

Achieving 95% Accuracy in an IT Asset Data Repository: There's No Magic Bullet

Success requires utilizing multiple solutions, technologies, and adopting ITAM best practices

Bar codes or RFID? Thomas Watson, president and co-founder of AMI, makes the case for automation, shows you how to maintain accuracy in a rapidly changing environment, and provides the algorithm to calculate the costs of receiving assets and tracking processes.

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Part I: The Case for Automation

In 2009, we're still struggling with effective ways to track our fixed IT assets . . . oh, if they were only fixed in one place. The problem with IT assets in particular is their mobility: a laptop is swapped, a printer replaced, a PDA is brought from home. Who knows what's sitting on a closet shelf in our hinterland branch office. The warehouse guys just received a pallet of mystery machines and we've warehoused some UNIX servers that are off the wire somewhere. Achieving a respectable (and auditable) level of accuracy in your asset database is a daunting task but it is essential in getting the most value out of your IT asset management solution.

Daunting, yes, but hopeless? No. By adopting and practicing ITAM best practices and by deploying the right solutions and technologies, 95% accuracy is achievable. Why 95% accuracy? Technicians in the field need it, service desk managers can't live without it, and executive management is demanding it. Due to internal and external rules and regulations, SWAG numbers and inaccurate snapshots are no longer good enough.

Without accurate asset information, asset management reporting is unreliable, exposing you, your program, and your company to unnecessary risk. Your job is on the line. To remain viable, ITAM and Service Management programs need timely, accurate information to report. Without it, you could lose program support from all those involved -- from help desk personnel and field technicians, all the way up to executive management.

The 95% Challenge

Asset data is a key component of overall company financial reporting and IT budgeting. It is also the foundation for Service Management. The last thing you want to do is fail an audit or drop your help desk and service desk productivity numbers due to bad asset data.

By merging “best of breed” data collection technology with best practice asset tracking processes and integrating these components with your enterprise asset repository, Asset Management professionals can achieve 95% asset data accuracy, often within existing staff and budget constraints. By moving your organization away from static historic data to a more dynamic model gives your IT organization complete, current and accurate asset data throughout the asset’s lifecycle.

Accurate, close-to-real time data is more valuable to management and, done right, can be provided at a lower TCO to the enterprise. With the right tools and dedication to best practices, you can document your data accuracy. Unlike before, your freshly collected asset data can now flow upstream into your company’s ERP, making it readily available to other departments. You’ll be generating real world reports that accurately reflect your actual IT asset environment. I call this “moving to the adult’s table.” But what are the tangible benefits to a successful ITAM program?

According to our consulting partner Pepperweed, a leading global ITAM professional services firm, their average customer achieves \$3-6 million in annual hard dollar savings and \$2-4 million in annual soft dollar savings by implementing a comprehensive ITAM program. Their clients

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(primarily Fortune 1000) achieve true ROI in less than 1 year. Their Human Resources, Legal, IT Operations, IT Security and Finance get necessary data for closed-loop process integration, and their customers reduce time spent on audit activities by 200%.

In this three part article, we’ll show you how to overcome the challenges and:

- Increase Confidence in your ITAM Program by proving information accuracy.
- Reduce Costs by utilizing the right solutions, eliminating redundant, tedious, error-prone work.
- Improve decision making by producing complete, current and accurate reports.

Maintaining accuracy in a rapidly changing environment

The challenge really begins with the fact that IT assets are, for the most part, very mobile. While they don’t sprout legs and move themselves, it may seem like they do. Establishing a baseline inventory of your IT assets and maintaining its accuracy can be a huge challenge. If you’re still using paper or spreadsheets for asset tracking, you’re not alone. Many asset managers continue to use pencil and paper and/or Excel spreadsheets to track IT asset information like where they are and to whom they are assigned.

The downside to manual tracking is the fact that it is terribly time consuming and not very accurate. Organizations can typically expect a 10% error rate in manual data entry thanks to typing and transcribing errors. Errors with critical asset identification information such as asset tag and/or serial number are the most common and the most costly. Lack of proper tracking of the crucial identification information negates tracking and analysis of the asset through its lifecycle. For reporting purposes, it may as well be invisible.

While a manual audit has the advantage of being bulletproof (when was the last time your pencil crashed?), the manpower required for a full manual audit is well beyond what most organizations can bear. Does your IT department have the surplus resources available to create a large team of people to deploy to the field? Once the data is gathered, how will you conduct an annual audit? Typically asset management responsibilities are spread across personnel with other responsibilities, and it is not generally considered a full-time task, but without automatic data capture tools, it is a full-time job. Most organizations find the process too painful and expensive, causing the program to collapse from lack of support.

Calculating the cost of manual asset tracking

The following algorithm can be used to calculate the costs of receiving assets -- which is only one of your numerous asset tracking tasks. Similar calculations can be created to measure the costs of other asset tracking processes throughout the asset lifecycle (Receive, Move, Add, Change):

$$((X * (MR + ME)) + ((X * E) * MF)) * L = \text{Total Cost of Manual Receiving}$$

Where:

X = Number of assets to receive

MR = Minutes to record each asset serial number, model number and PO

ME = Minutes to manually transpose the written data into the database

E = Percentage of errors caused by misread or incorrectly keyed data

MR = Minutes to fix errors

L = Fully burdened hourly rate of your personnel

Example: Customer X takes 5 minutes to record each asset serial number, model number and PO number on a clipboard. Customer takes 3 minutes per record to key the database into the database. Customer estimates 10% error rate in keying in data. Revisiting the location to find the error records takes 15 minutes per asset (locate actual asset, find erroneous record in database and update). The hourly rate for fully burdened labor is \$30.

Given the above, the cost of receiving 1000 assets is \$5,000.

Using the audit process as an example, we figure the cost of managing manual inventories is around 10x the cost of an automated solution. A bar code scan, for example, is under 12 seconds vs. manual data entry at around 120 seconds (2 minutes) and (with the error rate factored in) up to 5 minutes to get the correct information accurately recorded.

Manual:

80,000 assets x 120 seconds = 2666 hours: over 1 man year

Scanning Solution:

80,000 assets x 10 seconds = 222 hours: 1.5 months

Assuming a \$50/hr loaded cost, there is a savings of over \$126,000 per year in audit costs alone. When you

add the other functions in asset tracking (Receive, Move, Add, Change) this number becomes much higher -- perhaps even tripled.

So, we've made the case for automation. There are many options available out there; some new and some not-so-new. Which of these is best?

Part II: There's no magic bullet

There's a bit of history with the automated asset data collection solutions. There's a long-standing demand for a "singular solution" from both asset managers and solution providers that will automatically and accurately track all assets with no human intervention. Like most solutions, out there, with enough time, money and resources, it is possible to achieve almost anything. But, if the goal is to achieve 95% asset data accuracy within budget and with your current level of personnel, we believe a multi-faceted, integrated approach is the only way to go.

Let's start with the pros and cons of each of the automated asset data collection and tracking solutions.

Automatic Discovery Systems

Discovery systems are an important part of a comprehensive asset management solution. They are great at automating some of your asset tracking. As you know, these solutions reside on your server and detect unique identifying information from virtually everything in the enterprise connected to the network.

Once considered the best hope for a singular solution, we now know they miss 20-30% of your IT assets in the best of circumstances, far beneath the 95% benchmark.

Reasons why auto-discovery systems alone are not the sole solution:

- Inability to track received assets
- Inability to track assets in the warehouse or in transit
- Inability to track non-networked assets
- Inability to track assets with failing discovery agents or network adapters
- Inability track authorized assets
- Inability to track additional ownership information including warranties, contracts, costs, and cost centers

In short, auto discovery provides essential data for supporting IT assets, but cannot provide a complete picture on its own.

Next: Bar Code Technology

No newcomer to the scene, barcode technology is tried and true. By substituting manual data entry with an asset tag bar codes and a bar code scanner, organizations increase the efficiency of data capture by increasing both speed and accuracy.

For years, bar code solution providers have developed stand alone systems - some running on basic hand held scanners while more modern versions were designed for more sophisticated hand held computers. Until recently, the biggest limitation for most of these solutions was the lack of integration. Data collected remained locked in its own silo. Now, while some of these solutions allow some sort of data export (usually via csv files), few offer a truly integrated solution.

As a solution provider, we believe that multiple data capture technologies are required to track assets through the entire lifecycle but we also believe that they must be integrated to be truly effective. When both integrated bar code and auto-discovery technology are combined with ITAM best practices, you can achieve a solid foundation of asset data, regardless of the asset location or status.

Integrated Bar Code Technology

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Like traditional bar code solutions, integrated barcode solutions can capture and load asset inventory quickly and accurately. With integrated bar code solutions, data entry exceptions can be detected during collection and collected data can be compared to the repository data before changes are applied to the repository. Data entry exceptions, even with a bar code scanner, must be automatically detected before changes are applied.

Though any bar code scanner can scan a serial number, not all systems can detect that you accidentally scanned a model number or an order number bar code from a shipping label. Modern bar code solutions will detect and alert users to virtually eliminate bar code data entry exceptions.

Furthermore, integrated solutions are able to compare bar code collected asset data with current repository data, enabling asset managers to audit the repository accuracy and detect changes to data before they are applied. This level of control over incoming data is essential to ensure database integrity.

More robust integrated bar code solutions, when integrated with ITAM enterprise applications, can extend the enterprise application's functionality to the field. Without endangering asset data repository integrity, these solutions allow your asset data collection personnel to be much more productive and to have a powerful tool to address real world scenarios.

For example, integrated bar code solutions can streamline the receiving process by extending Advance Shipping Notice data from the ITAM enterprise application to the asset data collector's handheld. When anomalies occur, the handheld computer signals an alarm. Not only is the collector notified, but with AssetTrack, he or she can collect the non-matching asset data. When uploaded from the handheld, this non-matching data is automatically flagged for the attention of the asset manager. Rather than uploading this "rogue data" to the asset data repository, the data flows to an interim database and appears in the "asset manager console." The asset manager views the console and has the ability to manage that data prior to publishing in the asset data repository. This feature allows receiving personnel to continue their work, while collecting and conveying "rogue asset data" to the asset manager.

The same can be said for the audit process. If the asset data collector finds a "rogue asset" at Mary's desk, he or she can collect that data by scanning the asset tag and inputting pertinent data. When that data is uploaded, the asset manager sees the data flagged for attention in the "manager console" and can determine the new status of the asset with Mary at that time.

Latest and Greatest? Issues with RFID for IT asset tracking

Millions of dollars are being spent to bring RFID into the mainstream of asset management. Recent articles include RFID technology implanted into the Beijing Olympics tickets and many organizations tracking vehicles and pallets of products using RFID technology. Whether with more expensive active RFID tags or less expensive passive tags, RFID is clearly well on its way to becoming a viable asset tracking solution.

Any asset management program must start with accurate baseline information about owned assets: the exact number of existing assets, their current value, location, and maintenance history.

While we're sure it will get there, for now, RFID is not a great fit for IT asset management. For one, R&D is still working on the asset tag technology that will work effectively on IT assets.

For example, passive RFID tags do not work, when affixed directly to the metal case of a laptop. The metal surface interferes with the RFID signal and prevents the tag from being read by an RFID fixed or mobile reader. This can be mitigated by using more expensive tags with a one-quarter inch gap between the RFID chip and the laptop surface, however these tags are easily removed and not practical for laptops.

For others, there's a false sense of security. RFID tags can be easily shielded from the RFID reader by simply covering it with your hand, allowing assets to leave the building undetected. So, your automated bullet proof system can be circumvented by the simplest of means. These physical issues are being worked on, but today these issues prevent RFID adoption for IT asset tracking.

Everybody understands the promise of RFID - fully automating asset tracking - but physical complications with the technology must be flushed out before anyone will successfully use RFID for asset tracking outside the data center.

We recently asked one of our more experienced RFID hardware implementation partners “How long is a typical RFID implementation for IT Asset Management, and how much does it cost?” His response was “I don’t know the answer. Most of the time people spend \$20,000 with us and stop before spending a lot more time and money on a project that is not going anywhere.”

Even when RFID for IT asset data collection arrives, it still won’t be the sole solution. For auditing purposes alone, there’s nothing comparable to an electronic audit using an integrated auto discovery solution and a physical audit with an integrated barcode solution. Having a human being go “physically” (not virtually) to the room, see the asset, scan the asset tag, and report his or her findings is really the only way you’ll know if your auto detection and RFID solutions pass the audit.

The importance of IT asset data

The importance of governance over IT organizations is increasingly more critical. Many federal, state and local public agencies are now required by law (or internal edict) to accurately account for both the existence and the value of their IT assets. CFO’s are required by The Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 to accurately account for company assets - including IT assets - that were not tightly controlled before.

But more than this, “Next Generation Asset Managers” know their IT organizations will require detailed information about their assets not just for compliance, but in order to manage costs and deliver improved service levels. The need for integration with governance tools to provide granular information to improve executive decisions shouldn’t be underestimated.

The transition to Next Generation Asset Management can be characterized as moving from “What do I have?” to “What insight can ITAM provide to improve IT business decisions?” While organizations must first get their hands around what they own by implementing a solid asset tracking process, the next step is building a Next Generation Asset Management and Service Management program.

Baseline

Any asset management program must start with accurate and detailed baseline information about owned assets: the exact number of existing assets, their current value and their location and maintenance history. This information is essential for properly planning, procuring, and deploying assets - all while maintaining cost control. From here, you’re able to facilitate:

- **Lease/Warranty Tracking.** You cannot manage returns/compliance with contracts without knowing the whereabouts of everything.
- **Vendor Selection.** Knowing which hardware costs us the most requires not just knowing the initial costs but the costs of supporting the assets in production, meaning tracking of assets and service requests is required.
- **Compliance Audits.** You can’t tell internal/external audit what we have if we don’t know.
- **Budgeting.** You can’t accurately budget technology refreshes without knowing what you have, what’s coming off warranty or service contract coverage to determine what needs to be replaced.
- **Taxes, accounting, insurance.**

Audit/Reporting Compliance Challenges

Your organization may be audited for any number of reasons: Sarbanes-Oxley for public companies, SLA compliance contracts for service providers and internal audits for any organization wishing to maintain cost control. Even without an external reason for an audit, you absolutely must audit your asset repository for accuracy to quantify the effectiveness of your asset tracking tools and processes, as well as to create the level of confidence required for other business units to trust the asset management program.

The specific data you must audit depends on the requirements, but in most cases, simply testing a sample of your repository for accuracy is enough, so long as the audit method you use is transparent to the audience of your audit.

We recommend the following procedure for auditing your repository:

1. Divide your organization into pieces by physical location. The number of pieces depends on the size of your organization, but each slice should represent at least 2% of the total number of assets in your repository.
2. Establish a rolling audit schedule, where each location in your environment is audited one at a time before any location is audited twice.
3. For your first audit, use data capture tools to inventory the assets at the location. For each asset capture the data elements required for the audit. This is typically: A) Model number, B) Location, C) User, D) Status.
4. Combine and normalize the collected data in a database outside the repository. Remove any duplicates.
5. Compare the collected data with the repository to identify: A) Assets in the audit data but missing from the repository - This is your “rogue asset” percentage and represents assets that fell through the cracks of your receiving and/or deployment process. B) Assets with incorrect locations and users. This is your location accuracy and represents the number of assets that have moved without being properly tracked and can help identify issues with your IMAC process. C) Assets in the repository but not in the audit data. This is your missing asset list that you can use to identify assets which may have been lost, stolen, or moved to another location without being tracked.
6. Once you’ve generated your audit reports, apply the collected data to the repository, updating any existing assets that had incorrect data in the repository, as well as adding any assets that were missing from the repository to begin with.

The main point of this process is to test your asset tracking solution, build confidence from management by showing the repository is backed by an audit process, and ensuring compliance with internal and external audit requirements by demonstrating controls are in place to ensure asset management reports are based on accurate data.

Choosing an IT Asset Management Enterprise Solution

Larger organizations look to enterprise level software solutions to help manage the asset data collected throughout the enterprise including IT asset data. If your organization has an ERP (enterprise resource planning) solution in place, it is imperative that whatever asset data collection solutions you choose integrate with your financial and other ERP applications. The ability to integrate multiple asset tracking technologies together with other enterprise-wide applications is a critical component of Next Generation Asset Management.

Within the enterprise-level asset management solution, auto-discovery information collected via the network is connected to physical audit data captured by your mobile barcode scanners and RFID devices. The combination of data sources provides a holistic view of your organization's assets.

Our solution, AssetTrack, is designed to easily integrate with most ERP applications, including CA Service Management (formerly CA UAPM and CA Service Desk), HP's AssetCenter, and Microsoft Dynamics. In addition, as a .NET solution, we are able to integrate with legacy solutions, home grown solutions, and other ERP's using XML and Web Services interfaces.

Track Discoverable and Non-Discoverable Assets Alike

Multiple integrated data capture technologies are required to track assets through the entire lifecycle. AssetTrack mobile bar code scanners enable receiving and warehouse tracking before auto-discovery can detect assets "on the wire." And, of course, non-discoverable assets such as monitors, copiers, and other non-IT equipment require physical audit tools like AssetTrack. With integrated bar code and auto-discovery technology, you know what you have on-hand and where, regardless of the asset location or status.

In addition, multiple data sources can be compared against each other to audit their effectiveness. For example, you can report on all physically scanned computers assets which are not reported by auto-discovery and vice versa. This process will identify exceptions in your data and processes so you can resolve them.

Part III: Implement and Integrate Technologies with Processes

Whether your organization can afford an enterprise level solution or not, combining the right technologies with the right business processes is critical to achieving the goal of 95% asset data accuracy.

This section addresses how to coordinate vendor advanced shipping notices, auto-discovery data, and bar code & RFID physical asset tracking data into one comprehensive and integrated IT asset tracking solution.

The solution entails optimizing each stage of the asset lifecycle, from procurement to disposal, to ensure that the repository is updated accurately and in a timely fashion as assets move through the lifecycle. Each stage in the lifecycle has its own requirements for capturing data, and each should be analyzed individually.

Once this process analysis is completed, the program you create will document easy-to-follow "best practices" processes for your team. In addition, the program you create will need to include detailed instruc-

tions and success criteria in order to audit those processes, ensure compliance, and identify areas of weakness or breakdown of the program.

The Asset Lifecycle

When developing asset tracking solutions, the first place to start is to define the various stages through which IT assets move as they are procured, received, used and eventually disposed by your organization. We call this the “Asset Lifecycle.” By defining your asset lifecycle, you can see the transitions that take place for a given asset.

These transitions are where you need to put in processes to update your asset repository. We’ve often heard these transitions called “Catch Points.”

Integrate Advance Shipping Notices and the Receiving Dock

Now that you know what you own and are tracking IT Assets through their life cycle, we need to account for new assets coming in the door.

As assets show up at the door you need to establish a process for registering the new assets into your database and show that they have been received. This is incredibly important for reconciling invoices, identifying duplicated shipments, and streamlining the deployment process to ensure compliance with service levels.

The process you design must be easy and accurate to provide minimal interruptions to daily work. Using AssetTrack mobile devices is essential to ensuring the receiving process is fast, accurate, and integrated. Without such a tool, your receiving personnel can capture a large number of erroneous asset records or could altogether fail to comply with the receiving process.

Vendor Advanced Shipping Notices

When possible, get your vendors to send advanced notices of equipment on order and import those notices into your enterprise asset database. This enables you to pre-load your asset data repository and your AssetTrack mobile devices with asset information before the equipment arrives. This greatly reduces the amount of data that needs to be collected at receiving time, reduces the chance for data entry error, and (importantly) alerts you to exceptions during the receiving process.

At a minimum, vendor ASNs should include the following data for each asset:

- Model number
- Serial number
- PO number
- Cost
- Lease or Warranty End date

Vendor Applied Asset Tags

In addition to providing ASNs to their customers, many IT hardware vendors are now offering asset tagging services. This way, assets show up pre-tagged. Having the vendor apply the asset tags is a great way to ensure that all the assets are tagged in a consistent way. This helps ensure that there are no duplicate tags. This is especially helpful if your organization doesn't have central receiving and has its vendors drop-ship I.T. assets directly to end users.

When applied by vendors, asset tag information should be included in Advanced Shipping Notices, so receiving can be done using your company's automated, integrated asset data collection solution.

Deployment and Management

Insert asset tracking procedures into staging and deployment processes to ensure that the asset repository is updated with new contact, location, and status information as assets are deployed. By updating your repository during deployment, your repository will remain accurate and ensure your reports show exactly which assets have been assigned to which users.

As assets are prepared for deployment, the following steps should be taken:

1. Ensure an asset tag is on the asset, and apply a new one if necessary.
2. Update the asset tag of the asset in the database if necessary.
3. Update the contact, location and optionally the organization of the asset.
4. Update lifecycle status to indicate the asset is in production use.
5. Save a historical record in the repository showing the changes, the technician that made the change and the date the change was made.
6. Ensure the auto-discovery agent is installed and functioning correctly.

Keep in mind that staging technicians are already overburdened with work, so the asset tracking procedures need be minimally invasive. Therefore, using bar code scanning tools is essential to ensure your technicians comply with asset tracking processes without incurring significantly more work. Bar code solutions also eliminate data entry errors and minimize time spent reconciling exceptions in the database.

Physical Audit with Bar code or RFID Technology

Automated network discovery will never cover all your assets, let alone assets that are not on the network. Freshly received assets, assets in the warehouse, assets being repaired, "closeted," or disposed are not on the wire and won't be discovered. Plus, not all assets on the network will have properly functioning auto-discovery agents.

To close this gap, physical discovery is required. As the "nuts and bolts" of RFID technology continue to mature, the best way to capture physical data is by using integrated bar code and integrated RFID technology.

How to Integrate and Expose Physical Audit and Discovery Data

Physical audit and auto-discovery data are maintained in two separate databases, so for every discoverable asset, there should be two records: one in the discovery database and one in your physical audit database. Each of these databases has a field for every asset's serial number.

Modern auto-discovery systems can detect serial numbers from the system bios, and most manufacturers will now put serial number bar codes on every device. Therefore, it is possible to join auto-discovery and physical discovery databases by serial number. First, you must ensure that the bar code serial number on the outside of the box matches the bios. This can be handled by proper ASN integration or a rock solid receiving process.

By utilizing serial number data, you can run reports that find all assets discovered by auto-discovery but not included in a physical audit and vice versa. Comparison of the two reports will expose anomalies.

Retirement and end of life

In addition to just tracking software licenses, your asset management solution should track all related installed licenses directly to each asset. This way, when assets are retired you can use your installation database to find software licenses that can be harvested from the disposed machines and re-used. The ROI just on this one action is phenomenal.

Your retirement process should be triggered via a single bar code scan using an asset tracking tool like AssetTrack. When integrated with the asset management solution, the retirement scan can automatically kick off a process to reclaim software licenses associated with the asset being retired.

Are you green? Your retirement process must also generate the required reports for environmental compliance.

Auditing/reporting and compliance benefits

No system is perfect. Every asset management solution must be audited for accuracy. This will help to identify gaps in both ITAM processes and data capture technologies.

To audit the repository, perform a manual baseline inventory of a small portion of your IT asset environment. Compare this baseline inventory to what is in your asset data repository. Does the asset data match? If not, double check your baseline inventory. Document the differences. From here you can generate an accuracy percentage. Where are you now? How far away are you from 95%? Can you implement some of the tools mentioned in this article to improve your number?

Database accuracy metrics can be as detailed as you need, but we recommend testing your database accuracy on the following fields:

1. Location
2. User
3. Model

Once you've implemented your best practices and ITAM solutions, testing your database on a rolling basis will help identify any ongoing problems. Regular audits will also force you to manually touch each asset in

your environment over a rolling schedule, helping to:

1. Ensure all “rogue” assets, those not properly enrolled in your database, are accounted for.
2. Prove database accuracy to management which builds trust in your asset management program.
3. Update erroneous information currently in your repository, ensuring the 95% accuracy.

With the help of our solution AssetTrack and a bar code scanner, you can physically audit one-twelfth of your total inventory each month, completing a total sweep of your environment every year.

Value Proposition for an effective IT Asset Management Program

1. Procurement: Greater Spend Control, Vendor Consolidation
2. Finance: Greater AP Control, Tighter Fixed Asset
3. Controls, Greater Tax & Insurance Accuracy
4. Operations Inventory: Software Re-use, Hardware
5. Re-use, Security Controls, On & Off Boarding Employees
6. Service Management: Enhance Incident Management, Enhance Change Management, Enhance Configuration Management

Conclusion

Many of our clients come to us having just flunked an IT asset audit. You have to measure what you have and you can't manage what you can't measure. Just because you say you have 95% accuracy doesn't mean anyone will believe you. You must expose the inner-workings of your asset management program for others in the enterprise to believe your data and for you to pass your audit. With the right technologies and ITAM best practices, you can convince others that you have designed a fool-proof asset management system--one that has the controls in place to identify and resolve breakdowns.

Only then will they believe you when you say you have the 95% accuracy demanded of Next Generation Asset Managers. Once that level of accuracy is achieved, documented, and proven, you will have the executive buy-in you need to not only justify your program, but allow others throughout the enterprise to share your data, allowing you to expand your program into other areas of asset management.

About the Author



Thomas Watson, president and co-founder of AMI, has twelve years of software development experience, having worked for Microsoft, MSNBC, and Acadio Corp. as a senior software engineer and development team lead.

Prior to founding AMI, Watson was with Micropath, an IT asset management consulting firm, where he led the design and implementation of their Asset Agility asset tracking software that was implemented by firms such as IBM, AOL, Washington Mutual, EDS, and others.

Watson holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Washington.