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Synopsis: Are you paying for software licenses that you aren't using?

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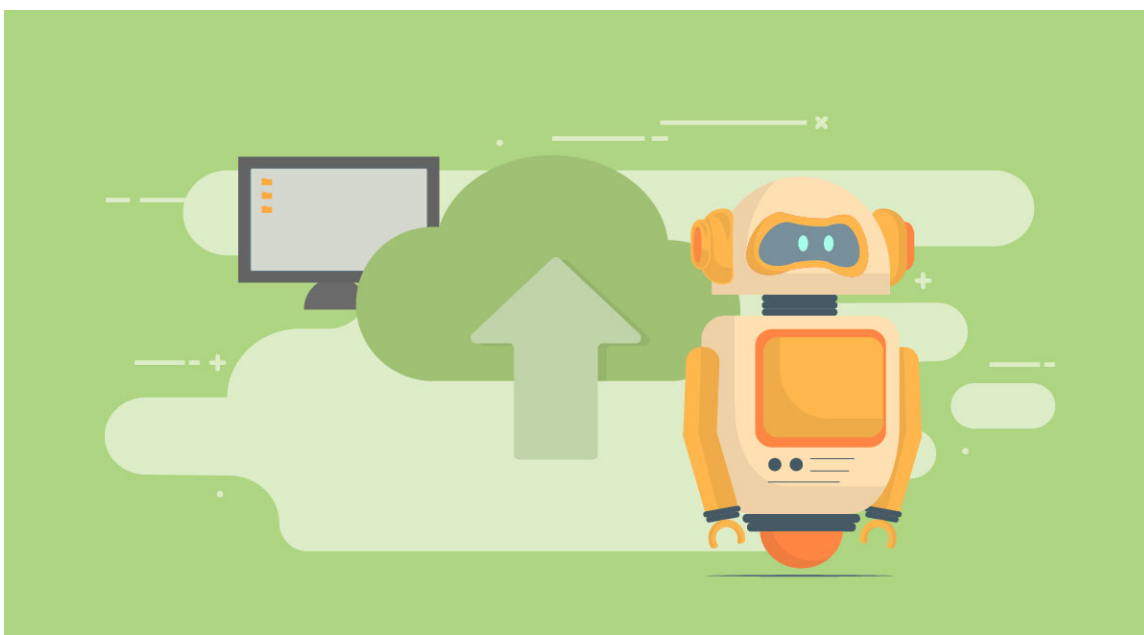
Managing IT assets become trickier as new asset types like SaaS applications, mobile devices, and virtualized servers blur the lines between technology and business functions. You can't manage the growing number of assets, fueled by technologies like the Internet of Things (IoT), with spreadsheets alone.

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Maximizing IT asset value in the digital age: 4 best practices for small businesses

by Gitanjali Maria | Jun 1, 2018 | Insights, Security



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This article will cover four ITAM best practices and several [technologies](#) that will help small businesses track, value, and protect their technology assets in this digital age.

Re-defining IT asset management to track broader value

IT asset management includes tracking the availability and usage of your technology assets (both hardware and software) and managing their life cycle right from procurement to the time you replace it with a new one.

[Gartner](#) defines IT asset management as “a process that provides an accurate account of technology asset life cycle costs and risks to maximize the business value of technology strategy, architecture, funding, contractual, and sourcing decisions.”

What this basically means is that you track your IT assets to ensure that you have what you need and optimally use what you have.

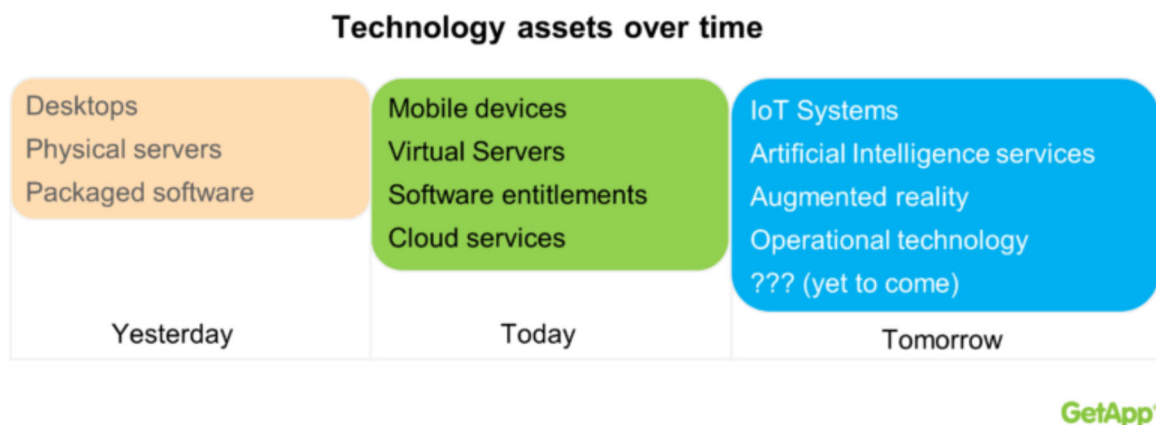
Gartner simplified its earlier ITAM definition¹ to make it broader to encompass new kinds of technology assets like SaaS, IoT, and big data.

The IT asset evolution: From legacy systems to artificial intelligence

Defining an IT or technology asset is in the first step in updating your ITAM guidelines. A technology asset is as any digital technology that provides information or gives you access to information that will help generate business value.

The IT assets of yesterday like bulky desktops and servers have given way to technology assets like sleek laptops, mobile phones, and virtual servers. Internet of Things (IoT) is turning many everyday physical objects into tech assets. Cloud subscriptions are replacing perpetual licenses.

The graphic captures how IT assets have changed over time.



Small businesses are increasingly adopting these new technology assets. Let's look at some stats:

- By 2020, **78 percent** of small businesses in the U.S. will adopt cloud computing.
- Small businesses in Europe, on an average, use **three cloud-based applications** mainly for email, payments, and web design.
- **Fifty to 70 percent** of small and medium businesses pay for some portion of their employees' mobile phones.

- **Twenty percent** of small businesses currently use IoT.

4 best practices for IT asset management (ITAM)

Now that you have broadened the scope of your IT assets, here are some best practices that can help you redefine your ITAM strategy:

1. Develop new ITAM guidelines to include digital technologies

You must rebuild your ITAM strategy to include all the new assets like SaaS applications, mobile devices, other connected physical devices, and big data.

Here are some ways you can include these new-age assets into your ITAM strategy:

Cloud and cloud-based applications:

- **Manage SaaS subscriptions.** Manage user access to paid cloud-based software on different devices including personal mobile phones and tablets that employees may be using for work. You do not want to be paying for them long after they have left your business. A [software asset management solution](#) that manages compliance for cloud-based subscriptions helps here.

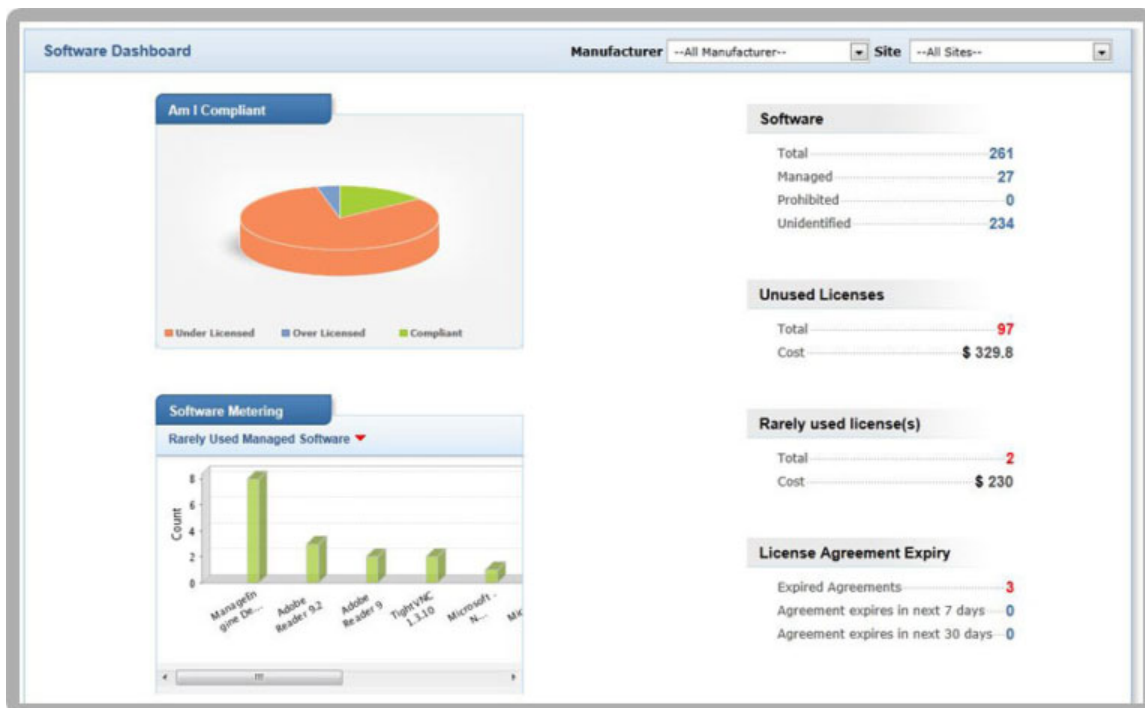
Bring your own device (BYOD):

- **Establish BYOD policies.** Create a BYOD policy that lists down devices that can access your corporate network. Include operating systems and applications that will or will not be supported.
- **Use mobile device management.** Incorporate [mobile device management](#) policies in your ITAM to ensure security, compliance, and proper usage of business data on mobile devices used by your employees in the workplace.

Internet of Things (IoT):

- Incorporate physical devices into your ITAM strategy: More than **25 percent** of the botnets is made up of devices other than computers. As physical devices get connected to your

network, you need to make provisions to track and manage them to ensure that security is not compromised. Your **ITAM solution** should be able to give a complete picture of what, where, and how the devices are used.



ManageEngine AssetExplorer's software management feature

Benefits of this practice:

- **Maximize value from your IT investments.** IT asset management practice lets you maximize the business value obtained from your technology assets. You can stop paying for assets you do not use or start using more of the assets you pay for.
- **Minimize vulnerabilities.** Creating ITAM guidelines for new technology assets ensures that you have not left any hardware or software vulnerable to security risks.
- **Improve accountability.** Updating your ITAM policies to include all new IT assets helps make sure that you have accounted for every device that connects to your network.

2. Adopt holistic IT asset management vs. IT asset tracking

Holistic IT asset management approach manages IT assets throughout their life cycle: from

procurement to disposal. It involves governing IT assets to ensure that they are used effectively and efficiently to meet business goals. IT asset tracking, once believed to be the essence of ITAM, is only one part of it.

Here are some ways you can build a holistic ITAM approach:

- **Consider ITAM as an ongoing process.** ITAM should not be taken as a once a month effort or as a one-time activity. It should be implemented as an ongoing effort to maintain and optimize the use of all IT assets, from their procurement till disposal.
- **Proactive ITAM.** [Software audits](#) from technology vendors is a cause of worry for most small businesses. ITAM should not be viewed as a reactive exercise, done when an asset goes missing or when a software audit happens. A continuous ITAM process will help you be ready for audits as well as enable you to spot potential areas of loss even before they arise.
- **Build a broad ITAM team.** Get together employees working in different areas like IT, operations, and marketing to form a broad ITAM team. This is important because ownership of some of the technology assets may lie with individual employees. Having a broad ITAM team will give you a holistic picture of how different IT assets are put to use.

The screenshot shows the 'Check In' page of the AssetCloud application. The page has a dark sidebar on the left with navigation options: Assets, Transactions, Check Out, Check In, Move, Dispose, Recover, Convert Asset, History, Lookups, Audit, Reports, Users, and Mobility. The main content area is titled 'Check In' and includes a sub-header 'Check In is used to receive assets that are currently included in a check out transaction to a student, staff or vendors.' Below this is the 'Asset Details' form, which includes a 'Scan Here' button, a 'Choose Asset Tag' dropdown, an 'Asset Description' text field, a 'Choose Location' dropdown, a 'Quantity' field set to 0, a 'Receive all units' checkbox, and a 'Choose Department' dropdown. To the right of the 'Asset Details' form is the 'Check In By' section, which includes an 'Assign To' dropdown set to 'Student', a 'Choose Student' dropdown, and a 'Details' text field. Below the form is a 'Check In Queue' table with columns for Asset, Check, Asset, Asset, Serial, Local, Depa, Assig, Due, Move, and Move. At the bottom right, there are buttons for 'Print receipt', 'Check In', and 'Clear'.

AssetCloud's check-in page for capturing details of IT assets just purchased

Benefits of this practice:

- **Reduce asset under-utilization.** A holistic approach allows you to keep tabs of IT assets in different phases of its life cycle. You get to know unutilized or under-utilized assets and can take steps to reduce spending on them or limit their future procurement.
- **Improved Return on Assets (ROA).** According to [Gartner's report on Practical Governance](#) (full content available to Gartner clients), businesses with strongly governed IT assets enjoy 20 percent higher ROA than others. Using processes to ensure that assets are used effectively and efficiently saves you costs and improves productivity.

3. Use data to shape your IT asset management policies

Your IT administrator has tons of data about how your IT assets are utilized—including the number of hours logged in from a system/user id, the location of devices connected to your network, the number of failed login attempts, and other similar information. Analyzing this vast pool of data will help you improve your IT asset management practices.

Here are some tips how you can do it:

- **Identify and review all available sources of ITAM data.** There are many sources of IT asset data. Your [network monitoring](#) tools, [security solutions](#), and invoices and purchase orders maintained by procurement teams are just some of the sources that provide you information about IT assets in your organization. Collecting, consolidating, and analyzing this data will give you insights on how to reduce costs and improve the productivity of your technology tools.
- **Analyze ITAM data to identify patterns and threats.** Slicing through your IT asset data can reveal many interesting insights. For example, the higher number of failed login attempts may mean more work for the service desk. Hence analyzing this data will help the service desk team take steps to automate fulfillment of some requests and reduce escalation.
- **Share valuable asset data between teams.** The different teams within your organization share common business goals like reducing costs, improving efficiency and productivity. Sharing ITAM data with other teams will help you get a holistic picture of your technology assets. For example, data on the usage of an application will help the procurement team decide whether they need to increase or reduce the number of licenses for it.



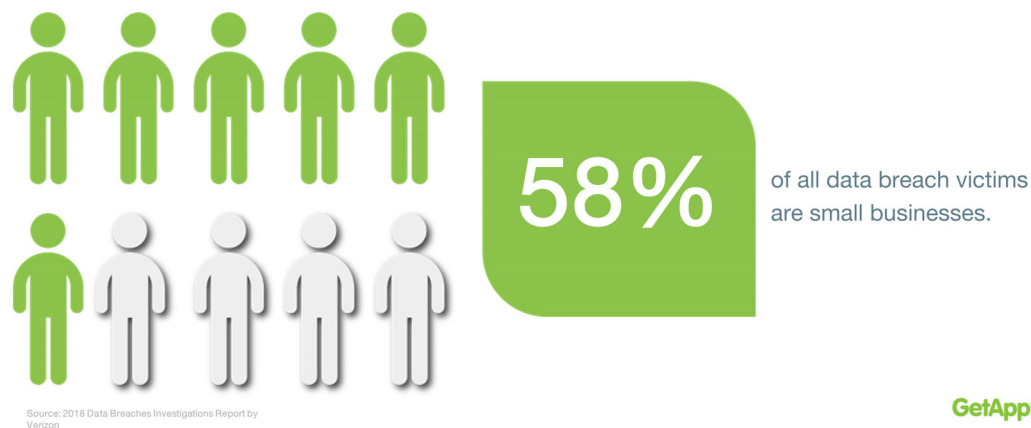
Asset Studio's visual reports of ITAM data

Benefits of this practice:

- **Improved service levels and reduced costs.** Effective use of ITAM data will help businesses avoid over-purchasing or under-purchasing subscriptions. Inventory data of IT hardware assets help save costs by preventing the unnecessary purchase of new devices. You can also improve your IT service levels by using data to analyze common issues and automate service tasks.
- **Improve efficiency.** ITAM data will provide you details on how efficiently an IT asset is being utilized. For example, you may identify that the new printer is not used much because many user devices are not compatible with it.

4. Embed security elements into your IT asset management strategies

According to [Verizon's 2018 Data Breach Investigations report](#),



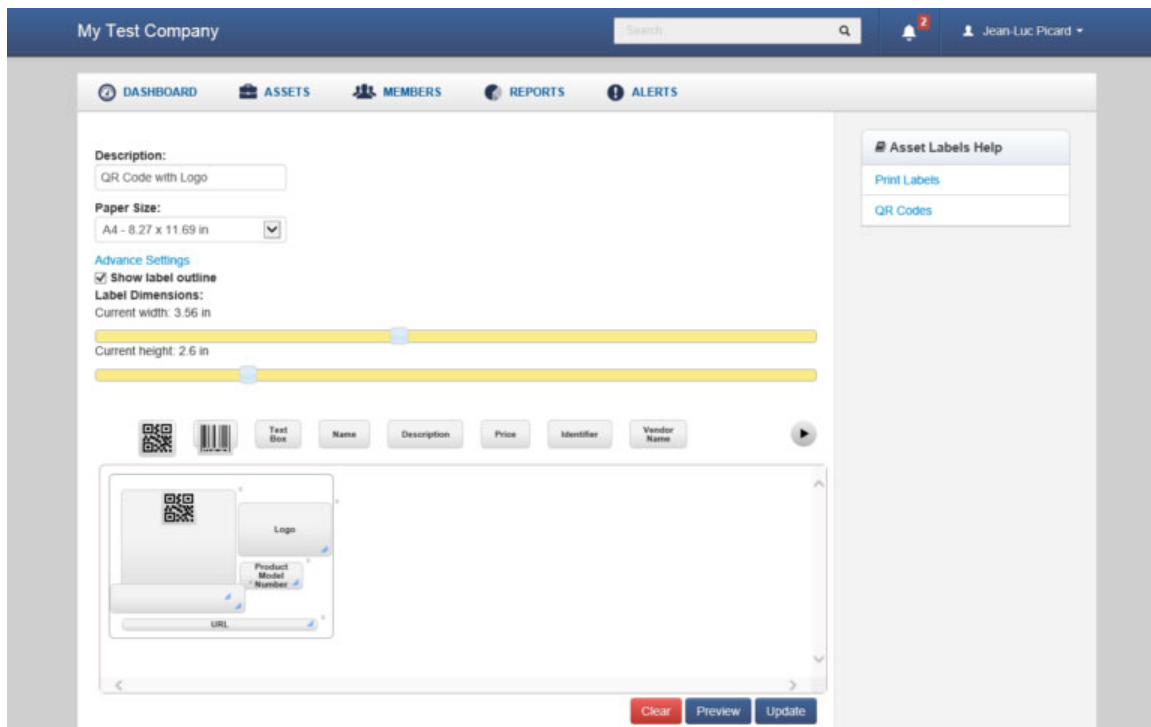
The rising number of cybercrimes demand security and ITAM to work in tandem.

Small businesses **do not invest** enough in managing their IT assets and then fail to track systems that have been upgraded, and those that haven't. These shortcomings make you vulnerable to security risks.

A strong IT asset management framework with a focus on security will help you strengthen your defenses against cyber threats.

Here are some tips that can help you do this:

- **Use ITAM software to track unauthorized hardware and software.** With practices like BYOD and technologies like IoT, you'll often find it difficult to track the number of devices and applications using your network. Your **ITAM tool** should be able to detect any unauthorized device or application and alert the IT administrators. Knowing about any unauthorized use of your network can help pinpoint vulnerabilities and mitigate risks.
- **Regulate disposal policies.** Security risks are often high in the end-of-life hardware or during data disposal processes. Asset tagging through RFID or **barcodes** coupled with access management controls and inventory tracking systems support the secure disposal of your IT assets.



Adding labels to assets help in their tracking and disposal in [EZOfficeInventory](#)

Benefits of this practice:

- **Protect your assets.** IT asset management software provides administrators visibility about the use of the business network and allows them to block specific users/devices. This ensures that all systems and data within your network are protected.
- **Supports compliance.** Continuous ITAM helps meet compliance with software license agreements. It is also one way to account for IT assets and ensure data protection, few among the many requirements of regulations like Sarbanes-Oxley Act and GDPR.

Recommended resources

If you want to know about ITAM tools that help manage your technology assets, visit [GetApp's directory for IT asset management software](#). Here, you can filter and compare ITAM software solutions based on features, pricing and deployment options.

You may also be interested in reading:

- [“Solution Spotlight: Google’s Most Popular Asset Tracking Software Systems Explained”](#)
- [“IT Service Management: A Handy Checklist”](#)
- [“How Cloud Monitoring Enables Better Analytics”](#)

¹ Gartner’s earlier definition of ITAM: IT asset management (ITAM) entails collecting inventory, financial and contractual data to manage the IT asset throughout its life cycle. ITAM depends on robust processes, with tools to automate manual processes. Capturing and integrating autodiscovery/inventory, financial and contractual data in a central repository for all IT assets enables the functions to effectively manage vendors and a software and hardware asset portfolio from requisition through retirement, thus monitoring the asset’s performance throughout its life cycle.



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