



What is a CMDB?

What's a CMDB and do I need one?

CMDB stands for **Common Management Database**. A CMDB is an organized, centralized collection of all critical information regarding your IT infrastructure and is a term that springs forth from the ITIL framework. **ITIL** stands for Information Technology Infrastructure Library and it is *a well documented set of IT Management best practices* developed for the British government in the early 1990's *to optimize the management of technology*. Please see any of our other Tech101 articles or whitepapers on the topic of ITIL for a more in-depth discussion.

As for whether you need a CMDB, the simple answer is yes, the tricky part is what kind of CMDB do you need.

What's down the rabbit hole?

The items inside of the CMDB are referred to by the ITIL best practices as Configuration Items (CIs). Without getting into the real nuts and bolts of CIs, let's just say that they are any IT infrastructure component that can be replaced on an individual basis, and are of an important enough value to the business to be tracked. This will generally include computers and servers (and the major components thereof), network equipment, peripherals, and software.

One size does not fit all...

Just like ITIL in general, a CMDB isn't only for Fortune 500 companies; this element of ITIL can be adopted into any size company, because you choose the components (CIs) that are most important for your company whether you have two computers or a vast network of 20,000. That said, not all companies would use the same type of CMDB. Implementation of **a CMDB can range from a text document** listing technology assets, to a spreadsheet with more comprehensive information, **to an actual database** application.

Generally speaking, Tsunami consultants urge most small to mid-sized companies to start with a spreadsheet listing the IT assets and some critical information (see "*How Do I Use ITIL in my Organization?*" for more details). This is a great starting point, and as long as the document is maintained, can be an extremely valuable method of making sure that IT infrastructure investments are tracked wisely. One size doesn't fit all, but the concept does benefit any size organization that uses computer technology to support its business.

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