

Novell Steps Forward with Enhanced CMDB Capabilities Aimed at Mid-Tier and Enterprise Customers

Abstract

On March 11, Novell introduced its Business Service Management solution offerings, among which are key enhancements to its myCMDB capabilities, which will also include what Managed Objects, prior to its acquisition, had termed its “CMDB360” functionality. In the announcement, Novell termed this a “complete federated configuration management database (CMDB) solution for comprehensive IT infrastructure and configuration modeling and analysis.”

Later, on Tuesday, March 31st, 2009, Novell introduced its Data Center Strategy for the “Service-Driven Data Center,” in which its BSM portfolio plays a key role alongside its Virtualization and Workload Management solutions and its Enterprise Linux Servers. In this broader context, the Novell myCMDB will play an enhanced role in providing a unifying fabric across Novell’s entire product line as well as an integration and reconciliation point for relevant third-party applications. Moreover, the Novell myCMDB, like Novell’s broader BSM solution, will now be able to target pre-existing mid-market Novell customers, while providing an upmarket linkage to larger enterprises for Novell as a whole.

This impact report assesses Novell’s CMDB strategy and its likely impact on existing and potential Novell customers in light of current market requirements and industry trends.

Market Issues/Market Opportunities

While ENTERPRISE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATES® (EMATM) research shows that the percentage of IT budgets on decline is about twice that of IT budgets on the rise in Q1, 2009, spending associated with CMDB Systems (CMDDBS) is close to flat. In other words, investment in the CMDDBS area has retained its appeal to enlightened IT organi-

zations seeking to improve operational efficiency, improve and better manage service performance, reduce asset costs, and provide more effective and automated approaches to industry, financial and security-related compliance issues. In fact, 37% of the 162 EMA respondents from Q1, 2009 showed \$250,000 or better in proactive savings from their CMDDBS investments (“CMDB Deployments in 2009: from Philosophy to Federation,” EMA, April, 2009), and significantly, about 30% of mid-tier respondents experienced savings above \$500,000!

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At the same time, the CMDDBS landscape is showing many signs of increasing maturity. One of these is the growing commitment to federation. In Q1, 2009, only 14% of respondents said they were not yet interested in federation, and most of these were in the early planning or very early deployment states. Another indication of growing maturity is the emphasis on support for multi-brand integration versus looking for a uni-brand framework approach, as respondents overwhelmingly voted for the former by a margin

of nearly 2.5 to 1. Yet another sign of growth and maturity is the growing breadth of CI scope, with more than half of CI respondents showing a CI scope of 10,000 or above (Figure 1).

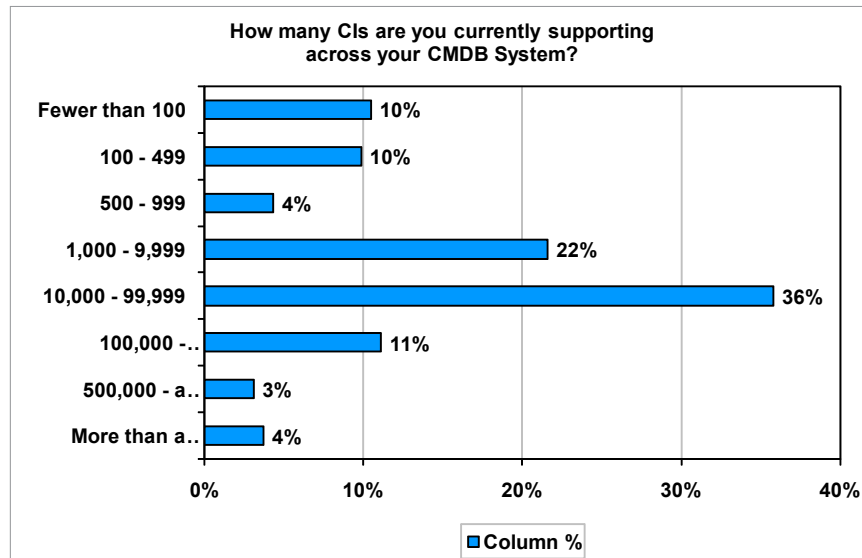


Figure 1 Research from Q1, 2009, shows that 54% of respondents from mid-tier and enterprise companies are planning a CI scope in excess of 9,999 CIs for their CMDB Systems. ("CMDB Deployments in 2009: From Philosophy to Federation," EMA, April, 2009.)

But respondents are still looking for better visualization capabilities and reporting – which some have called simply “primitive” – better impact analytics, and enhanced support for automation.

All this indicates that entering the CMDB System marketplace in 2009 will require vendors with some level of sophistication in assimilating multi-brand environments, providing better support for visualization, analytics and automation, and offering scalable, extensible solutions capable of supporting high volumes of configuration items (CIs) with increasingly frequent intervals – in 25% real-time by Q4, 2009 – for updates.

New Investments and New Functionality

After Novell’s acquisition of Managed Objects in October of 2008, EMA suggested that this could be a cultural challenge for Novell, given the broad scope of the portfolio, and the complex nature of BSM and CMDBS deployments. However, after less than six months, the news seems to be strongly positive. Novell has not only honored the distinctive nature of process- and politically-sensitive BSM and CMDB initiatives and their associated technologies, but has significantly invested in these requirements in terms of sales and marketing, as well as research and development. Moreover, Novell has creatively realigned its overarching Data Center strategy to become more service-centric and optimized to the breadth and depth of Managed Objects’ service awareness.

The new Novell BSM portfolio includes:

- The Novell Business Service Manager, for real-time application and service impact.
- The Novell myCMDB, which combines the CMDB360 support for federated systems with distinctive capabilities to support better communication across lines of business and other stakeholders.

- The Novell Business Experience Manager for application performance monitoring.
- The Novell Business Service Level Manager.
- And Novell myMO Executive Dashboard for role-based visualization targeted at executive stakeholders.

What's New with Novell's myCMDB?

The Novell myCMDB has already shown its scalability in accounts with even a million or more CIs. It has also capitalized on a tradition of openness with strong support for third-party capabilities including BMC's Atrium, IBM's TADDM for application dependency mapping, and EMC nLayers and Tideway for application dependency mapping. The Novell CMDB has, moreover, matured with a strong focus on advanced architectural design, including Web-based and Web 2.0 principles. It is built upon one of the longest and most established commitments in the industry to work with third-party solutions and leverage standards such as CIM. And in line with CMDBS requirements for 2009, Novell has focused its enhancements on usability, improved visibility and communication, and improved deployability with a unique offering targeted at the mid-tier.

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More specifically, these enhancements include:

- A new community Web-based application that combines a Facebook community experience with a Wikipedia-like approach to information management, a new Google-like search engine, Del-i-cio-us social bookmarking, and Google Finance interactivity for capturing timelines and events.
- There are new analytics for IT decision support directed at assessing the impacts of planned changes. These fully leverage the contextual modeling and policies native to Novell's myCMDB combined with myCMDB reporting.
- Enhanced support for modeling and entering new CIs by the use of CIM-based templates and a personal modeling environment so that myCMDB administration can be done in a sandbox mode without disrupting production.
- Improved performance and reduced memory usage.

There is also a new solution offering packaged as an appliance targeted at mid-tier environments especially sensitive to administrative overhead and quick time to deploy. This appliance includes an embedded SQL database and out-of-the-box modeling for selected third-party applications.

EMA Perspective

Both Novell and Managed Objects have had a common tradition of openness to third-party solutions, which should do very well for Novell in the CMDBS landscape. Novell's willingness to assimilate and invest in Managed Objects' CMDB and BSM technology, while respecting its distinctive come-to-market and development requirements, is also heartening. EMA has seen far too many acquisitions in which compelling and innovative technologies get lost in a miasma of cultural reluctance and product management politics, so this news is all the more exciting given the stark contrast it provides to the discouraging industry norm.

The BSM sales force, and that supporting the CMDB, is an overlay that can function both independently, and in conjunction with the larger whole. It has become larger, not smaller, and Novell reports positive uptake in the CMDBS and BSM arena.

Moreover, EMA believes that the need for supporting distinctive constituencies will be one of the most important forces driving the future of the CMDBS marketplace towards more variety, modularity, and flexibility. EMA has, for instance, identified the following list of stakeholders from a cross section of CMDBS deployments: service desk professionals, service portfolio managers, process managers for best practices, asset management professionals, professionals seeking to manage service providers ranging from hosted data centers to WAN services, systems, network, telecommunications and database professionals, security and compliance managers, applications managers, applications developers, Q/A Test, business partners, and a whole host of IT and line-of-business executives. The Novell myCMDB's advanced communication and visualization features should prove well adopted to capitalize on the rich opportunities inherent in that “constituency-centric” trend.

The benefits indicated in Figure 2 underscore the need to support this diversity in an open, federated environment in which many data sources can be leveraged “sources of record” and many different defined constituencies can work together.

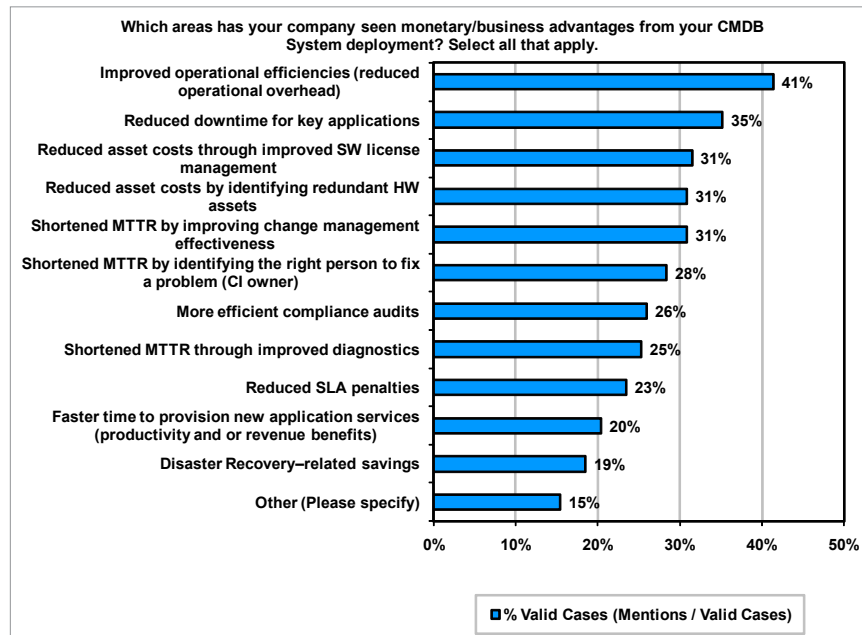


Figure 2: Benefits from CMDBS deployments in 2009 indicate a breadth and diversity of stakeholders and executives, each with defined and individualized requirements

It will be interesting to see how much of Novell’s growth in the CMDBS arena comes from leveraging its core, mid-tier base, or in growing up-market into larger enterprises. EMA believes, as Novell does, that both are very viable options, and if Novell can continue to make good on its commitment to enhance deployability, administrative overhead, improved analytics and automation, and constituency-sensitive visualization and communication, it should become a positive and disruptive force in the CMDBS marketplace.