

Five Key Steps to Managing IT Assets

Introduction and Context

While Enterprise Technology Orchestration (ETO) may sometimes be considered a secondary player in IT, it is by far the core element of the backbone that enables them to do their jobs. Increasingly, ETO is also becoming a critical part of making life better for compliance, finance, cybersecurity, HR and other lines of business.

With effective ETO, IT teams can:

- #1.

TRACK UPGRADES

and refreshes
- #2.

COORDINATE PURCHASES

and future needs with procurement
- #3.

IDENTITY STOLEN

or misappropriated software and hardware
- #4.

ENSURE THAT ALL DEVICES

on the network are secure and have endpoint protection installed
- #5.

STREAMLINE ONBOARDING

processes to provide a better employee experience
- #6.

IDENTIFY TRENDS IN USAGE

and demand for devices, software, SaaS and cloud infrastructure
- #7.

IDENTIFY SHELF-WARE

and manage true-up or true-downs of licenses
- #8.

SIMPLIFY IT AUDITS

and adherence to related compliance requirements
- #9.

REDUCE SECURITY RISK

by making it easy to find the owner and location of a breached device or service

Making ETO effective requires a systemic and thoughtful approach by IT teams. As much as a product, ETO is a process that spans all types of IT infrastructure. Here are the steps you should consider to get the most out of ETO at your organization.

Step 1: Define Your IT Estate

The responsibilities of IT teams for asset management has rapidly expanded in the past several years as the number and type of devices, software and services in use has exploded. Today the average IT team must manage not only monitors, VoIP devices, laptops and servers but also smartphones, tablets, video conferencing gear, smart monitors, keyboards, headsets and a host of other networked and IP enabled devices. While managing installed software has always been part of the work for IT, more recently SaaS license management has become critical, as well as managing the deployment and provisioning of hybrid and virtual infrastructure on public clouds. In this dynamic and expanding array, the first step is to define the extent of all the things that IT is responsible for managing as part of ETO efforts. Revisit this list frequently, because it will change continuously. If your definition is not expanding, you are not doing your job.

Step 2: Create a Multi-Source Discovery Process

The next task is to start cataloging and tracking everything in your IT estate. You will likely have multiple software packages running as ITAM-lite systems for partial coverage of specific devices or licenses. Most IT teams at mid-sized and larger organizations are running MDM, SAM, CMDB, and other sub-ITAM packages. Each likely has an agent or entry process. You need to take these splintered pieces and meld them into a single cohesive discovery process. Some agentless ETO systems can collect, reconcile and dedupe data from all agents running on the different systems and create a golden database that serves as the source of record. This is ideal but not mandatory. If need be, your team can probably cobble together some scripts to automate the collation and collection of discovery data. But keep mind, this ends up being its own software development project in many cases. You also may want to add network scans to identify all endpoints accessing your networks. However, collating the network scan information with agent information can be challenging and may better

be used as a security process rather than a part of ETO. Whichever path you choose, taking discovery and putting all the pieces into the same source of record with a defined process is critical. Remember - bad discovery means inaccurate data in your system which invariably yields bad results.

Step 3: Build a Unified and Comprehensive Asset Inventory

Once you have completed your multi-source asset discovery you need to knit that into an asset inventory. A spreadsheet is commonly used but is not a great idea. Asset inventories need to be dynamically and programmatically updated to be most useful. Spreadsheets force manual labor that tends to introduce numerous errors over time. The upshot? For optimal ETO, the compilation and maintenance of your inventory should be automated and minimally reliant on human hands.

Step 4: Assess Inventory and Ask Questions

Now that you have an accurate and trustworthy asset inventory, you need to think about what the inventory can tell you in order to improve asset management. A good inventory should be able to answer all of these basic questions:



These are just some of the questions you can ask that would yield important answers. Answers to these questions can and should guide you towards repeatable processes and playbooks for managing IT assets. Keep in mind that a well-integrated ETO at its core is a dynamically updated database. So once you have all your information in a clean format that is easy to query, it is likely you will ask new questions for unanticipated use cases.

Step 5: Set up a programmatic plan to track asset lifecycle

Every organization has defined asset procurement, maintenance, and disposal policies. Often these are documents. If you have built a machine addressable asset inventory that is part of an ETO solution, then you can take the documents you have created and start transforming policies into code. The first stage is request, second is purchase and procurement, third is receiving, and so on, concluding with EOL. For each stage, there may be multiple sub-stages for approvals, requests, repairs and the like. In reality, the lifecycle will require integration with multiple other systems: ticketing, employee directory software, single sign-on platforms, HR information systems, ERP systems for asset depreciation and procurement platforms. Most of these tasks remain manual in most organizations.

There are two ways to automate these mostly rote steps. One is to hard-code workflows with rigid and bespoke code on platforms like ServiceNow. This tends to entail great expense and also requires annual licenses per connect, workflow or service pack. The other is to choose an ETO that offers no-code / low-code integration and workflow configuration capabilities as well as out-of-the-box integrations with the key platforms and technologies you will need for lifecycle management tasks. Reflecting the modern world of APIs to facilitate interconnections, the best ETO

solutions have low barriers to integration and comparatively open platforms. As you plan out your lifecycle management workflows in this new and improved state, consider not only what you need now but what you are likely to need in the next 3 to 5 years; Some ITAM platforms may have limitations baked into the way they are designed and coded that may make it harder to integrate them with other systems down the road.

Conclusion: Just the Beginning of A New Era for Enterprise Technology Orchestration

Enterprises pursuing digital transformations are looking to upgrade the core building blocks of their IT backbones. Forward-thinking CIOs view ETO as a way of driving broad efficiencies and getting access to better data about how the company consumes and uses resources. This can enhance the strategic value of IT while also resulting in better security, lower costs and a better employee experience. Following these five steps will help set you on a path towards better ETO capabilities and towards making IT asset management less of a chore and more of a value-add for your CIO and C-Level team..

About Oomnitza

Oomnitza is an agentless enterprise technology orchestration solution for digital business. By consolidating technology asset data from siloed systems into a single pane of glass, our customers are able to optimize their technology spend, automate their governance processes to meet compliance and auditing requirements, protect from security risks, and ensure great employee experience and productivity. Oomnitza is headquartered in San Francisco.

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