

How ETM Lifecycle Management Keeps Employees at an Optimal Performance Point

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Introduction

Enterprises today are in uncharted technology waters. Many or most are accelerating their movement of all activities and applications into the cloud, a shift precipitated by the global pandemic. Partially as a result of this, CIOs and their teams are re-architecting their infrastructure and applications to permanently accommodate hybrid work, with 25% of knowledge workers choosing to work from home at least 25% of the time. This percentage is likely to increase over time as technology innovation makes remote work and collaboration more efficient and secure. The shift to the cloud does not mean all on-premise infrastructure is gone. On the contrary, many legacy and critical assets remain in older deployment paradigms and will likely continue in this mode for at least a decade. So IT and security teams need to deploy, manage, configure and secure a wider array of architectures. This creates a larger attack surface for cybercriminals.

The shift to work-from-anywhere further increases the attack surface with workers who are logging onto sensitive enterprise systems via home or public wireless connections and using a wider array of devices. Additional exposure comes from the growth of smart IP-enabled peripherals including headsets, monitors, televisions, keyboards, and more. Aside from dealing with a rapidly expanding attack surface, IT teams now must manage ever-increasing compliance mandates. These mandates can vary widely by industry, state or region, nation, and overarching governing body such as the European Union. In the United States, for example, a patchwork of state regulations can expose enterprises to significant financial risk through class action lawsuits directed at compliance failures in data collection and customer notification policies.

Amidst all of these challenges, IT teams must focus tightly on delivering the most compelling technology capabilities to their users. Doing so effectively can improve broad organizational performance and keep workers functioning at an optimal level. Optimization allows them to onboard more quickly, get the tools and resources they need when they need them, and minimize time and energy spent dealing with IT processes. All of the above are imperatives driving the growth in demand for Enterprise Technology Management (ETM). Organizations that deploy and properly leverage ETM can see multiple benefits including an improved security posture against the novel threat landscape and attack surface exposure as well as measurable optimization of employee performance and experience.

What is Enterprise Technology Management

Modern, holistic ETMs are meta-systems that integrate data from all point solutions used for different lifecycle tasks to create a single system of record, management, orchestration, and compliance. What makes ETM so powerful is a bi-directional aggregation layer that works across all data silos in an enterprise. ETMs take data from MDM (Mobile Device Management), CMDB (Configuration Management Database), SAM (Software Asset Management), ITAM (IT Asset Management), HRIS (Human Resources Information Systems), and security sub-systems with relevant information about asset lifecycle, status, and usage and create a single integrated data record source for all IT assets. This breaks down rigid data silos and empowers teams to collaborate and solve problems more efficiently. An additional no-code workflow automation layer makes it easy for teams to build processes that improve efficiency, security, and responsiveness while reducing manual labor.

With rich APIs and extensible connectors, ETMs can power workflows that automate key IT-related processes. Unlike point solutions, ETM systems are designed to ingest and clean API data from sub-systems and then present a unified, accurate, and trustworthy view of every IT asset. In addition, modern ETMs are agentless (collecting data via other installed agents) and require minimal integration work. This flexibility and extensibility are crucial for addressing the full spectrum of lifecycle challenges because new classes of assets appear continuously.



ETMs can deliver the following capabilities:



Full-lifecycle tracking

Designed for extensibility and agility, ETMs easily integrate with OEM and distributor systems to start asset tracking from the moment the PO is signed. By connecting across all the sub-systems, ETMs can follow the status and path of any asset from provisioning to refresh to retirement.



Compliance and auditing automation

By crossing silos and enabling comprehensive near-real-time asset tracking, ETM can deliver repeatable playbooks for compliance and auditing of IT assets.



Streamlined employee offboarding

By creating workflows that enable mobile device provisioning and onboarding as part of an automated process, ETM can remove multiple steps from onboarding.



Enhanced IT security

Because ETM discovery is continuous and agent-less, security teams can continuously survey their IT landscape for potential asset-based risks and anomalies such as lack of encryption, lack of endpoint protection, or anomalous asset behaviors. Part of this discovery is enabling security teams to remain abreast of all security processes required to improve the security stance at each lifecycle point in an asset's journey.



Employee experience

ETM can provide insights for employees into all their asset requests and the lifecycle status of their assets – from the status of a repair to time to refresh to the status of purchase requests for a new SaaS tool. ETM can also make the lives of all employees having to work with or track asset lifecycles better by giving them an easy way to see and track asset data and eliminating manual tasks.



Smarter procurement and reduced spend

Pulling granular and fresh data on the lifecycle status of all assets can help procurement teams shift to more proactive planning and optimize purchasing activity to map precisely to lifecycle data that is accurate and reconciled rather than estimated.

How ETM Secures and Optimizes the Workforce

To understand how ETM secures and optimizes the workforce, it is important to list and consider the lifecycle stages of each technology asset. We can break this down into required actions at each stage.



Purchase: Capture asset data at the source, even before it enters your organization. Most OEMs and resellers can provide API access that allows your systems of record to pre-populate IT asset data prior to a box hitting a truck. Early asset data capture can significantly accelerate the onboarding and tracking process and improve data accuracy while minimizing mistakes and repetitive tasks. For the purchase of software and virtual infrastructure (cloud servers, platform-as-a-service, and software-as-a-service) ETM should automatically capture deployment data as part of employee asset assignment and provisioning.



Image: Configure software and hardware usage profiles to the specifics of the individual. For example, a developer may get the right laptop with their favorite IDE and developer experience tools installed, as well as the right security agents given their roles. With proper imaging, each employee gets exactly what they need on all their relevant assets, ensuring they're productive right from the start.



Secure: ETM can help IT teams and security engineers secure assets prior to assignment by automating key security steps as workflows triggered by the receiving, assignment, and imaging process. By automating security provisioning on assets and continuing to automatically manage patching and configuration changes on devices and assets, ETM empowers security teams to ensure employees stay ahead of security requirements and improve security posture.



Deploy: Smart deployment capability ensures employees have what they need when they need it, starting from their first day on the job. Deployment systems also should tie into procurement, human resources information systems (HRIS), and enterprise resource planning (ERP) solutions that map hiring plans and actual new hires to IT systems and procurement processes so that IT doesn't over or underbuy assets for employees.



Monitor: In modern IT environments, thousands of assets are under the care of the IT team. At any given moment, many assets under their watch are changing or in motion; this may include adds, deletes, changes, patches, updates, new or expired licenses, changes in infrastructure configurations, new seats added to IaaS, PaaS or SaaS, and more (and this doesn't include basic behavior like working remotely). By effectively and cleanly monitoring all this activity, IT teams and their security counterparts can keep employees secure and compliant. This reduces headaches for both the enterprise and the people that work there and enables them to spend more time on their jobs and less time dealing with audits or other compliance and security-related activities.



Service: No one likes to wait, and most employees have hard deadlines and a full plate of work. When an employee requires a new IT asset or has an asset in need of repair, when they need a new piece of software or a new license for a SaaS platform required to perform their jobs, waiting for IT to respond and resolve their request is painful. Downtime due to long service waits not only leads to loss of productivity, it also impacts the employee experience.



End of life: All assets have to be disposed of properly at the end of their useful life or when a license expires. Managing end of life (EOL) is critically important for security and efficiency. Assets that are quickly repatriated and reimaged can be immediately put back into service, saving procurement costs. Employees with assets that are at the end of their useful life should be notified well in advance about the switchover and instructed on how to prepare for their new asset or other required changes.

What are the Advantages of Managing This Through ETM?

Managing these key stages and functions for IT teams can make the difference between a high-performing workforce and employees with high levels of downtime and low satisfaction levels. Deploying ETM to handle each of these complex challenges considerably improves outcomes and allows IT teams to more proactively and confidently manage not only the nuts and bolts of their jobs but also spend more time troubleshooting complex issues. The benefits of managing employee and enterprise IT assets and resources with ETM include:

Comprehensive and integrated asset view

Because ETM aggregates data from all asset classes via all available agents and authentication or usage tracking services, it provides the most holistic and comprehensive view of IT assets of any solution. ETM then can allow IT, HR, legal, finance, security, and any other stakeholder to customize a view of assets or asset status for specific workflows or processes and jobs. For enterprises seeking to optimize employee productivity, this integrated view and easy query interface and report builder make it easy to track progress and spot problems or bottlenecks.

Stronger security profile

By making it simple to identify which employee or unit or role is associated with which asset and quickly pull up asset status and activities, ETM can improve the security profile of any organization. ETM can also make coordination of patching, updating, and other security practices easier and less time-consuming for employees.

Easier and more streamlined compliance and audits

As compliance requirements continue to increase, employees are increasingly caught up in compliance efforts and forced to spend time helping compliance teams or providing screenshots and other validation of system status and presence of security controls. ETM can automate all of these compliance processes for employees by creating repeatable workflows based on proven playbooks managed by a centralized compliance team.

Better inventory management and procurement planning

Because ETM provides a comprehensive and integrated asset view, and updates information and accuracy in near realtime, these solutions can be leveraged for better inventory management of IT assets. ETM enables even small IT teams to locate and track assets at all lifecycle stages. Making it easy to determine which assets are due for refresh or EOL and which assets should be coming back into usage means enterprises can increase utilization rates and decrease procurement. Granular tracking of EOL and employee hiring plans by unit and by role lets the assets team plan procurement several quarters in advance and consolidate purchases for better pricing and service. This rolls up into employees getting the systems they need in a more timely fashion and even more robust DIY IT asset request and purchasing processes for employees that need to change or upgrade their IT resources.



Conclusion: ETM Keep Employees Working and Happy

In the midst of the Great Resignation, employees have choices and they vote with their feet. For knowledge workers, the Digital Experience and interactions with IT systems can be a secret weapon in keeping employees happy while also keeping the enterprise more secure. IT teams that offer seamless and painless technology processes for users are a hidden but critical advantage both in the war for talent and the quest to make workforces more productive and happy. The foundation of success in this practice is agile, effective, and timely management of the entire IT asset lifecycle. Organizations leveraging ETM give their IT teams superpowers by enabling them to see more, do more, fix more, and run a proactive IT practice. The automation capabilities of ETM can offload key IT tasks to employees and streamline everything from ordering a new SaaS license to requesting a memory upgrade to a laptop. Because ETM delivers an accurate real-time view of the entire IT estate, security teams can use it for an improved security posture that keeps both employees and their employers more secure. By automating other IT processes around auditing and compliance, ETM shields employees from manual reporting processes that interrupt their daily workflows. Even as IT moves faster and faster, ETM can allow IT teams to stay ahead of the curve and focus on solving challenging problems while simplifying the nuts and bolts of technology management and service delivery. In turn, this enables IT teams to spend more of them keeping employees happy, productive, and optimized to do their jobs.



Oomnitza is the first Enterprise Technology Management solution that provides a single source of truth for endpoints, applications, cloud, networking, and accessories. Our customers can orchestrate lifecycle processes, from purchase to end-of-life, across all IT assets, ensuring their technology is secure, compliant, and optimized, enabling their employees. Oomnitza is headquartered in San Francisco, CA. For more information, visit www.omnitza.com.