

serviceTALK

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ISO/IEC 20000: an annual update



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Opening the doors to the next generation

Paving the way for future service management practitioners presents an ongoing challenge for our profession. Mark Lillycrop investigates a number of initiatives that are coming together within the itSMF community to spread the word about service management to a wider audience.

At some time we have all asked a young person about their career plans, and the answers are often predictable... dentist, doctor, teacher, accountant, astronaut maybe? One answer you very rarely hear is, "I'd like to be in service management."

So why don't we make it onto the list? Well, that's about to change. There are plans at itSMF UK geared specifically to help raise the profile of our profession among young people.

Work experience

As we all know, there's no substitute for hands-on experience, and service management offers so many opportunities for newcomers. itSMF UK's new youth engagement strategy, led by board members Val Wilson (BT), Cristan Massey (Pearson), and Vawns Murphy (i3works), aims to inspire young people to explore careers in service management, identifying ways for member organisations to support students through work experience and ultimately apprenticeships. The team hosted a launch meeting on 7th May to share their ideas, with many similar events to come.



The first element of the youth strategy is work experience. Earlier this year, itSMF UK signed up to an exciting new partnership with Speakers for Schools, which liaises with organisations to host work experience students. The format is flexible. Whether online, face-to-face, or hybrid, Speakers for Schools can tailor the packages to align student needs with the experience sessions available.

Offering work experience placements provides numerous benefits, say the new partner organisation. It helps build a talent pipeline by identifying and nurturing potential future employees. Additionally, it brings fresh perspectives and innovative ideas from young people, which can drive creativity and problem-solving within the company.

The first step for itSMF is to identify members who would like to be involved, whether or not you have experience of similar schemes. If you missed the launch meeting and would like further information, please contact the office for further details.

Apprenticeship schemes

The team will also be sharing their vision for researching, and all being well launching, a dedicated apprenticeship pathway into service management, aimed at creating sustainable entry routes into our industry.

"We're still at the early stages with this one," said board member Cristan Massey, head of service management at Pearson, a company steeped in educational know-how and opportunities, who really understands the value of apprenticeship schemes. "We're also monitoring government guidance around apprenticeships, and we want to hear from anyone who is interested in being involved and helping take this project forward. The potential for apprenticeships within service management is enormous, and itSMF are perfectly placed to coordinate the effort."



Digital futures: engaging tomorrow's ITSM leaders

As a further element of the youth engagement strategy, itSMF UK last year became a partner to The National Museum of Computing (TNMOC) in Bletchley, sponsoring one their highly successful Digital Futures Days for school-age students. Board member Vawns Murphy attended the Futures Day as our representative, and was able to meet a group of young IT enthusiasts and share some insights into her own career in service management.

"It was a great experience," said Vawns, who believes passionately in preparing young people with the skills they need to flourish in the working environment. "Talking about my own professional journey and some of the things I wish I'd known when I was starting out was a privilege, and I really enjoyed answering the students' insightful questions about a job that I enjoy so much."



itSMF UK will be looking to maintain and extend our partnership with the TNMOC and finding for new ways to help young people develop the right skills for a career in service management, through dedicated events and communities.

ITSM on the curriculum

Things are also moving forward in the academic world. Our schools and universities have, by any standards, been slow to embrace service management, and to incorporate ITSM modules into computer studies and other IT-based courses.

The good news is that things are gradually changing, and the academic world is waking up to the need for a stronger focus on service management. At ITSM24 last November Sandra Whittleston, an itSMF member and one of the most vocal campaigners for degree-level education in ITSM, described the Open University's service management simulation which is now included in a module of their computing degree. She also writes in this issue of ServiceTalk, arguing that universities, training organisations, and forums like ours need to work more closely to provide students with the right options and resources. We should be moving towards an apprenticeship-style chartered status for service management, she argues, similar to schemes in so many professions. "This type of plan could generate the energy needed to move ITSM forward in education. With an altruistic eye, it could create an environment where the department for education, the university sector and the service management community join



together to make it work. Without key stakeholder engagement from all sides, it cannot work."

There's more good news at Northumbria University, which recently unveiled an ITSM module for their Computer Science BSc course. "Time for our students to get their ITIL on," commented former itSMF UK board member Claire Burn on LinkedIn at the time. Claire works at the university as Director of IT Delivery & Governance and has been a strong advocate of this new addition to the curriculum, yet another example of industry and academia working together to open those doors to our young people.



There are even signs of progress at GCSE level. Last year former itSMF UK chair Karen Brusch and board member Keith Reeves were invited to participate in a consultation on the GCSE computer science curriculum. Among the issues they flagged up at the time were a lack of ITSM and AI-related content and insufficient consideration for neurodiversity and digital access.

"Being involved in consultations of this kind is absolutely critical," commented Karen. "If the service management community can begin to influence the curriculum at this level, who knows how it will shape the profession in the future?"



Mentorship and ongoing support

It's clear, then, that itSMF UK as the membership forum for service management has a key role to play in attracting new young professionals into the industry – working with our members to make work experience, apprenticeship, and relevant training and academic courses a reality.

Once on board, the final piece of the puzzle is to provide ongoing support for newcomers, and that's where our new mentorship scheme has an essential role to play. The service, available to members for free, encourages and supports mentees to identify their key goals and objectives, and align them with standard industry roles. We then aim to match the mentee with a mentor who has the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience to aid and drive their personal development. Underpinning this service is the Professional Skills Management Framework (PSMF), which offers a free self-assessment to members. It's part of the onboarding requirement for mentorship that mentees complete the free PSMF skills assessment so that the resulting profile and content can provide input for the mentoring sessions and help to match them to the most appropriate mentors.

The mentorship pilot was launched last year, and we now have a growing panel of mentors available to coach upcoming professionals and help them develop key competencies.

"Our members are so willing to give something back to young ITSM professionals, and in so many cases already have that expertise in place," commented itSMF UK chair Claire Drake, who has been instrumental in encouraging itSMF's focus on youth-related initiatives. "itSMF can act as a bridge to bring new recruits and member organisations together, so that the new generation of service management professionals are more aware of the options and opportunities open to them."



These ideas are all fine, but for change to happen we all have a responsibility to get involved. If you'd like to support itSMF UK's work experience, apprenticeship, or youth development plans, please do reach out to the team.

So the next time you ask someone, what do you want to do for a profession?... maybe you'll hear, "I want to be in service management" coming back loud and clear.



Mark Lillycrop
mark.lillycrop@itsmf.co.uk



ITSM 25

**STADIUM MK
MILTON KEYNES
10-11 NOVEMBER**

ITSM25: time to book your place

This year our Annual Conference & Awards, ITSM25, is moving to a new venue – Stadium MK in Milton Keynes – on 10th-11th November. The new location gives us the space and flexibility we need to host the industry's leading service management conference. Why not join us?

With more than 50 presentations from across the industry, plenty of networking and interaction, and of course our Professional Service Management Awards dinner on the Monday evening, ITSM25 is the perfect place to liaise with likeminded professionals. Check out the amazing agenda on the following pages, featuring four tracks packed with practical, experience-based content from industry leaders and member organisations in the private and public sectors.

We're delighted to announce our two keynote speakers: intelligence specialist and TV spymaster Julian Fisher, who will be kicking off the event on Monday and – on Tuesday morning – industry coach Annette Andrews, who talks about the need for industry leaders to adapt to new expectations from employees and the fundamental cultural changes that this brings. We're also welcoming the very popular entertainer and comedian Mark Watson as our special guest at the awards evening.

ITSM25 really does offer something for everyone. Book your place today and take advantage of our early booking discount. We look forward to seeing you there!



Awards special guest:
Mark Watson



Scan the code to book
your place or visit
www.itsmf.co.uk/itsm25/



Day 2 Keynote:
Annette Andrews



Opening Keynote:
Julian Fisher

AND THE WINNER IS...

New this year: CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AWARD

The call for nominations for this year's Professional Service Management Awards (PSMA25) is now open. Why not give some thought to the outstanding service management professionals in your organisation who deserve a place on our platform this year? We'd like to hear about the great teamwork, ingenious solutions to problems, unsung heroes and thought leaders that have really made a difference.

PSMA offers a perfect opportunity to highlight the achievements of IT service management individuals and teams whose skills, commitment and imagination have marked them out for special recognition.

Winners will be announced at the gala dinner on Monday 10th November during Conference. With a fine menu, music and celebration, plus entertainment from our very special guest Mark Watson, this will surely be an evening not to miss.

All the details of the call for nominations can be found at www.itsmf.co.uk/psma25



Winners and Finalists at PSMA24

Paul Rappaport Lifetime Achievement Award

WINNER

Daniel Breston

Dave Jones Inspirational Leadership Award

WINNER

Simone Jo Moore

Ashley Hanna Contributor of the Year

WINNER

Sally Bogg – NHS Digital

FINALISTS

Kirsten Elsworth – Barclays Bank
Neil Keating – Bright Horse
Stephanie Ward – Scopism

Service Management Team of the Year

WINNER

Direct Line Group Architecture & Enablement

FINALISTS

DWP Children Live Service Support
Vodafone Global Service Management

Service Innovation of the Year

WINNER

Square Enix Service Management

FINALISTS

Arup Change & Configuration Management
BT Business Managed Service Configuration Management
Vodafone Service Management/DevOps Integration

Young ITSM Professional

WINNER

Shannon Stronge – BT

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Rhys Elis Jones – CGI

FINALISTS

Anna Hyland – Brillio
Shannon Metcalfe – Barclays

Content of the Year

WINNER

Barry Corless – CGI

Challenge Cup 2024

WINNER

Team GLEIF

CONFERENCE AGENDA

MONDAY 10 TH NOVEMBER 2025				
08:30 – 08:50	Registration and refreshments			
08:50 – 09:00	Take your seats for the opening keynote			
09:00 – 09:15	Conference opening – Claire Drake, itSMF UK Chair			
09:15 – 09:25	itSMF UK operations update – Graham McDonald and Mark Lillycrop, itSMF UK			
09:25 – 09:55	Keynote – Julian Fisher, Guest Speaker			
09:55 – 10:15	Refreshments and networking			
	Track 1 – Ballroom Central	Track 2 – Ballroom South	Track 3 – Ballroom North	Track 4 – Legends
10:15 – 11:00	1 Learning from experience: building agility into operational resilience Gary Mulqueen, Ministry of Defence	2 Value by design Nigel Hopkins, IKEA IT AB	3 Addressing technical debt Duncan Watkins, Forrester	4 What can a bookstore teach us about service management? Roy Atkinson, Clifton Butterfield, LLC
11:10 – 11:55	5 Efficient service reporting and service level management through an automated intraday SLA dashboard Francesco Barba, GLEIF	6 Key to governance via organisation management Shilpa Thomas, Allianz SE	7 Digital products and services: two different worlds or two sides of one coin? Roman Zhuravlev, Peoplecert	8 Why do so few ITSM professionals make the C-Suite? Mark Boyer, Softcat
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch and networking			
13:00 – 13:45	9 A cheat code for major incident management lessons from the aviation industry Nigel Murphy, Fujitsu	10 Simplifying ITIL: cutting complexity in change management Shameem A.S. Hameed, WM Morrisons Supermarket Ltd	11 The ch-AI-ngineing landscape of ITSM Aaron Perrott, KTSL	12 ITSM: experience meets best practice Katrina Macdermid, HIT Global
13:50 – 14:35	13 Shift left - the right way Andrei Spiridon, Square Enix	14 ADDer's paradise: empowering neurodiverse individuals through agile service management practices Faith Thomas, University of Birmingham	15 Board-led session TBC	16 Why are you making your life so difficult? Simplifying service management by tackling data overload Chris Kingsbury, CGI
14:35 – 14:55	Refreshments and networking			
14:55 – 15:40	17 Thriving ITSM teams: leading with compassion Emma Wood, STEMCELL Technologies	18 Chatbot: the road to success, with some potholes along the way... Andrew Hardwick & Kate Morlino, Arcadis	19 Sponsor Session ManageEngine	20 I wouldn't start from here... how to transform your existing service management Martin Goble, TCS
15:45 – 16:30	21 Unlocking IT excellence: the power of unified service models and asset inventory Sean Auckland & Jason Hamer, Vodafone	22 Enabling the journey to service excellence with enterprise service management John Sansbury, ESMi Ltd & Sam Heasman, KCL	23 Sponsor Session Freshworks	24 The underrated potential of service request management: unlocking efficiency and value in ITIL practices Paul Brandvold, Cegal
16:35 – 17:20	25 Feel-good ITSM: does your ITSM spark joy? Rob Akershoek, The Open Group / DXC Technology	26 SIAM Body-of-Knowledge 2025 – redefining service integration in a changing digital landscape Simon Dorst & Michelle Major-Goldsmith, Kinetic IT	27 Utilising AI in knowledge management Chevonne Hobbs, Illuminet Solutions	28 TOM - bringing ITSM, ESM, XM, and more together Barclay Rae & Steve Cave, Barclay Rae Consulting
17:20 – 18:00	Delegate drinks and networking			
18:00	Conference close			
19:00 – 19:30	PSMA25 Pre-dinner drinks			
19:30 – 01:00	PSMA25 Awards Dinner with special guest Mark Watson			

TUESDAY 11TH NOVEMBER 2025

08:30 – 09:00	Registration and refreshments			
09:00 – 09:30	Keynote – Annette Andrews, Guest Speaker			
	Track 1 – Ballroom Central	Track 2 – Ballroom South	Track 3 – Ballroom North	Track 4 – Legends
09:35 – 10:20	29 Digital Transformation - breaking barriers, building the future Agnieszka Bochacka, Lotte Wedel	30 Are we all doing too much? The significance of cognitive load Cristan Massey, Pearson PLC	31 Are you willing to risk jail because of Shadow AI? Akshay Anand, Atlassian UK & James Finister, AI Ethicist	32 Sponsor Session TBC
10.20 – 10.40	Refreshments and networking			
10.45 – 11.30 (including 2 mins' silence at 11.00)	33 Implementing a global SIAM team – the Primark journey to date Neil O'Reilly, Primark	34 Developing and sustaining a culture of CI within a remote ITSM world Katie Trayers, Livestock Information Ltd	35 What XLAs Are NOT Doug Rabold, Bold Ray Consulting	36 Dopamine versus defence: rewiring human behaviour for cyber resilience Conor Horgan & Dr Clive King, Kepner Tregoe
11.35 – 12.20	37 Transforming major incident reviews for better outcomes Ian Porter, Nationwide	38 We will review you: elevating service management reviews to rock star status Geoff Soper & Ann-Marie Holloway, IPO	39 Practise what you preach: selecting the right tool for a consultancy Simon Powell, AtkinsRéalis	40 Sponsor Session TBC
12.20 – 13.20	Lunch and networking			
13.25 – 14.10	41 From chaos to control: quality assurance meets service management Bhuvana Sriharimohan & Munir Patel, ITV	42 Global standardisation of risk and impact levels Danielle Dilley & David Heaps, Vodafone	43 Agentic AI - one agent to rule them all Jaro Tomik, CDW Ltd	44 Sponsor Session TBC
14.10 – 14.25	Refreshments and networking			
14.25 – 15.10	45 Transforming problem management Charles Bougon & James Hollinworth, Direct Line Group	46 Transforming IT configuration data: from chaos to clarity Fiona Benoist & Sarah Routledge, Irwin Mitchell	47 Sponsor Session TBC	48 Nature's blueprint: biomimicry in IT service management Tuuli Bell, The ESG Institute
15.15 – 16.00	49 Sassy service desk Vavns Murphy, i3Works & Simone Jo Moore, HumanisingIT	50 ISO/IEC 20000, 9001, 27001, 19770 etc - which one is suitable for you? Lynda Cooper, Service 20000 Ltd	51 From firefighting to a solid cloud managed service, across Europe and LMICs Ben Clarke, Solidsoft Reply	52 Start small, think big: DTMethod in IT service management Rafal Czarny, Inprogress
16.00	Conference Close			

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Who is your favourite Gladiator?



Val Wilson reflects on some key shifts that have occurred in leadership styles, and how these changes are creating new opportunities for female leaders.

Who is your favourite Gladiator? This question sparks conversations across generations. Whether your answer is Jet, Lightning, Hunter, or the newer stars like Apollo, Saber, or Fury, everyone has a favourite Gladiator from the eponymous TV entertainment show. I've asked this question to several people recently, and it always leads to lively discussion. Some immediately reminisce about the original 90s Gladiators, recalling the excitement of Saturday nights. Others, too young to remember the original lineup, are just as passionate about the 2025 reboot. No-one can deny though that this show has lasted the test of time.

Leadership styles: then and now

Another topic that fuels great discussion is how leadership has evolved over the years. This was a key theme at itSMF UK's International Women's Day event, *Women in ITSM*, at Center Parc in March. The transformation in leadership styles over the decades has been both significant and necessary.

Having led teams for the last 24 years in a FTSE 100 tech firm, I've seen these changes

first-hand. Expectations from employees, customers, and society have shifted dramatically. Today, the most successful leaders create environments where teams feel safe, empowered, and valued. The result? Stronger engagement, higher performance, and ultimately, more successful businesses.

Key shifts in leadership

Leadership today looks very different from the past. We've seen several significant changes:

- From **command and control to servant and transformational leadership**
- From **top-down authority to collaborative, data-driven decision-making**
- From **one-way communication to psychological safety and open dialogue**
- From **limited emotional intelligence to empathetic, authentic leadership**
- From **IT department -led digital rollouts to leadership digital transformation**
- From **reactive crisis management to proactive, resilient strategies.**

This shift has redefined what we expect from leaders in 2025. To me, it can be summed up by leading through **G.R.A.C.E.**—leaders who are **Genuine, Resilient, Adaptive, Collaborative, and Empathetic.**

These qualities, in my opinion, are often more naturally found in female leaders. That's not to say that men don't possess these traits

or that all women do. However, research suggests these skills tend to be more prevalent in women. For years, leaders were encouraged to suppress traits like empathy and emotional intelligence; yet today, these are the very qualities that modern leadership courses emphasise as essential for building high-performing teams.

Now more than ever, employees expect these qualities in their leaders. Studies show that a person's manager is the single biggest influence on their performance and workplace experience. So maybe you are reading this today as a leader or indeed a member of a team: focus on improving and leaning into the above skills and create a team environment where people and businesses will thrive. Leading through GRACE.

Unlike the BBC's *Gladiators*, which has stood the test of time with its familiar format, leadership in tech has had to evolve. It has shifted to align with modern values, prioritising trust, relatability, and authenticity. Today's employees don't just want a leader—they want someone they can follow with confidence.

So, who is my favourite Gladiator then? The hilarious **Legend**.



Val addresses other ITSM leaders at 'Women in ITSM'.



Valerie Wilson

Valerie Wilson is Service Operations Director, BT and a Board Member of itSMF UK.

Don't miss our signature events

As always, itSMF UK has a huge range of webinars, masterclasses, forums and member meet-ups, most of them free of charge to members.

Check out the website for full details.

Our programme of signature events has been particularly popular this year. Don't miss out on these exciting topics:

- **SIAM: Future Directions** in June offers an update on the SIAM community from Scopism; service integration case studies from both Primark and the Ministry of Defence; and news of the joint working party on SIAM and Experience Management.
- **XLA25**, at the Imperial War Museum in Duxford in July, offers a great selection of case studies, highlighting how experience management is re-shaping the way we deliver services to customers.
- **Our Digital Transformation Business Simulation** in July is at St James Park, Newcastle: experience rapid change in a safe, simulated environment, adopt AIOps and ITXM in Enterprise Service

Management, improve your processes, and celebrate success!

- Why not join our annual **ITIL Case Study Day** at the British Motor Museum in September, presented by experienced practitioners at full throttle? Strap yourself in and enjoy our service management improvement journey with PeopleCert, Vodafone, Bupa and MS Amlin.
- The **Challenge Cup** competition offers a perfect opportunity for service management professionals to pit their wits against teams from other organisations. Why not give it a go this year?
- And **ITSM25**, our celebrated Conference & Awards, takes place in November – more information on page 6.

Be sure to sign up for at least one signature event this year!

SIAM: future directions

5 June

Online SM forum

XLA25

8 July

Imperial War Museum
Duxford

Digital Transformation Business Simulation

17 July

St. James' Park,
Newcastle



ITIL Case Study Day '25

17 Sept

British Motor Museum,
Gaydon



Challenge Cup 2025

October

Online

ITSM 25

Conference & Awards

10-11 Nov

Stadium MK,
Milton Keynes

The problem with problem is people



Problem management is the only ITIL discipline that prevents incidents from occurring or recurring. Given its potential impact, you would expect it to be viewed as a strategic organisational capability. Yet many organisations undervalue and overlook its importance, argues Ian MacDonald.

All ITIL processes are equal, but some are more equal than others

In many organisations, problem management is often the 'poor relation', treated as a lesser priority by management and practitioners alike than its peer discipline, incident management. Over time, this fosters poor attitudes and behaviours, creating a culture of indifference to its importance and value.

Apples and pears

This indifference towards problem management typically stems from a lack of management commitment and strategic positioning, driven by misplaced perceptions and unfair comparisons. While incident and problem management share the common goal of minimising business impact, their approaches are fundamentally different.

Consider this comparison: incident management is like a paramedic focused on rapid response and stabilisation, while problem management is the Accident & Emergency department, diagnosing issues and ensuring long-term health. While both are

essential, their timescales and skill sets differ significantly.

Incident management aims to deliver results in minutes or hours as it prioritises speed, urgency, and immediate stability, aiming to restore service as quickly as possible. In contrast, problem management operates on timelines of days, weeks or even months as it takes a methodical approach, identifying and verifying root causes to implement permanent long-term solutions.

Misplaced management perceptions

When success is measured primarily by speed, incident management's quick fixes appear more effective than problem management's long-term solutions. This reinforces the false perception that problem management is slow and ineffective. The urgency of incidents further amplifies incident management's visibility and perceived value, strengthening its priority over problem management.

These often-ingrained perceptions shape the IT organisation's culture and priorities:

- **Resolution is valued over prevention:** Practitioners receive more recognition for solving incidents than preventing them.
- **A 'superhero' culture emerges:** Those frequently involved in incident resolution are seen as more valuable.
- **Incident involvement boosts visibility:** Being a firefighter is believed to raise practitioners' profiles and career prospects.
- **Firefighting takes precedence:** Resources, budgets, and leadership attention are skewed towards incident response rather than prevention.

Without management support and commitment, problem management remains poorly understood and underappreciated. Its core purpose of preventing incidents and recurrence is deprioritised, and lacks focus, resources, and investment. This ongoing cultural indifference reinforces its diminished status as a discipline that is of lesser importance and delivers minimal value. **Meanwhile, incidents continue to recur that could have been prevented.**

Establishing effective problem management: prioritising the right dimension

So, how do we address this? ITIL 4 recommends using the 'Four Dimensions' when establishing or improving any IT practice:

- **Organisations and people**
- **Information and technology**
- **Value streams and processes**
- **Partners and suppliers.**

This encourages a holistic approach to ensure no critical elements are overlooked. However, my observations are that many organisations gravitate and overemphasise processes, procedures (value streams and processes), and tools (information and technology). While important, they are only enablers.

Problem management doesn't happen without people. Even with the best tools and processes, if staff aren't motivated, engaged, or incentivised to perform problem management activities, nothing will change. At the end of the day, it's your people, not your tools, that identify root causes and drive permanent solutions.

Strategic positioning is key to shaping the right attitudes, behaviours and culture. People must understand its value, embrace within their role, and be motivated to apply their expertise in solving the underlying cause of incidents. A strong organisational foundation is essential, making the *organisations and people* dimension the primary area of focus if problem management is to become a key organisational capability.

Easy as 'ABC': 8 key steps

The *organisations and people* dimension requires leadership and management focus

to identify the essential strategic elements that will positively influence attitudes, behaviours, and culture, embedding problem management as a core capability that delivers value. Key steps include:

1. **Create a strong value proposition:** Promote problem management's value. Make this compelling by focusing on business and customer outcomes like service quality, service stability, CX/UX, and managing technical debt. Avoid ITIL jargon like 'incident prevention' and 'root cause'.
2. **Branding:** The word *problem* can have negative connotations. When naming your problem management team and roles choose a positive solution orientated name i.e., *service stability*, *service reliability*, or *service protection* to reinforce your value proposition.
3. **Align with IT objectives:** Make incident prevention a clear IT objective and/or critical success factor with top-level KPIs and aligned team and individual objectives. Remember the adage of *what gets measured, gets done!*
4. **Leadership commitment:** IT leaders need to evangelise the benefits of problem management, champion its adoption and support teams doing it. (Cynical me: If their rewards depend on incident prevention, they'll ensure it happens!)
5. **Clarify roles and responsibilities:** IT practitioners are responsible for problem-solving. The problem management team oversees the process (accountable) but doesn't solve issues directly. IT practitioners (responsible) own the root causes of issues in their domains. Make incident prevention explicit in formal job descriptions.
6. **Education and training:** ITIL isn't a silver bullet. Train IT teams in real problem-solving techniques like Kepner-Tregoe, 8D, and 5 Whys. Make your central team a centre of excellence in these techniques.

7. **Establish governance:** Set up a *Problem Review Board (PRB)*, chaired monthly by senior management, this is akin to the change advisory board. The PRB ensures that progress is being made with high-impact problems and that any proposed closures are rigorously reviewed. No true root cause? No closure.
8. **Reward and recognition:** Recognise and reward incident prevention to drive cultural change. Balance incentives between incident and problem management.

Reflection

Problem management is only as effective as the people behind it. The best tools and processes mean little without motivated, engaged, and incentivised staff. Organisations that embed problem management as a strategic capability, backed by strong leadership and a problem-solving culture, can shift from reactive firefighting to proactive incident prevention. This shift leads to greater service reliability, enhanced CX/UX, and reduced technical debt.



Ian MacDonald

Ian MacDonald is an award-winning ITSM consultant, author and trainer.

Problem management: reflecting on a decade of progress and challenges

Many of the issues raised in Ian's article are echoed by our new white paper on problem management.

Around ten years ago, itSMF UK's Problem Management Special Interest Group (PM SIG) surveyed its membership about the state and perception of problem management within their organisations.

Recently itSMF UK decided to find out what had changed in the problem management world over the last decade. Armed with the original questions and answers, Barry Corless – who wrote the 2014 research paper as chair of the former SIG – has been talking to representatives of member organisations to see if we have moved on.

To read the updated paper, visit www.itsmf.co.uk/problem_update/





The correct

to stack the dishwasher

Richard Horton has spent a decade and more in the service management kitchen. Here are some musings on what the dishwasher might have to say about ITSM. When the rinse cycle finishes will everything be clean? And will everyone still be on speaking terms when it comes to the next load?

Dishwashers are indispensable to many of us. We take it for granted that they are there, our willing servants, ready to make life easier. At the end of the meal, in go the dishes, and we leave it to do its stuff. Service management can be a bit like that, taken for granted and indispensable. But it wasn't this that made me think of the dishwasher analogy.

I have been struck by the strength of opinion that people have about how to stack a dishwasher. Should you rinse first? What stacks best where? What should be washed by hand? What do you do with sharp knives? Maybe you will get a sharp correction. Or maybe someone will just move it back after you have moved away.

The thing is, despite academic study into these questions, there aren't rules for these things. And, as in frameworks like ITIL, "it depends" is more important than you might think at first. It is unlikely that what you do will break the dishwasher. Maybe this makes people all the more willing to have their own opinion and stick to it.

Who knows best?

I have found that people in other areas can have a strong view on what service management is responsible for. This doesn't necessarily correlate with my view or indeed with the view of people in other areas. If you are not careful, then rather than having one process applied for everyone you can have a customised process for each area. And people are only too willing to find what they see as valid exceptions to whatever rules are in place.

Of course, we know that our role is to enable change, not to control it, and we've spent years working on that balance. To provide appropriate assurance we often need people to do a little more than they want to. Our perspective is likely to be a broader one, seeing potential impacts across areas. But how are we perceived? People who get in the way or people who help?

There is a certain irony here that IT service managers find it so difficult to describe what they do. It starts with the basics. We find it hard to give a clear and meaningful definition of what a service is in the first place. I've blogged about that before for ITSMF. If we find it so hard, we shouldn't be surprised when our work colleagues struggle to understand what we do and what they can expect from us. So maybe it's not such a surprise when

we find ourselves viewed in different ways by different people.

Where all this started for me was a story told by someone I know well. He observed that his father-in-law had been very supportive of him as a son-in-law, and had not tried to change him. There was however one point where the son-in-law was corrected: when he was stacking the dishwasher incorrectly. I doubt whether what was being done was so fundamentally wrong to merit a once in a decade correction. But we do have particular views about how things should be done. Let's explore this a little more.

So how do we use a dishwasher?

To start with, what sort of dishwashing scenario are we talking about? This has a big impact on what is appropriate. In a mass catering context, industrial efficiency is the driver. The supply of large numbers of identically shaped dirty plates at the same time supports this. I'm more interested in the home scenario, which is more analogous to a smaller business.

Take my house. I thrive on having people round for meals. On Christmas Day there were 10 of us sat round the dining table. This despite the fact that we had only moved into the house 10 days earlier. In the days when I had no dishwasher there were times when it felt like I lived at the sink (as I didn't make my guests wash up). Now, when entertaining, we try to run the dishwasher at the start of the meal. This will process pots and pans used for preparation, and anything else lying around. Then, when it finishes, we add the plates. For a big meal there will be another run the following morning, for things like large pans and dishes.

Meanwhile posh wine glasses and handmade dishes are done by hand. The net result, the kitchen is (reasonably) tidy and we've not spent all night washing up. The key points here are that we think about when we run the dishwasher and we use it differently at different times. We only have one dishwasher, but what is dirty varies.

All this is very similar to a service management world. We often can't control what comes at us. But we will have constraints to work within about what we can process. We will need to organise ourselves to process work in an efficient and effective manner.

So, going back to the difficulty people have working out what we do, maybe that's something we should work on. In our dishwashing context, maybe a visitor wants to help stack the dishwasher. If so you would make sure they know what is your precious dish that must be done by hand and if you have any particular foibles about how things are stacked.

In a service management context what would help people engage with us? Where do we want people to follow standard routes? What makes an exception that justifies custom treatment? I have found that when you help them navigate a specific challenge people start to see you as an enabling rather than a constraining force. Doing the small things well can open up larger opportunities.

As an example, we have a number of volunteer groups in my organisation. These encompass such topics as how we get more from our core tools through to wellbeing and inclusion. I've found that getting involved in these reveals what people actually do and informs what will help them do things in the way we are after. Basically making it easier to do things right than wrong. Easier said than done, but people appreciate it when it happens.

Washing by hand and other variants

A challenge here for us as IT service managers links back to the dishwasher scenario. If we don't have a cooking device we can't cook the food, and if we don't have crockery then we struggle to serve and eat our food. But if we don't have a dishwasher there is an alternative of washing by hand. Not always a helpful alternative but it can blur the lines between what is a good idea and what is possible. Can we bypass all the process checks and just do it anyway? Yes. Will there be consequences? Quite probably. Does it matter? Depends on the scenario.

On an epi-pen the instructions basically say that there could be serious side effects if you inject yourself. They go on to say that the alternative could be death so just do it anyway if you need it. However examples like the epi-pen are exceptions. And, almost by definition, the exception should not be the norm. So, we want people to understand that putting the dishes through the dishwasher in an orderly way helps them as well as us.

What about rinsing? The academic theory is that you shouldn't. Scraping yes, rinsing no. But there's another factor here. If you leave the dishwasher to do the rinsing then you need to clean the filter more. Now, I know that I'm rather better at loading and unloading a dishwasher than cleaning the filter. So I know it makes good sense to make sure that the worst is off those plates and pans before they go in, even if, theoretically, it isn't the most efficient approach. Maybe one could compare rinsing to assurance checks. How many do we do, and what purpose do they serve? We

“Our role is to enable change, not to control it, and we've spent years working on that balance.”

don't want to be ticking the box for the sake of ticking the box. But let's spare a thought for the poor person who fields the change that has caused implementation problems. Whether or not the customer is impacted directly we've made life more challenging for our staff.

Here's another service management analogy. Ever come across people wanting to chop bits off the process to get an earlier implementation? The way a dishwasher works the final phase is its residual heat drying everything. So, yes, you can open the dishwasher before the end of the cycle, but don't expect the same result. Short-cuts can be taken to accelerate delivery, but the quality may suffer. When people say they want to be "pragmatic" I keep an eye open for what they think it's OK to lose. Maybe it's all OK. But maybe they are cheerfully sacrificing something important. The short term gains of delivering something may be outweighed by the reputational impact of getting it wrong, for example.

You and me

Continuing with the people theme, a dishwasher is a machine. But it's a machine to serve people. If the way we use it causes friction in the kitchen that isn't a good result. Our IT service management is about providing business value, absolutely. But it's about working with people. We want those people to feel their lives have been enhanced by coming into contact with the ITSM dishwasher.

OK, let's run through an evening meal scenario. What scenes could highlight some of the service management old chestnuts.

To come at it from a slightly different angle here is life with a dishwasher imagined in an ITSM world.

- Before the meal (aka **Start where you are**): The projects versus service management divide (over the fence). Getting early enough

visibility of what is being done to put ideas into practice remains an enduring challenge.

- Before serving (aka **Think holistically**): What resources do we need? What will happen after implementation (is everything for the meal lined up? Can you get an initial dishwasher load going?) Establishing and working with acceptance criteria
- Getting the food to the table (**Collaborate and promote visibility**): It would be nice if the food people eat is food they can eat. If there's an allergy friendly dish it needs to go to the right person. Communications breaking down is another old chestnut. Does everyone who needs to know realise the change is being released?
- During the meal: Operational services – no news is good news. At the table, the dishwasher is out of sight and mind: allowing focus on what is important. Responding to customer needs. **Keep it simple and practical**. What do people need to know to give them confidence that everything is under control? Demonstrating competence. When we have plans do we fulfil them?
- Between courses: A lot of work may be done by suppliers and contracts come to an end. We want smooth handover to whatever comes next, whether it is more of the same or a shift to something new. Here we want to be good customers and ask for what we actually want (easier said than done). **Focus on value**. Tendering – being on receiving end and issuing them.
- Dessert: How do we ensure that the last course is right sized? Maybe portion size will need to be adapted based on how full people are. **Progress iteratively with feedback**. Pilots can prove what you can do (including resourcing) and allow setting up something that aligns with your needs.
- After the meal. Washing by hand (manual tasks) has its place, but the dishwasher comes into its own. **Optimise and automate**. Dealing with everyone else's view of your role. Simplifying approvals.

- And finally... thanking the host. The dishwasher is not mentioned but has been an important part of a successful evening, and the host knows it. Even if we are not praised to the rafters, we can and should celebrate success internally, and find ways to communicate what value we have added. But let's keep a sense of proportion. We're a dishwasher, not the meal. Maybe I should be viewing the kitchen as the analogy rather than a dishwasher. Then things become more integrated and it's harder to mould ITSM in your image. But that's one for another day.

When the dishwasher has finished

So, going back to my dishwasher theme...

- You can stack how you like but you need to work within the constraints of the machine
- Pots and pans will have different requirements to plates or glasses. One approach does not fit all scenarios even if you are using the same framework
- There is probably a right way of stacking for what you have – but do you know what you will be washing up? Don't try to make things too perfect
- Sometimes processing a load is more important than correct stacking. Keep the pressing priorities in mind
- The end result matters – will it be clean
- Understand valid exception cases
- Everyone knows best... can you work with different views

A final thought. A dishwasher is built to cope with a variety of uses, but has a fixed capacity. It works because it is resilient and fool proof, not because you stacked it correctly. May your service management setup be equally effective!



Richard Horton

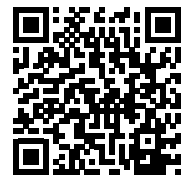
Richard Horton is Head of IT Service Management at NIHR RDNC. He is a former itSMF UK director with a history of running itSMF groups and events, and is the incoming chair of itSMF International.

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Explore the ITSM world at SITS – The Service Desk & IT Support Show

SITS – The Service Desk & IT Support Show and the MSP Show are returning on 14-15 May to Excel London.



SITS boasts the only free ITSM education programme in Europe, made up of seminars, panels, breakfast briefings and hot topic workshops.

Event Director, Alice Fulton said “We are thrilled to welcome attendees to this year’s show, where technology, collaboration, and learning take centre stage. With an incredible lineup of exhibitors, expert-led sessions, and networking opportunities, the event is set to be our best yet!”

“Rapidly assess all your ITSM platform needs and tools in one place”

The event is the largest in Europe focused on IT Service Management. 70+ ITSM vendors will be showcasing the latest IT service solutions, aiming to enhance the efficiency of IT service delivery. Attendees will experience tailored demos, compare service offerings and get their questions answered

from leading service providers, including Freshworks, Hornbill, Valiantys, TOPdesk and ManageEngine.

itSMF UK, the country’s leading membership association for service management professionals, will also be exhibiting at SITS on stand 114. Their team will be providing information on membership benefits and events, and answering any questions.

Visitor Benjamin Shaw from HM Courts and Tribunals said, “Meeting so many vendors helps us stay ahead of the game, we can’t wait for next year.”

“I learnt lots of practical advice I’ll be using when I return to work”

Visitors can take advantage of two packed days of sessions, full of practical advice and industry updates. Topics cover everything from agentic AI and problem management to security and automation. Seminars will be delivered by experts from the industry and beyond.

Thomas Mackenzie, Director of Product Strategy at Lansweeper, will be delivering the seminar ‘Integrating cybersecurity into IT service management: practical strategies for strengthening security’. The session offers practical strategies for enhancing cybersecurity within ITSM frameworks. It will explore how ITSM professionals can incorporate security measures into incident management, change management, and service request workflows. Thomas will highlight straightforward, actionable steps that can be seamlessly integrated into existing processes, without adding unnecessary complexity.

The session ‘Redefining success: navigating career growth and change in IT service management’ with Georgina Otubela, Brit Insurance, will explore how IT professionals can redefine success and navigate career growth in a rapidly evolving industry. Attendees will gain advice on overcoming barriers like imposter syndrome, leveraging mentorship, and future-proofing their careers.

For a case-study on how partnership-driven collaboration empowers teams, Terry Haines, Alf Mounter and Glenn Grice from the Maritime and Coastguard Agency will be delivering the session ‘How IT supports saving lives at sea’. Visitors will discover how IT professionals play a vital role in safeguarding lives, driving results, and cultivating a sense of purpose and belonging, reinforcing the idea that IT is not just a support function but a cornerstone of lifesaving operations at sea.

‘SAM as a service - acting as an internal MSP’ will be delivered by Julia Veall from Vodafone VOIS. The session will dive into how Vodafone VOIS is changing the way that software asset management can be delivered internally to their customers. Acting as an internal MSP in this way is empowering them to build standardised processes and customer journeys using appropriate tooling.

“The education programme offers a great opportunity to hear, share and discuss relevant, important and current topics from within our industry!” commented visitor Elisa Garcia from Valeo.

“I left feeling inspired and equipped with practical strategies to enhance how we do business as an MSP”

Returning after its launch last year is the MSP Show, dedicated to the rapidly growing managed service provider sector.

Building on the success of the show last year, this time there will be even more exhibitors and seminars. The exhibition will include a diverse list of leading MSP suppliers alongside a comprehensive conference programme.

Attendees will have the chance to engage with key suppliers including HaloPSA, ThreatLocker, NinjaOne and ConnectWise, as well as meeting with new exhibitors such as enhanced.io, DriveSavers Data Recovery and Cloud in the Channel.

The seminar programme will be expanded from one to two theatres to provide invaluable education and inspiration from thought leaders and experts, to help MSPs grow their businesses.

“The first MSP Show was a great use of mine and my team’s time to make new connections, reconnect with channel friends and learn what’s new and innovative in the MSP space,” commented Ian Luckett, The MSP Growth Hub.

“Year in, year out, my favourite UK event to meet vendors, gain insights and network”

Alongside new features to explore, visitors can also network with their community at the annual post-show drinks, where they can unwind after a busy day.

The 29th edition of SITS and second edition of the MSP Show will unite thousands of industry peers from around the world. Attendees will leave with fresh ideas and inspiration to help push their careers forward.



SITS, The Service Desk & IT Support Show and the MSP Show are back on 14-15 May 2025 at Excel London.

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Putting ITSM on the university curriculum



A service management colleague once said that the best thing about attending itSMF UK Conference is that there is always something there to surprise. It could be an entire presentation or just an idea which is mixed in with conversations, or even a small nugget by way of a throwaway comment.

ITSM24 last November was no exception. Conferences like this are an opportunity to assess the state of play regarding service management and importantly (for me) to gauge what people think regarding education's role which too often gets missed off in discussions.

It was a pleasure to have the opportunity to present about the Open University's service management simulation, which is included in a module of the computing degree. Presenting at 9.00AM on the second day is always a challenge, but (all things considered) attendance was good and I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to those who decided it was an effective use of their time.

It was during ITSM24 that I also picked up on that 'nugget' – a casual comment which I'll come back to later in this article.

It did set me thinking, though, about why we have been slow to take up teaching service management in our university system. Indeed the fact that service management is delivered primarily by training organisations is written into our history. It was because, initially, the techniques were likely to be

more relevant to those already working in IT. During the early days service management education focused on technical people exploring how best to deliver business-efficient systems which included a service element. But we have now reached critical mass in this regard, and those IT-related objectives have been fulfilled. What we should now be considering is how to disseminate this knowledge further afield, and especially to young people with no prior knowledge of the workings of IT.

It's clear that we need to teach our students about IT service management. However, either through bad luck or bad judgement, we have only been able to include relevant material in a handful of university degree courses so far. The reason for this comes down to a complex mix of circumstances which have not been easy to unpick. What we know is that businesses need it, the service management industry wants it, and students deserve it. If we create the right environment, we already have the proof that it can work.

There is no doubt that the more technically-minded computing students need to have key elements of ITSM including in their degree, but some educationists argue that

serving up too much can encourage them to switch them off. What they need is a trimmed down knowledge set which complements the material delivered on a traditional computing degree programme.

Three-fold approach

How then can we move this discussion forward? In my view it requires a three-fold approach based on being creative and thinking laterally.

- First, it is important that we deconstruct and understand university course structures (computing and business), examine pre-degree content and attempt to understand the nuances of the compulsory education curriculum to see how it all might knit together with service management material.
- Second, given the energy and work put into the original Professional Skills Management Framework (PSMF), which was devised by itSMF UK members working within the industry, it is important to consider how those roles and topics fit in with the content described in the university degree subject descriptors for both the computing and business domains.
- Third, the underlying support mechanism should be organised around Skills for the Information Age (SFIA), which contains the bread and butter profiles and definitions built into degree and training programmes.

Further to this, we should create a core learning environment which offers the basic knowledge of service management. This could be badged as a pre-degree qualification aimed at education level 3.

This will then lead onto creating a dedicated ITSM degree apprenticeship route to be delivered by the university sector. By designing a specialist degree for our industry, we can then start to think more creatively about a more robust continual development plan which is built upon knowledge gained in the degree.

How else can we support professionalism and embed this into an ITSM degree apprenticeship? Two complementary university disciplines offer some inspiration here: education and nursing. To explain, newly qualified teachers undergo substantive post-degree mentorship as they go out and teach in the real world. Established teachers monitor the new teacher and work with them so that they are able to develop their teaching skills in the classroom. Similarly, newly qualified nurses undergo a mentor-review process managed by established nurses who are already working in practice and hospitals. The review process goes towards proving that they are competent to deal with real-life patients.

Learning from teachers and nurses

As we know, huge emphasis is now placed on 'the people factor' in ITSM, so it is not beyond the bounds of logic that this is what we need for our industry. My suggestion, then, is that at the completion of the ITSM degree apprenticeship, students should be conferred with Newly Qualified Status (NQS) and undergo a similar process to teachers and nurses.

With the help of the service management community the NQS students could undergo mentoring and professional development activities which will take place over the following year. These activities would be monitored and logged and form part of the individual's professional record.

At the end of that cycle the student would be encouraged to embark upon further continual professional development phased to work alongside their career. With a dedicated degree apprenticeship approach, students would have a sound knowledge of ITSM and business content which would form the bedrock of their knowledge. It would then lend itself to them embarking on a more proactive continual personal development cycle to take charge of their own career planning.

For example, if ITIL, PRINCE, SIAM, Agile, and ISO 20,000 were included in education at foundation level, we could start to shape up a more progressive continual development process that individuals would likely find more attractive. In other words, why not put foundation level material in mainstream education, and let the training community

concentrate on more specialist learning? If we have a solid base of students with foundation knowledge, this will likely spawn interest for continual development and the market will naturally expand. As ITSM and business content will be delivered as part of the degree, it would likely be of interest to those students with a more passionate interest in business systems and/or business than perhaps trying desperately to force-feed ITSM to the more technically minded students, where computer science is their real passion.

As things stand, by trying to retrofit ITSM into traditional computing and business degrees, we run the risk of having too many gaps, too little engagement with academics and their deans of study, and little opportunity to explore career options for post-degree students. Creating a dedicated degree route would be a more expansionist approach and thus naturally create a wider range of options for ITSM professionalism in the round.

What this means is that post-degree students could (with advanced CPD routes and the support from the ITSM community) find a career path suited to their skills and attributes. For example, there would no doubt be routes for ITSM generalists, ITSM/business specialists, consultants or educators. It won't have gone unnoticed that we do not have a mechanism to support those wishing to develop a career to teach ITSM either in schools or universities. This final point is a huge issue.

Thus, budding professionals would be able to focus on their attributes and interests and work towards collecting credits. If we get it right, it would provide a more solid base for the creation of a Service Management Chartered Status.

This type of plan could generate the energy needed to move ITSM forward in education. With an altruistic eye, it could create an environment where the department for education, the university sector and the service management community join together to make it work. Without key stakeholder engagement from all sides, it cannot work.

If we were really smart, we could find a way to integrate training course qualifications into post-graduate higher education awards like masters' degrees. At Bolton and Northampton Universities, we proved that this was possible as the core ITSM qualifications were given credits off degree study. The degrees in both institutions were shored up with quality complementary material which extended and expanded the student's knowledge beyond ITSM.

Back to the 'nugget'

To finish, this takes us back to the 'nugget' mentioned earlier. At Conference I heard it said that universities and the training community are in competition with each other. The comment was quite shocking and

without any firm basis of truth. Universities would not see themselves as competing with training organisations, because education has its ways of doing things, including its own mechanisms for how to include content. Some universities like degrees which are an easy sell to potential students and their parents or sponsors. Take it from me, building in material which is above and beyond the content described in the university sector subject descriptors is not easy to achieve. I have the scars. ITSM needs the right environment to flourish in a university. It requires an amenable set of academics to push it and certainly a dean of study who is willing to take a risk.

Based on evidence from what we have achieved already, we know that including ITSM in degrees is possible. I have witnessed my former students going on to achieve great things even from studying a small amount of ITSM material at undergraduate level.

With my considerable knowledge of writing and developing ITSM material for the university sector, I have already done the mapping for the ITSMF PSMF, and I have also developed a course outline for a dedicated ITSM degree apprenticeship which includes a CPD route. My latest challenge is to develop a basic course aimed at pre-degree level, which with the support from my colleagues at the Open University we may be able to deliver as part of our Open Learn Scheme.

It is obvious that we need to take a more pragmatic approach, and thus we have the potential to create new market spaces which will be of benefit to universities, employers and the ITSM community. We need to stop thinking in terms of this faux competition; we need to think more creatively and (importantly) we need to do the right thing for the next generation of learners.



Sandra Whittleston

Sandra Whittleston has worked in education for over 30 years and is a strong advocate for teaching IT service management effectively within the university system. She currently works for the Open University.

ISO/IEC 20000: an annual update



A big thank you to all itSMF UK members who took part in the ISO/IEC 20000 Survey 2024, giving us a great snapshot of what's happening in the service management standards community across the world. Lynda Cooper summarises the results.

208 respondents took part in our annual survey, representing 38 countries including the UK, Republic of Korea, India, Australia, Canada, Japan, and the USA. 29% of respondents represented small organisations of up to 250 staff, 15% were mid-sized, up to 1000 staff, and the remainder were from larger organisations. The roles of respondents varied as consultants/ trainers, SM managers/ practitioners, auditors and compliance managers were all represented.

52% of those who responded were from organisations certified to ISO/IEC 20000-1. The reasons for certification are shown in the chart below. The main reasons for not certifying were lack of demand from customers and regulators, lack of support for this certification from management, or lack of budget.

Is the organisation certified to ISO/IEC 20000-1, and why?

52% of respondents (93) said they were certified. 47% (87) were not certified.

See figure 1.

Other comments about certification:

- Since we obtain certification for each service, the motivation for obtaining it varies depending on the service.
- Required for integration with our other ISO certified management systems.

Further feedback from the community

The free-format comment section at the end of the survey yielded some excellent insights. It is especially interesting to balance the negative comments with the positive ones and other suggestions.

Negative comments

- Centric to process owners, not holistic enough.
- Relic of the waterfall era.
- Moving to ISO/IEC 27001, AI etc; earlier importance of ISO/IEC 20000 slowly dying, less relevant to organisations.
- Struggled to demonstrate cost-effectiveness and value of SM and certification.
- ITIL 4 also describes a management system – the SVS – and books are more 'modern' with agile and connections to DevOps and Lean.

Positive comments

- ISO/IEC 20000 has been a benchmark for helping organisations to transform and standardise services.
- The ISO/IEC 20000 framework drives value to the organisation in adhering to standards and is beneficial.
- We use ISO as a support to measure how the ITIL framework is delivering against the standard, should we ever feel brave enough to venture into ISO certification
- ISO/IEC 20000 certification is helpful for complying with government regulatory requirements.

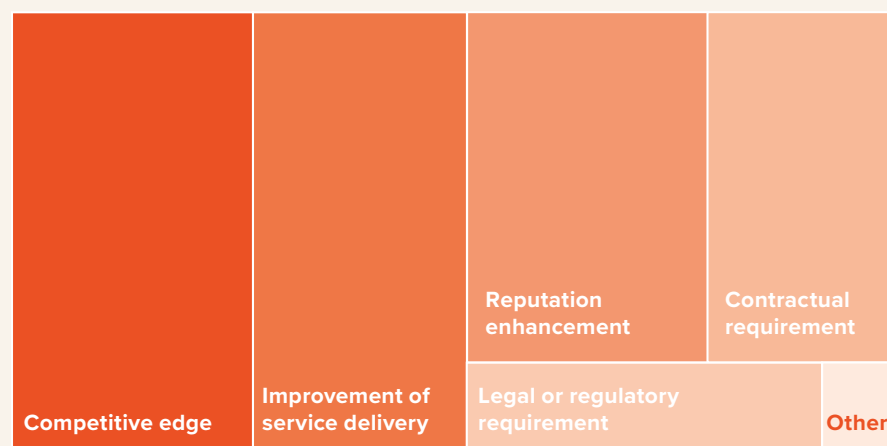
Other suggestions

- Strengthen promotion of the standard.
- Suggest ways to utilise ISO/IEC 20000-1 for cloud users.
- A strategic approach is needed to ensure that various benefits can be provided at the government level.
- It would be beneficial to have methods that can be efficiently aligned with regulations in each country – for example, obtaining ISO/IEC 20000 certification could be evaluated as automatically complying with certain government regulations.

The output from this survey has been discussed at the international and the UK committees and is leading to action plans for further papers to raise awareness about various topics and input into any future update of ISO/IEC 20000.

Reasons for Certification (Figure 1)

- Reputation enhancement
- Improvement of service delivery
- Contractual requirement
- Competitive edge
- Legal or regulatory requirement
- Other



Lynda Cooper

Lynda Cooper is an independent consultant and trainer, and is the project editor for ISO/IEC 20000-1. She chairs the BSI committee for service management and sits on various ISO/IEC committees representing the UK. She can be contacted via LinkedIn or at ynda.cooper@service20000.com.

IT's emotional shift: why XLAs matter now



XLAs have emerged as a game-changer, helping IT focus on user outcomes rather than just technical outputs. Steve Fleming considers why they are having such a profound impact across the service management world.

IT might seem like the last place you'd expect emotions to come into play, but the truth is, IT is an emotional experience.

Think about it: how often do you hear someone say, *"Using this app makes me feel stupid,"* or *"Connecting to the VPN is so frustrating,"* or even *"I hate having to log in 20 times a day!"* These aren't just technical complaints—they're expressions of frustration, stress, and even a sense of personal failure.

Major IT changes, like moving to a new ERP or CRM tool, can evoke feelings of anxiety, loss or grief, as people grapple with altered workflows or worry about their place in the organization.

Conversely, a single positive interaction with IT support—like a helpful engineer at the Tech

Bar—can turn a bad day around for someone under pressure.

Why? Because IT sits at the heart of how we work. It enables—or obstructs—our ability to get things done. And since work plays a significant role in shaping our identity, IT has a direct line to our emotions.

In this emotionally-charged environment, IT service managers are realising the importance of **Experience Level Agreements (XLAs)**.

What are XLAs?

In IT service management, XLAs have emerged as a game-changer, helping IT focus on user outcomes rather than just technical outputs. Unlike traditional SLAs, which measure operational metrics like response times or system uptime, XLAs also evaluate the emotional resonance and perceived value of IT services.

For example, while an SLA might track how quickly a ticket was resolved, an XLA

for the related product or service might help prevent future tickets, based on a deeper understanding of the overall service experience, and the impact on the end user.

In a world of hybrid work and rising customer expectations, XLAs help IT teams deliver valuable, people-centric experiences.

Sentiment analysis: the heart of XLAs

The XLA Institute identifies three types of data integral to these agreements:

- 1. Technical (T) data:** device crashes, app launch times, CPU load, and so on.
- 2. Operational (O) data:** SLAs and KPIs like availability and mean time to resolve.
- 3. Sentiment (X) data:** feedback on how people actually feel about IT services.

See figure 1.

Of these, sentiment data is king. According to the XLA Institute, "Sentiment data is the most

Figure 1



important of these three data types. While an XLA may omit the technical and operational data, it **must** measure sentiment.” Moving to sophisticated XLAs can feel overwhelming, so the XLA Institute has outlined three maturity levels to help organisations progress through the process:

- **XLA 1.0:** Sentiment data only.
- **XLA 2.0:** Multi-data integration (sentiment + operational and/or technical data).
- **XLA 3.0:** Personas—tailoring services to specific user groups.

While XLA 2.0 and 3.0 can require significant investment, starting with XLA 1.0 is both manageable and impactful. Collecting and analysing sentiment data is the first step to understanding how users truly feel about your IT services and what matters most to them.

Sentiment analysis, especially when powered by AI, transforms end user feedback into actionable insights for IT by identifying and quantifying emotions expressed in survey responses. **See figure 2.**

In the past few years sentiment gathering technology has advanced tremendously, providing IT service managers with the ability to quickly and easily:

1. **Collect meaningful data:** Well-crafted email surveys with automated distribution capabilities help engage a wide audience, ensuring statistically reliable data while avoiding survey fatigue. Aim for response rates in the region of 20%-40%.
- **Analyse survey ratings:** Advanced statistical tools and machine learning algorithms help identify the main drivers

of satisfaction and pinpoint IT's highest-priority improvements. This is key when you are being asked to do more with less. **See figure 3.**

- **Interpret verbatim text:** Specialist AI models can extract trends and generate summaries faster and more accurately than manual analysis. Technology that goes beyond basic keyword matching to detect nuanced emotions like sarcasm, frustration, or gratitude will help you empathise better with end users. **See figure 4.**
- **Segment with precision:** It's not a one-size-fits-all world. Different departments, roles, and locations often have vastly different IT needs. Segmentation ensures that each group's unique experiences are captured in a way that enables more precise action planning, and can help earn and retain the trust of key stakeholders.
- **Create user personas:** While full persona mapping belongs to XLA 3.0, specialist AI tools can identify emerging user personas based on patterns in sentiment data, giving you a head start. Aim for 4-6 personas, and maintain a mini-XLA for each one.
- **Visualise data intuitively:** Not all stakeholders are technically minded, so use an intuitive and user-friendly dashboard to share key findings and get everyone on the same page. Ideally, publish results within 24 hours of survey close to engage decision makers early and accelerate action planning.

Why this matters now

The world of IT service management is evolving faster than ever: hybrid work, digital transformation, and rising expectations have

Figure 2



made end user experience a key differentiator. Starting with sentiment allows IT leaders to build a foundation of actionable insights—without overwhelming their teams or stakeholders with complexity. Whether you're dealing with frustrated end users, planning a major IT change, or striving to align IT with organisation goals, AI-powered sentiment analysis (XLA 1.0) should be your first step on the path to sustainable—and measurable—success.

It's time to put emotions at the centre of IT Service Management. After all, IT is an emotional experience—so let's use those emotions to drive better outcomes for everyone.



Steve Fleming

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Figure 3

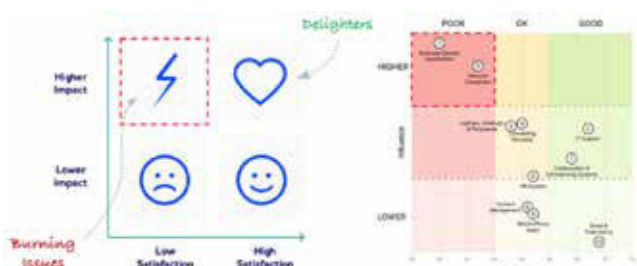
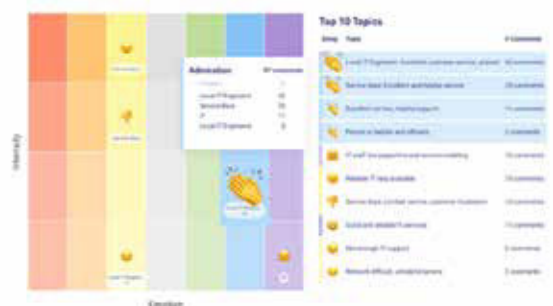


Figure 4



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of Practice



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LAST YEAR

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400

HOURS OF
ON-DEMAND
CONTENT



WITH
2800

EVENT
REGISTRATIONS



150+

ORGANISATIONS

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