

The Metric the Board Saw

Why an enterprise governed availability by a number it could manufacture, and how a capability model replaces the army that honest measurement requires.

The board governed availability by a **number** a **handful of people produced.**

At a large financial services and insurance institution, availability had become a matter of board-level oversight. I led the availability assessment with a team of specialists in site reliability engineering and IT service management, working alongside the institution's own experts across site reliability engineering, release, test, change, incident, problem and configuration management.

The operational discipline was real. Every morning, hundreds of people worked through the previous day's incidents and the ones that had become problems, and every one was examined. What it needed was a dependable way to relate an infrastructure event to the business and the members it affected.

At the center of the program sat a single index. It weighed the members an outage was estimated to affect by the importance of the capability that failed and by the duration of the failure. A handful of people produced it, and every input was a judgment: which capability failed, what it was worth, how many members felt it, and for how long.

THE FINDING

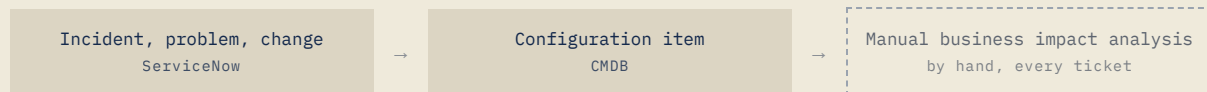
The index was subjective. Its inputs were judgments rather than measurements, and nothing in the architecture could reproduce them. Given the weight the index carried, the question was whether it captured business impact at all.

Measuring the truth required an army.

The formula was the right idea. Members, capability importance and duration is exactly how availability should be measured. What the institution could not reliably see was how an infrastructure failure propagated through its business capabilities to the members it served. Honest measurement meant taking every incident and problem ticket to the configuration item behind it, whether a server, a network device, a database or an application, and then working out by hand what that item touched: the business services, the capabilities and the members who felt the failure. Every ticket, every day.

That is not a handful of people. That is an army, and no enterprise sustains an army as its measurement system.

TRADITIONAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT



The configuration item is found. What it touched is reconstructed by people, every incident, every day.

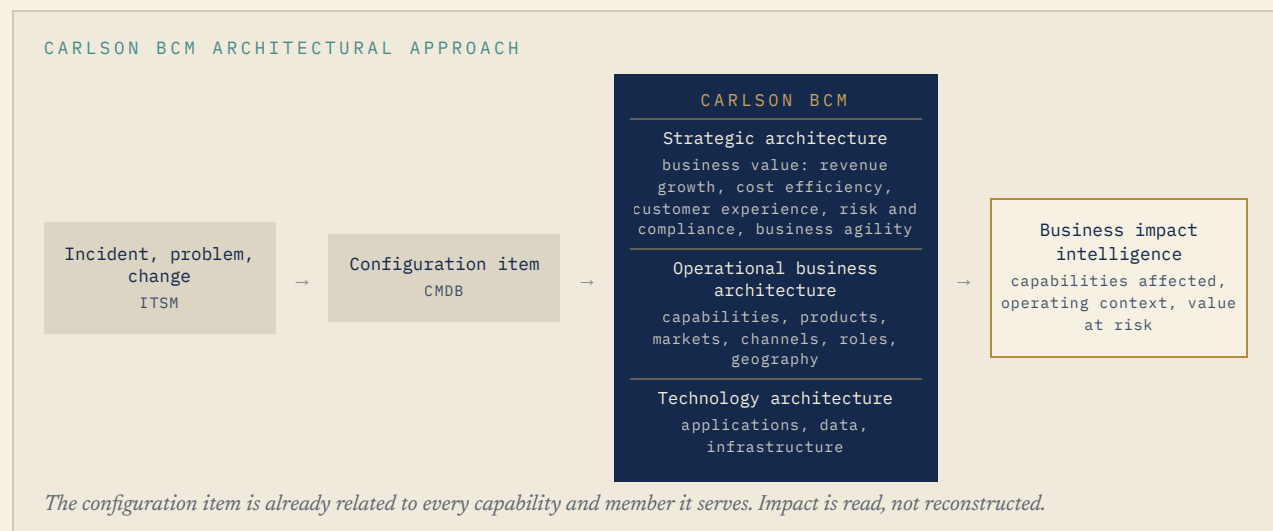
THE ASSESSMENT'S CONCLUSION

The institution needed a more reliable and scalable way to establish the business impact of an operational event.

A capability model replaces the army with a structure.

Carlson BCM supplies that kind of structure: strategic, operational business and technology architecture wrapped around the service management engine. Importance comes from the strategic architecture: business value across revenue growth, cost efficiency, customer experience, risk and compliance, and business agility. Reach comes from relating every configuration item to the application, data or infrastructure it belongs to in the technology architecture, and from there to the capabilities in the operational business architecture, with their products, markets, channels, roles and geography. Duration comes from service level indicators measured at the capability, from the moment the member feels the failure.

A capability model also holds the dependencies that reliability objectives require: what every application depends on, and what depends on it. That is what lets a subjective index be complemented, and then replaced, by measurement.



A NUMBER IS ONLY AS GOVERNED AS ITS INPUTS

Three directions follow from the structure.

Carlson BCM is independent of the systems used to manage and observe technology. Whether operational topology is maintained in a CMDB, discovered through telemetry, or generated dynamically from application and infrastructure behavior, the enterprise still requires a consistent business architecture to establish what those resources support, how they relate, and why their availability matters.

01

Reliability as an enterprise discipline

Reliability engineered into every portfolio and measured against objectives the business agrees to, at the capabilities members depend on.

02

Delivery that knows what it touches

Every test and every release planned against the capabilities it puts at risk, rather than the application it happens to change.

03

Operations that anticipate

Events read through the capability model, so analytics can predict which members a degradation will reach before they feel it.

A capability model is also what relates AIOps findings to the capabilities and members they affect. A correlation engine on its own can tell which events cluster together. It cannot tell which cluster a member felt. Without that relationship, AIOps automates the proxy.

When measuring the truth takes an army, an enterprise buys a cheaper number. The capability model makes the truth the cheaper number.