

How correcting flawed knowledge of your IT environment helps control costs, empower management, and diminish risk.

Executive Summary:

The creation and maintenance of an efficient, flexible, and secure IT environment is undermined by endemic forces that erode critical knowledge.

Over time, IT management is left with increasingly incomplete, out-of-date, and one-dimensional information about physical and virtual assets, their relationships to one another, and their true degree of utilization.

The resulting misinformation can lead to suboptimal decisions that negatively impact a range of IT activities, from day-to-day operations to strategic planning.

Traditional strategies for overcoming this knowledge deficit are typically disruptive, incomplete, and biased for or against some vendors.

A new professional services engagement, called Lighthouse Independent Discovery & Analytics (IDASM), promises complete, unbiased IT-environment knowledge through mapping and analysis which is non-disruptive, economical, and secure.

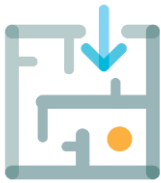
Flawed knowledge of IT diminishes the effectiveness and efficiency of these and other critical IT functions:

- Change management
- Capacity planning
- Performance management
- Inventory management of hardware & software
- Showback / chargeback
- Problem determination and resolution
- Technology refreshes

Background

Some corporate IT environments may start out highly organized and rigidly structured, with management and staff fully aware of all assets and the relationships that connect them.





Yet even these IT environments are subject to naturally occurring technical and business forces that undermine this knowledge over time.

These forces include:

1. Growth of IT:

This growth might include the addition of users, networks, sites, and devices, often propelled by growth of the company, organically and through acquisition.

These additions may involve broader deployments of established applications and architectures, which come with a unique set of technical challenges.

However, they may also involve exceptions for requirements such as integration of legacy systems, “one-off” projects that go mainstream, in-process modernization initiatives, and cases where even well intentioned people – whether users or IT staff – don’t follow the rules.

2. Increasing complexity of IT:

Most IT organizations are also responding to users’ growing appetites for entirely new IT services, requiring new physical and virtual resources. To meet this demand, IT must support new applications on multiple platforms (including mobile) that feed and read diverse data sources located locally and off-site.

This creates a scenario that is both complex and fluid, with myriad associations among mounting data, numerous applications, and proliferating devices that support them.

3. Organizational and technical change:

The most reliable constant in business is change. In IT, change comes in many forms, both gradual and immediate. The

most commonly cited sources of change are software upgrades, hardware refreshes, and new initiatives.

Less obvious, but no less impactful, are changes precipitated by the evolution and expansion of IT’s mission, incremental revisions to routine processes and procedures, even the impact of departing staffers who may take unique knowledge with them when they walk out the door.

Finding the truth about IT:

Here are some questions to ask:



To help you evaluate the various solutions for closing the IT knowledge gap, here are some suggested criteria for consideration:

1. Are the results unbiased?

For obvious reasons, the solution you choose should be independent of any one vendor and must treat all the major vendors in your environment equally. Only this will provide you with objective knowledge of what you actually have in your IT environment, not the partial or biased view you may get from vendor-sponsored studies.

2. Is the study comprehensive? Does it include all the assets in my environment?

A useful understanding of your IT environment must be complete and requires discovery and analysis of all IT assets – not just storage, or just servers, or just applications.

Look for a holistic solution that examines all of your IT assets – servers, storage, data, and applications – at the same time, and identifies not just what your assets are, but how they are organized, connected, and utilized.

3. What should I expect to get from an engagement?

- An accurate inventory of all IT assets, both physical and virtual
- Accurate inventory of all data and all applications in the environment
- Detailed map of relationships between data and applications
- Tracking of consumption of all physical and virtual IT assets, indicating which are over- and under-utilized
- Views of all reports and analyses by line of business, region, and functional areas
- Data and analyses available in custom reports and interactive dashboards
- Ability to drill down to lowest possible level of detail
- Reports showing events, OS levels, firmware levels, hardware and software components
- The ability to export data and provide APIs to other IT services/middleware (e.g., asset management and migration tools)
- Automated data collection and analysis every day, with no human intervention
- Insightful analyses by experienced IT consultants

4. What is involved in an engagement?

Managing IT is already complex enough; so the simpler the engagement is for you and your staff, the better.

Beware of older-generation solutions that may burden your staff with disruptive tasks.



Ascertaining complete, unbiased knowledge about your IT environment can improve confidence and accuracy on a number of operational fronts, including:

- Tactical and strategic projects
- Key initiatives, including cloud, big data, analytics, mobile, and defensible disposition of data
- Operational improvement, including data protection, archive, and data availability
- Operational efficiency
- Delivery against LOB expectations

Consider if it's worth waiting weeks for highly-edited results that may be hiding vendor bias.

5. Is the solution secure?

Try to ensure that the discovery and analysis process can be executed without exposing any operational data or processes outside your firewalls.

In today's security-sensitive business environment, we believe this is an urgent and necessary requirement.

Conclusion

Growth, complexity, and change make it increasingly difficult to know what's what in IT: what you have, how it's all related, and how hard it's working for you.

This amplifies the challenge of running IT by obscuring facts critical to nearly all IT functions, from daily management to strategic planning.

One solution designed to meet these challenges is the new Lighthouse Independent Discovery & Analytics (IDA) Engagement.

About Lighthouse Computer Services

Since 1995, Lighthouse has provided expert counsel, sales, and service for clients' complex IT requirements.

To learn more about us, please visit www.lighthousecs.com.



About the Lighthouse IDA

Engagement:

We designed the Lighthouse IDA Engagement to be fast, cost-effective, thorough, and non-invasive; and to empower clients with complete, unbiased IT knowledge that helps them realize benefits* like these:

- Infrastructure TCO savings range from 11% to 55%.
- Storage demand is typically reduced by 10% or more.
- Demand for maintenance resources typically declines by 20% or more.
- ROI ranges from 29% to 140%.
- Breakeven can be expected in three to 24 months.
- Immediately useful knowledge is produced within two hours after starting the engagement.

The Lighthouse Independent Discovery & Analytics Engagement draws on our 20 years experience working with IT organizations of all sizes and types, helping them achieve their business goals and get more from their IT investments.

** Results may vary by size, complexity, and other specifics of your IT environment.*

For further information, call 888-542-8030 Ext.888, or write to truth@lighthousecs.com

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