AssetGen SysMap

Product FAQ

Technical Support FAQ

PRODUCT FAQ

1. **What software do I need to run AssetGen SysMap?**
   AssetGen SysMap is a 'thick client' application installed onto a PC. It requires the Microsoft .Net framework v4.5 and either a local SQL database (MS SQL Express 2012 R2) or a Microsoft SQL Server 2008/12/16 database hosted on a central server. There is also an intranet (web) application which provides read only access to the main data screens and data analysis reporting.

   For power users and administrators Visio 2007/10/13/16 Professional or Premium is recommended for the creation of Visio service diagrams.

2. **How does AssetGen SysMap help with ITIL processes? Doesn't my service desk have the same functionality?**
   AssetGen SysMap is very much complementary to a service desk toolset, as we help communicate complex service dependencies to suit different viewpoints. Querying, reports, Visio service maps and Excel files can help communicate planned changes, allocate incidents to causes and support service catalogue descriptions. If purchased with AssetGen Connect, the service impacts can be directly associated with infrastructure changes and made visible to technical teams.

3. **Are the CI types and relationships fixed, or can I choose my own?**
   There is complete flexibility for the user to set up CI groups and types and relationship types. These are held in 'lookup' tables which are maintained by a user with administrator rights. There is also a CI category field to allow use of the same CI name for production, test and development versions of hardware, databases and software.

4. **Can the CI data be taken or refreshed from other sources such as a Service Desk?**
   Yes. The data structures are very similar so CI data is often imported from existing service desks. CI groups, types and categories and relationship types can be set up to match those already in other systems. CI, relationship and attribute data can be refreshed using csv, txt or xml files where, for example, it is useful to combine multiple sets of information into SysMap. Automated refreshes are supported by a data loader program customised for each specific implementation.

5. **Can I use AssetGen SysMap to document physical relationships between CIs such as locations, cards, cabinets, etc.**
   Yes. AssetGen SysMap provides the framework to connect anything to anything. In practice however, AssetGen Connect provides a much better basis for holding physical infrastructure components and their connectivity. The database is common to both products and a CI in SysMap can be easily linked to a piece of equipment in Connect.

6. **Do I need to have a completely documented infrastructure before setting up AssetGen SysMap?**
No. AssetGen SysMap is designed to enable the addition of new information as CIs and dependencies are understood. You may start with the most critical systems then add to them over time. If a major incident highlights a dependency that wasn't understood, then you can add it in. A key issue is that the knowledge within SysMap will grow and change with business priorities.

7. **Can any of my service team undertake an impact analysis without having AssetGen SysMap software on their desktop?**
Yes. The server version ships with a web server application which can be installed on a server running Microsoft IIS and the .Net framework v3.5. This provides read only access to CI data, and reports, including impact & dependency analysis from a standard web browser (e.g. Microsoft Explorer).

8. **Why are there different types of dependency visualisation?**
AssetGen SysMap is able to create 'on-the-fly' diagrams using MS Visio. A starting CI is specified and a 'granularity' parameter controls how many relationship hops the program will navigate. The user therefore has great control over the complexity (or simplicity) of the diagrams created. The Visio drawing can then be manually laid out to tidy, amend, store and collate the diagrams, or even publish them to a web server to act as a corporate resource.

9. **Can I import data on service dependencies drawn in Visio?**
Yes. Visio service diagrams can be imported to update CIs and relationships. Guidelines on formats are provided in the help files. This is often a good way to avoid transcription errors.

10. **What happens to Visio service diagrams when there are CI and relationship changes?**
When creating a visualisation, users have the option to create, compare or update a diagram. With existing diagrams, we recommend you "compare" the existing diagram with the current SysMap database, saving on unnecessary updates. If you "update" a diagram it will change the CI attributes and add CIs and relationships as required. If the SysMap database has had CIs or relationships deleted, these will be highlighted for manual deletion. This helps to reveal errors in data, as well as preserve understanding.

11. **How do I link SysMap configuration items (CIs) to the AssetGen Connect database?**
An option in AssetGen Connect can automatically create a CI in AssetGen SysMap when an equipment record is created. If your physical infrastructure and assets are already in AssetGen Connect, you can link CIs in AssetGen SysMap to them. There is a link field on the CI data record which holds the equipment record number. This gives flexibility when the underlying hardware changes, not requiring changes to the SysMap CI mappings.

12. **Why do I have to group CI types together?**
You don't necessarily have to. You could have just one group which holds all CI types. However, if your database is to contain a large number of different types of CIs (users, departments, business functions, applications, middleware, DBMSs, databases, servers, storage, etc.) it make sense to group types together to aid reporting, impact analysis, setup and maintenance.

13. **Do I have to create direct relationships between all CIs in order to undertake an impact or dependency analysis?**
No. You only need to create simple parent/child relationships. For example, you do not have to link a business function directly to a server. There could be individual relationships defined via applications, middleware, and databases. The impact analysis algorithm navigates through these relationships to find instances of the target CI type.

14. **Can you have different parent/child relationships between two CIs?**
Yes. When defining a relationship between two CIs, you can have different relationships from parent to child and child to parent. For instance, in a remote access diagram, in one direction you can have "requests access", in the other "supplies user authentication".

15. Can I associate existing build, configuration, release and other documentation with CIs?
Yes. Any CI record can have many documents linked to it. Only the path to the file is stored in the database, rather than the document itself to ensure that, if the source file is updated (and retains the same name) the user can still view the new document without changing anything on the CI record.

16. How could I quickly identify the CIs that a critical service or process relies on?
We provide a number of ways to ensure you get an appropriate level of detail. You can specify a start point and retrieve all CIs of a specific group or type (dependency analysis). Or you can use the visualisation feature which will show all the CIs with the level of detail under your control in a Visio diagram. (In complex environments, controlling the level of detail prevents being swamped by unnecessary information)

17. If a hardware CI such as a server or network switch had to be powered down, how could I quickly understand the impact on services for my emergency change process?
The user specifies a starting CI (the server or switch) and a target CI group or type (business services) then clicks a run button. The application interprets the relationships and, within seconds, populates a list with affected CIs. The user can then drill down into a CI record from the list for more detail.

18. What is batch impact analysis?
This enables the impact or dependencies of multiple CIs to be determined quickly. For business impact it could be a list of servers to be upgraded, a set of changes to hardware/software as part of a new release. For dependencies it could be the supporting servers or software for the top 20 services. Rather than go through one CI at a time, AssetGen SysMap will provide a collated results list. Batch templates can be saved to update impact results for major programmes that take place over many months or years.

The batch impact feature also makes it quick to create service charging, as it lists CIs and whether they are shared or particular to a service.

19. How would I perform a root cause analysis using the data held within AssetGen SysMap?
AssetGen SysMap enables fast identification of potential root causes by the use of dependency mapping and attributes against CIs. If a new dependency is uncovered through the problem analysis process, it can be entered into AssetGen SysMap so the knowledge is available to all immediately.

20. What does the Advanced filtering button do?
AssetGen SysMap can be used to document multiple types of mapping across common CIs such as service, data flows, groupings, etc. The advanced filtering enables inclusion or exclusion to aid impact analysis and visualisation using the relationships of choice. For instance, if a server needs rebooting the service and time criticalities can be understood to help decision making.

21. How can I validate the data held within the SysMap?
A common problem with many service desks and CMDBs is checking if the data is still up to date or correct, in particular the number and type of relationships. The Visio visualisation capability has a dual role in helping users to understand CI relationships, but also to help the system administrator validate the data and relationships. Specific administration reports for orphaned CIs also help with data validation.

22. How many CIs can be put into AssetGen SysMap?
This depends on the licence version purchased. The desktop version supports 300, 1000, 3000, 5000 or an unlimited number of CIs (subject only to database restrictions). The server version supports 1000, 3000, 5000, 10000 or an unlimited number of CIs. Product versions can be simply upgraded with a replacement licence key.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT FAQ

Typical questions

Answers

Q1. What software do I need to run AssetGen SysMap?

AssetGen SysMap is available as an intranet based application (requiring a web server, database server and client software) or a stand-alone application running on a standard Windows PC.

Intranet Application (includes 1 copy of the client software)

Web Server	Microsoft Internet Information Service (IIS) v7.0 or above (Server 2008 or above) Microsoft.Net Framework V4.5 AssetGen SysMap Web Application, image, help, report and configuration files (provided as part of the Installer package).
Database Server	Microsoft SQL Server 2008/12/16 The database can reside on the web server but is normally installed on a corporate SQL Server installation to take advantage of existing backup and resilience plans. **Note:** The database is shared between all products in the AssetGen range.
Browser	Accessing the web server application requires a minimum of a web browser, normally Microsoft Internet Explorer v8 or above.
Client	See Desktop Application Client below

Desktop Application

Database	Microsoft SQL Express 2012 R2 is supplied as part of the installer package. This is a freely distributable version of SQL Server with a restriction on maximum database size.
Client	Microsoft.Net Framework V4.5 AssetGen SysMap Client Application, image, help, report and configuration files (provided as part of the Installer package).
MS Visio	Users wanting to produce cabinet, equipment and network topology diagrams will need to install MS Visio 2007/10/13/16 Professional or Premium edition. This is not supplied with AssetGen SysMap.

AssetGen distributors and resellers can discuss specific installation needs as these can vary greatly between individual customers.

Q2. How do I backup the AssetGen database?
Backup regimes will vary between types and sizes of customer. MS SQL Server has the capability to schedule backups of the database. The Professional (stand-alone) version of SysMap has built-in backup and restore options. Backup files should be copied to removable media and stored in a safe location. AssetGen distributors and resellers can give guidance on the optimum procedures, hardware and software for ensuring timely backups of the database.

Q3. I'm getting the error "Your AssetGen SysMap Session has Timed Out"
The reason is simply that, within an AssetGen SysMap session, you have not used the application for longer than a timeout value (the default is 20 minutes). Contact an AssetGen distributor or reseller for further information on how to amend the timeout value.

Q4. Some of the data entry boxes are highlighted in yellow on the Viewer pages.
This is due to the "Auto Fill" function in certain browsers. This function scans all the data elements on the page and compares them to a list of items it considers could be auto filled. If it finds a match (on a full OR partial basis) the field is highlighted, normally in a yellow colour. We suggest you turn off this feature.