

Autotrader

Online Car Retailer Uses Technopedia® and Normalize® to Drive Standardization, Help Build ITSM Foundation and Enable ServiceNow® Asset Management



Autotrader

Autotrader is a leading online platform for anyone buying or selling a new or used car, with an inventory of thousands of vehicles, a sophisticated search tool, and a rich library of resources to help consumers choose wisely and negotiate well. However, as Autotrader Group, a conglomerate of six companies including Kelley Blue Book, the Atlanta-based company's internal IT assets were far less well-organized. It was using at least nine different asset discovery and asset management solutions because every department insisted on retaining its own familiar data models, processes, and systems. This resistance to standardization and integration created massive data quality issues that hindered performance and productivity. To address these problems, the company needed an asset management solution that could standardize data across multiple siloed systems without replacing them.

The Challenge

After having failed the first attempt, Autotrader was looking to implement asset management for the second time. Besides the data quality issues, the company also faced resistance to standardization and integration from various departments that were using more than nine different discovery and asset management tools.

The Asset Management Challenge

A previous attempt at enterprise-wide asset management showed Autotrader exactly how attached its departments were to their individual approaches to data discovery and asset management. The company failed to achieve consensus around a common data model and architecture. The departments were reluctant to give up the systems and processes that they were comfortable with. As a result, the asset management initiative failed.

A new manager joined the company as IT Asset Manager in the Technology Strategic Sourcing department, which is responsible for vendor management across all Autotrader Group companies. When he immediately realized that the asset management function was practically nonexistent, he made implementation of an asset management solution his first project.

Company Profile

As the foremost authority on automotive consumer insights and expert in online and mobile marketing, Autotrader makes the car shopping experience easy and fun for today's empowered consumer looking to find or sell the perfect new, used or certified pre-owned car. Autotrader is a Cox Automotive™ brand.

Industry: E-commerce Software

Location: Atlanta, GA

Size: 3,300 employees

Website: www.autotrader.com

Systems: 6,000 devices, 6,500 servers, 6 data centers

A quick audit revealed that departments like End-User Computing Operations, Server Operations, and Compliance each had a different preferred asset discovery tool — nine in total, including Microsoft SCCM, LANDesk, Dell KACE, HP DDMi, and Casper. None of these tools integrated with each other. They also did not integrate with the company's legacy asset management solution, which had to be manually populated with data from vendor shipping, spreadsheets, and email. What's more, the friction among departments over asset management tools meant they couldn't even agree on basics of data architecture such as asset categorization. At one point, the IT asset manager says, "The teams spent three hours debating whether an iPad should be categorized as a laptop or a mobile device."

The data quality issues with asset data created more challenges. Raw discovery data contained too much noise and was not in a clean, easily understandable format. With minor upgrades to the various software assets releasing way too frequently and a complex licensing ecosystem of suites and editions to track, keeping the data accurate and current was taking up too much time. "New minor versions released weekly, making the data outdated, and we had to constantly play catch-up," the IT asset manager explained. "The complexity of suites, editions, licensing, and upgrade/downgrade rights made keeping the data accurate and current almost a full-time job. The manager overhead was simply not sustainable."

The organization faced the following challenges with the asset management project:

- Manually populated legacy asset management system that did not integrate with discovery tools
- Multiple disparate discovery tools
- Lack of consensus between the various departments regarding data architecture and tool preference
- Data quality issues with raw discovery data

"In one instance, the teams spent three hours debating whether an iPad should be categorized as a laptop or a mobile device. Technopedia® [asset information source] came with device and product categorizations that largely solved this problem and helped the teams align around a standard data model."

- IT Asset Manager, Autotrader

Benefits

- Cut implementation effort by 75 percent
- Reduced ongoing maintenance efforts by 90 percent
- Standardized data across the organization
- Built the foundation for IT Service Management

The Solution

The solutions for ServiceNow delivered turnkey Asset Management that allowed the departments to continue using their preferred tools while also delivering a consolidated single view of all assets. The solution also enabled aggregating data from the tools, standardizing it around a reference asset information source, and automating cleansing and maintenance.

"With over nine different tools, and quality issues with raw discovery data, we were facing serious timeline and feasibility risks. The solutions enabled us to consolidate the data across the various tools into the ServiceNow platform. We cut implementation effort by 75% and ongoing maintenance efforts by 90% by automating the data cleansing, population and maintenance."

- IT Asset Manager, Autotrader

Autotrader had already invested in the ServiceNow IT automation platform that included Asset Management, so the IT asset manager and his team decided to utilize the application and began to look for normalization capabilities that would integrate smoothly with it. After extensively researching solutions that could integrate existing discovery sources with the ServiceNow Asset Management function while remaining within existing budget constraints, the IT asset manager and his team opted to stick with Technopedia and Normalize. "For the specific capabilities we were looking for, there was really no other solution out there," the IT asset manager says. "It was an easy decision."

Technopedia provided a single consistent data model for asset categorization and naming that instantly solved the problem of data model and asset class conflicts. Normalize® with built-in data extractors helped aggregate asset data across the various departments and normalize it to Technopedia. This helped the team to standardize data across the various departments to build a foundation for ITSM. The ServiceNow integrations automatically populated the ServiceNow tables with normalized data and

kept them up-to-date on an ongoing basis. Technopedia also provided non-discoverable metadata necessary to perform day-to-day functions like End-of-Life data and upgrade/downgrade paths for software releases. The solution kept the data current with latest product releases and minor version updates.

The solutions helped:

- Aggregate asset data across multiple tools
- Normalize data to a single taxonomy to build a consolidated and consistent view of all assets
- Solve the data quality issues by cleansing the data in an automated way
- Provide non-discoverable meta-data and dynamic market information
- Ensure data remains current with market changes
- Standardize data architecture across the organization

The Results

Today, Autotrader has built a centralized asset management solution based on the ServiceNow platform to drive standardization across the organization while still allowing individual departments to keep using the tools they prefer. The solutions extract the often unusable and complex discovery data from multiple tools, and cleanse it to identify licensable products. Keeping this data current takes far less time and effort with Flexera's data aggregation, filtering, and normalization functionalities. The certified integrations populate data directly into the ServiceNow instance and automatically update it whenever a new version or new product is released.

"Separating the data from the tools allowed me to build a single asset management solution for all assets across the different tools," the IT asset manager said. "I could get an accurate picture of all the assets, easily generate reports for compliance, and basically build a foundation for IT Service Management."

The solutions delivered the following results:

- Cut implementation effort by 75 percent through automation of manual tasks
- Reduced ongoing maintenance efforts by 90 percent
- Reduced 25 percent cost at the get go
- Achieved data standardization across the departments with inbuilt model categories
- Dramatically simplified reporting
- Built a strong foundation for ITSM with accurate and trusted data

About Flexera

Flexera is reimagining the way software is bought, sold, managed and secured. We view the software industry as a supply chain, and make the business of buying and selling software and technology asset data more profitable, secure, and effective. Our Monetization and Security solutions help software sellers transform their business models, grow recurring revenues and minimize open source risk. Our Vulnerability and Software Asset Management (SAM) solutions strip waste and unpredictability out of procuring software, helping companies buy only the software and cloud services they need, manage what they have, and reduce compliance and security risk. Powering these solutions and the entire software supply chain, Flexera has built the world's largest and most comprehensive repository of market intelligence on technology assets. In business for 30+ years, our 1200+ employees are passionate about helping our 80,000+ customers generate millions in ROI every year. Visit us at www.flexera.com.

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