets are Tracked Throughout Their Lifecycle

The tracking and management of assets normally begins as they enter the IT environment from point of purchase. This tracking may be via an API feed from the distributor or manufacturer, or it may be an IT or (more often) procurement team members inputting information manually. The task of initially tracking assets and then subsequently following them through their processes may fall on a single team but generally as organizations grow, they split the responsibility into multiple teams to track different asset classes. This has become more pronounced with the introduction of cloud infrastructure, which is often tracked by DevOps teams and represents a challenge for traditional IT teams.

As each of these asset classes progress through their lifecycle, they have different needs and work on different time scales. Laptops might be managed on a two-year lifecycle. Software might be managed on an annual license basis. SaaS might be managed on a monthly consumption model. Cloud infrastructure might be managed over a lifecycle of a few hours. Different types of assets have vastly different requirements for tracking and management. Peripherals, for example, are generally not a concern during audits or compliance checks, whereas mobile devices are of growing concern in this area. Some areas have distinct overlap; maintaining cloud infrastructure involves patch management, and mobile devices also require patch management, albeit generally on a more rapid time scale. What is critical, however, is that a CIO and their team always be able to track at a granular level the status of each asset. This capability often becomes lost even early in the asset's lifecycle due to the crush of manually synchronizing data and activities. This is true even within a category of IT assets, point tools are generally unsynchronized. Most rely on their own agents or other systems to collect data, with no unified data plane or collection system to cover the full lifecycle. The result can be not only problems managing assets and providing visibility into their status, location and ownership, but also challenges during auditing and compliance of IT portfolios.

Why Improved Asset Lifecycle Tracking Matters

The benefits of improving asset lifecycle tracking are clear.



Increased compliance requirements

Enterprise IT teams face a growing list of compliance requirements both to maintain certifications and to pass audits. In the past five years, compliance and due diligence teams have become less forgiving of missing certifications like SOC2 or ISO 27000. At the same time, numerous new laws and regulations governing data, such as GDPR and CPRA have added urgency to improve asset tracking and ensure that tracking is both holistic and accurate.



Increased security risks due to expanded asset surface

Information security teams today must guard against attacks on many more exposed surfaces that are connected to networks and the public internet. This includes rising use of SaaS and cloud infrastructure as well as increased penetration of connected devices (IoT) and wireless peripherals. Ephemeral cloud infrastructure presents novel challenges due to the fact that it is virtual and often spins up or down on an "as-needed" basis.



Improved employee experience

Ensuring that employees get the IT tools they need to perform their work has become a key component of keeping employees happy. Employees must manage many more technology systems than in the past and they have less patience for slow or disjointed responses to requests for help, upgrades, or purchases of new assets.



Better spend optimization and reduced costs

Having a full view of all IT assets, where they are in the lifecycle, plus associated vendors and contracts provides procurement, finance and IT teams with crucial information to make better informed spend decisions. Smarter procurement can enable vendor consolidation and improved contract terms, resulting in lower costs and giving an enterprise more bang for the buck.



Strategic insights into IT as a proxy for core business metrics

How an enterprise consumes and behaves with regard to its IT portfolio can provide important insights into the business as a whole. This is especially important if the business has a core technology component as part of its product (e.g. SaaS or healthcare companies). By monitoring consumption and use of assets across their entire lifecycle and being able to compare and contrast across silos, IT teams can offer FP&A teams and management teams useful insights into business shifts and behaviors.

All of this ultimately contributes to an enterprise that is more profitable, more efficient, more secure and better managed. As more and more work flows into the digital realm, how an enterprise manages its IT assets throughout their lifecycle becomes a crucial component for more successful and insightful management of the entire enterprise. Due to this trend, proper management of IT and assets becomes a strategic differentiator for all business functions—HR, legal, finance, sales and, of course, IT and security.

How to Improve the Lifecycle Tracking Process

Taking a holistic approach to asset lifecycle tracking can improve visibility, management, and execution of all required processes throughout the asset lifecycle. Creating a holistic approach requires that an organization deliver the following capabilities:



Track assets prior to their entering the system

By connecting with distributor or OEM systems to automate initial system data capture and enable remote capture, lifecycle tracking covers the entire journey. This can both save labor for IT teams and also alleviate confusion and double-purchases.



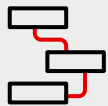
Automate asset capture and entry

Automating asset data entry either via an OEM or distributor API or with a barcode or MAC scanner improves data accuracy and comprehensiveness.



Generate an automated but holistic discovery process

For tracking all assets across all classes, an agentless mechanism is best because it can leverage all existing discovery mechanisms without adding an additional burden. Agentless discovery can also be agile, adding or removing other discovery mechanisms without polluting the data pool of IT asset data.



Integrate, validate and reconcile asset data across point tools

One of the biggest problems with IT asset lifecycle management is bad or duplicate data. Creating a layer that rides above the point solutions and validates or reconciles asset data tends to deliver outsized returns in efficiency in downstream processes such as audit, purchase or planning.



**Offer role-based and needs-based integrated views of asset status**

Asset management works best when it can be customized to the needs of the individual stakeholder. This is particularly true when helping stakeholders manage complex tasks spanning the entire lifecycle or when stakeholders from multiple departments or disciplines must collaborate on complex multi-step processes.

**Provide easy-to-use dashboards and reporting tools**

Related to role-based views is the ability to quickly communicate asset lifecycle status with charts or reports. The ability to report and share and to ask questions about asset lifecycle will improve general organizational understanding and knowledge of lifecycle processes and improve knowledge sharing.

**Empower stakeholders to build and automate workflows**

Aside from tracking, an important facet of holistic asset lifecycle management is simplifying the process. This means that stakeholders must be able to quickly and easily connect different point tools to create unified workflows. They should be able to automate those workflows based on key triggers and criteria such as "When a laptop reports back that it's hard drive is no longer encrypted, then X and Y will happen in Z systems." (X and Y being an email sent to the employee and security, and the asset being removed from access lists for sensitive systems, for example).

**Orchestrate asset processes dependent on asset lifecycle status and path**

By providing stakeholders at all levels the visibility into lifecycle status and needs, and enabling them to automate key management processes and responses, enterprises can light up the capability to more intelligently orchestrate asset lifecycle processes in a systematic fashion.



How ETM Delivers Holistic Asset Lifecycle Tracking and Orchestration

Modern, holistic ETMs are meta-systems that connect all point solutions used for different lifecycle tasks and provide a bi-directional aggregation, publishing, management and orchestration layer that works across all departments in an enterprise. ETMs take data from MDM, CMDB, SAM, ITAM, HRIS, ERP and security subsystems that have relevant information about asset lifecycle and create a single datasource of record for IT assets. Because it has rich APIs and extensible connectors, ETMs can power workflows that automate key IT-related processes. Unlike point solutions, ETM systems are designed to ingest and clean API data from sub-systems and then present a unified, accurate and trustworthy view of every IT asset. Modern ETMs are agentless (collecting data via other installed agents) and require minimal integration work. This flexibility and extensibility is crucial for addressing the full spectrum of lifecycle challenges because new classes of assets are appearing on a continuous basis.

For full asset lifecycle tracking and orchestration, ETMs can deliver the following capabilities:

- **Cradle-to-grave tracking:** Designed for extensibility and agility, ETMs easily integrate with OEM and distributor systems to start asset tracking from the moment the PO is signed. By connecting across all the sub-systems, ETMs can follow the status and path of any asset from provisioning to refresh to retirement.
- **Compliance and auditing orchestration across lifecycles:** By breaking down silos and creating comprehensive near-real-time asset tracking, ETM can deliver push-button “replay” for the compliance and auditing process of IT assets. Teams can build workflows with dependencies and decision trees and bundle workflows to create repeatable processes that remove much of the manual toil from compliance work.
- **Enhanced IT security:** Because ETM discovery is continuous and agent-less, security teams can survey their IT landscape for potential asset-based risks and anomalies such as lack of encryption, lack of endpoint protection, or anomalous asset behaviors. Part of this discovery is enabling security teams to remain abreast of all security processes required to improve the security stance at each lifecycle point in an asset’s journey.
- **Delightful employee experience:** ETM can provide insights for employees into all their asset requests and the lifecycle status of their assets - from status of a repair to time to refresh to status of purchase request for a new SaaS tool. ETM can also make the lives of all employees having to work with or track asset lifecycles better by giving them an easy way to see and track asset data and eliminating manual tasks.
- **Improved asset optimization and reduced spend:** Having granular and fresh data on the lifecycle status of all assets can help procurement teams shift to more proactive planning and optimize purchasing activity to map precisely to lifecycle data that is accurate and reconciled rather than estimated.



Conclusion: IT Lifecycle Management with Holistic Enterprise Technology Saves Time, Money, Stress

As technology assets make up a larger and larger portion of workflows and activities inside of a company, managing asset lifecycles has risen from a secondary concern to a primary objective with serious business implications. Teams that do a better job managing IT asset lifecycle enjoy a host of benefits including improved security, better employee experience, significant cost savings and ultimately, enhanced operational capabilities and better visibility into the inner workings of their enterprise. The only way to deliver on all these benefits in a modern, hybrid and increasingly diverse IT landscape is to enable tools like ETM that can break down all the silos from point solutions and govern two-way data flows to deliver the intelligence layer for orchestration and tracking that is valuable to IT, HR, finance, and all other stakeholders.



Oomnitza is the first Enterprise Technology Management solution that provides a single source of truth for endpoints, applications, cloud, networking, and accessories. Our customers can orchestrate lifecycle processes, from purchase to end-of-life, across all IT assets, ensuring their technology is secure, compliant, and optimized, enabling their employees. Oomnitza is headquartered in San Francisco, CA. For more information, visit www.oomnitza.com.