

Automated asset discovery simplifies decommissioning in increasingly complex data center environments

The rapid pace of change in IT makes hardware asset management uniquely challenging. A typical enterprise data center has thousands of equipment items, ranging from servers to power strips. There are good reasons why assets must be documented and tracked throughout their useful life.

- Costs are reduced by eliminating duplicate equipment purchases.
- Maintenance is simplified because aging equipment can be replaced on a scheduled basis with minimal operational disruption.
- Security is strengthened when asset managers can pinpoint the location and status of equipment needing updates and patches.
- The risk of a data breach is reduced when all devices connected to the network are known.
- Warranty service is less complicated.

- Compliance is streamlined in industries that require IT asset tracking.

The limitations of manual asset tracking

Asset lists usually include detailed information about each device, including purchase date, serial number, software version, location, and status. Tracking has traditionally been done manually, using paper or spreadsheets. However, this approach falls apart at scale.

- Manual inventory list entries and updates are susceptible to errors, leading to discrepancies between actual and recorded status. Data entry error rates average between **1% and 5%**, although rates of **more than 26%** have been observed in situations involving complex environments. Even a 1% error rate across 10,000 devices adds up to 100 inaccessible or invisible assets.



- Updating lists to account for frequent equipment replacements and updates is a labor-intensive process that diverts resources from other tasks.
- As asset inventories grow and IT infrastructure becomes more complex, keeping a comprehensive and up-to-date record of every asset manually becomes nearly impossible.
- Personnel turnover creates gaps in scheduled updates. New employees unfamiliar with asset management procedures magnify the risk of error and omission.

All these factors can combine to make asset decommissioning an auditing nightmare. Crews unaware of undocumented equipment can overlook critical hardware, potentially leading to data security breaches or incomplete disposal. Unknown equipment connected to the network is a prime attack vector for cybercriminals.

The advantages of automation

Decommissioning isn't just about removing equipment; it's also about protecting data. Automated asset discovery tools solve the problems of manual inventory tracking by providing a dynamic, accurate, and comprehensive view of all IT assets within a data center environment.

Most IT equipment contains a bounty of information that is accessible electronically, including device type, IP address, operating system, serial number, date of manufacture, and vendor name. Automated asset discovery software scans the network and builds an inventory of everything that is connected to it, including servers, workstations, network devices, printers, sensors, and even power and environmental equipment.

Iron Mountain's proprietary data sanitization and compliance software, Teraware™, automates the discovery of every serialized asset and maintains parent-child data relationships to ensure precise auditing and tracking. More specifically, Teraware identifies server components (e.g., CPU, Memory DIMMs) and key drive attributes (e.g., power-on hours, logical

serial number). This information provides a detailed blueprint of the relationships between the rack, server, and drive.

Teraware's automated reconciliation reporting, which identifies variances between the discovered assets and your inventory list, is critical to establishing accurate inventory and ensuring complete sanitization. All variances are researched and resolved before advancing in the decommissioning process. To learn more about Teraware's discovery and sanitization capabilities, [check out this resource](#).

Automated tools are a decommissioning team's best friend. They improve data security compliance and facilitate better decision-making by eliminating human error and ensuring that IT asset data is accurate and up-to-date. Decommissioning crews clearly understand what assets need their attention, saving time and resources while reducing risk.

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