

# BMC Strengthens CMDB Leadership in Federation, Extensibility and Analytics with Atrium 7.5

## Abstract

BMC has played a large role in shaping the CMDB market ever since its first CMDB was announced in December of 2004, followed quickly by its broader Atrium Strategy in January, 2005. When BMC introduced Atrium 7.5 in February of 2009, it enhanced its leadership position in CMDB technologies through a variety of new capabilities targeted at improved federation, scalability, extensibility, maintenance, and analytics, as well as more dynamic support for virtualization. The announcement came as a part of a broader ITSM update. Atrium 7.5 should significantly strengthen BMC's hand in satisfying the requirements of more mature and demanding CMDB customers seeking enhanced efficiencies in sustaining and growing their CMDB Systems with visible benefits in terms of process, automation and analytics.

## Market Context

CMDB, or to use ITIL v3 terminology, CMS, deployments, more than any other single technology area, represent a fundamental shift in how IT is investing in and leveraging management solutions of virtually all types. This is because CMDB initiatives are driven by the need to integrate management toolsets more effectively in support of more collaborative, more business aligned, more automated, and overall more effective ways of working. CMDB Systems are most often driven by the need to achieve improved operational efficiencies in managing change, while reducing the costs (in penalties, loss of productivity, and actual revenue) of critical IT services. As such, they are not merely technology investments, but depend on attention to process, as well as to cultural and organizational roadblocks to IT effectiveness. And because they are transformative, they typically involve uniquely defined teams with architectural, process and communication skills.

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It is therefore not surprising that, according to Q1 2009 ENTERPRISE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATES® (EMA™) research, CMDB implementations are the single most active area for current and ongoing ITSM initiatives in 2009. And when the need to marry technology with process and organizational dialog is taken into account, it also isn't surprising that CMDBs are given the lowest satisfaction rating among ITSM initiatives. This is all the more true since CMDB-related technologies are still new and emerging and faced with increasingly stringent demands to support currency, federation and quick time to value.

For instance, while respondents surveyed in February of 2009 indicated that, on average, 16% of their configuration items (CIs) or CI attributes are updated in real time, these same respondents expect that number to expand to 25% by the end of 2009, an increase of more than 35%. Moreover, 86% of the respondents are already focused on some form of federation. But this growth doesn't come without a price, as more than 80% of the respondents have two or more FTE equivalents dedicated to long-term support of their CMDB System. So it's not surprising that these same respondents rank automation in establishing and maintaining their CMDB data as their top maintenance concern.

This move from the notion of a monolithic CMDB, towards a federated system with enhanced capabilities for currency, sustainability and automation, along with faster time to value, will define the CMDB marketplace over the course of 2009 and probably well into the coming years as well. BMC's February announcements then are best understood in against this backdrop – and the good news is that that the fit between requirements and delivered value is strong.

## BMC Atrium 7.5: CMDB Advances in League with the Times

When BMC introduced its Atrium strategy and initial product set over the winter of 2005-2006, it became the initial leader in CMDB technologies – in large part because

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BMC grasped the need for “next-generation platforms” to be assimilative rather than all-or-nothing grab bags. Time and again, IT clients have made it clear to EMA that they are seeking a partner who can “integrate” and “automate” existing management investments with an eye to process improvements and superior analytics for managing change and isolating problems. BMC has sustained its leadership in part through its recognition of this “open” model, as well as by ingesting hard-won lessons from initial CMDB deployments to support an increasingly mature and savvy customer set. BMC's February announcements reflect this attention to real-world customer requirements in 2009.

### Federation

BMC approaches the need to federate multiple management investments (both BMC and third party) with a series of pragmatic options. This can allow IT adopters to find a fit for the requirements most pertinent to them, and also to support multiple options for federation based on process and domain priorities. For instance, sources for CI-related performance information are generally more time-sensitive than, by contrast, asset-related information, and so a more loosely coupled and dynamic approach to federation in support may well be advisable. With this in mind, some of BMC's options include:

- BMC improved support for Web Services in February through a centralized UDDI registry that is optimized to support loosely-coupled integrations with relatively easy and transparent upgrades. Specific Web Services can be brought up or shut down without disrupting the core integration.
- BMC is enhancing its support for the emerging CMDBf standard developed by the CMDB Federation Workgroup and under review from the Distributed Management Taskforce (DMTF). The CMDBf specification promotes sharing of information across multiple management sources with a CMDB. BMC is actively working to demonstrate real-world CMDBf data exchange through the COSMOS project directed at establishing reference CMDBf implementations. BMC is also supplying CMDBf-compliant adapters out of the box.
- BMC also has three established capabilities for federating information across its CMDB System. One of these, its “Reconciliation Engine,” which applies defined policies for assimilating “trusted sources” of information about CIs and CI attributes, has been improved to support real-time requirements in virtualized

environments. BMC's "Normalization Engine" uses a dictionary and product catalog-like capability to ensure that the same CI types from multiple (BMC and non-BMC) sources are represented in the same way across the CMDB, and that duplicate CIs are not falsely created when, for example, one source refers to, say, a laptop by its IP address and the other by its Model Name. And finally, the Atrium Integration Engine is an ETL-like capability optimized to leverage pre-existing data sources (e.g., an asset data repository) through bulk updates into the CMDB. Many of these are one-time occurrences optimized to populate the CMDB from prototypic or inherited sources.

## Discovery and Application Dependency Mapping

Atrium can flexibly assimilate multiple sources of discovery information into a staging area that leverages the Atrium CMDB's core strengths in reconciliation and policy-based control to optimize updates to the CMDB System. This enables adopters to allow for the separation of "discovered" versus "desired" state information, and also provides flexibility and reach in assimilating both BMC and non-BMC discovery sources.

Core to Atrium's discovery, however, is its Atrium Discovery and Dependency Mapping (ADDM) solution, which provides a set of dynamic insights into application-to-infrastructure interdependencies. New in February is support for VMware virtualized environments based on event-driven automation. This automation leverages Atrium Orchestrator to trigger a new scan of the virtualized environment when a change occurs. As the scan is triggered, it passes through normalization and updates the CMDB within minutes.

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## Lifecycle Simulation, Visualization and Scalability

In order to answer requirements for service providers and some enterprises for managing unique "customer" domains, BMC has further expanded its multi-tenancy support for its Atrium CMDB. This allows for multiple logical and physical instances of the Atrium CMDB so that individually managed environments can be segregated and customized according to unique, customer-related policies.

BMC has also introduced its Atrium Impact Simulator, designed to provide "if/then" analysis prior to actually making a configuration change. The Simulator leverages the Atrium CMDB and Atrium Discovery and Dependency Mapping to enable engineers and other professionals to assess service impact prior to when a change is made. The Simulator creates a sandbox environment informed by configuration policies and awareness of application-to-infrastructure interdependencies.

The new Atrium Management Console is also a significant advance for BMC customers. It includes the Atrium Explorer, which allows IT professionals to explore CI and service interdependencies in a graphical manner. It also allows for service model creation and graphical editing. It is designed to support both problem resolution and business impact analysis, as well as update and maintenance of the CMDB System, as newly discovered CIs can be reconciled according to pre-established policies with one mouse click.

New Executive Dashboards complement this capability by providing business service summaries, drill-down for service impact, and in mapping service performance and availability information to existing SLAs.

BMC has also provided CMDB administrators with a Graphical Class Manager, in order to make it easier to customize or extend CI classes and assign distinctive CI attributes based on individual requirements. Additional administrative functions include a Job Monitoring Console to assess progress in federating CI sources through normalization and reconciliation by performing data transfer tests, and by providing historical information about old runs.

## EMA Perspective

In EMA research, BMC consistently appears as a leader in CMDB deployments, particularly among more advanced customers seeking to evolve beyond Phase-One objectives. BMC's February announcements are further indications that by investing in its experience in real-world CMDB deployments, as well as through its commitments to openness and federation, BMC is sustaining and enhancing its leadership position across the CMDB marketplace.

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On the other hand, the great promise of CMDB Systems across the industry is still a "work in progress." This is true both from a technology perspective, and from the standpoint of adopter sophistication, organizational maturity, and process awareness. With this in mind, BMC is making important and market-aware advances in support of its Atrium CMDB and its Atrium Application Discovery and

Dependency Mapping that directly speak to adopter priorities. EMA believes that these announcements are well targeted at 2009 adoptions, as well as present and future needs to move toward more federated, dynamic, and efficient CMDB Systems.