

What is Configuration Management?

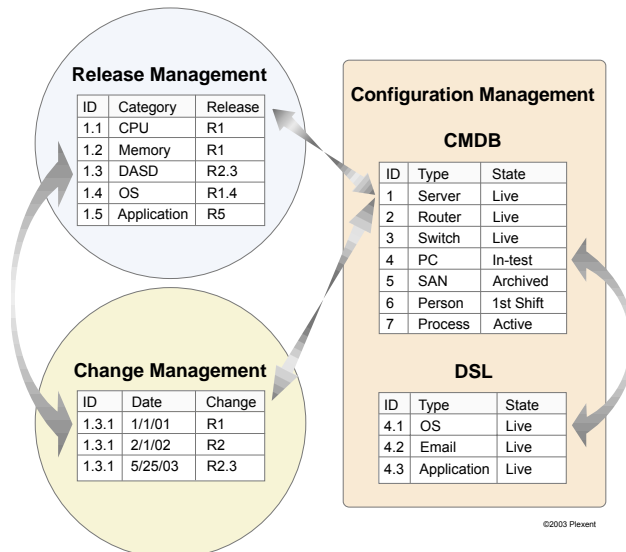
ITIL defines Configuration Management as:

... the identification, recording, and reporting of IT components, including their versions, constituent components and relationships. Items that should be under the control of Configuration Management include hardware, software and associated documentation.

Other than Service Level Management, there is perhaps no other Discipline that interacts as strongly as Configuration Management across the spectrum of Service Management processes. It is bound so tightly to Change and Release Management that these three Disciplines should be implemented simultaneously. Each of these contributes to the initial placement and refresh of Configuration Items (CIs) within the Configuration Management Database (CMDB) and entries within the Definitive Software Library (DSL). Careful consideration, therefore, should be given to the ramifications for data integrity when they are unable to mutually support one another. The important relationship of Configuration Management, to Change and Release Management is highlighted in the diagram below.

Within the CMDB each CI is assigned various attributes in accordance with its Type and State. Types provide a high-level grouping for the various CIs, with examples being: software products, business systems, system software, servers, mainframes, workstations, laptops, routers and hubs. State provides an indication of the CI's condition, for example: registered, fit for use, installed, in use, withdrawn, for disposal, disposed and under change. These attributes, along with others, provide the level of detail appropriate to your business needs. It is important at the outset to determine the level of reporting required from the CMDB. Planning is required in order to create the necessary relationships among the various tables and associate them correctly via key fields with tables supporting Change and Release Management.

Beyond the ability to interact with the two Disciplines discussed, other linkages are required to fully leverage Configuration Management. For example, Configuration Management can provide an additional level of detail to asset management reporting by introducing information about the relationship between assets. The value of the CMDB and DSL to enhance Incident and Problem Management functions, through the facility of the Service Desk, is especially dependent on proper integration and access to Change/Release Management data. As with reporting, the ease with which integration occurs is tied closely to the level of detail associated with each CI. Not enough and value is reduced, making it difficult to justify the cost; too much and the system becomes unwieldy, making it difficult to justify the effort. Focusing on your business needs, Plexent and itDNA can help identify the appropriate level of Configuration Management detail and the linkages to other Disciplines necessary to reach your goals.



The Plexent Approach

itDNA builds on the Configuration Management concepts outlined in the ITIL standard and, by leveraging our framework, Plexent can apply ITIL to your organization. If you are just getting started with Configuration Management you may need help with identifying and applying attribute sets to the CIs in your environment. Perhaps your need is to develop Release Management processes and link them to a DSL. Or, maybe you already have robust data collection in several Disciplines and your challenge is deciding how best to integrate the information and keep it current. Whatever your Configuration Management maturity, Plexent can take you to the next level by bringing all of the pieces together.

Much more than just a framework, itDNA brings real-world tools and techniques to bear on your concerns. Backed up by itDNA's maturity models and rich, intellectual property knowledge base, Plexent's project management combines with proven policies and procedures to provide standardized services within the following Configuration Management Elements:

- Asset Management
- Education
- Equipment Purchasing

As a result of the interaction with so many other Disciplines and the vital importance the CMDB and DSL have on the overall Service Improvement Program, the benefits arising from

Configuration Management are substantial. Among the most important are those that reduce cost and improve efficiency, such as accounting for expensive CIs and supporting trend analysis within Problem Management. Other benefits of a mature Configuration Management program include:

- Overview of the entire IT infrastructure
- Better allocation and administration of resources
- Faster processing of incidents and problems
- Control unauthorized software and licensing
- Support for capacity, continuity and financial planning,

It should be apparent what a viable Configuration Management program can do for your organization. By investing the effort to measure your infrastructure in terms of CIs, and developing a CMDB and DSL to manage that information, the ability to effect change and realize substantial improvement is immediately available. When taken to the next level, Configuration Management becomes a resource multiplier by allowing the positive impact of other Disciplines to be felt across the organization. The need to bring these other Disciplines on line in parallel with Configuration Management, however, can present a significant challenge from a planning perspective. To help you determine if you are ready, Plexent provides assessment services. Leveraging the intelligence in our itDNA, we can help you evaluate where you are today, where you would like to take your organization, and the surest path to get there.