

Service Configuration & IT Asset Management

All the gear, no idea! Why tools alone cannot deliver trusted asset and configuration outcomes

A whitepaper by Pallab Dasgupta and Jonathan West





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Foreword

In 2014 itSMF UK's Problem Management Special Interest Group (Problem Management SIG) surveyed its membership about the state and perception of Problem Management within their organisations.

10 years later itSMF UK decided to find out what had changed in the problem management world over the last decade. Armed with the original questions and answers, Barry Corless, who wrote the 2014 research paper as chair of the former Problem Management special interest group, talked to representatives of member organisations to see what factors (if any) had moved on.

In 2026, in the same vein, itSMF UK members Pallab Dasgupta and Jonathan West of CGI picked up the challenge to write a similar paper in their chosen fields of Service Configuration Management and IT Asset Management, to see how these subjects are perceived by itSMF member organisations and explore the modern day challenges these topics bring today's ITSM environments.

We extend our thanks to all individuals who participated in this latest research.



1 Introduction

Like a cricketer arriving at the crease with new pads, a £500 bat and no forward defensive, organisations can invest heavily in SCM and ITAM tooling while still lacking the basic technique needed to protect the wicket: ownership, governance, trusted data and disciplined lifecycle management.

Despite advances in tooling and awareness, many of the original challenges in Service Configuration Management (SCM) and IT Asset Management (ITAM) persist today. Insights gathered from cross-industry interviews conducted with itSMF UK members reveal that while organisations are shifting toward more integrated, value-focused, and automated digital workplaces, foundational issues remain unresolved.

Digital transformation initiatives often struggle due to poor planning, unclear requirements, and insufficient integration of SCM and ITAM into the wider operational ecosystem. As a result, weaknesses typically become apparent only after costly failures occur.

Although technology adoption has accelerated, process maturity, governance, and ownership have not kept pace. This leaves many organisations with advanced tools but without reliable, trusted outcomes. The organisations represented in the research covered a broad range of sectors, operating models and tooling environments, summarised below:

Area	Description
Sectors	2 x Management Consultancy, 1 x Engineering Consultancy, 1 x Technology Service Provider, 2 x Data Analytics, 2 x Telecoms, 1 x Architecture, 2 x Government Departments, 1 x County Council, 1 x Higher Education.
IT service management	Mostly ITIL v3 with pockets of ITIL 4 practice.
Tools	A variety of toolsets in use with varied results. Including but not limited to ServiceNow, BMC Remedy, Freshworks, Flexera, SNOW, SCCM, InTune, Spreadsheets etc.
Organisational set up	Traditional SCM & ITAM teams ranging from a couple of people to international teams.

Table 1: Summary of Interviews Conducted

A recurring pattern emerges:

- Technology adoption has accelerated
- Process maturity has lagged
- Governance and ownership remain unclear.

This creates environments where tools exist—but trusted outcomes do not.

Authors' view

Organisations are often seduced into investing in tool, like buying a £500 cricket bat expecting to score a century for England before you've even faced a ball. All before establishing the strategy, planning, modelling, ownership and governance needed to deliver reliable outcomes.



2 Stakeholder perception of SCM and ITAM

Stakeholder perceptions of SCM and ITAM varied significantly depending on role, seniority and organisational maturity. In many cases, SCM and ITAM are still viewed as interchangeable disciplines or operational overheads rather than strategic enablers of business value.

In more mature organisations, SCM and ITAM are increasingly recognised for their contributions to risk reduction, service reliability, and decision support, although their value is still often realised reactively during incidents rather than proactively. Many organisations remain on the journey toward establishing a mature CMDB, with investments in tools, systems, and personnel frequently undermined by poor implementation approaches.

Tools were often procured before processes were properly defined, resulting in misalignment and limited effectiveness. Additionally, there was little evidence of service mapping or long-term strategic planning, leaving many CMDB data fields incomplete or unused and preventing organisations from fully realising the broader business insights and benefits that effective CMDB management can deliver.

Authors' view

Pallab: It is easy for organisations to often dismiss SCM and ITAM as uninteresting topics, only recognising their importance when a P1 incident occurs or a vendor initiates an audit that could result in significant financial penalties. Reactive efforts may improve capabilities initially, but without planning, stakeholder support, and sustained investment in people, training, tools, and governance, these disciplines often decline and are ultimately neglected—particularly when not embedded within a broader ITSM strategy.

Jon: On reflections of these interviews, I have found organisations that value data typically see SCM and ITAM as integral to decision making. Through careful planning and tool selection, their CMDBs provide trusted insights that support operational, financial, and transformation activities.

When technology is introduced without adequate due diligence, CMDBs often suffer from poor integration, manual processes, and reliance on individual knowledge. This erodes trust in the data and prevents the platform from delivering strategic value.



3 How do we measure SCM and ITAM?

Approaches to measuring SCM and ITAM vary widely across organisations, with most relying on data completeness metrics, asset counts, and tool-generated reports. However, governance and maturity measurement remain inconsistent, with some reporting CMDB accuracy falling below 20%, leading to widespread distrust in the data. Organisations also lack the capability to measure business-critical outcomes such as downtime costs, risk exposure, and service impact, making it difficult to quantify value.

More mature organisations achieve higher data accuracy through automation and system integration, enabling trusted data to support operational and strategic decisions with minimal manual effort. In contrast, less mature organisations often focus on record completeness rather than true estate coverage, creating only partial visibility and false confidence in the data.

Effective measurement should move beyond record counts and include operational, risk and business-value indicators. These may include stale asset records, reconciliation exceptions, unsupported assets, audit exposure, service mapping coverage, lifecycle compliance, incident impact reduction and improved forecasting accuracy.

Across all sectors, organisations recognise data as strategically important, but governance and reporting capabilities are often insufficient—particularly in large-scale environments where outdated or out-of-scope assets are difficult to identify. Poor-quality legacy data further undermines trust, reducing confidence in the CMDB as a reliable source of truth.

Authors' view

Pallab: If measured at all, ITAM performance is typically captured across Cost, Risk, and Lifecycle Management, focusing on cost reduction, compliance, security, and effective governance. Regular audits and risk assessments support lifecycle management and help evaluate asset investments.

Integrating ITAM, SCM, and IT Service Management improves asset visibility and tracking from request through to retirement. Automated discovery tools are essential for maintaining accurate inventories, but technology alone is not enough. Organisations that invest in tools without a clear data strategy, governance framework, or maturity roadmap often struggle with untrustworthy data, resulting in poor asset intelligence, ineffective decision-making, and limited ability to measure performance effectively.

Jon: Trust is a critical success factor for the CMDB. Legacy data and weak governance undermine adoption and limit the value that SCM and ITAM can provide. Organisations that invest properly around data accuracy, have correct accountability measures in place, and continual service improvement measures in place are more likely to achieve reliable visibility across their estate. This can maximise the return on their tooling investments and use these capabilities as strategic enablers rather than operational repositories.

Reflecting on how organisations gauge the effectiveness of SCM and ITAM is heavily influenced by how accuracy is determined and governed. Organisations that prioritise accurate, trusted data through strong governance and automation are better positioned to manage risk, control costs, and make informed strategic decisions.

However, for organisations that focus solely on data completeness or rely on tooling without adequate oversight risk operating with inaccurate information. This can lead to poor decision making, increased security risks, and reduced confidence in the CMDB and asset management functions.



4 How do we communicate success?

This study found that SCM and ITAM successes are rarely visible or effectively communicated to senior leadership. Achievements are often shared informally and viewed as expected outcomes—such as cost savings or compliance—rather than the result of sustained effort to maintain trustworthy data. Demonstrating value is particularly challenging because many benefits are preventative or indirect, including risk reduction, stability, and compliance. SCM and ITAM teams often prevent the very failures that would otherwise make their value visible.

In mature organisations, success is translated into business outcomes such as improved financial control, reduced risk, greater operational efficiency, and enhanced lifecycle visibility, although these benefits are often attributed to tooling rather than the teams behind the work. In less mature environments, success is measured through technical metrics like CMDB record counts or audit completion rates, and SCM and ITAM are frequently seen as compliance-focused activities rather than strategic, value-adding capabilities.

Authors' view

Organisations must translate technical achievements into clear business outcomes to secure recognition, support, and investment. When SCM and ITAM are linked to cost, risk, and performance objectives, they are seen as strategic enablers rather than operational functions.

However, overreliance on completeness metrics and static reporting can create a misleading picture of progress, as increases in record counts do not necessarily indicate improved accuracy, coverage, or control. Weak governance and low confidence in data further limit the ability to demonstrate value at senior levels, creating a cycle of underinvestment that hinders improvements in data quality and trust.

Ultimately, success is gained through visibility and influence when communicated through tangible business impact rather than technical metrics alone.



5 What challenges do SCM and ITAM face?

Challenges across SCM and ITAM are often driven by governance gaps, poor data quality, fragmented tooling, immature processes, and limited senior leadership engagement. These issues are interconnected, creating operational inefficiencies and reducing the strategic value these functions can provide. Research for this paper identified several recurring challenges among delegates, including but not limited to:

- **Organisational buy-in and culture**
A major issue is organisational culture and buy-in. SCM and ITAM are frequently viewed as low-priority operational functions, overshadowed by a focus on rapid delivery rather than governance. Without executive sponsorship and leadership support, these functions struggle to secure the authority, funding, and collaboration needed to mature, resulting in reactive practices and limited accountability.
- **Governance and ownership**
Governance and ownership also remain weak in many organisations. Delegates highlighted unclear ownership, inconsistent standards, and poor accountability for maintaining asset and configuration data. Weak or undefined RACI models contribute to inconsistent data management and operational oversight, while the absence of strong governance frameworks allows tooling environments and data quality to deteriorate over time.
- **Shadow IT**
Shadow IT continues to create operational and security risks. Decentralised procurement, unmanaged assets, and poor tooling integration allow assets and configuration items to exist outside formal governance structures, reducing visibility, increasing compliance risks, and creating budget inefficiencies. Stronger governance and integrated tooling help organisations identify hidden assets, reduce risk, and improve transparency.
- **Data quality and trust**
Poor data quality is both a symptom and consequence of weak governance. Many organisations rely on outdated or duplicated legacy data, leaving teams without a trusted single source of truth. This often forces departments to maintain separate records, increasing shadow IT, inconsistent reporting, and reliance on manual audits. Accurate and trusted data is essential for operational efficiency, risk reduction, and enabling organisations to move from reactive firefighting to proactive strategic planning.
- **Tooling and integration**
Tooling fragmentation is another common challenge. Many organisations operate multiple overlapping tools with limited integration, often implemented without a long-term strategy or alignment to supporting processes. This creates siloed information, duplicated effort, inconsistent reporting, and additional manual workload. Effective integration is critical for improving visibility, reducing inefficiencies, and enabling automated lifecycle management.
- **Process maturity**
Process maturity across SCM and ITAM also remain inconsistent. Common weaknesses include ineffective procurement and contract tracking, poor Joiners, Movers and Leavers (JML) procedures, weak Install, Move and Change (IMAC) controls, inadequate decommissioning, and limited integration with wider ITSM practices. Organisations that fail to improve process maturity often remain trapped in reactive operating models and struggle to scale effectively.
- **Perceived knowledge and skills gaps**
Many organisations also face perceived knowledge and skills gaps. In less mature environments, SCM and ITAM are often underestimated as straightforward disciplines requiring limited specialist expertise. Teams relying primarily on on-the-job experience may overestimate process maturity, creating a false sense of confidence until failures or incidents expose weaknesses. This often leads to costly remediation that could have been avoided through training and governance.

Strategic planning

A further challenge is the lack of strategic planning and senior-level support for SCM and ITAM. As organisations adopt digital and cloud technologies, many have shifted from top-down strategic models to bottom-up Agile approaches. While Agile methods can support aspects of SCM and ITAM, an Agile-only approach is often ineffective because lifecycle management, compliance, procurement, and inventory control require long-term planning and structured governance. A hybrid approach combining Agile flexibility with traditional governance frameworks is generally more effective.

Although bottom-up Agile models aim to involve frontline teams in shaping strategy, they can create siloed departments and strategic misalignment without strong communication and top-down direction. This increases the risk of higher costs, delays, compliance failures, and operational instability, particularly where organisations fail to recognise that SCM and ITAM underpin many wider ITSM capabilities.



The most effective approach is a hybrid strategic model where leadership defines the overall vision and objectives, while operational teams determine the execution methods and day-to-day activities. Combining Agile responsiveness with governance-driven controls improves operational stability while maintaining flexibility to adapt to business needs. Organisations should also develop maturity roadmaps to guide improvements in technology and service capabilities, moving from ad-hoc asset tracking toward fully optimised lifecycle management aligned with broader business goals.

Authors' view

Pallab: The challenges facing SCM and ITAM functions often stem from organisational complexity and inconsistent practices. Over the years I've seen organisations struggle to establish clear ownership, standardised processes, and effective collaboration across teams stemming from years of a piecemeal approach. This can hinder the ability to manage technology assets efficiently. In addition, evolving business demands and increasing dependency on digital services place greater pressure on SCM and ITAM teams to deliver accurate reporting, compliance assurance, and strategic insight. Organisations that prioritise alignment between people, processes, and technology are more likely to strengthen operational resilience and support informed decision-making across the enterprise.

Jon: These challenges create a cycle that is difficult to break. Weak governance leads to poor data quality, which undermines trust and reduces adoption. Fragmented tooling exacerbates inconsistencies, while limited executive support restricts the ability to invest in long-term improvements. As a result, organisations risk maintaining systems that exist in form but fail to deliver the strategic insight and control they were intended to provide. Those that can address these interconnected challenges, however, are far better positioned to realise the full value of SCM and ITAM as drivers of informed decision-making and operational efficiency. Cultural resistance can sometimes be a bigger barrier than technology due to the lack of understanding.



6 Wishful thinking – future aspirations

Organisations consistently identified the same priorities for improvement: more mature, integrated operating models supported by trusted, reliable data. Delegates emphasised the need for a single source of truth through accurate, real-time CMDBs, integrated asset data, and stronger data governance, standardisation, and interoperability.

There was also strong demand for greater automation and AI-driven capabilities to improve discovery, reconciliation, reporting, and proactive risk management. However, participants stressed that technology alone is insufficient without stronger governance, leadership, accountability, and clearly defined ownership models.

A broader cultural shift was seen as essential, with organisations wanting SCM and ITAM recognised as strategic, value-driving capabilities rather than operational repositories. Delegates also highlighted the need for improved lifecycle governance, consistent processes, stronger stakeholder engagement, and better communication across suppliers and functions.

Ultimately, organisations want SCM and ITAM to demonstrate measurable business value through improved resilience, efficiency, risk reduction, financial outcomes, and service quality.

Authors' view

In summary, the overarching desire is for a shift from fragmented, tool-led approaches to a well-governed, leadership-backed, data-centric capability, where processes, people, and technology are aligned to deliver accurate, trusted, and actionable insights. Organisations need to recognise that Configuration and Asset managers are more than just database administrators and owners. They can be involved in the decision making and approvals of changes, resolving of incidents and root cause analysis of problems with the right tools and access.



7 Conclusion

Many organisations have invested heavily in SCM and ITAM tooling without first developing the core technique needed to make those investments effective. Platforms have been deployed, data has been collected and reports have been produced, but confidence in the outcomes often remains limited.

Organisations have made measurable progress in SCM and ITAM through improved tooling, automation, and awareness, but operational maturity remains inconsistent. Key challenges persist, including weak governance, unclear ownership, limited executive sponsorship, and poor strategic alignment.

Thought for the day: is a CMDB seen as ‘operational’ whereas “foundation data repository” is actually strategic? A major issue is unreliable data, as CMDBs and asset repositories are often incomplete or inaccurate. Many organisations rely on superficial success metrics that fail to reflect true operational value, limiting confidence in decision-making. Process maturity also remains uneven, with inconsistent lifecycle management and weak standardisation. Although automation has advanced, it cannot compensate for poor governance or immature processes.

Technology fragmentation further reduces effectiveness, as SCM and ITAM tools are often poorly integrated, creating duplicated effort and limited visibility. At the same time, cultural challenges persist, with SCM and ITAM still viewed as operational overheads rather than strategic business enablers.

Overall, organisations are progressing but remain mid-journey in their maturity evolution. Long-term success depends on embedding four key foundations across the organisation:

- Trusted and accurate data
- Clear ownership and accountability
- Strong governance and leadership engagement
- Measurable business value and outcomes

Until these are fully established, SCM and ITAM will continue to be recognised as important capabilities but will remain under-realised strategically.

In cricketing terms, organisations not only need better kit; they also need better techniques and a game plan to perform well and utilise existing capabilities strategically, SCM and ITAM will remain under-realised where the focus stays on tools without the discipline to use them well. Where organisations build the right fundamentals, these practices can move from the back office to the front foot, enabling confident decisions, controlled risk and lasting business value.

About the authors



Pallab Dasgupta (left) is a Senior Business Consultant and Jonathan West is a Service Advisory Consultant at CGI.

Appendix A: SCM and ITAM Infographic



SCM & ITAM

All The Gear No Idea!

A WHITEPAPER

By Pallab Dasgupta and Jonathan West

WHAT IS SCM & ITAM?

Service Configuration Management (SCM) and IT Asset Management (ITAM) provide visibility, control and value from your technology assets and services.

They ensure the right information is available, trusted and used to support better decisions, lower cost and reduce risk.



VISIBILITY



CONTROL



VALUE

THE CHALLENGES WE HEARD



POOR DATA QUALITY

Incomplete, outdated or inaccurate data undermines trust.



UNCLEAR OWNERSHIP

Lack of accountability leads to gaps and duplicate effort.



TOOLING & INTEGRATION

Tools bought before needs are defined and poor integration.



LEGACY & COMPLEXITY

Inherited data, complex estates and scale are hard to manage.



RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS

Limited skills, time and budget slow progress.

THE 7 KEY THEMES IN THIS WHITEPAPER

- 1** **Introduction**
Despite investment, capabilities remain inconsistent.
- 2** **Stakeholder perception of SCM & ITAM**
Still seen as interchangeable or operational overhead.
- 3** **How do we measure SCM & ITAM?**
Accuracy and completeness vary widely.
- 4** **How do we communicate success?**
The story and language must fit the audience.
- 5** **What challenges do SCM & ITAM face?**
Data quality, ownership and tooling top the list.
- 6** **Wishful thinking**
What good looks like — if everything worked perfectly.
- 7** **Conclusion**
Focus on people, process and trusted data.

SCM & ITAM DELIVER VALUE



KEY TAKEAWAYS



GET GOVERNANCE RIGHT

- Define clear ownership and accountability
- Establish standards and processes



TRUST YOUR DATA

- Focus on accuracy and completeness
- Keep data current and relevant



INTEGRATE & AUTOMATE

- Connect systems where it adds value
- Reduce manual work and single points of failure



COMMUNICATE VALUE

- Tailor the message to your audience
- Use data to tell the story



FOCUS ON OUTCOMES

- Support decisions, not just reporting
- Continuously improve and adapt



BUSINESS IMPACT



LESS DOWNTIME



BETTER CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE



LOWER COSTS



REDUCED RISK



INCREASED AGILITY

MATURITY MATTERS



Maturity in SCM & ITAM drives measurable improvements across people, process, data and technology.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE (WISHFUL THINKING)



Complete, accurate and real-time data



Clear ownership and accountability



Integrated systems with automation



Used everywhere to make decisions



Continuous improvement as standard

THE BOTTOM LINE



SCM & ITAM success comes from people, process and trusted data working together to deliver value every day.

FOCUS ON WHAT MATTERS: Trusted data. Effective processes. The right tools. The right people. | **SMALL STEPS TODAY: BIG IMPACT TOMORROW.**



Working together for better service management

