

Finisar

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"The CMDB is the core of ITIL," says Christine Rose, director of global IT at Finisar, a computer hardware manufacturer that adopted ITIL in 2002. "It allows you to track your assets and gives you a running history of everything that you have done." The CMDB is essentially a map of every piece of technology a company owns—systems, routers, servers, PCs and so on—as well as a catalog of every change made to each asset, the incidents linked to the asset, and the asset's relationship to the larger technology environment.

For example, Rose ran a report against the CMDB that found Finisar's FTP server was responsible for several recent incidents. This server was used to provide technical support to end users, and heavy usage was overwhelming its hard drive. Rose was able to solve the problem by simply adding more storage space. "If we did not have a history of the server, we would not have noticed the trend, since the business didn't convey its needs to IT," she says.

A CMDB can help with what-if planning to find out if a proposed change could have unintended consequences on any other systems in the environment. ITIL's change management methodology also requires alerting business users 72 hours before a major change is made. That way the finance department, for instance, can request a delay to an ERP change if it needs the system up to close the books. "There are a lot of things that the business does that IT just doesn't know about," says Rose. "This allows us to align ourselves with the business instead of just making them angry when something they need isn't available."

Old habits are hard to break. Rose says that she had to give her entire IT staff new cell phone numbers to prevent users from bypassing the service desk and calling staff directly. Also, most CIOs say that layoffs are inevitable because some IT people just can't adapt to the new processes.

But for many CIOs, the pain of ITIL is worth it. Since Finisar's service desk was standardized, customer satisfaction rates have risen from 33 percent to 95 percent. And Rose has cut the amount Finisar spends on IT from 4 percent of revenue to 2.4 percent.