

Getting There – The Nuts & Bolts to Building Asset Management Maturity



*Why set a strategy. When to use tactics.
Maintain the right balance and achieve excellence, cost-effectively.*

Part II of a two part series on strategy and tactics
in implementing an IT asset management program.

White Paper

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Introduction ...

Many organizations understand the benefits from improved IT asset management. It's easy to identify the opportunities – overcharges on maintenance expenses, overspending on software licenses, lost and unused assets. Also apparent is the cost to productivity – frequent and longer downtime, poor customer service, and project delays.

When companies do make improved asset management an imperative, they find that just saying so doesn't make it happen. It is very hard to get a program going when you have daily operations to manage too. Plus, there are many options on how to get started. There is a danger in not being successful, but also a danger in spending too much time and expending effort in an inefficient manner.

Having the strategy to improve is not enough. You also need proven tactics to ensure that measurable results are achieved. Getting your program moving in a cost-effective manner is certainly the coveted ideal.

First - You Need a Strategy

In our first exposé (Getting There - Part I), we discussed the importance of a written strategy document. The strategy document is your roadmap of where you are today and where you want to be. Having a desire simply to make continuous improvement is not enough.

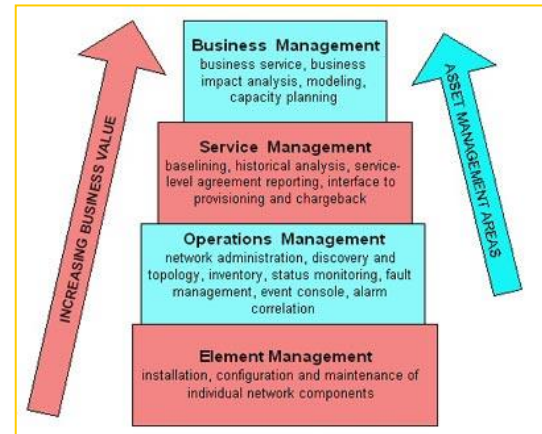
Find time to write out your strategy, or use an outside firm for help. While the strategy must be uniquely yours, the tactic to use an outside consultant is an excellent, cost-effective way to get your program started. The cost in delay generally outweighs the cost in getting your program started.

Where Are You Today – The Assessment

Any good plan must also include your current state of affairs. An essential step is an Assessment of where you are today. While asset management is an important enabler, there are many other techniques and tools that infrastructure departments must employ to achieve overall excellence.

For instance, tools are needed to alert when outages occur – these systems are in the Operations Management category. Equally important are Element Management tools and techniques that provide effective ways to manage your most common devices.

Your asset management program must fit with your other systems, both current and planned. This is a critical part of the strategy phase – mapping your current requirements to your existing enterprise.



Defining Your Current Level of Maturity

Several models also exist on how to describe and increase your asset management maturity. Gartner describes a 5-step approach, whereas others have described 4-, and 3- step delineations. Regardless of whether you use a 5-step or a 7-step program, the concepts are the same.

"Because few enterprises have a staff that fully understands IT asset management, companies often turn to external service providers that specialize in asset management for assistance with part, or all, of the strategy."

The bottom levels describe organizations that are reactive – constantly dealing with project delays and system outages. They lack mature procedures, have little assessable documentation, and have poor information on where their assets exist. Best practices are not followed. There is limited accountability to procedure adoption. Costs are higher. Staff work longer than they should.

Please understand, it is not that people don't want to advance; it is just too overwhelming. It's hard to make meaningful progress when faced with service requests, project demands, and annoying downtime. Daily urgencies constantly maintain the status quo.

Also, it takes time to move from one level to another.¹ Two key enablers to move faster are 1) senior management support, and 2) use of outside expertise. Cost is a third factor to consider, but typically the risk of continued losses in not moving forward outweigh the incremental cost to get started.

¹ The Gartner Group, *IT Asset Management Q&A: Process Maturity Model*, QA-17-0313, August 27, 2002

Tactical Steps To Remember

There are many tactics that increase your level of success.

- **Conduct a Baseline – Not Just an Inventory**

It is critical to understand your current costs, service levels, budget figures, staffing, process diagrams, total cost of ownership, and procurement data. These items should be summarized in the context of a current state document. While this step is often overlooked, it will become critical to maintain momentum as your program proceeds.

An initial inventory may be part of the baseline, but often it may not. Point-solution inventories are often costly to obtain, but more importantly they quickly become outdated. Until many of the steps of your program are achieved, short-term inventorying efforts often pay little long-term value.

- **Identify & Prioritize Problems**

Depending on your organization, more cost may be expended in your infrastructure rather than on your desktop systems. Many asset management programs begin with desktop asset tracking or end-user software licensing. While these are real problems very visible across the organization, they may actually be less costly to the organization. Network downtime, system maintenance, and leased circuits are often huge budget items riddled with waste.

Your Assessment should identify the potential opportunities and articulate solutions to existing problems. Again, it will be important to show success by solving point solutions. This helps maintain momentum. These various areas of opportunity should be identified for senior management. Both IT and business unit management can help prioritize an approved plan of action.

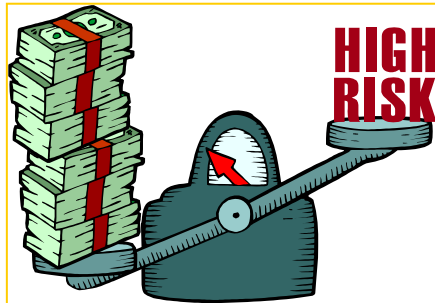
- **Make Work Fun**

We also suggest making your program fun. Work is already hard enough at the lower stages of maturity. When people have incentives and meaningful rewards, the adoption rate of new techniques improves.

Other key tactics include 1) staged implementations, 2) obtaining executive sponsorship, 3) involving the operational and business units, 4) and communicating successes along the way. Techniques should be employed that make your asset management a part of daily operation. This can be done with reporting, workflow, or strategic system integrations.

Proceeding Cost Effectively

No matter which way you get started, proceed carefully. Over 70% of all IT asset management programs fail to deliver their expected results. Why the high failure rate? – Usually because organizations do not have a good plan.



Don't spend too much ...

- Buying enterprise software products too soon.
- Getting expensive advice, trying to solve everything at once.
- Buying products when you first need services.

Remember too that at the early stages of your program, your implementation costs are the highest. You have your existing operation costs and any expenses toward asset management are additive. Since use of outside consultants are best for the early stages, choice of a cost-effective partner is crucial.

As your program matures, the earlier gains will pay dividends to fund the later stages of your program. Also, internal employees are usually better to achieve the higher levels of maturity later in the program. A properly designed program should eliminate outside assistance where the internal staff should ultimately become self-reliant to keep the program going.

Find cost-effective ways to begin

- Use outside consultants for specific, early, tactical gains.
- Get your program started with temporary staff that leaves once your program matures.



Conclusion ...

Getting to a mature infrastructure management program takes time, expertise, and resources. Having the right strategy is important, but the tactics along the way are equally vital. There are many “right ways” to proceed. Get outside help to avoid “doing nothing”. When the time is right, get started, have fun and enjoy your journey to improved IT asset management.