

## Vendor Profile

# Sunbird Software: Facilitating Customers' Shift to Data-Driven Decisions with DCIM Solutions

Jennifer Cooke

## IDC OPINION

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Datacenters are undergoing their own transformation to modernize and prepare for the deluge of data that digital transformation initiatives are bringing. To make the best use of existing resources and drive better decisions on datacenter investments and placement, organizations are adopting a new and more data-driven approach to managing datacenter resources. Datacenter infrastructure management (DCIM) solutions help organizations tackle the growing challenges of managing and optimizing datacenter power, environment, and space needs. Sunbird Software has taken a very customer-led approach to DCIM, and its solution meets a critical need in the market to improve the management of critical datacenter resources. Based on an assessment of Sunbird's DCIM software and service organization and conversations with customers, IDC's key takeaways include the following:

- Sunbird's investment in ease of use and simplicity in its tools helps drive continued use and therefore accuracy. The vendor understands well that if its solution is not intuitive and easy to use, people will not continue to update assets within it, and it will quickly become out of date and useless. By focusing on the user experience, Sunbird's customers have been able to promote use throughout the organization and, in some cases, have been able to reduce the number of management tools used.
- With many organizations using diverse and distributed resources including on-premises, colocation, and cloud datacenters, Sunbird's solution has been an essential tool in making decisions on moving infrastructure and managing it remotely. As a source of truth in datacenter physical assets, DCIM allows an organization to rely on a digital representation of its critical infrastructure and IT assets and streamline moves as well as ongoing operation.
- Sunbird's services organization is highly valued and trusted by customers. Over the years, Sunbird has learned that a phased process is the best way to implement a solution to avoid being overwhelmed. Its understanding of datacenter challenges and commitment to customer success have contributed to a high retention rate and expansion within existing customers.
- Sunbird's customers reported that they have been able to deploy more infrastructure within their existing footprint without increasing the risk of downtime. Rightsizing datacenter resources and developing the ability to accurately assess capacity needs are critical. Increasing utilization of existing datacenter space can delay the need to build new datacenters or move to new datacenters. Beyond saving on capital expenditures for a new datacenter, the ability to provide resilient, agile service builds trust and collaboration between executive leadership, line-of-business managers, and the IT and datacenter groups.

## IN THIS VENDOR PROFILE

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This IDC Vendor Profile provides an overview of Sunbird Software, a provider of datacenter infrastructure management software and services. DCIM solutions and intelligent critical infrastructure are within IDC's coverage of "Smarter Datacenters" that support an IT organization's shift to a more services-driven approach to support the needs of businesses on the digital transformation journey. This document includes an analysis of Sunbird's solutions and approach to the market.

## SITUATION OVERVIEW

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Datacenter managers, like professionals across many industries, are increasingly relying on data to drive better decisions and improve processes. The manufacturing industry is relying on digital twins and machine learning (ML) technologies to improve safety and become more efficient. The healthcare industry is transforming to become much more patient centric through the use of artificial intelligence (AI). And the transportation industry is relying on sensors and Internet of Things (IoT) solutions to improve the safety and efficiency with which people and things are moved around the globe. These are just a few of the thousands of ways that data and emerging technologies are disrupting entire industries. This same transformation is also reshaping how datacenter managers optimize and improve their own datacenter facilities. By gathering data from intelligent infrastructure and using software to analyze this data and streamline processes, datacenter managers are transforming their facilities. In an era of increasingly distributed datacenter resources that include a hybrid of on-premises, edge, colocated, and cloud resources, the ability to improve the usage of these resources, and streamline management and maintenance of these resources through automation and data-driven decisions, is a competitive differentiator. Making this shift requires a new way of thinking about management and the ability to trust the systems and solutions generating and analyzing data. This trust is especially important for people responsible for mission-critical facilities and services. However, as demands for IT service in new locations grow and as IT service continues to underpin the massive digital transformation that is happening across all industries, the ability to make this shift to data-driven datacenter decisions is critical.

Technologies such as Sunbird Software's DCIM solutions are the foundation for building smarter datacenter resources that can support an IT organization as it in turn supports a digitally transformed industry and ecosystem. The future of an internal IT organization depends upon its ability to quickly provide service where it is needed, ensure the security of data, and improve the resiliency and efficiency of IT service. Increasingly, internal IT is being asked to deliver IT service in a "cloudlike" way – providing the resiliency, cost transparency, and just-in-time capacity management in the same way a major cloud provider would. DCIM solutions allow organizations full transparency into the capacity, cost, and performance of critical infrastructure resources that make up the foundation for enterprise private clouds.

IDC's research has found that companies that have higher investment in "smarter" datacenter resources (including intelligent critical infrastructure and solutions such as DCIM) are more than twice as likely to be prepared to support IT service at the edge. They are also much less likely to overprovision power resources, creating waste and inefficiency. Datacenters need to be able to support these new demands, as well as the coming deluge of data that will continue to challenge organizations to effectively store, protect, and leverage that data. The role of the datacenter is more important than ever before. Meeting the needs of the business requires all IT and datacenter

operations to improve the accuracy of asset management and capacity planning, streamline maintenance and service, and enable the fast deployment of new IT services.

## Company Overview

Sunbird Software has focused on making datacenter infrastructure "smarter" and better managed for more than 20 years, before the term *DCIM* was coined. Today, Sunbird's dcTrack and Power IQ software is deployed in mission-critical datacenters in 73 countries and across all vertical industries to tackle power, asset, energy, and environment management and drive capacity planning and change management processes. By increasing the visibility into datacenter assets and essentially creating a "digital twin" of datacenter resources, Sunbird customers reported an improved ability to move resources, plan for future capacity needs, and provide rapid IT service provisioning for their organization.

Sunbird was formed in 2015, when it was spun off from parent company Raritan. At this time, critical infrastructure provider Legrand acquired Raritan's rack and power product lines and Sunbird was formed as a separate software company to transform the management of datacenters. Raritan was started 1985, when company founder Ching-I Hsu developed the first KVM switch as a way to control multiple PCs from a single product. Raritan emerged as a major provider of intelligent power management solutions in 2007 and produced intelligent rack power distribution units (PDUs), inline meters, branch circuit monitoring, rack transfer switches, and digital and analog KVM switches. In 2015, Sunbird Software was spun off from Raritan when Legrand acquired Raritan. Since that time, Sunbird has been focused solely on developing software and services to improve its customers' visibility into and management of datacenter resources.

## Company Strategy

Sunbird's DCIM solution is a comprehensive solution that includes many of the foundational building blocks for smarter datacenters such as real-time monitoring, dynamic infrastructure management, analytics, and reporting.

IDC believes that one of Sunbird's strengths is in its ability to quickly translate customer needs and feedback into product enhancements. The company's service organization is frequently cited as a main strength in the overall DCIM solution. Sunbird understands the critical role of its support organization in ensuring its customers' success. Customers investing in DCIM are also often adopting major process changes that come with implementing datacenter management best practices. The ongoing support and ability to customize the solution to unique needs are strengths.

In addition to its ongoing partnerships with Legrand, Servertech, and Raritan (after the 2015 spin-off), Sunbird also established new partnerships with ServiceNow, BMC, VMware, nVent, and Chatsworth Products, a large manufacturer of cabinets, KVM switches, and cabling infrastructure. Many customers adopt management best practices and DCIM solutions during major datacenter upgrades or rebuilds, making joint selling partnerships with complementary infrastructure a good fit.

## Customer-Centric Focus

One of the hallmarks of Sunbird is its customer-centric product development process and service organization. In interviews with current customers, a consistent theme was the company's commitment to helping customers succeed in the journey to improving management and use of datacenter resources. Sunbird's work in integrating its solution with IT service management (ITSM) and configuration management database (CMDB) evolved out of customers' requests. For many, Sunbird

has become the source of truth within their organization, and the data gathered is used companywide for purposes beyond the day-to-day management of datacenter critical infrastructure. Following are a few examples of how customers have leveraged Sunbird's DCIM solution:

- **Improving use of existing space.** Customers reported being able to put 30-40% more hardware into existing cabinets without worrying about overloading the power capacity of racks. They were able to continue to grow the IT infrastructure within the existing datacenter.
- **Streamlining the moving process.** Several customers have recently gone through datacenter moves into colocation datacenters and new company-owned datacenters. These customers have leveraged the dynamic asset management and capacity planning features of Sunbird's software solutions to streamline and organize the moving process.
- **Communicating risk and securing more datacenter investment.** The ability to clearly communicate areas of need with company executives was powerful and resulted in increased investment in datacenter resources. One customer had been studying data on power usage and identified areas of significant risk. But it wasn't until he was able to show this data in a simple, graphic representation via Sunbird's solution that he was able to help executive leadership understand the critical need for more investment in datacenter resources.
- **Finance and tax accounting.** While much of the focus of DCIM is on power management, customers cited asset management as one of the most valuable functions to drive more trust and cooperation within the broader organization. One customer that has more than 10,000 assets in dcTrack cited time savings for finance and tax accounting as a major benefit of implementing Sunbird's software. The customer uses the system to help its finance organization track what is being used for tax reporting and associating assets with purchase orders. This customer noted a dramatic reduction in the time needed to accurately report usage. An exercise that would take weeks to do manually could be done in a matter of minutes.

## *Product Line Overview*

Sunbird's DCIM solution is built on its asset management-focused dcTrack and energy management-focused Power IQ modules. The combined suite enables an organization to monitor and manage critical power infrastructure and IT infrastructure in a coordinated way to simplify understanding of resources. Sunbird's open API allows data from the DCIM solution to be integrated with an ITSM solution. The ability to enable a "single source of truth" in datacenter resources has secured the value of DCIM investment for a large portion of Sunbird's installed base. The open platform and ease of exchanging data have driven broader adoption and reliance on the solution across the organization for many, beyond the IT and datacenter staff.

Key areas of differentiation for Sunbird include rapid 3D visualization of the datacenter space, including automatic rack elevations. The ability to create custom fields and panel layouts allows organizations the flexibility to track anything in their datacenters. The solution comes with prebuilt dashboards for analytics, and its shared widget approach fosters collaboration and greater understanding of datacenter resources across the organization. Users can share charts and reports through a portal, and a dynamic integration engine allows integration with many third-party tools.

## **FUTURE OUTLOOK**

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IDC believes that datacenter resources will be challenged to support the growing needs of the business as exponentially expanding volumes of data and the ability to support IT service in new

locations become the norm to support not only normal business operations but emerging edge and IoT initiatives. Datacenters will be under tremendous pressure to deliver service quickly and protect valuable data and assets. For many organizations, these datacenters and assets are distributed across many locations. The traditional manual methods of managing these critical resources cannot withstand the shift to support new power-hungry workloads and distributed and edge computing that is required by emerging technologies such as IoT, artificial intelligence, and augmented and virtual reality.

IT and datacenter professionals will be valued on how well they are able to service and support business strategy. Because IT is embedded in almost all innovation today, this means that IT and the datacenter service need to be rapid – while ensuring security of data and assets in all locations. To accomplish this, many organizations need datacenter solutions that drive improved asset management and the ability to plan for future demand and capacity needs. To support the growing demand for IT service in new and often remote locations, these solutions need to enable remote visibility and control, because in many cases either there will not be human labor present or having the right skills in the right locations at the right time will be a logistical challenge. Sunbird Software's DCIM solutions help tackle many of the growing challenges that datacenters face in managing increasingly complex environments. Interviews with Sunbird customers confirm that its commitment to customer success is effective. The company has built a solid installed base of diverse customers. Some are supporting varied and highly demanding application development environments; some are highly distributed and require remote management and resiliency. Sunbird's retention rate is strong, showing the value its customers place on the DCIM solution.

Datacenters are critical resources that businesses rely on to protect and leverage valuable data. As businesses rely more on data to drive strategy and decisions as well as connect with their customers, the role of the datacenter becomes even more important. Often, investment is necessary in solutions that allow the organization to get the most value from these resources through better technology and management processes. IDC believes that investment in DCIM solutions helps organizations make better decisions on their datacenter spending and strategy, often enabling them to improve utilization of existing resources and reduce waste.

## ESSENTIAL GUIDANCE

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### Advice for Sunbird Software

- **Seek more distribution partnerships with colocation providers.** Organizations are increasingly looking to their colocation providers for guidance on datacenter management best practices. Setting up sell-through or subscription-based DCIM services will help colocation providers become trusted partners for their customers. The relationship will open up opportunities to create more value and functionality for customers as they seek to rationalize workload placement decisions.
- **Partner with local service organizations to offer a complete datacenter management-as-a-service offering to reduce barriers to adopting a management solution.** Many organizations remain hesitant to invest time and expertise into adoption of another management solution. IDC's research points to the average IT organization running five to eight different management solutions. Adding one more is difficult to justify. An opportunity exists to reach datacenter managers who have not been able to internally "sell" the value of a DCIM solution. These organizations would benefit from a complete "as a service" offering that makes it cost

efficient to assess the existing infrastructure, add all infrastructure elements into the solution, and perform ongoing support for any changes.

- **Elevate the conversation to executive leadership with the datacenter as a critical asset to supporting new initiatives.** DCIM means power monitoring to many. But what many do not realize is that DCIM functions are essential in supporting a software-defined and autonomous environment. DCIM solutions today are far more than tools for facilities managers to use to optimize space and power resources. DCIM functions are critical to creating agile and resilient IT service because they help connect business needs with available capacity to ensure better coordination of resources.
- **Support the evolving role of CIOs.** IT is shifting in the skill sets that it needs from managing infrastructure to managing pools of resources. In an often "cloud first" world, on-premises datacenters are competing with service provider datacenters. What many datacenter and IT professionals need is the ability to shift their business and become more cloudlike in their delivery of datacenter resources. This change can be difficult, but DCIM solutions are helpful in supporting greater visibility into usage for viewbacks and chargebacks, which will help IT pivot to an IT-as-a-service (ITaaS) model. DCIM can also provide the information necessary to make the best choice of which datacenter resource to use based on performance needs, cost, and security. The more that DCIM investment can be tied to the ability to more rapidly deliver IT service, the more momentum it will achieve.

## Advice for Technology Buyers

IDC recommends that IT and datacenter managers shift to a services-driven datacenter model. Doing so will establish trust in datacenters as a strategic asset in digital transformation initiatives and bolster credibility for the IT and datacenter organizations. DCIM solutions can be very helpful in establishing a trusted foundation on which to build private clouds and software-defined datacenter resources. DCIM solutions enable many of the key capabilities that are essential in creating what IDC defines as "smarter datacenter facilities":

- **Power resiliency.** The ability to have real-time visibility into power usage and available capacity by rack and datacenter streamlines deployment of new workloads, reduces the risk of downtime, and increases the ability to support power-hungry technology.
- **Accelerated delivery of service.** Leveraging machine learning and connected products reduces the burden on service personnel and improves outcomes by relying more on automation, augmented reality, and remote control.
- **Dependency monitoring and management.** Having a single version of the truth regarding how infrastructure is connected and dependency mapping requires ongoing support of consistent processes. Intuitive technologies and tools to manage infrastructure improve accuracy and ultimately improve an organization's ability to deploy new IT service quickly, perform maintenance, or move to a new location.
- **Intelligent critical infrastructure.** Power and cooling infrastructure that collects data and communicates its performance, energy consumption, and environmental conditions is important as organizations deploy infrastructure in multiple locations, some of which could be remote.
- **Predictive maintenance.** Using machine learning and big data to drive maintenance of equipment and infrastructure reduces the risk of downtime and streamlines maintenance.
- **Energy efficiency.** Improving the use of energy resources is a corporate mandate for many. Beyond measuring power usage effectiveness (PUE), initiatives to improve the use of energy

involve eliminating IT resources that are not contributing to the IT workload and making the best decisions regarding workload placement.

- **Demand and capacity planning.** Accurately planning for datacenter resources and future capacity needs requires a tight alignment of the IT and facilities teams with the business units that are driving demand for IT resources.
- **Physical infrastructure.** The physical datacenter buildings are in optimal locations and standardized as much as possible. The critical infrastructure that supports all IT and networking technology is "smart" in that it can gather and communicate data on its current state and performance levels.

For a full review of IDC's recommendations for establishing key performance indicators for datacenters, see *IDC MeasureScope: Critical KPIs for Smarter Datacenter Facilities* (IDC #US43796818, September 2018).

## LEARN MORE

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### Related Research

- *IDC FutureScope: Worldwide Datacenter 2019 Predictions* (IDC #US42582518, October 2018)
- *IDC MeasureScope: Critical KPIs for Smarter Datacenter Facilities* (IDC #US43796818, September 2018)
- *Worldwide Datacenter Infrastructure Management Solutions Forecast, 2018-2022* (IDC #US43829618, May 2018)
- *IDC MaturityScope Benchmark: Smarter Datacenter Facilities in the United States, 2018* (IDC #US43540718, February 2018)

## About IDC

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## Global Headquarters

5 Speen Street  
Framingham, MA 01701  
USA  
508.872.8200  
Twitter: @IDC  
idc-community.com  
www.idc.com

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