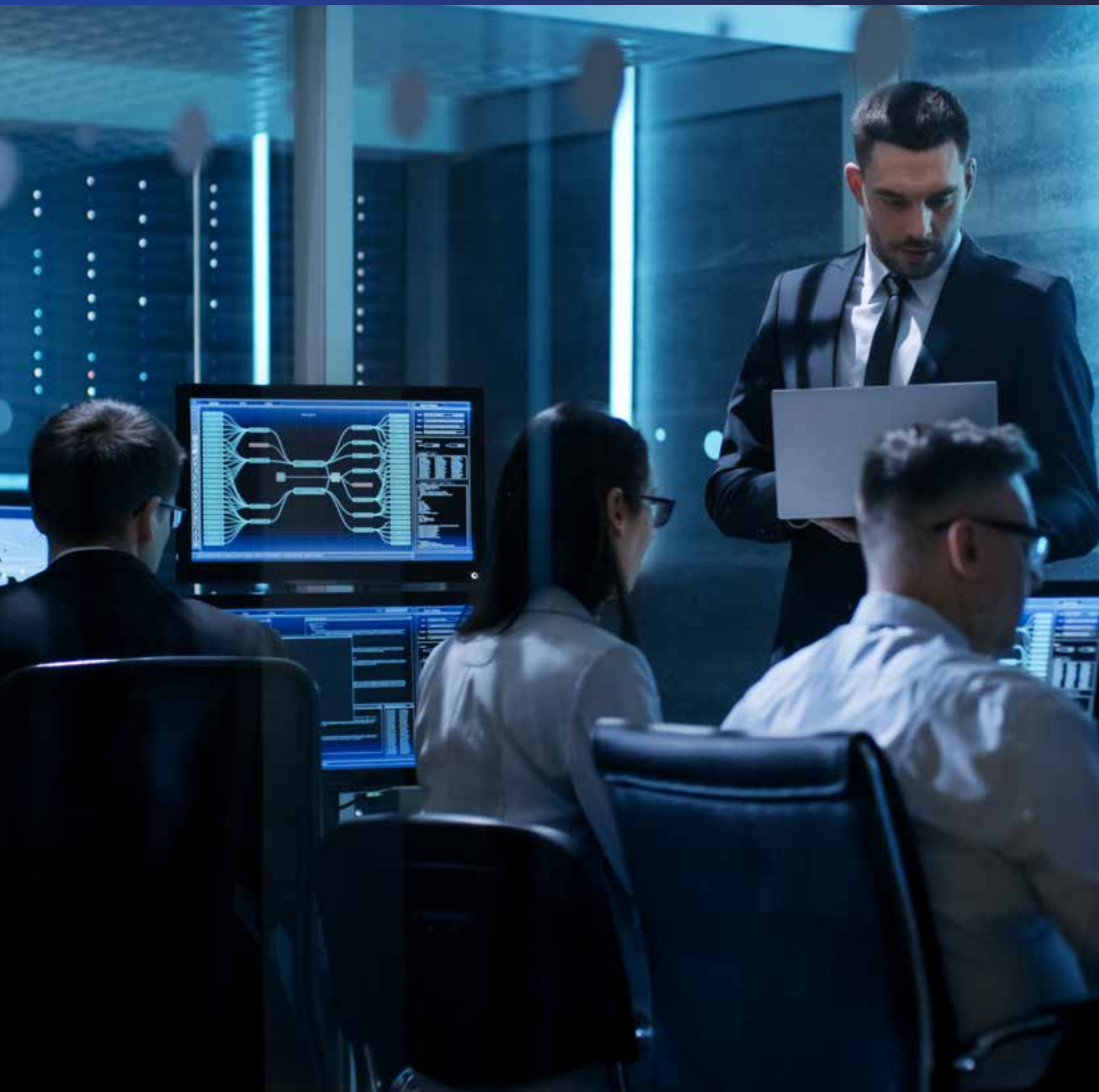


# IT Asset Management and COBIT<sup>®</sup> 5: Strategic ingredients for effective Governance of Enterprise IT



Enterprises invest heavily in procuring and managing the lifecycle of IT assets and expend countless resources securing them. Assets, whether hardware or software, must be accounted for, optimized and secured to realize the value provided by these assets. IT asset management as a strategic ingredient to the governance of enterprise IT is crucial. Leveraging industry proven frameworks for this governance is a best practice, and the COBIT® 5 framework is a perfect fit. In this paper we will explore how the COBIT® 5 framework provides the essential practices and activities that not only help in controlling IT assets, but link these to other leading industry frameworks in the asset management space that results in a holistic approach to asset management and IT governance.



## Why focus on asset management?

As a CIO, there were several things that occupied my mind at night. On the positive side, I thought about improving how we delivered services and recognize the accomplishments of the team, but with every positive thought there were concerns as well. Not only did I worry about the possibility of a major incident at 3 a.m., or a notification of a breach, but when it came to our IT assets we simply didn't know where we stood. The thought of having a software licensing audit mortified me. To take this further, specifically with respect to IT assets, there are many things that kept myself, and many CIOs and enterprise leadership up at night:

- *Do we know what assets we have and why we have them?*
- *Which assets are critical to the enterprise and why?*
- *Are we effectively managing the lifecycle of assets?*
- *Are we optimizing the value of IT assets?*
- *Are we providing value with our ITAM process?*
- *What will happen if I get a licensing audit tomorrow?*

The world of IT assets and management of those assets is constantly changing and is a critical part, creating value for the enterprise. We are seeing increasing trends to outsource

portions of IT services, infrastructure and applications with the help of cloud service models; a drastic increase in mobile device adoption (BYOD) and IP based devices (IoT); increased requirements for availability and speed of access; and of course, data and information storage requirements (Big Data). Couple these with the changing landscape of the legal and regulatory environment (think GDPR) and there's no surprise why IT leaders are concerned. When you boil all of this down, the effective governance and management of IT assets are at the root of most of these concerns.

## A primer in Asset management

An IT asset is information, software, hardware or any other item that is used by the enterprise in its course of conducting business. Assets have financial or potential/strategic value to the enterprise. IT asset management (ITAM), therefore, is the process that incorporates effective use and maintenance of assets through their lifecycle. It ensures proper planning, procurement, protection, upgrading, replacement and disposal and must incorporate effective procedures for each asset's lifecycle stage. ITAM can include Hardware Asset Management (HAM), Software Asset Management (SAM) and Information Asset Management (IAM).

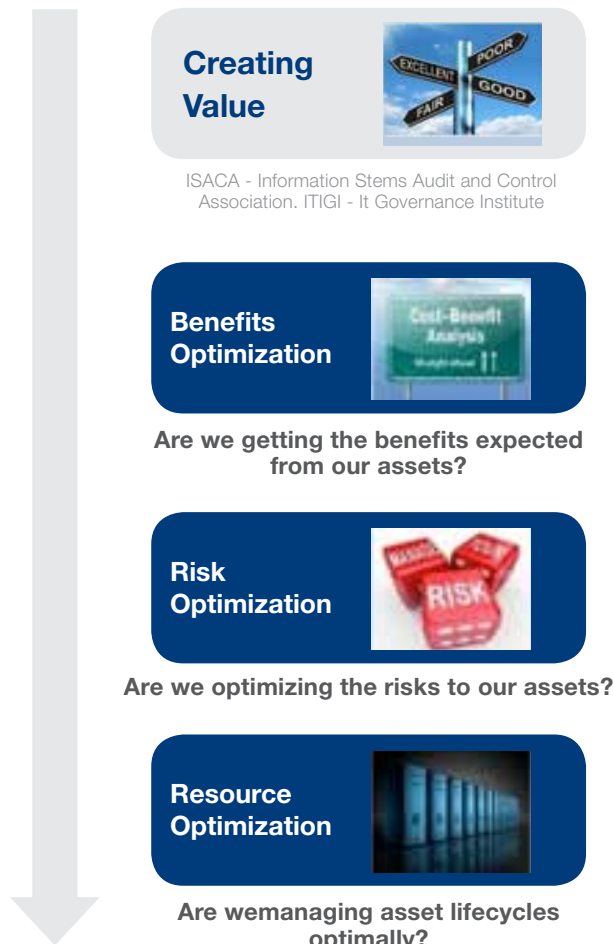
## Asset Management in the scope of IT Governance

ITAM is an important part of an organization’s strategy. The IT Asset strategy should be documented and communicated to all stakeholders, and included as a part of the overall IT strategy, which clearly places this under the governance structure. In the past this involved obtaining data about hardware and software inventories which was used to make decisions on purchases, retirements and redistribution. Today it is a critical part of strategic decision making which includes benefits realization, risk optimization and resource optimization. Integrating ITAM into the strategic planning processes can advance IT portfolio investments that can create value.

IT is a fundamental business enabler that should not be viewed simply as a cost center. With IT comes expenditures, and these can represent a very large portion of an organization’s financial and resource needs. Therefore, ensuring return on investment and value delivery is often not fully realized due to inadequate decisions and oversight which can cause significant pain. Viewing governance as an IT responsibility is no longer adequate.

Governance of Enterprise IT is a matter of assigning decision rights and accountability to ensure IT meets the growing needs of the business and creates value for stakeholders. But it doesn’t stop there, it also includes models, methodologies, frameworks (and their accompanying processes), policies, and standards required to help guide decisions. This spans from the strategic planning phases all the way through execution. Therefore, GEIT is not an isolated discipline but an integral part of enterprise governance.

figure 1: Value Creation



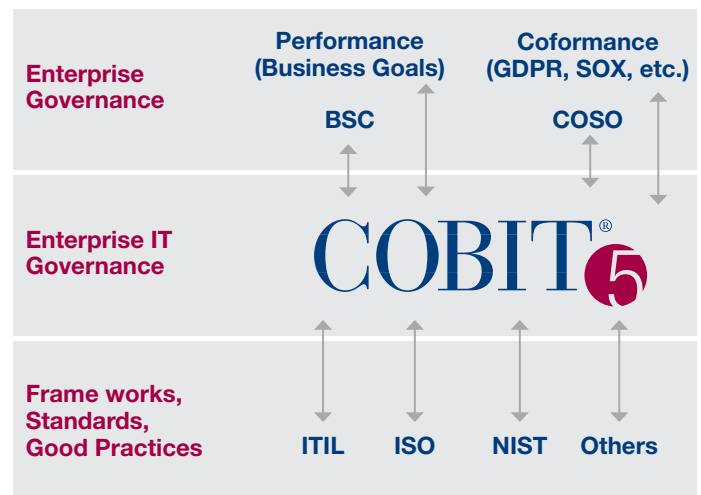
## Standards and Frameworks

Considering the many challenges faced by IT service providers today, leveraging frameworks to assist in managing and controlling IT services is difficult. There are several methodologies and frameworks competing for the attention of IT leadership, and they all have valuable contributions. The challenge is knowing which ones are applicable. Frameworks have become so popular because the rising demand for best practices is driven by requirements to be more competitive while holding costs down and ensuring performance and conformance of IT services. As IT moves up the list of strategic goal priorities, justifying technology investments grows - therefore the need for best practices.

Leveraging best practice frameworks and standards are crucial to enterprise success, but be careful not to take these “right out of the book” and adopt them word for word. Many are designed to be modified to fit the needs of the organization.

Before tackling the enormous task of leveraging these practices in your organization, first understand where they fit. Figure 2 below is an example of how you can look at the placement of frameworks in a governance structure. The “altitudes” include Enterprise Governance, Enterprise IT Governance, and finally Frameworks, Standards and Best Practices used in the IT organization.

figure 2: Altitudes of Governance Frameworks



A key point to this is that many organizations have some form of Enterprise Governance, and jump right to the bottom and pick the popular frameworks that seem to fit. Notice that the COBIT® 5 Framework integrates nicely in the middle and provides what I call the “framework to manage frameworks” by linking Enterprise Governance to the applicable tools available in the market.

Since we will be focusing on the application of ITAM into this body of frameworks, there are several models out there that can assist.

COBIT® 5: BAI09 Manage Assets, with a focus on practices designed to control processes. This paper will cover this process in more detail.

ITIL® 2011: Service Asset and Configuration Management, with a focus on IT services.

ISO/IEC 19770: Family of standards for ITAM, with a focus on SAM.

ISO 55000: Asset Management, with a focus on management systems. This standard recognizes that proper planning enables the organization to balance costs, risks, opportunities and performance.

NIST SP 1800-5: IT Asset Management by the National Cybersecurity Center of Excellence (NCCoE), with a focus on cybersecurity.

NIST SP 800-53: Security and Privacy Controls for Federal Information Systems and Organizations.

NIST Cybersecurity Framework (CSF): Framework for Improving Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity, with a focus on the protection of critical infrastructure.

CIS CSC: Center for Internet Security CIS Controls “top 20”, with a focus on protecting against cyber-attack vectors.

PAS 55: British Standards Institution’s Publicly Available Specification, with a focus on requirements for a system for the management of physical assets and asset systems over their life cycles.

OMB Policy M-17-09: Management of Federal High Value Assets

Of course, this not a complete list, but it includes the most widely referenced in the industry today. Now that we have overloaded ourselves with standards and frameworks, let’s look at how these are put together by using COBIT® 5.

### COBIT® 5 to the rescue

COBIT® 5 is the latest edition of ISACA’s globally accepted Governance of Enterprise IT (GEIT) framework. This comprehensive tool provides an end-to-end business view of the governance and management of enterprise IT. COBIT® 5 builds on previous versions of COBIT (including Val IT and Risk IT) and integrates other major industry frameworks and standards such as ITIL®, TOGAF®, PRINCE2®, and related ISO and NIST standards. At the core of the framework are its principles.

### COBIT® 5 Principles

#### Principle 1, Meeting Stakeholder Needs.

Different stakeholders have different requirements, and COBIT® 5 validates the alignment of stakeholder needs with specific processes and practices. This helps ITAM efforts by ensuring that IT investments are determined based on the needs of stakeholders which ensures proper focus and attention. At the heart of this principle is the goals cascade. As illustrated below, the COBIT® 5 goals cascade is a generic set of goals that are mapped to each other from stakeholder needs all way down to enabler goals (more on enablers coming up).



figure 3: The COBIT® 5 Goals Cascade

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#### Principle 2, Covering the Enterprise End-to-End.

COBIT® 5 covers all functions and processes within the enterprise and treats information and related technologies as assets that need to be dealt with just like any other asset by everyone in the enterprise.

#### Principle 3, Applying a Single Integrated Framework.

COBIT® 5 aligns with other relevant standards and frameworks, and can serve as the overarching framework for the governance and management of enterprise IT. The COBIT® 5 set of publications is a result of this effort. This helps organizations leverage multiple frameworks, standards and bodies of knowledge as tools to assist in compliance with ITAM requirements.

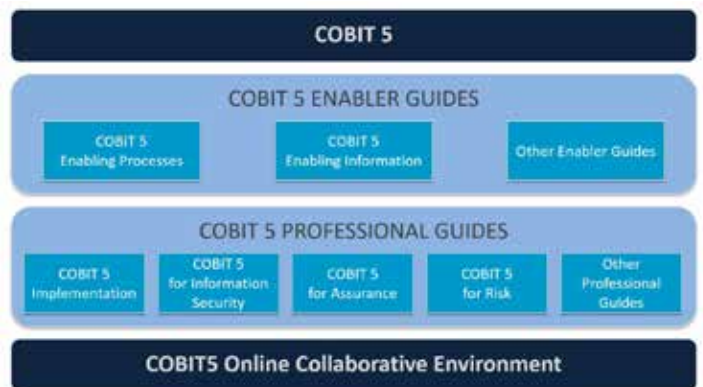


figure 4: COBIT® 5 Publications

#### Principle 4, Enabling a Holistic Approach.

COBIT® 5 identifies a set of interacting components, or enablers, that support a comprehensive governance and management system. An enabler is a factor which individually or collectively influences the success of a governance effort. Consider these enablers as key ingredients which must be considered during the adoption of an effective ITAM process. The Enablers will be covered in more detail in the next section.

#### Principle 5, Separating Governance From Management.

COBIT® 5 makes a clear distinction between governance and management which is key to ensuring that the stakeholder needs, conditions and options are evaluated to determine balanced, agreed-on enterprise objectives to be achieved. This supports ITRM by recognizing that governance provides policy and direction, while management provides the planning, building, running and monitoring of the process.

## COBIT® 5 Enablers.

As discussed in Principle 4 above, there are a set of enablers that assist organizations in the adoption of good governance. These enablers, when applied to the ITAM strategy, can result in a solid and highly capable process.

### Processes.

A process is defined as “a collection of practices influenced by the enterprise’s policies and procedures that take inputs from a number of sources (including other processes), manipulates the inputs and produces outputs (e.g., products, services).” The COBIT® 5 Process Reference Model (PRM) has 37 processes organized into five domains, illustrating the separation of governance and management.

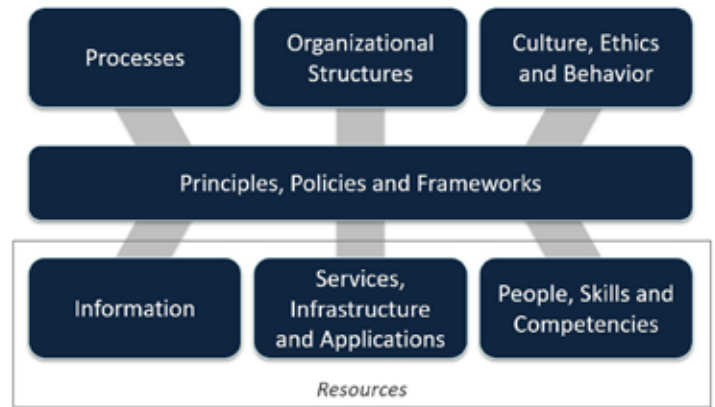


figure 5: COBIT® 5 Enablers

figure 6: COBIT® 5 Process Reference Model

Governance	Management			
EVALUATE, DIRECT & MONITOR	ALIGN, PLAN & ORGANIZE	BUILD, ACQUIRE & IMPLEMENT	DELIVER, SERVICE & SUPPORT	MONITOR, EVALUATE & ASSESS
<b>EDM01</b> Ensure Governance Framework Setting and Maintenance	<b>APO01</b> Manage the IT Framework	<b>BAI01</b> Manage Programs and Projects	<b>DSS01</b> Manage Operations	<b>MEA01</b> Monitor, Evaluate, and Assess Performance and Conformance
<b>EDM02</b> Benefits Delivery	<b>APO02</b> Manage Strategy	<b>BAI02</b> Manage Requirements Definition	<b>DSS02</b> Manage Service Requests & Incidents	<b>MEA02</b> Monitor, Evaluate and Assess the System of Internal Control
<b>EDM03</b> Ensure Risk Optimization	<b>APO03</b> Manage Enterprise Architecture	<b>BAI03</b> Manage Solutions Identification and Build	<b>DSS03</b> Manage Problems	<b>MEA03</b> Monitor, Evaluate and Assess Compliance with External Requirements
<b>EDM04</b> Ensure Resource Optimization	<b>APO04</b> Manage Innovation	<b>BAI04</b> Manage Availability and Capacity	<b>DSS04</b> Manage Continuity	
<b>EDM05</b> Ensure Stakeholder Transparency	<b>APO05</b> Manage Portfolio	<b>BAI05</b> Manage Organizational Change Enablement	<b>DSS05</b> Manage Security Services	
	<b>APO06</b> Manage Budget & Costs	<b>BAI06</b> Manage Changes	<b>DSS06</b> Manage Business Process Controls	
	<b>APO07</b> Manage Human Resources	<b>BAI07</b> Manage Change Acceptance and Transitioning		
	<b>APO08</b> Manage Relationships	<b>BAI08</b> Manage Knowledge		
	<b>APO09</b> Manage Service Agreements	<b>BAI09</b> Manage Assets		
	<b>APO10</b> Manage Suppliers	<b>BAI10</b> Manage Configuration		
	<b>APO11</b> Manage Quality			
	<b>APO12</b> Manage Risk			
	<b>APO13</b> Manage Security			

Source: COBIT5 Enabling Processes

For each process, the COBIT® 5 Enabling Process Guide identifies a number of ‘need to knows’ about the process:

- Description and purpose
- IT-related goals that the process supports with related metrics
- Process goals and metrics
- Process practices with
- RACI chart for each practice
- Inputs and outputs for each practice
- Activities that support each practice
- Related industry guidance (this is where COBIT® 5 links to other standards and frameworks).

In Figure 6, BAI09 Manage Assets is highlight. This process is the subject of the rest of this section. **As mentioned above,** the COBIT® 5 Enabling Process Guide identifies several nice pieces of useful information regarding this process. **For BAI09 Manage Assets:**

<b>Description:</b> Manage IT assets through their life cycle to make sure that their use delivers value at optimal cost, they remain operational (fit for purpose), they are accounted for and physically protected, and those assets that are critical to support service capability are reliable and available. Manage software licenses to ensure that the optimal number are acquired, retained and deployed in relation to required business usage, and the software installed is in compliance with license agreements.	
<b>Purpose:</b> Account for all IT assets and optimize the value provided by these assets.	
<b>IT-Related Goal</b>	<b>Related Metrics</b>
Transparency of IT costs, benefits and risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percent of investment business cases with clearly defined and approved expected IT-related costs and benefits</li> <li>• Percent of IT services with clearly defined and approved operational costs and expected benefits</li> <li>• Satisfaction survey of key stakeholders regarding the level of transparency, understanding and accuracy of IT financial information</li> </ul>
Optimization of IT assets, resources and capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequency of capability maturity and cost optimization assessments</li> <li>• Trend of assessment results</li> <li>• Satisfaction levels of business and IT executives with IT-related costs and capabilities</li> </ul>
<b>Process Goal</b>	<b>Related Metrics</b>
Licenses are compliant and aligned with business need.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percent of used licenses against paid-for licenses</li> </ul>
Assets are maintained at optimal levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of assets not utilized</li> <li>• Benchmark costs</li> <li>• Number of obsolete assets</li> </ul>

figure 7: BAI09 Manage Assets <sup>2</sup>

Processes are controlled through a series of practices. These practices represent a set of requirements, at a high level, for effective control of the process. For those who may be familiar with earlier versions of COBIT, these were called control objectives. These statements are aligned with relevant accepted standards, frameworks and good practices and can be modified to meet the specific needs of the organization. Although it is recommended that organizations can add, remove, or modify these practices, we will be using them as seen in COBIT® 5 for the purposes of this paper.

For BAI09 Manage Assets, the following practices are identified:

**Identify and record current assets.** Maintain an up-to-date and accurate record of all IT assets required to deliver services and ensure alignment with configuration management and financial management.

**Manage critical assets.** Identify assets that are critical in providing service capability and take steps to maximize their reliability and availability to support business needs.

**Manage the asset life cycle.** Manage assets from procurement to disposal to ensure that assets are utilized as effectively and efficiently as possible and are accounted for and physically protected.

**Optimize asset costs.** Regularly review the overall asset base to identify ways to optimize costs and maintain alignment with business needs.

**Manage licenses.** Manage software licenses so that the optimal number of licenses is maintained to support business requirements and the number of licenses owned is sufficient to cover the installed software in use.

<sup>2</sup>COBIT® 5 Enabling Process Guide, ISACA

<sup>3</sup>COBIT® 5 Enabling Process Guide, ISACA

For each of the practices above, COBIT® 5 identifies a set of stakeholders with their roles and responsibility levels as responsible, accountable, consulted or informed (also known as RACI) for each practice as seen in Figure \_\_\_ below. Responsible refers to who is getting the task done. Accountable relates to who accounts for or owns the task. Consulted notes who provides input. Finally, Informed identifies who receives information.

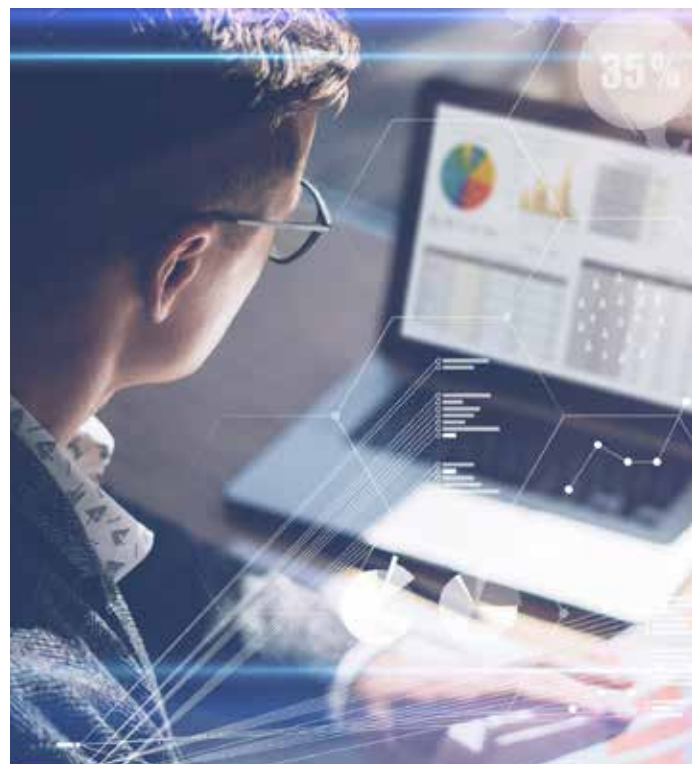


figure 8: RACI Chart for BAI09 Manage Assets<sup>4</sup>

Key Management Practices	Enterprise Roles																									
	Board	Chief Executive Officer	Chief Financial Officer	Chief Operating Officer	Business Executives	Business Process Owners	Strategy Executive Committee	Steering Committee	Project Management Office	Value Management Office	Chief Risk Officer	Chief Information Security Officer	Architecture Board	Enterprise Risk Committee	Head Human Resources	Compliance	Audit	Chief Information Officer	Head Architect	Head Development	Head IT Operations	Head IT Administration	Service Manager	Information Security Manager	Business Continuity Manager	Privacy Officer
Identify and record current assets.			C		C													I	C	C	A	R	C			
Manage critical assets.			C	I	C											C	C		R	R	A	R	C	C	C	
Manage the asset life cycle.					C														C	C	A	R	R			
Optimize asset costs.			R	I	C													A	R	R	R	R	R			
Manage licenses.				I	C											C	R	A		R	R	R	C			

The enterprise class roles are shaded darker than the IT-related roles. It is important to note that in the RACI above, these are suggested levels of assignments for different roles in the enterprise. The intent is that you add, modify or remove roles and their associated levels of engagement.

If this isn't quite enough, there's more. COBIT® 5 takes each of these practices and expands on them by identifying inputs and outputs for each, as well as a set of activities that provide more detailed guidance on the achievement of practice success.

For example, one of my biggest fears was software licensing compliance. I knew this was under my ITAM process, so I referred

to the COBIT® 5 BAI09 process. Within this process, I identified metrics that were important to the process and modified those based on my stakeholder needs, enterprise goals and IT-related goals. I selected these based on the goals cascade discussed earlier. One of the practices is called "Manage Licenses." Referring to my RACI chart I knew that I was Accountable for this practice, and I could also see who is Responsible, Consulted and Informed. For this practice, COBIT® 5 identified relevant inputs, outputs and a set of activities unique to managing licenses.

<sup>4</sup>COBIT® 5 Enabling Process Guide, ISACA

figure 9: COBIT® 5 BAI09.05 Manage Licenses Practice

BAI09 Manage Assets – Activities, Inputs and Outputs				
PRACTICES				
Identify and record current assets	Manage critical assets	Manage the asset lifecycle	Optimize asset costs	Manage licenses
Inputs From	SELECTED ACTIVITIES			Outputs To
None noted	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain a register of all purchased software licenses and associated license agreements.</li> <li>On a regular basis, conduct an audit to identify all instances of installed licensed software.</li> <li>Compare the number of installed software instances with the number of licenses owned.</li> <li>When instances are lower than the number owned, decide whether there is a need to retain or terminate licenses, considering the potential to save on unnecessary maintenance, training and other costs.</li> <li>When instances are higher than the number owned, consider first the opportunity to uninstall instances that are no longer required or justified, and then, if necessary, purchase additional licenses to comply with the license agreement.</li> <li>On a regular basis, consider whether better value can be obtained by upgrading products and associated licenses.</li> </ol>			<p><b>BAI10 Manage Configuration:</b> Register of software licenses</p> <p><b>MEA03 Monitor, Evaluate and Assess Compliance with External Requirements:</b> Results of installed license audits</p> <p><b>APO02 Manage Strategy:</b> Plan to adjust license allocations</p>

Note that Figure 9 covers just one of the five practices identified for this process. For a complete view of the all practices and activities for this process, refer to COBIT® 5 Enabling Processes guide.

These activities give me the areas of focus I needed to ensure the practice achieved its purpose, and therefore contributed to the process achieving its purpose as well. COBIT® 5 does not

have any related guidance for this process, so we referred to the applicable tools noted above such as NIST, ISO and ITIL. I now had the information I needed to check off one major fear of mine. Of course, just adhering to process guidelines is not enough, we also had to ensure that we were addressing the other enablers.

## Organizational Structures

The goals of this enabler include having a proper mandate, well-defined operating principles and application of other good practices. The outcome of the organizational structures enabler should include:

### Operating principles

The practical arrangements regarding how the structure will operate, such as types and frequency of meetings, documentation and general rules specific to the ITAM process.

### Composition

Structures have members, who are internal or external stakeholders. This helps identify who is involved in the various governing bodies that direct ITAM efforts.

### Span of control

The boundaries of the organizational structure's decision rights with respect to IT assets.

### Level of authority/decision rights

The decisions that the structure is authorized to make regarding IT assets.

### Delegation of authority

Delegation of a structure's decision rights to other structures reporting to it.

### Escalation procedures

The escalation path that describes the required actions in case of problems in making decisions.

## Culture, Ethics and Behavior

Often underestimated, this enabler refers to the set of individual and collective behaviors in an enterprise that support the overall goal of providing value. Good practices include:

- Communication and awareness of desired behaviors.
- Incentives to encourage and deterrents to enforce desired behaviors.
- Leadership and role modeling.
- Continuous improvement mentality.
- Compliance is genuinely valued and appreciated.

## Information

Information is not only an enabler, but a key organizational asset as well. Information is pervasive throughout any organization and includes all information produced and used by the enterprise.

An information asset is a body of knowledge that is defined, organized and managed by the enterprise. Like any other asset, information has value and can have a different lifecycle than other (software or hardware) assets. An information asset can be classified according to any criteria that makes it easier to find, share and maintain. Questions to ask with regard to information that can assist in classification include the following:

- Does it have value?
- Does it fall into a specific category?
- Is there an identified owner?
- Is it useful?
- Will it cost to re-acquire?
- Are there repercussions for not being able to produce it on request?
- Is there a risk of losing it?
- What if somebody tampers with it?
- What happens if is not accurate?

## Services, Infrastructure and Applications

As a service provider, IT contribution to the enterprise is expressed in terms of services which are supported by infrastructure and applications. This enabler is key to the ITAM process, and is dependent on the services catalog, service level agreements and architectural principles. It also provides a powerful link to the configuration management process which identifies all baselines, attributes and relationships of configuration items. A configuration item, in simple terms, can refer to any asset that is required for the successful delivery of an IT service. The majority of IT assets are part of this enabler.

## People, Skills and Competencies

People are required for successful completion of activities and decision making. Goals for skills and competencies relate to education and qualification levels, technical skills, experience levels, knowledge and behavioral skills required to provide and perform process activities. The ITAM process must gain a firm understanding of the required education and qualification levels, technical skills, experience levels, and requirements by role. Examples of skills may include procurement and contacting, financial, quantitative and analytical, managerial and communication business analysis and project management.





## Benefits of Leveraging COBIT and ITAM

It is a strategic imperative to keep IT costs low and manage the risk associated with IT assets, while achieving maximum stakeholder value from IT investments. A mature and capable ITAM process helps organizations reduce IT cost of ownership, minimizes the burden of support, and identifies potential vulnerabilities. To accomplish this, a formal process must be in place. Just having a good process model isn't enough. When you tie processes to the COBIT® 5 governance enablers identified in this paper, you have effectively identified the ingredients needed to ensure that value is created by ensuring benefits are realized, and risks and resources are optimized.

With effective ITAM practices in place, the organization can reduce the total cost of ownership, manage risks to the enterprise, optimize resources, and above all, create

recognizable value. A successful strategy that leverages COBIT® 5 and other relevant industry frameworks and standards creates a solid foundation of practices that focuses on strategic enablement in a time where timely access to assets is key to decision making.

Let's go back to the things that keep CIOs and enterprise leaders up at night and how COBIT® 5 can help. In Figure 10 below, I have identified the six major fears I had when it came to IT assets. Not surprisingly, COBIT® 5 had a full set of practices and activities, that, when adopted effectively, helped our organization address these concerns effectively. It is important to note that just using COBIT® 5 alone wasn't enough, we had to ensure that we adopted detailed practices from other industry standards and frameworks. However, using COBIT® 5 as our "framework to manage frameworks" was critical to having a solid governance and management model for ITAM.

figure 10: Mapping Concerns to COBIT® 5 Practices

	BAI09 Manage Assets, Management Practices				
	Identify and record current assets	Manage critical assets	Manage the asset lifecycle	Optimize asset costs	Manage licenses
Do we know what assets we have and why we have them?	●	●	◐	◑	●
Which assets are critical to the enterprise and why?	◐	●	◐	◑	●
Are we effectively managing the lifecycle of assets?	◑	●	●	●	●
Are we optimizing the value of IT assets?	●	●	●	●	●
Are we providing value with our ITAM process?	●	●	●	●	●
What will happen if I get a licensing audit tomorrow?	●	◐	◐	◐	●

● Exceptional    ◐ Satisfactory    ◑ Limited    ◒ Marginal    ○ Not applicable

## Tips to Adoption

### Tip #1 – Gain Stakeholder and Executive Support.

Having the appropriate executive support for ITAM efforts is paramount. Without this support, your efforts can only go so far. Here are some tips on how to gain support for your ITAM process:

- Link ITAM goals to enterprise goals and stakeholder needs. *Hint: Use the COBIT® 5 Goals Cascade to complete this.*

- Link ITAM risk scenarios to enterprise goals and stakeholder needs. *Hint: The COBIT® 5 For Risk publication identifies multiple generic risk scenarios and guidance on how to link these to enterprise goals and stakeholder needs.*

- Identify a governing body to separate the governance and management of the process. *Hint: Refer to COBIT® 5 Principle 5: Separating Governance From Management for ideas.*

### Tip #2 – Treat ITAM as a Process and not a Project.

The first three questions from a sponsor when you mention the word project are: 1) When will you be done? 2) How much will it cost? and 3) What is the benefit? Therefore, it is important to note that the deployment of a process can be handled as a project, but the management of IT assets is a process. You will never be done "implementing" a process, it is a continuous improvement cycle.

As you continue to adopt this process, keep some of the following things in mind: The journey is never complete, all processes must have owners, must be continually measured, and must integrate with other processes such as Supplier/ Vendor, Configuration, Financial, Security, Request Fulfillment, etc. *Hint: Leverage COBIT® 5 and ITIL for excellent guidance on process governance and management.*

**Tip #3 – Identify Critical Assets.**

Determine critical assets by using multiple viewpoints to assist in identification and implementation of protection. Many organizations simply conduct interviews or do a high-level assessment of assets and determine critical or high value assets based on limited information. Use multiple avenues to determine these.

*Hint: Critical assets can include more than just hardware and software. They can also be patents/copyrights, financial data, proprietary software, research, key services, unique processes, and of course, PII.*



**Tip #4 – Don't forget about Security**

Today's security landscape has expanded drastically. Assets are often targets where threats will attempt to exploit vulnerabilities for a multitude of reasons. If you do not know what information, hardware and software you own and where it is located, you are leaving the door open for future attacks and malware. Don't forget all external facing assets and IoT devices. Here are some key things to remember regarding assets and their vulnerabilities:

- Actively manage and monitor configurations.  
*Hint: COBIT® 5 process BAI10, Manage Configuration and ITIL Process Service Asset and Configuration Management.*
- Actively manage and monitor access management.  
*Hint: COBIT® 5 Process DSS05 Manage Security Services, ITIL Process Access Management, and relevant NIST, and ISO standards.*
- Use the risk management process to understand the potential threats, vulnerabilities and scenarios and ensure asset protection is balanced with these risks.  
*Hint: COBIT® 5 Processes EDM03 Ensure Risk Optimization and APO12 Manage Risk*

**Tip #5 – Document the Lifecycle of Assets.**

Different types of assets can have different lifecycles. For example, hardware lifecycles are much different than information or service lifecycles. Gain an understanding of the lifecycles you have for each of your asset classes, this will help

manage the value cycle for the asset, and help you determine when it is time for update or removal. For example, two typical lifecycles are below:  
*Hint: COBIT® 5 offers information on enabler lifecycles as well as relationships with other processes.*

*Typical IT Asset Lifecycle*



*figure 11: Example Lifecycles*

*Typical IT Service Lifecycle based on ITIL®*



**Tip #6 – Get a Handle on Licensing!**

As you already know, this was one of my biggest unknowns (and fears). All software and applications have licenses. There are many different licensing models currently on the market, each with unique terms and conditions that the licensee needs to adhere to – and violations of those terms and conditions can

be expensive and embarrassing if an audit uncovers non-compliance. There are a number of different licensing models currently offered by vendors, so choose the model that best suits your needs.  
*Hint: Link your asset management, inventory, discovery, financial and configuration processes to integrate these into a single view*

**Tip #7 – Consider COBIT® 5 as a “Framework to Manage Frameworks.”**

Resist the urge to use one framework because it can do everything—those do not exist. Leverage a mix of applicable governance and ITAM related frameworks and adjust them to meet enterprise needs with COBIT® 5 as the integrator between them.

*Hint: In the COBIT® 5 Enabling Processes guide, there are references to relevant industry frameworks. For ITAM specific areas, refer to this whitepaper for additional guidance*

**Tip #8 – Automate as much as possible.**

Automation is critical success factor to effective ITAM. Of course, an end-to-end solution is ideal, but may be cost prohibitive for some. A complete end-to-end solution can provide, CIOs, CFO’s and Chief Information Security Officers (CISO’s) with better information that will allow them to address the any current or future issues they are facing.

*Hint: If you have an IT Service Management system in place today, you may be able to integrate asset lifecycle tasks into the tool, such as procurement, monitoring, management, and decommissioning.*

**Tip #9 – Adopt Incrementally.**

Resist the urge to do it all at once. This process has multiple connections with other processes, and complex relationships that you should take this a piece at a time. *The COBIT® 5 Implementation Guide* is a great resource to do this with.

*Hint: Use a continuous improvement model that considers organizational change enablement such as the COBIT® 5 Implementation model, and make continuous improvement business as usual.*

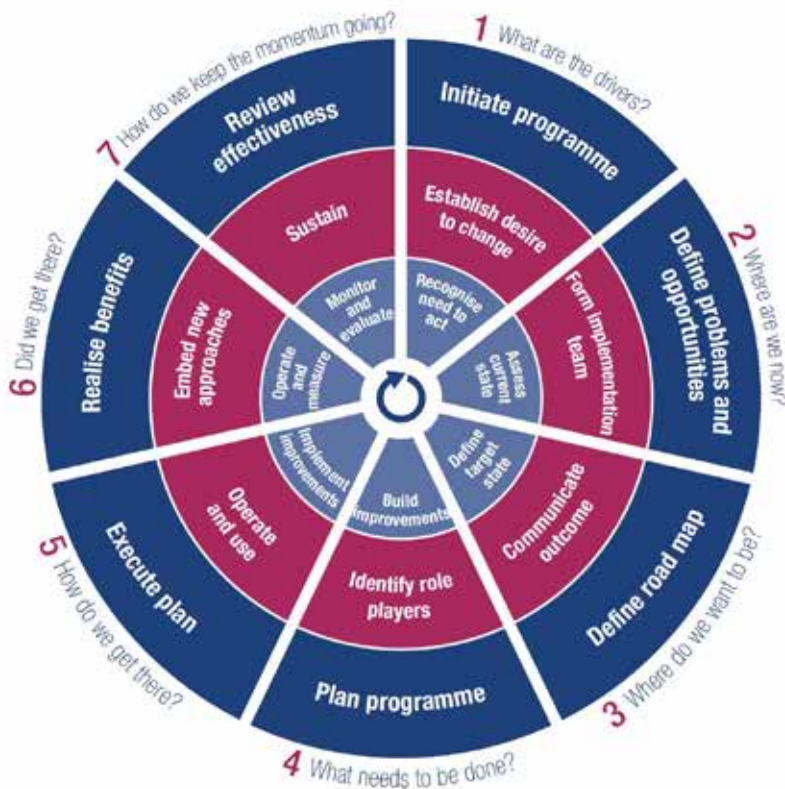


figure 12: COBIT® 5 Implementation Cycle<sup>5</sup>

- Programme management (outer ring)
- Change enablement (middle ring)
- Continual improvement life cycle (inner ring)

<sup>5</sup>COBIT® 5 Implementation, ISACA

**Tip #10 – Get the Right Training and Certifications**

Your actions should support your words, so allow time and money to deliver the appropriate training. It will not only demonstrate your commitment, but will increase the knowledge of the stakeholders.

The International Association of Information Technology Asset Managers (IAITAM) has a Best Practice Library for an IT Asset Management Program that provides a body of knowledge which includes workflows, templates and whitepapers for twelve Key Process Areas. IAITAM also has training and accredited certifications that are applicable and valuable.

For COBIT specific information, ISACA has created a complete knowledge space of relevant articles, whitepapers, tools, and publications that can get you started. ISACA also has certifications and training related to IT Governance, Risk, Audit, Cybersecurity and COBIT® 5. At a minimum, COBIT® 5 Foundation training is a must.

*Hint: Go to the APMG website for information on certifications and authorized training providers for any of the above training*



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### About the author:

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Escoute Consulting is an internationally known governance, risk, and compliance expert in the areas of Cybersecurity, IT Service Management, Assurance and Audit, and IT Controls. His background spans leadership roles from CIO to Management and IT Consulting in several Federal and State Agencies, Private Firms, and Fortune 500 Companies.

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