

Manage Your Inventory

IT Asset Management Requires Measurement

Effective measurement is essential to optimizing IT asset management. But all too often, professionals with asset management responsibilities are challenged with what to measure and how to measure it.

Begin By Thinking Strategically

Inventory metrics are evolving to meet the changing requirements of IT. To ensure proper visibility, companies need to develop metrics based on where an asset is located within its lifecycle, beginning with pre-deployment and extending to end-of-life.

But before the process can even begin, it's critical that IT asset management priorities are aligned with the strategic initiatives of the organization. Asset managers need to be familiar with the company's technology roadmap, have a broad perspective of the organization's financial situation, understand the security implications of assets in transition, and be aware of the environmental impact of decisions made at each stage of the lifecycle.

Once an organization is comfortable with all of these factors, it can begin looking at key points in the lifecycle necessary to assess the performance of inventory management. While identifying these processes can sometimes be complex and overwhelming, companies like Redemtech can simplify the process through different IT asset management services.

Identify Key Inventory Metrics

Typically, when an asset is procured, most OEMs commit to getting the equipment to the warehouse or business in a certain time period. If an asset manager wants to manage a just-in-time inventory to improve the return on investment of the technology assets, it is important to know how long it takes the product to arrive, which requires tracking when purchases are submitted.

Too often, employees may not take into consideration factors, such as the time it takes to get financial approvals for the new equipment, especially in large corporations where authorizations can take weeks. Once the approval and processing hurdle has been cleared, the next point to measure is arrival at the warehouse. Then consider the processing time for making the inventory available for deployment.

Once the inventory is available for use and is identified as a resource to be deployed, measuring the time it takes to be delivered to the requester – taking into consideration configuration and installation – is crucial. This process should also include any transfers in the chain-of-custody from one handler to the next. Significant risks exist at each change of control, becoming even greater when more than one person is handling the assets.

Upon delivery, if the hardware asset is discovered on a network and is stationary, then the difficult task is over. However, if the asset is mobile or off-network, especially in areas such as training rooms, labs and locations for remote workers, the risk becomes greater. This also makes inventory management an even bigger challenge along the way.

Once the equipment is deployed, another factor that affects the ability to successfully manage IT desktop asset inventory becomes evident: the behavior of the organization. This is why it's important to have an effective process in place that ensures the asset is recovered in a timely manner. Often times, organizations will store idle equipment in closets or cubicles to use at a later time, which is not a safe or effective practice. These unproductive, depreciating assets may contain sensitive data and are highly susceptible to loss or theft in such unsecured environments, becoming both a security and environmental liability for organizations. Typically, if you have proper off-boarding processes in place, the likelihood of this occurring will be reduced, as you will be alerted when the equipment is no longer in use.

Now that the inventory has been gathered and accounted for, it's important to track the time the asset was recovered, while also taking into consideration if any changes in custody occur. Tracking also needs to account for the moves, additions and changes that may have transpired while the asset was in use. In this case, discovery tools can be deployed to identify and report on those changes, but the best method is to track them manually and validate with auto discovery.

Compare the Benefits vs. Risks

Identifying all of these data collection points allows asset managers to get a better perspective to see if they have the proper processes in place to collect data, the tools to integrate equipment, and the clear data relationships between the various sources or policies in place to prevent behaviors that impact data quality.

Developing accurate, efficient and up-to-date inventory metrics is certainly not a small task. But long-term benefits do exist when these metrics are in place, especially from a financial and contractual management perspective.

It's much better to have effective metrics in place than to deal with the headache and high costs associated with a security breach due to poor inventory management practices. Recent high-profile cases where IT assets with sensitive data on them have been lost, stolen or sold on the secondary market are proof that IT assets, and the organizations accountable for them, are vulnerable.

The old adage holds true even when it comes to technology. You cannot effectively manage what you cannot effectively measure. However, if asset managers can craft and deploy accurate inventory metrics, that's the first step in the right direction.



*Barbara Scott
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