

Configuring & Modeling Network Inventory

Why is it that most of the major network inventory vendors do not provide a library of network equipment/devices? It has to be frustrating from a carrier perspective to think you're getting a software product that will allow them to manage their equipment, capacity, etc....only to find the bare fundamentals are not modeled. One would assume basic metadata would be provided out-of-the-box – especially given licensing costs....not so much.

As a result of this lack of functionality, a SIGNIFICANT amount of time and money must be spent designing, developing and testing network equipment models (device, slot, card, port, etc.). To give you an example of this level of effort, I was told by an executive at a Tier 1 Carrier, that the design, development and testing of a single network device ended up costing MORE than the actual device itself!!! I'm not saying this is the case for every situation....but that is ridiculous!

I've asked the same question to one of the vendors and their response was something along the lines of 'each client has different requirements and its common for telecommunication carriers to model network equipment different.' Really? I don't buy it. If a network device is not modeled based on manufacturer specifications, how then could the inventory be considered accurate? Vendors, do yourself and the carriers a favor....push them to follow best practices for modeling; not following manufacturer specs is not a best practice.

I previously blogged about the importance of network inventory...and if the inventory isn't accurate, how valuable will it be to other components in the OSS architecture that depend on inventory (e.g. Service Assurance)?

While carriers can and should continue to push inventory software vendors to provide network equipment models with their product, we shouldn't hold our breath. The fact is this: these vendors depend on the consulting revenue and can care less how long it takes...the longer modeling phase takes...the better.

There are things that carriers can do combat this issue:

A. Always model devices based on manufacturer specifications.

This may sound obvious, but I know of situations where the carrier 'over-customized' the modeling to compensate for the lack of other product functionality....and now is having massive difficulty upgrading to the newest version of the product.

- If you're an SI implementing the solution....your approach should be simple with the carrier...tell me what devices and cards you want modeled....and model them.
- If you're the carrier, DO NOT use ridiculous 'sign-off' processes for the design phase. Just say, here's what I want.....model them based on the manufacturer specs...and then use the testing phase to validate.

B. Carriers using the same inventory application need to partner together so they can share common configurations, automations, etc.

I've led multiple introductions with carriers from one end of the globe to another....and at the end of the day; the carriers together have to make it happen....there's plenty of information / assets to share and millions of dollars to save.

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