Lifecycle management has been in existence as a concept for many years. As early as the 1990s, lifecycle management was touted as an IT strategy that would streamline operations and reduce costs.

Along the way, the marketing messages were confused with the actual discipline of lifecycle management. The maturity level of lifecycle management was in its early development. The needs of IT managers were not yet fully defined and articulated. There was an abundance of providers, all of whom had similar marketing messages with a wide array of core competencies and definitions at a detailed level of what lifecycle management represented. However, in all this confusion began to rise a conceptual vision of what lifecycle management could be and an operational definition of what it would comprise.

Two clear steps were required make that vision become reality: define the requirements, and then organize to deliver the service levels that the requirements addressed. This proved to be more complicated than many IT professionals believed because, in the vacuum of definitions, silos developed organizationally for the delivery of the services. Around these silos, cultures and a “comfort” level developed; the challenges to consider and implement lifecycle management had become political, too. To adopt lifecycle management, the organization would need to become more flexible.
About the same time, other significant breakthrough developments occurred that facilitated how businesses would perceive lifecycle management. The first development was the widespread acceptance of the *total cost of ownership* (TCO). As both a concept and a deliverable, the TCO message convinces IT professionals and executives that the cost of a client device (PC) can in fact be measured and tracked.

Whereas TCO measured and reported the costs specifically, areas of potential impact were generally identified. The measurement and reporting, however, was not a plan to execute a strategy to impact the cost and service structure; that is the role that lifecycle management plays. TCO highlighted the need for IT organizations to have a defined lifecycle strategy. After all, it has become clear in the industry that the acquisition price of an access device represents a small percentage of the overall costs to support that device.

The TCO became a primary justification for the need to define a plan. From the 1990s through today, many (if not most) large businesses have had some sort of TCO validation. At times, the TCO was both a validation for change and a validation that a business was already optimized.

Y2K had many interesting long-term impacts that were not clearly understood at that time. During Y2K, end users discovered that they could add, change, or modify certain parameters including the image and software to access device configurations. In many cases, end users also discovered that IT involvement was not required (and in some cases, IT didn’t even need to be notified of the changes).

Because of the scaling of Y2K remediation, end users felt empowered as competent users of access technology to enable the technology on a more personal level. This heralded the end of the casual end user. End users suddenly felt “comfortable” making changes and were not concerned with implications across the enterprise; their concern was to make the access device more adaptable for their own use.

Through all the evolution of technology of personal computing for the enterprise, lifecycle has remained constant. Interestingly, the definition of *lifecycle* depended on who was asking the question and from whom the response was sought. The belief of businesses was that if you asked six consultants the same questions regarding lifecycle management, you would get six completely different answers. Although this might seem a bit humorous, it happens to be quite true.

What businesses now seek is a practitioner’s point of view and an industry definition of lifecycle management, which is the primary objective of this book. Just as
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with a cookbook recipe or a manufactured product, a bill of material can be defined to represent the requirements to support access devices across the enterprise. This book should be viewed as the “cookbook.”

To be clear, lifecycle management is vendor neutral. A simple definition is that lifecycle management is the set of deliverables required to support access devices in an enterprise. Many businesses truly believe that lifecycle management is not “rocket science.” I would agree. Lifecycle management represents a combination of business, political, and economic considerations. It is the combination of all these agendas that make lifecycle management challenging to deliver in the marketplace.

Closed loop lifecycle planning offers a methodology that provides businesses an opportunity to objectively assess and improve the entire lifecycle environment. Looking at lifecycle management from a practitioner’s point of view yields the clearest possible insight into optimizing the client lifecycle portfolio.