



Interlink  
Software

Whitepaper



## The Interlink Software Approach to Service Configuration Management (SCM)

# When the Only Constant is Change!



The provision of a corporate-wide Configuration Management System (CMS) in a fortune 1000 organisation is not a trivial task, most organisations have grown through mergers and acquisitions and accumulated configuration data in a multitude of tools such as Help Desk IT service management products, software audit systems, databases, spreadsheets and directory services. Rather than require the wholesale transfer of the data itself and the existing maintenance process for the data away from these existing sources, the Interlink Software solution enables the federation and/or import of this data into a CMS, automatically detecting updates to the data from the originating sources and populating a central CMS. This approach exploits the benefits of a central, corporate-wide CMS without the pain (and expense) of a massive "big bang" migration.

## The CMS can be unlocked to provide benefits including:

- Low-to-no-maintenance Business Service Management (BSM) – change to the CMS drives BSM updates.
- The ability to analyse the risk of and to schedule the implementation of IT changes from a business perspective.
- The ability to report on the cost of delivering business services identifying technology, people and real estate required to deliver services.
- The ability to create IT compliance reports by business service.

In today's large multi-vendor, distributed enterprise IT environments additional systems management challenges have been laid at the feet of the systems administration staff due to the rapid adoption of technologies that are more dynamic in their configuration than anything that came before, these include but are not limited to the advent of both virtualisation and cloud computing. With this backdrop of an increasingly complex and rapidly changing technical environment the IT department is being required by the business to show or at least be aware of the direct linkages between the physical and logical IT estate and the business services that it underpins. To achieve this goal many organisations are turning to Business Service Management (BSM) service health dashboards and reports to align the management of the IT infrastructure with the needs of the business.

# How Interlink Software Can Help

## Pragmatic Deployment Model; Top Down, Service-at-a-Time

Interlink Software developed the Service Configuration Manager (SCM) product from the ground up to address this need to maintain up to date service dependency mapping linking logical and physical IT elements commonly known as Configuration Items or CIs to the business functions and overall business services that they support. SCM addresses this requirement by offering a flexible top down, service-at-a-time deployment methodology in contrast to the boil-the-ocean approach to configuration management that often requires the entire IT estate to be defined in a monolithic Configuration Management Database (CMDB) before moving on to the next steps in the service management value chain such as Service Level Agreement (SLA) tracking and Business Service Management (BSM).



"Our most successful deployments follow a top down, rapid definition of business service dependency maps with break point analysis identifying the IT required to deliver each business function combined with a highly automated, iterative approach to continuous improvement and tuning of these service models – a data-driven approach."

Lloyd Hopkins, Founder, Interlink Software Services Ltd.

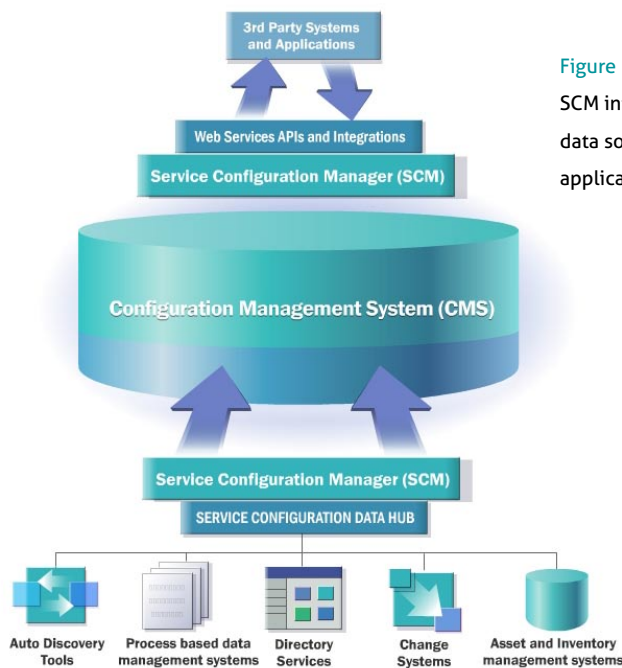


Figure 1. SCM integration points for data sources and 3rd party applications.

Interlink Software has coined the IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL®) v3 term Configuration Management System (CMS) to describe the core function delivered by SCM. SCM enables the integration of one or more data sources (configuration, systems management, service catalogue, SLA, asset, etc) mapping the contents to business service dependency maps resulting in an overarching view of individual business services, an entire organisation or group of associated organisations. By taking a pragmatic, top down service-at-a-time approach to deploying SCM and carefully analysing each data source to be integrated with SCM, incremental benefit can be realised as configuration management for each business service is released, unlocking risk of change by service, business service management, automated SLA tracking and a host of other benefits within the organisation.

# Integrating the Right Data Sources from your Environment



"With regards to audit and compliance, the Interlink Software solution maps to your organisations dynamic network operations or data centre discovering configuration changes automatically and cross references them with your change policy highlighting compliance and security issues."

Colin Griffiths, Founder, Interlink Software Services Ltd

In terms of best practice for this approach to deployment we recommend that careful attention should be paid when adding data sources to SCM ensuring that an existing process has been established to keep the originating data source up to date if it is not an automatically updated source such as a systems or network management tool or auto-discovery product. Once integrated with SCM the data sources can be automatically filtered removing unwanted entries, individual characters or whitespace. Once this data "cleansing" step has completed SCM provides the option to merge data from multiple data sources resulting in what we term consolidated CIs where CI attributes come from different data sources and where reconciliation rules in SCM determine which values should take precedence. For example the specification of a server may be manually entered into an asset management system when it is purchased, however the actual configuration values yielded by a systems management agent installed on the server would override the manually entered data if a difference between the values supplied by the two different data sources was detected by SCM.

## Automatically Detect and Validate Changes

The history or "delta" between versions of service configurations maintained by the SCM product is created automatically. Every change to the underlying configuration data detected by SCM causes an increment to the version of the service configuration. Detected changes can be compared against pre-defined policies or look-ups against a 3rd party change management system can be performed automatically reconciling detected changes with corresponding change records. This approach ensures that only authorised configuration changes are propagated to the business service dependency maps, business service management dashboards and SLA reports. Unauthorised changes can be escalated via visual cues in the Interlink Software dashboards, automated incident creation or notification (SMS, paging, email, etc).

## Key Benefits

Why Service Configuration Manager (SCM) is the Configuration Management System (CMS) platform of choice for some of the largest organisations in the world, SCM enables them to:

- Identify the impact of IT changes on their business services BEFORE the changes are made
- Identify and re-schedule conflicting changes
- Deliver a forward schedule of change by business service or technology
- Identify unauthorised changes to their IT infrastructure
- Automate the management of the lifecycle of IT assets
- Visualise IT infrastructure-to-business dependencies for their organisation
- Centralise operational documentation with context sensitive launching
- Achieve Compliance via an automated audit trail of IT infrastructure changes
- Track infrastructure and business services via an automated Service Catalogue

# About Interlink Software

A cornerstone of our success has been the early adoption of a best practice approach; Interlink's technology breakthrough of producing the world's first commercially available ITIL® best practice based Business Service Management (BSM) solution led to a rapid uptake from many Global 2000 firms looking to align their IT and network operations with ITIL® best practices.

Today, we provide the event management, business service management (BSM) and configuration management system (CMS) platform of choice for some of the largest organisations in the world

## Mission

Our mission is to work in partnership with our customers to use our expertise and software tools to:

- Demonstrate IT-to-business alignment improving overall business service health and reducing the cost of delivering IT services
- Leverage 3rd party tools and applications offering a best of breed alternative to the big 4 "frameworks" or suites of products
- Exploit resource-optimising technologies such as virtualisation
- Deliver the most robust and scalable event management and business service management possible
- Help our customers automate the management of their dynamic network operations and data centres

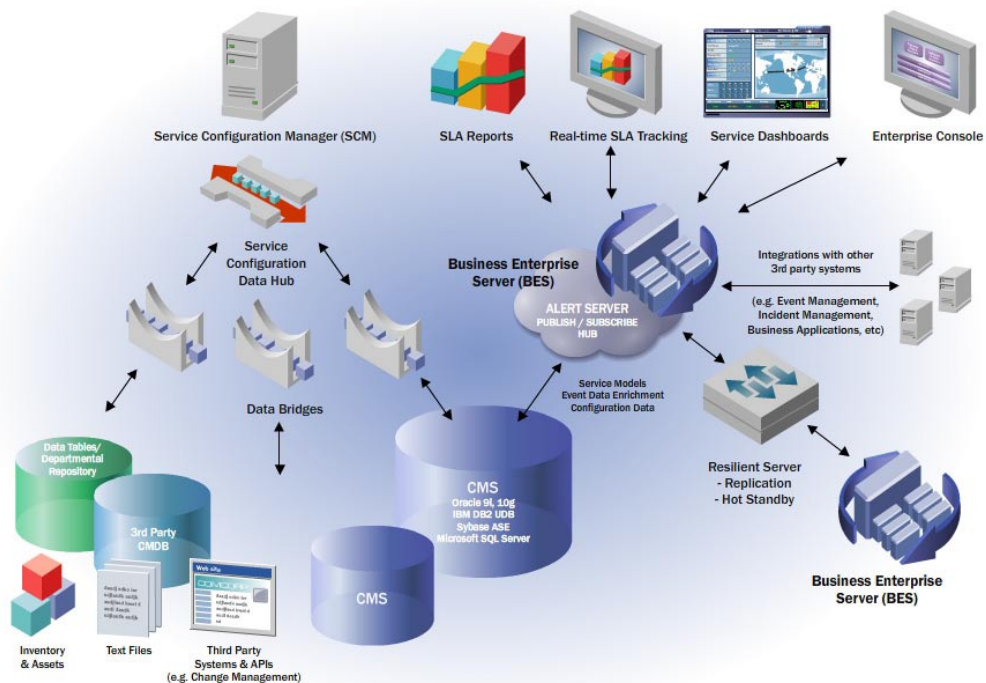


Figure 2. The high level Interlink Software solution architecture.

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