

BDNA – Asset Content for BSM

Remember the dictum “content is king” that was pervasive during internet’s early stages? When dealing with issues of complexity in managing the ever-changing IT infrastructure, content is still king. One “content” fundamental for any business-oriented service management (BSM) strategy involves what IT assets exist, what assets are being used, and how assets fulfill business purposes. It seems a statement of the obvious. Yet, the process of obtaining the IT asset content required for BSM purposes remains elusive. The recent announcement of Technopedia™, as part of BDNA’s IT Genome Center, addresses part of that elusive need.

The logo for BDNA, consisting of the letters 'B', 'D', and 'N' in a bold, blue, sans-serif font, with a vertical line separating the 'B' from the 'D'.

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During this product launch, BDNA positioned IT Genome Center as eliminating IT waste. While addressing an immediate and timely business benefit to buying the solution, Ptak/Noel believes its value extends far beyond simply controlling IT waste. IT Genome Center balances the inherent business conflict between the need of reducing IT costs while simultaneously delivering more IT services ...no easy task as attested by any IT executive during the last 18 months.

Within molecular biology, the [genome](#) is the “entirety of an organism's hereditary information.” Usually encoded in DNA, the genome “includes both the genes and the non-coding sequences of the DNA.” Identifying the new product line as IT Genome Center, BDNA has highlighted the need for mapping IT DNA if an accurate business view of the IT asset is to be achieved. Without this IT DNA, business decisions re: problem identification, issue resolution, impact analysis, return on investment, and value contribution are jeopardized. BDNA’s April announcement segregated their encyclopedia of asset knowledge (Technopedia) from their asset discovery tool, thereby taking a critical next step in using asset content for business purposes.

Important to BSM considerations is the ability of IT Genome Center to normalize and enrich asset data, beyond the foundational task of asset discovery (BDNA Discover). Through BDNA’s agentless discovery capabilities, the company experienced an impressive 50% growth rate during 2009 – in spite of the economic downturn that impacted revenue of so many other technology companies. By leveraging Windows Management Instrumentation (WMI), BDNA does not need special user permissions to gain access to asset data needed ...significantly important in finding assets unknown to typical monitoring systems.

The objective of BDNA Normalize is to “get more from what you have.” Intended as value added to most any deployed asset discovery tool, BDNA transforms data created “into actionable information for strategic decision-making.” Examples include the normalization of differences across naming, installations and versions thereby highlighting inefficiencies, duplicities and budget waste ...all critical to creating a business discussion about the IT assets actually used.

BDNA Enrich taps over 800,000 “market data points” for 200,000 hardware and software products in order to ensure business relevance of asset content. These data points are pieces of information that are not discoverable from the asset itself, but require continuous updating. Examples of undiscoverable market data provided through BDNA’s Technopedia include energy efficiency specifications needed for Green IT cost-benefit analysis, or hardware physical dimensions required for consolidation of Data Centers, or support options that could extend product beyond end-of-life for more informed upgrade decisions. BDNA Enrich is now a service offering with product expected in the second half of 2010.

By providing an open, independent source for asset data that is not discoverable, Ptak/Noel believes that BDNA is filling a critical BSM void in the gap between IT and business views of technology assets. While there is significant importance to understanding what assets exist, where they are located, and how they are configured ...much of the asset content that allows the business value of the IT asset to be understood is not accessible through WMI or IP protocols.

To ensure confidence in the business use of IT assets, business managers need accurate asset data provided in an automated and reliable fashion. Business decision makers not only need data points readily available from discovery tools, but also data that comes from installation procedures, manufacturing specifications, power consumption, maintenance schedules, support costs and other pieces of information that are normally not recorded and/or occasionally changes. The primary alternative to purchasing such data that has been vetted through a quality control process is the time-consuming, manual task of collecting, recording, and adjusting such content. Given the high expense of this kind of data collection, such tasks are usually not performed and business loses confidence in accuracy of asset data provided.

DNA serves two primary biological functions. In overly simplistic terms, DNA first stores information about the biological characteristics of any living thing ...which thereby provides “genetic coding” to capture physical traits and characteristics. It then uses this DNA data to transcribe a message into the creation or development of living cells. Similar to the scientific mapping of DNA, the mapping of technology DNA needs to store information about all characteristics of technology assets, and then use that content to implement, control and extend the life of the IT asset for business purposes. BDNA positions the products and services of IT Genome Center to enable IT assets to fulfill their primary business use ...or to “show businesses what they are made of.”

BDNA describes this DNA mapping process in three steps:

1. Leverage Technopedia’s 800,000 market data points to understand the IT asset in order to extract greater value from existing (discovered) asset data.

2. Sequence the “genetics” of IT components to *diagnose* what you have, what you use, and what you actually need.
3. Enable fact-based business decisions to *treat and cure* IT assets ...which mean determining when to retire, reallocate and invest in technology to enhance the company’s competitive position.

BDNA launched IT Genome Center with ten “sequences,” which are data groups vetted and organized by vendor and solution area. ITgenome.com portal allows asset content to be downloaded by these sequences and is available in three levels to subscribers. Level 1 (...free discovery) requires the IP address range in order to discover servers, clients, network equipment, IP telephony, SAN, NAS and critical network services. Level 2 requires non-administrative user access to discover system configuration, storage, peripherals, installed software and applications. Level 3 requires application user accounts to discover application usage.



Figure 1: BDNA Online Services at <http://www.theitgenome.com>

With the delivery of IT Genome Center, the provision of asset data from Technopedia is now segregated from BDNA’s discovery tool sets and is available for integration with the most competitive asset discovery tools. Through a subscription to Technopedia, asset data sequences can automatically augment the discovery of multiple types of IT assets.

The Final Word

The ability to take the complex and make it intuitive, compelling and simple continues to be a significant, yet crucial marketing challenge for software application companies. Ptak/Noel quickly identified with the intuitive concept of DNA mapping IT assets in order to deliver value to the business community. Finding a way to capture all pertinent asset data, both discoverable and non-discoverable, for business use is an enormous step forward in delivering basic business-oriented service management (BSM). An IT organization can’t improve what they don’t know they have, or what they can’t measure. A current stumbling block for aligning IT with business functions is the inability to measure undiscoverable asset data, or what BDNA identifies as “market data points” for 200,000 types of hardware and software components.

However, the long term viability of Technopedia as a broadly used subscription service will be proportional to BDNA's success in gaining buy in of the vendor and user communities to continually updating the database of "market data points" ...which now stand at 800,000. We find the availability of such an asset data source as a worthwhile and needed component for BSM effectiveness. If BDNA can actually create a process for community development of asset data ...in which their own profit objectives do not hinder the openness of partner contributions, we are hopeful that Technopedia will make a meaningful contribution to BSM initiatives.

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About Ptak, Noel & Associates LLC

We help IT organizations become "solution initiators" in using IT management technology to business problems. We do that by translating vendor strategy & deliverables into a business context that is communicable and actionable by the IT manager, and by helping our clients understand how other IT organizations are effectively implementing solutions with their business counterparts. Our customers recognize the meaningful breadth and objectivity of our research in IT management technology and process.
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About the Author

Bill Keyworth is VP and Research Analyst of Ptak, Noel & Associates and editor-in-chief of BSMreview.com. Leveraging over 25 years of successfully defining technology and market trends within the IT service management industry, Keyworth has established a reputation as one of the more credible and consistent voices in maximizing business value from IT management. Being the first to identify and justify market requirements and benefits for a network management (monitoring) framework thrust Keyworth into an early leadership role within the IT management industry. As vice president and research director at Gartner Group, Keyworth initiated the successful Network and Systems Management (NSM) service and helped to create a US focus on ITIL processes years before their industry adoption. Through analyst and vendor executive roles, Keyworth led the focus on IT Infrastructure Management as critical for managing the dynamic elements of internet and enterprise applications. Having demonstrated expertise in refocusing the marketing engines of an organization and turning product driven companies into market driven industry leaders, Keyworth now translates that market perspective into success criteria for user's IT management initiatives.