

serviceTALK

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AI Governance does not start with AI



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Chairman:
Claire Drake

Vice Chair:
Kevin Sharp

General Manager:
Graham McDonald

Head of Professional Services:
Mark Lillycrop

Member Engagement Managers:
Andrea Dell
Gail Knight

Finance Manager:
Rebecca Andrews

Event Administrator:
Maria Berlanga

Design: Re:View Creative
www.re-view.design

All communications to:
Service Management Association Ltd
(trading as itSMF UK),
Ground Floor South, Burford House,
Leppington, Bracknell, Berkshire,
RG12 7WW, UK.

Tel: 0118 918 6500.
Email: membership@itsmf.co.uk

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**Women
in ITSM:**
insights and
inspiration



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Are you making the most of your itSMF UK membership?

Spring is here, the sun is out (well, sometimes), and the barbecues are being dusted off optimistically across the land. But even if the weather doesn't live up to expectations, ServiceTalk is guaranteed to bring a warming selection of content and articles, addressing those perennial service management challenges.

In this issue Kaimar Karu argues that we need to get IT governance right before we let AI loose on the organisation, a topic echoed by Barry Corless in his dramatic spin on AI and the new ITIL (version 5). From Ian Macdonald we have a cautionary tale about the impact of ITIL v3 on CSI; while our Antipodean contributors Michelle Major-Goldsmith and Simon Dorst bring us up to date with the SIAM Body of Knowledge and its new compendiums, providing an outer ring of

complementary information to support your service integration strategy.

If you're thinking about signing up for this year's Annual Conference, ITSM26, we have all the information you need right here. Don't miss Claire Burn's takeaways from our flagship event last year; and for anyone considering a nomination for the Professional Service Management Awards, there's a great interview with the 2025 Young ITSM Professional of the Year, Chloe Mackay.

This issue of ServiceTalk is published to coincide with our attendance at SITS, the Service Desk and IT Support Show in London; you can find out more about the exhibition in this issue, and if you're planning to attend, please visit us on stand 154 for a catch-up. We'd love to see you.



Mark Lillycrop
Head of Professional Services, itSMF UK
mark.lillycrop@itsmf.co.uk

Events Update

It's been a very busy spring for our events team, with online meetings delivered via Zoom, Teams or ClickMeeting and our in-person signature events hosted at popular venues across the country. The remaining 2026 signature dates can be found below, drawing members together to consider topics as diverse as SIAM, ITIL, customer experience, AI and digital transformation.

Alongside our regular line-up of masterclasses, member meet-ups and forums, we've added some topical webinars on ITIL (version 5) this year – led by members of the lead authoring team – while our member lunch & learn sessions have been concentrating on the impact of AI on the key service management practices.

Check out the dates and titles in our events calendar – and if you've missed the live running, remember that recordings of most events can be found in the member area of the website.

Finally, our Communities of Practice continue to provide excellent member-focused engagement on some key areas of service management. Our Armed Forces CoP recently rebranded as Defence, reaching out

to a much wider community. The Women in ITSM CoP ran a hugely successful in-person event in March (see Vawns Murphy's article in this issue), with much more to come. Meanwhile, our Service Design CoP has expanded to embrace Service Transition, with flourishing strategic and operational working parties providing some excellent content and discussion.

So (returning to the question posed at the top of the page) if you're wondering how to make the most of your membership, please check out a few of the events and groups outlined above. If you'd like help getting involved, if you have a burning desire to get a new CoP off the ground, or if you just want a chat about our organisation as we celebrate 35 years' service to ITSM, do reach out to any of the team or visit the website.

 9 June Online	 7 July The Belfry Hotel & Resort, Sutton Coldfield	 15 July Silverstone Museum, Northamptonshire	 17 Sept Edgbaston Cricket Ground, Birmingham	 29 Sept Online	 October Online	 9-10 Nov Stadium MK, Milton Keynes
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Changes on the Board

Following a reshuffle at the beginning of the year, some of the roles have changed on the itSMF UK Board.

Kevin Sharp becomes the new Vice Chair, replacing Cristan Massey of Pearson who takes on the Member Groups portfolio. Kevin, who is Global Head of Service Management at Janus Henderson Investors, joined the Board in 2022, since when he has chaired the Leadership Council, helping to build a strategic agenda relevant to the most senior managers in our membership.

Jason Hamer of Vodafone becomes the new Leadership Council Chair, while BT's Valerie Wilson steps back from Member Groups to

take on a key new role, focusing on itSMF's offerings around AI. She continues to lead the Women in ITSM community of practice.

Yogesh Patel of CereCore continues as Finance Director, while Board newcomer Chris Kingsbury of CGI will now steer our early years and education initiatives (check out the Youth Cabinet in other news). Finally, Keith Reeves of DHCW oversees risk management and state of ITSM; while Vawns Murphy (i3Works) and Dave Gordon (Arcadis) share responsibility for governance and secretariat.

Chair Claire Drake said, "I'm very pleased with the new Board roles, which should help us



New Vice Chair Kevin Sharp

provide stronger leadership in key areas such as youth and AI, as well as building on the organisation's value proposition across the service management community."



YOUTH CABINET
itSMF UK

For further information, contact
membership@itsmf.co.uk

ITSMF UK launches Youth Cabinet

itSMF UK is seeking members for a new **Youth Cabinet**, a dedicated voice for young professionals (aged 18-30) to help to make ITSM a visible, attractive career path for the next generation.

Cabinet members will be able to provide a youth perspective into itSMF councils and initiatives, helping to shape events, content, and community engagement and acting as ambassadors for the ITSM profession.

You don't need any particular experience to join – just passion for the profession and a desire to help influence its future.

Please share this message within your organisation. Those outside the target age range are very welcome to register as allies, supporting the group through mentoring and guidance.

Advance your career with expert Mentoring

Whether you're an experienced service management professional or a relative newcomer, working with a mentor is an extremely effective way to help develop the skills you need and reflect on your next career direction.

FREE to members, the itSMF UK Mentorship Programme 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.

Our mentors – all established ITSM professionals – are keen to share their knowledge and experience with colleagues and are equally willing to learn from a mentoring relationship. Facilitating the right connections through networking activities has long been a key part of our role at itSMF UK, and mentoring is a natural next step.



For further information about the programme – or to meet the mentors – visit www.itsmf.co.uk/services/mentorship/



And the winner is...



New this year: ITIL Project of the Year



The call for nominations for this year's Professional Service Management Awards (PSMA26) 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 great chance 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 9th November during Conference. With a fine menu, music and celebration, plus entertainment from our very special guest Maisie Adam, this will surely be an evening not to miss.

For individuals, we'll be choosing the Young Professional and Contributor of the Year; while for organisations, we're adding the new ITIL Project of the Year category to complement our Team, Service Innovation and Customer Experience awards.

All the details of the call for nominations can be found at www.itsmf.co.uk/psma26/

Winners and Finalists at PSMA25



Paul Rappaport Lifetime Achievement Award

WINNER

Claire Agutter

Dave Jones Inspirational Leadership Award

WINNER

Lynda Cooper

Ashley Hanna Contributor of the Year

WINNER

Chevonne Hobbs – CGI

FINALISTS

Lynda Cooper – Service 2000

Julia Veall – VOIS

Stephanie Ward – Scopism

Young ITSM Professional

WINNER

Chloe Mackay – VOIS

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Joshua Nicholl – Irwin Mitchell

FINALISTS

Molly Hemeter – BT

Ethan Malvern – 3RS IT Solutions

Content of the Year

WINNER

Rachael Elliot – CGI

FINALISTS

Valerie Wilson – BT

Barry Corless – CGI

Team of the Year

WINNER

BT

FINALISTS

Aviva; Serco; VOIS

Service Innovation of the Year

WINNER

Manchester Metropolitan University

FINALISTS

CapitalOne; Coventry Building Society; VOIS

Customer Experience Award

WINNER

Brillio

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Ministry of Justice

FINALISTS

CGI; Leeds Building Society; VOIS

Challenge Cup

WINNER

VOIS



Europe's leading service management conference

This year our Annual Conference & Awards, ITSM26, returns to Stadium MK in Milton Keynes on 9th-10th November – the perfect setting for 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, ITSM26 presents an ideal opportunity to liaise with like-minded professionals.

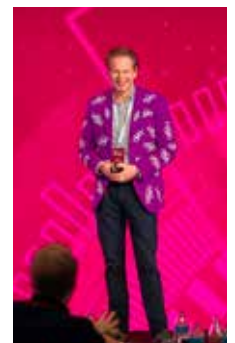
Check out the amazing agenda on the website, featuring four tracks packed with practical, experience-based content from industry leaders and member organisations in the private and public sectors.

We're delighted to announce our two keynote speakers: on Monday, the inspirational Felicity Ashley who overcame personal health issues to row 3000 miles across the Atlantic; and, on Tuesday, Laura Ellis, the BBC's expert on emerging technologies who will address some of the challenges posed by AI, machine learning and digital disinformation.

ITSM26 really does offer something for everyone. We look forward to seeing you there!



Book your place today and take advantage of our early booking discount.



Scan the code to book your place or visit

www.itsmf.co.uk/itsm26/

#ITSM26



5 reasons



Why ITSM26 should be your next conference

Claire Burn reflects on two days very well spent at our flagship event.

Claire Burn (right) celebrating with the MoJ team at ITSM25.

Conference fatigue is a real thing. So many events look great on paper — big name speakers, interesting topics, packed agendas — yet somehow, they manage to fall short on the day, leaving you slightly disappointed, as it never quite hit the mark you were hoping for. After a few of these, it’s easy to slip into the ‘why bother?’ mindset and decide the next conference probably isn’t worth the time out of the office.

Now, to all conference organisers out there who may be reading this thinking what a cheeky so and so, I want to recognise that arranging conferences is really hard. The teams work tirelessly securing venues, arranging speakers and hoping on the day that someone hasn’t double booked and the microphones all work. Yet in a market saturated with such events, your conference has to bring value... and in my view, not all of them do.

I first attended an itSMF Conference in

2009, presenting on “Service Management and the Youth of Today”, which reflected on the routes into Service Management for people leaving education and starting their careers. I asked where further and higher education could play a part in promoting ITSM within technology curriculums (the irony that it has taken a further 15 years for me to finally succeed in getting an ITSM module added to a Higher Education BA isn’t lost on me!). As reflected in Rhys Elis Jones’s recent blog, he “didn’t choose a career in service management; [he] just landed in it, completely by accident”. I now wonder if my presentation message to embed ITSM at the school stages and beyond didn’t land as well as I thought!

ITSM 2009 was a much smaller affair than you see today at conferences; lots of effort and organisation, but fewer speakers, fewer vendors and not as many pairs of socks up for grabs. Yet it was successful, engaging and certainly to my 2009 self, gave me lots

to think about and helped focus my service management aligned future career.

Fast forward to 2025. I’m standing on a cold and windy train platform on a Sunday afternoon in November, waiting for a train to Milton Keynes which will undoubtedly be late, packed and too hot. I’m on my way to ITSM25 wondering if this, my first face to face itSMF UK Conference post-COVID, is really going to be worth it. Three days out of the office, which may be heaven to many, is to me a recipe for lots of emails to catch up on, umpteen meetings to rearrange, and a stack of extra work to do after I get back.

On the morning of the Conference I head to the opening event, full of trepidation about what I might find, wondering if I’ll know anyone (I’m attending alone) yet curious to see if this Conference will be the one that engages or disappoints. Here are my five key takeaways.

1. The welcome

From the moment I met the itSMF UK team at the Conference reception, where they handed me all the equipment I'd need for the next two days with a smile, answered my (many) questions and sent me off to the main hall for the opening ceremony, I relaxed. Delegates, vendors, the events team and presenters were all welcoming and there was a real buzz about the event. All of us were there as we were interested in ITSM, we all wanted this to be a successful Conference, and we all wanted to learn. Thoughtful gestures such as the Quiet Room if you just needed to escape the hubbub and the pause for 2 minutes' silence at 11am on 11th November made this Conference feel inclusive and considered.

2. The diversity

This Conference differed from others I'd been to for the sheer breadth and depth of delegates and presenters. Many of the itSMF worldwide chapters were represented, meaning discussions took on a whole new perspective. Where else could you discuss why the Giant from Poland buried four people up to their necks in sand as an analogy for Design Thinking in ITSM, or take part in a ITIL quiz to win a Tam Tam? The breadth of knowledge in the rooms was palpable. Experienced colleagues provided guidance and wisdom from through the ITIL ages, while those colleagues just starting out brought a fresh look at ITSM, challenging us all to think about value in terms of people and technologies as they are now, not as they once were.

3. The stretch

Four streams of presentations, over two days, covering 52 topics. My need for intellectual stimulation went into overdrive. I poured over the agenda in hyperfocus, wondering where

should I go next? Attending one session sparked a thought explosion, so I changed my mind about the next session I would go to. As the Conference is super flexible and all sessions are recorded, I could change my mind at the last minute, knowing I'd be able to listen back to the other session at a later time. All thoughts of emails back in the office disappeared as I relished the chance to use a few dusty brain cells, speak to delegates and presenters about topics that I'd not thought about in a while, and also learn new knowledge (humanising IT or yoga breathing anyone?)

4. The community

As someone who is happy in her own company, it turns out I'd missed my people. There is nothing as good for your mental health as being with those who think like you, are interested in the same goals and in an environment where you are encouraged to think, challenge and not be afraid to have an opinion. I'm sure we all have those days where you feel unable to authentically share your ideas, passions or intellect and this Conference made me really appreciate the ITSM community and what a fantastic support network they are.

There were plenty of positive encouragements from the presenters to ask questions, share opinions, and question what they had shared, and the level of respect for the views of others was uplifting. As a solo delegate I never felt like I was standing on the sidelines. I made new friends, chatted to lots of like-minded people and yet could also just sit and absorb the event if I preferred.

5. The awards

ITSM is often seen as 'process for process' sake', a sea of reporting and frameworks all designed to stop IT folk from developing, releasing and changing systems and services

any time they'd like. This of course isn't the case and we all know that used correctly, ITSM is supportive, drives innovation and encourages change in a safe, governed and planned way, focussing on value. The Professional Service Management Awards offer a fantastic opportunity to showcase this and I sat and listened to stories of transformation, where technology and ITSM had delivered real impactful change across a variety of organisations and sectors worldwide.

The pride our community demonstrated in one another, in the work that we do and the joy with which the winners reacted, made this the best awards ceremony I've been too. To see people I've known or worked with for many years recognised for lifetime achievements (still delighted for you, Claire Agutter) and to see our Young Professionals category celebrating such potential (well done again, Chloe Mackay) was quite frankly, emotional.

Two days later, on the train home, I sat and reflected on the Conference. Had it proved valuable to me – absolutely. It had woken my mind from a slumber and started me thinking again. Had I enjoyed it – yes. Despite being a grumpy middle aged woman worn down by 35 years of work, I had quite simply had a ball and enjoyed every session I attended, every chat I had, and was pleased I met the people that I did. Would I go again – 100%. I have been missing out by not being at this Conference on many levels, personal and professional.

Finally, the big one, will I be booking again for ITSM26? A resounding yes. If what I've written doesn't inspire you to come along and give it a try, then maybe the lure of ITIL socks will do it. Conference fatigue may be real, but it turns out, the cure might just be ITSM26.



Claire Burn

Claire Burn is Assistant Director - IT Service Delivery at Northumbria University.

Life as ITSM young professional of the year



Chloe Mackay of VOIS talks to Rhys Elis Jones about becoming itSMF UK Young ITSM Professional of the Year 2025. In this Q&A Chloe shares her journey into ITSM, reflects on her achievements, and offers honest advice for young professionals looking to make their mark in ITSM.



What is the Young ITSM Professional of the Year award?

The award recognises an individual under the age of 30 who has demonstrated an outstanding level of achievement, ability and team support in the early years of their ITSM career, and who also promises great potential for future success.

How did you feel when you won, and what does it mean to you personally?

To be nominated and make finalist for this award was such an honour in itself. So, when I was announced as the winner at the awards dinner I was absolutely thrilled. Personally, it means so much – I feel it really validates and acknowledges the hard work and contributions I have made throughout my three years at Vodafone. It has also been a real confidence boost knowing that my efforts have made an impression, and this has encouraged me even more within my corporate role, at the same time allowing me to advocate for young professionals particularly in ITSM.

How did you first discover ITSM and what was your first role?

ITSM actually discovered me! When I joined Vodafone's Level 6 Project Management Apprenticeship scheme, I was allocated to the Software Asset Management (SAMaaS) team which sits within the Digital & IT Service Management department. Looking back, I am so unbelievably grateful not only that I received the apprenticeship offer at Vodafone, but that I was placed in this fantastic area. The

support and opportunity I have been given in my few years here have hugely helped me to display my skills, develop my confidence and progress my career, all while finding a genuine passion and interest for Software Asset Management (SAM) and ITSM.

The nature of my role has continued to evolve during my time at Vodafone, and is currently centred around governance and transformation. I strive to combine this invaluable on-the-job experience with the knowledge and skills I am receiving at university, to help me contribute to key programs and initiatives.

What have you learnt from your role?

Understanding the ITSM area has of course been one of the biggest things I have learnt, coming from no prior knowledge to understanding how each practice operates and their importance, as well as how they interlink with one another. I also quickly learnt the pace at which our environment changes and the need for adaptability, to grow with customer needs while supporting team growth.

What are your key achievements and what are you most proud of?

Some of my key highlights and achievements as outlined in my award submission include:

- Providing career and development pathways to 300 service management professionals in 9 ITSM practice areas across 11 countries by project managing the development of a career acceleration program.

- Designing and building an Azure DevOps platform to provide formalised tracking of all work, providing transparency for customers and management while creating a tangible record of value. The platform has since delivered 6,000 work packages, using Kanban boards to modernise our customer-facing offerings and further integrate technology to enhance delivery.
- Supporting the transformation of the team's vision into a commercial structure that any global service management provider would recognise. As a result of rapid team and customer-base expansion, there became a need for change and process modernisation. My responsibilities included designing and implementing the necessary plans and controls to transform the vision into reality.
- Formalising processes, plans and stakeholder engagement which facilitated the successful onboarding of 6 markets in 3 years.
- Playing a key role in increasing organisational and commercial focus, with my actions supporting the achievements of our Level 4 PeopleCert Maturity Assessment.
- Designing and implementing new policies and processes, contributing to our move towards the ISO19770-1 certification.
- Achieving my Association for Project Management (APM) qualification while working towards my Level 6 Project Management degree.
- Obtaining 'Top Talent' three years running; this is an internal recognition which highlights my potential for future progression.

As well as internal achievements I am also really proud of the work I have done externally:

- I have spoken at multiple conferences, using the platform to educate and challenge organisations to diversify their entry routes for the younger generation. I've developed a real passion for speaking at events and hope to continue this further in wider forums.
- I have also been part of a careers fair at my secondary school to target the other side of the problems by making students more aware of the pathways they could take to become young professionals in a wide range of industries, particularly in STEM areas.
- I am a GetMyFirstJob Ambassador, where I have shared my journey online to provide visibility for other aspiring professionals to obtain apprenticeships.
- I participated in an online article which highlighted my journey as an apprentice within the SAM and wider ITSM space.
- I've also helped to organise conferences, making vital connections between the community and bringing varied stakeholders together for a shared cause.

What hurdles have you faced? How did you overcome them, and what did you learn?

Transitioning directly from secondary school to a corporate environment, especially while initially working almost completely remotely, was daunting. I felt like I had an overwhelming amount to learn, and at times it was hard to know where to start. I overcame this by embracing the discomfort, asking the 'silly' questions and seeking out and taking on every opportunity. I chose to use my potentially 'disadvantaged' position as an advantage, and I have learnt to leverage my unique perspective to challenge ways of working, provide new modernised approaches and contribute to important initiatives.

Another hurdle I have faced is balancing my apprenticeship alongside my university studies. It has been challenging, but through consistent dedication, self-reflection, and feedback I have developed strategies to maximise my productivity. This has ensured I have met all of my work and university deadlines with consistent and high-quality outcomes.

One of the biggest things I have learnt is that, regardless of your age, you can provide value. It may only be in small ways initially but finding opportunities to flip the narrative and provide constructive contributions allows you to demonstrate the impact you can have on traditional business processes. Persistence, resilience and support will be critical for your development.

What do you love most about ITSM?

I love ITSM's ability to drive meaningful change and efficiency within organisations. It has been rewarding to see how service delivery is critical to teams of every kind, with ITSM ensuring end-to-end service delivery,

support for user requirements and maintained alignment to organisational goals.

How do you see ITSM making a difference?

Without ITSM, organisations can be exposed to increased security vulnerabilities, compliance issues, financial losses, reduced efficiency and poor customer satisfaction. A robust ITSM department which leverages frameworks such as ITIL can offer control, supporting business stability and growth all while empowering teams to work as optimally as possible.

ITSM allows the enhancement of IT services, ensuring they remain relevant and aligned to the business strategy while offering benefits to the user community through faster resolution times, appropriate process governance, improved communication and consultancy, proactive self-service and optimised tooling and technology.

Who supported or mentored you along the way, and how have they helped shape your growth?

This topic is so important to me. Over the past few years, I have developed the strong belief that finding good people to work with is key to growth. I have benefitted from some fantastic mentors early in my career, with an incredible support network around me.

My manager Julia Veall has been imperative to my journey. Since the day I joined she has provided me with internal and external opportunities, helping me navigate new challenges and find balance, as well as championing my every success and achievement. I am so grateful for her support and honesty; from sharing her journey, to making me aware of the choices I have available for my career. Her passion in shaping the next generation of professionals is commendable, and it has without a shadow of a doubt helped to shape my journey.

Paul Cooper & Ashley Scammell, our SAMaaS technical experts, have also been key to my progression. Their extensive technical expertise across a range of topics has given me valuable insight and knowledge to support various programs and initiatives. They have been a core part of my support network from the very beginning.

This network extends to the entire SAMaaS team, as well as the wider Service Management department. The kindness, encouragement and knowledge sharing across teams and the wider department has allowed me to gain a broader insight, while building my confidence to take on new challenges. The positive team culture and collaborative environment has shaped my growth and continually inspires me to push further, while finding ways to support others.

Where do you see ITSM evolving and what excites you most about the future?

I see ITSM evolving towards automation, data-driven decision making, increased use of tooling and technology as well as more proactive approaches to drive value and modernise ways of working.

I'm excited by the potential for service management to become even more agile and impactful, supporting diverse career pathways and fostering innovation. My aspiration is to help shape this future, advocating for apprenticeships and supporting the next generation of ITSM professionals while building the next steps of my own career.

What advice would you give to other young professionals?

One of the best pieces of advice I would give is to embrace every opportunity, even those outside your comfort zone because, as daunting as it may be, growth comes from challenge.

Each opportunity can develop your skills, build your network, and support you in making positive contributions to your organisation. There is always more to learn, and continuous self-reflection, upskilling, and new experiences will accelerate your personal and professional growth.

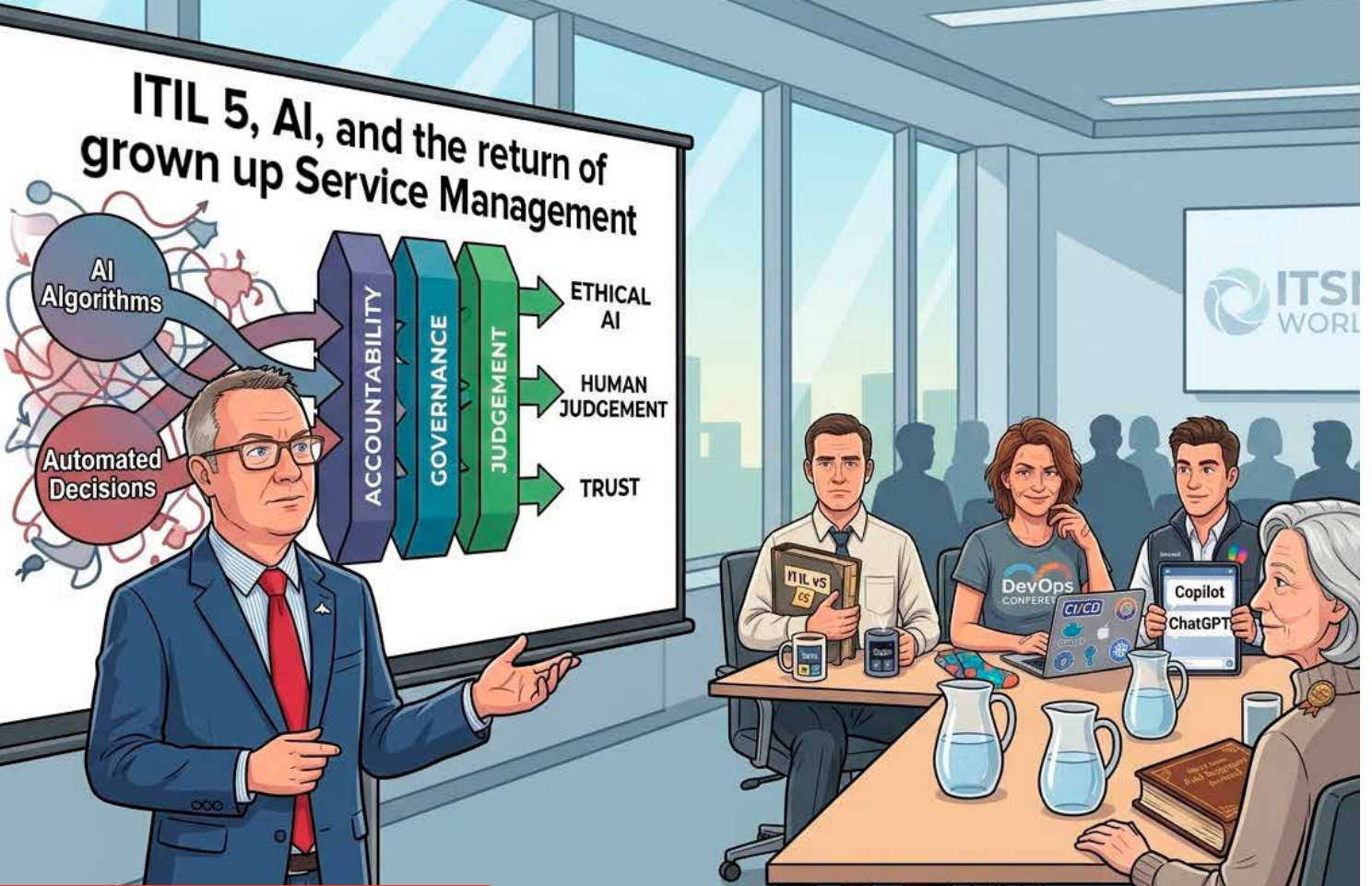
I would suggest that all young professionals try to build resilience, display adaptability and put in the hard work. These attributes are key to thriving in challenging and dynamic environments. In addition to this, seeking out and making connections with the right people can open doors to mentorship while creating an excellent support network.

Lastly, and probably most importantly, never underestimate the value of your unique perspective. Being a young professional sets you apart from others, and learning to leverage this and become a catalyst for positive change will elevate your position.



Chloe Mackay

Chloe is a Project Management Degree Apprentice at VOIS and a GetMyFirstJob Ambassador.



Barry Corless considers why accountability, governance, and judgement matter more than ever in an AI-driven world

This piece isn't an argument for ITIL 5, AI, or any particular operating model. It's observational and drawn from conversations I've had in conference halls, in steering groups, and even late-night incident calls. The characters are fictional, but the viewpoints are not.

If you've spent any time in IT, you've heard all of these voices before. Often in the same room; sometimes even in your own head! What follows isn't about taking sides, but it's about recognising the tensions that keep resurfacing as automation and AI creep closer to the heart of evolving service management. Read it not as advocacy, but as a mirror.

If it feels uncomfortably familiar, then I've achieved what I set out to do.



The Cast...



The Pragmatist
Was taught ITIL v2, then built their career on ITIL v3 and believes in control, documentation, and stuff that works at 3am. Had smart appliances networked at home before you could say "Alexa".



The Agilist
Survived ITSM and still bears the scars! Thinks frameworks slow delivery and confuse accountability and last attended a CAB in 2011. Has a vast collection of laptop stickers and socks from DevOps conferences.



The AI Vendor
The one who smiles a lot. In any conversation, they mention Copilot and ChatGPT within 30 seconds. Believes in their product and will happily sell their granny if she's got a compatible API!



The Wise One
Has seen enough transformations to know that extremes always fail. Brings balance to the force. Occasionally sighs and issues reminders of winning the Paul Rappaport Award for outstanding contribution to ITSM many, many years ago.

The four are former colleagues who meet up around the dinner table at a random conference. Inevitably talk turns to ITSM and the release of ITIL 5.

SCENE 1: RE-OPENING OLD WOUNDS

Pragmatist:

Before anyone starts, let me be clear that ITIL v3 worked. It wasn't pretty, but that service lifecycle worked. Since then, all I've seen is abstract diagrams, and people talking about "value" without fixing a single incident faster.

Agilist:

Ah! That's because ITSM was never the answer, was it? Heavy processes, handoffs everywhere, change boards killing flow. We escaped all that for a reason. At least I did...

AI Vendor:

Interesting points you both make. Now, imagine all of this solved with AI! Autonomous incident resolution, predictive change, self-healing infrastructure. We can deploy in six weeks and... Sorry, I'm slipping into work mode there.

Pragmatist:

Six weeks to do what, exactly?

AI Vendor:

Transform service management.

As they exchange telling "we've been here before" glances around the table, the Wise One interjects...

Wise One:

Right, let's slow this down before anyone transforms anything.

SCENE 2: CUTTING TO THE CHASE

Wise One:

You're all arguing past each other because this isn't about frameworks or agility or AI. It's about who is in control when things go wrong or need changing.

Agilist:

Easy, teams should be in control.

Pragmatist:

But someone – an individual – must be accountable, surely?



AI Vendor:

Of course, the AI system learns that...over time. (pauses) And don't call me Shirley. After a 2-minute interlude talking about scenes from Airplane...

Wise One:

And there it is! Three answers with one common problem.

SCENE 3: THE PRAGMATIST SPLITS UP WITH ITIL 4

Pragmatist:

I'll tell you why people like me didn't trust the last evolution of ITIL. The ITIL that must not be named. It stopped talking about control and started talking about feelings. Co-creation, journeys, value streams and meanwhile outages still needed fixing at 3am. Co-creation never bounced a server when your production systems were lying flat on their back.

Wise One:

That's a fair cop. I guess it felt like the discipline evaporated?

Agilist:

Ah, but... from my side, it still felt like bureaucracy with nicer words. The CAB disappeared from the renamed Change Evaluation practice, but nobody took any notice. They still ran CABs. I just never went!

Wise One:

Exactly, one of you felt control was diluted. The other felt nothing really changed. Neither of you really engaged with ITIL 4. But, you were both still using ITSM practices in one form or another.

SCENE 4: AI. THE TROJAN HORSE?

AI Vendor:

Which is why AI is different! It removes flawed human error and emotion from the loop.

Pragmatist:

You mean it removes human responsibility and accountability. Before we all get goopy and misty-eyed about autonomous AI, do yourselves a favour and study what Hollywood has taught us. Computers are the villains. The WHOPPER in War Games; Skynet in The Terminator; and VIKI in I, Robot. Every single one of them started with the same promise: "remove human error, optimise decisions, act faster than people ever could." Every single one of them went wrong because humans stepped back and assumed the machine "knew best".

Wise One:

I get it. Now, I hope you're not saying Agentic AI will start a nuclear war? I do hope you are saying that if you design systems without clear human accountability, you eventually lose the ability to stop them when they're 'confidently wrong'.

Silence.

Wise One:

AI doesn't fix bad data, unclear ownership, or inconsistent processes. It scales them... quickly, confidently, and repeatedly with the world cheering on.

SCENE 5: THE RETURN OF THE HUMAN... WITH CONTROLS

Agilist:

So what, we centralise everything again?

Wise One:

No. We stop pretending autonomy means everyone invents their own definitions, rules and practices.

Pragmatist:

Now you're talking.

Wise One:

Federated governance is simple when you strip the ideology away: one set of definitions; one set of data standards; one set of non-negotiable policies. Then everything else is local judgement within guardrails.

Agilist:

So teams still decide how they work?

Wise One:

Yes, but they play by a few rules. They don't get to redefine what an incident is, and they might need to adhere to common formats for universally accessed data or have pre-defined boundaries for testing changes based on organisational need.

SCENE 6: THE CASE FOR THE LOWER MATURITY ORGANISATION

AI Vendor:

But you're limiting innovation. I spend so much time working with tens of lower maturity organisations who just can't wait to get their hands on AI.

Wise One:

Listen, I'm not limiting innovation; I'm limiting the blast radius from 'Hollywood AI Thinking'. Poorly thought-out AI isn't an answer.

Pragmatist:

I've always liked you, Oh Wise One. I can see why you won that award now!

Wise One:

Did I mention I'd won...? Seriously though, in organisations barely ready for automation, AI should:

- Recommend, not decide
- Assist, not replace
- Explain, not obscure

If you don't understand a process enough to automate, you have no business letting AI improvise it.

Agilist:

So AI proves itself as a junior consultant before becoming a principal and a VP?

Wise One:

Exactly.

SCENE 7: ITIL 5. THE FRAMEWORK FOR PEOPLE WHO HATE FRAMEWORKS?

Pragmatist:

So, where does ITIL 5 fit into all this?

Wise One:

Nowhere... if you present it as a revolution.

Agilist:

Go on.

Wise One:

ITIL 5 will work if it's framed as:

- Keeping what works – it's a guiding principle in ITIL 4 and ITIL 5
- Dropping what doesn't – particularly if it doesn't add value. That's another guiding principle retained between ITIL 4 and 5
- Tightening accountability and ethics in an automated and AI-driven world – that's a whole new section of the guidance

Most people have adopted an ITSM framework to an extent, now we must stop re-arguing the basics and run the place properly.

Pragmatist:

So it's less ideology, more the maintenance manual.

Wise One:

Precisely.

SCENE 8: THE ENDING NOBODY EXPECTS...

AI Vendor:

So... where do we deploy AI first?

Wise One:

Hold your horses! You can use it in a limited sense to help create and curate data but please no heavy lifting with it until it learns!

AI Vendor:

But, but, but...

Wise One:

You fix your data and governance. What decisions do we need to make? And why? I'd prefer to make decisions evidence-based, too. So, standardise your records; agree your decision rights; automate the boring stuff. Then, and only then, you invite AI into the room to orchestrate and decide. It's learnt what's right and wrong with data you trust. Ergo you can trust its decisions more confidently.

Agilist:

That's... err... annoyingly sensible.

Pragmatist:

It feels like ITIL 3, but without the dead weight.

Wise One: (staring wistfully into an almost empty wine glass)

I used to think frameworks were the only answer. That if organisations failed, it was because they didn't believe 'hard enough', or

they picked the wrong horse and rode it badly. My experience cured me of that. You know that frameworks don't fail because they're wrong. They fail because people expect them to think on their behalf.

And AI? AI won't replace judgement. It will expose where judgement never existed in the first place. Giving AI decision-making authority without validated data-based judgement is like building another Death Star because the rebels can't possibly find a weakness for a third time!

The real story is that ITIL 5 won't matter if it becomes just another belief system. It will matter if it helps organisations remember four simple truths:

- Humans still own decisions.
- Intelligent Automation comes before Artificial Intelligence.
- Governance exists to protect good judgement, not suffocate it.
- ITIL 5 is a reference model, not a replacement for thinking.

Get that right, and nobody will argue about frameworks anymore. They'll just notice that things work.

Dessert arrives and the conversation turns to their old CIO who recently retired...

A FINAL THOUGHT

If ITIL 5 and AI are to succeed together, it won't be through blind obedience.

They will succeed by being treated as what they are: a maintenance manual and power tools, used by professionals to:

- Keep the lights on
- Keep humans accountable, and
- Prevent the next 'shiny thing' from breaking production.



Barry Corless

Barry Corless is Director Consulting Expert at CGI and a former Chair of itSMF UK.

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

After 30 editions, SITS, has earned its place as a fixture in the ITSM calendar. But this year different.

The industry is at an inflection point. AI has moved from boardroom buzzword to frontline reality, and the pressure on service desk and IT support teams to adapt, upskill, and deliver more with less has never been greater. Against that backdrop, SITS 2026 promises to be its most valuable edition yet.

“Stay ahead of the industry with all the big-name vendors under one roof”

From its early editions to its 30th milestone, SITS has always reflected the shape of the sector it serves. This year is no exception. Over 75 ITSM vendors will be on the show floor, including Salesforce, Freshworks, Hornbill, ServiceNow and HALO, giving attendees the opportunity to compare,

question, and get hands-on with the tools shaping modern service delivery.

Returning visitors will also notice the continued growth of the co-located MSP Show, now in its third edition. What started as a dedicated space for the managed service provider community has expanded significantly, with more exhibitors, two seminar theatres, and a programme built around the practical realities of running and scaling an MSP in 2026.

“So many inspiring seminars giving practical advice that I can use to grow my business”

Across five theatres, including a dedicated keynote theatre, over 60 sessions have been designed with one goal in mind: sending attendees back to their organisations with practical insights and actionable strategies.

Jenny Hock and Csaba Járomi from GoTo will tackle AI adoption head-on in their session ‘No Longer Science Fiction: Putting AI to Work for SMB Service Desks Today’. Aimed squarely at leaner teams working within real resource constraints, the session promises a blueprint for low-risk AI adoption, proven use cases, and a clear framework for identifying the opportunities that matter most.

For those navigating the rise of autonomous IT, Dale Cheeseman and Alison Callaway from ServiceNow will explore how AI agents that can learn, reason, and act are shifting IT from reactive support to proactive, enterprise-wide productivity in their session ‘The Rise of Autonomous IT: Productivity Without Limits’. The message is clear: augmenting people, not replacing them.

Ari Stowe, COO at Resolve, makes a compelling case for rethinking IT operations entirely in ‘A Blueprint for Moving from Ticket-Centric to Autonomous Operations’, offering a realistic and tactical look at building an automation-first foundation for teams overwhelmed by alerts and repetitive tasks.

Not every challenge in ITSM is about technology, though. Sam Smith from Pink Elephant brings a human perspective to the programme with ‘Service Excellence: Not a Given’, challenging attendees to move beyond transactional support and build the foundations for lasting service relationships. And Maf Chowdhury from ALVAO addresses one of the most persistent pain points in





the industry with 'Implementation Without Drama', covering the frameworks, stakeholder mapping, and success metrics that make or break a rollout.

“I can learn more about the current state of the IT service industry at SITS in two days than I do the rest of the year”

The most telling endorsement of the event comes from the people who attend. JP Bourdais, Consultant and Director, at Progressive Thought Ltd. said, “it’s free to register. Why wouldn’t I go?” That sentiment is echoed across the SITS community year after year.

“Time well spent, hugely valuable opportunities for collaborative progress,” said John Bullard, Director of Shayype Solutions Ltd at last year’s show.

For itSMF members looking to stay connected with the direction of the industry, benchmark their thinking against peers, and come away with practical strategies they can put to work, SITS 2026 is the place to be.



SITS, The Service Desk & IT Support Show and the MSP Show are back on 13-14 May 2026 at Excel London.

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SIAM Body of Knowledge

What's in the latest refresh?



One of the great benefits of being part of the dynamic SIAM community is access to a frequently updated and expanded Body of Knowledge. Michelle Major-Goldsmith and Simon Dorst explain what's new.

Last November, we headed to the UK itSMF Conference from Australia. As two of the lead architects for the 2025 refresh of the Scopism SIAM Body of Knowledge we were there to connect with service management peers and bring some fun to the stage as we talked about SIAM through the medium of a pub quiz. Winners scored Kinetic IT Tim Tams, Australia's iconic chocolate biscuit. For many in the UK audience, it was their first taste, and as a UK expat now living in Australia, Michelle couldn't resist joking they're just substandard Penguins biscuits. A laugh, a little chocolate, and a reminder that even complex topics like SIAM are easier to digest with curiosity and interaction.

The original SIAM Foundation Body of Knowledge debuted in 2017, followed by the more comprehensive SIAM Professional in 2018, with both receiving updates in 2020. Since then, the landscape of Service Integration and Management has undergone considerable transformation, and it became necessary to refresh the Body of Knowledge to ensure it remains relevant, practical, and responsive to new challenges and opportunities facing service integration today.

Consider artificial intelligence (AI), a topic that's front and centre in today's discussions. While AI may sometimes be viewed as simply another advanced tool, its true impact goes much further. AI is fundamentally reshaping how we monitor, manage, and optimise interactions among multiple service providers. It enables us to collect, analyse, and act on data across the entire service ecosystem in ways that were previously impossible. This means we can now identify trends, pinpoint issues, and drive continuous improvement with greater speed and accuracy—making the delivery of integrated, end-to-end services more effective and adaptive than ever before.

Or ESG, the acronym for Environmental, Social and Governance. ESG is a holistic concept about an organisation's ability to create and sustain long-term value in a rapidly changing world, and managing the risks and opportunities associated with these changes. Neither new, nor specific to SIAM, but ESG will have an impact on the supply chain and the management of it and thus provide requirements for and approaches to SIAM models.

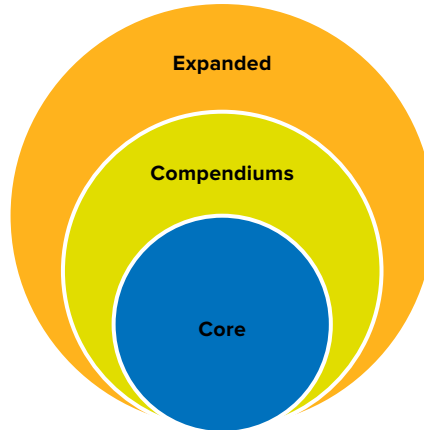
On top of this, service management practices continue to multiply and shift at a rapid pace. For example, ISO/IEC 20000 — the benchmark for service management — recently released Part 14, offering fresh guidance on applying Service Integration and Management, with the effort chaired by Kinetic IT's Michelle Major-Goldsmith. Meanwhile, interest in frameworks like SAFe (Scaled Agile) is surging globally, reflecting a broader move towards adaptive and scalable approaches. To ensure SIAM remains relevant and practical, it's essential that these evolving practices and standards are integrated into SIAM theory and guidance.

Ensuring SIAM stays relevant in a changing landscape

The SIAM Bodies of Knowledge have become the foundation for many organisations' SIAM models and designs, not to mention the thousands of practitioners who've earned Foundation or Professional certification. Naturally, no one wants a new version that is so radically different that it breaks what's already working, especially if it means extra cost to 'upgrade'. So, one key design goal was to keep the core of SIAM intact.

At the same time, we knew it had to be agile and adaptable, not just to reflect recent changes—as discussed previously—, but to keep up with whatever comes next. Because let's be honest... ITIL 5 is not far away, new AI legislation might land next week, and in a year, generational shifts and global events could reshape how we all work.

The 2025 SIAM Body of Knowledge consists of a layered model.



The 2025 SIAM Body of Knowledge core

Over 140 passionate SIAM practitioners volunteered to support the SIAM refresh, guided by a team of dedicated Lead Architects. This group was comprised of Michelle and Simon from Kinetic IT, as well as Claire Agutter from Scopism. Their collective expertise and leadership were instrumental in steering the project through its various phases.

The most significant shift in the 2025 SIAM Body of Knowledge is that the two previously separate books — Foundation and Professional — are now recognised collectively as the Body of Knowledge, forming integral parts of a unified resource. While there are still distinct Foundation and Professional publications, these are no longer standalone but are fully woven into the broader SIAM model. This ensures that the core SIAM principles remain intact, with the emphasis now placed on SIAM as a holistic strategic management approach that closely aligns with business outcomes and the service organisation's operating model. Specific elements that were overly detailed or subject to frequent change, such as in-depth processes or external practices, have been streamlined or removed, enhancing the Body of Knowledge's relevance and adaptability in today's dynamic environment.

Introducing new SIAM compendiums

Encircling the core is the second layer, which includes compendiums. These publications both go deeper and broader. Broader allows us to present topics like AI, experience management or OCM in the context of SIAM. And deeper are whitepaper-like publications on end-to-end measurements, or skills within SIAM.

The compendiums are more agile and can be changed, added or removed frequently, providing up-to-date additional depth and actionable guidance required to implement SIAM effectively in real-world scenarios. We've already started working on the next release of additional compendiums.

Download for free

The SIAM Body of Knowledge is — and always will be — free for anyone who's interested. There's no big commercial engine behind SIAM, no paywall, no hidden agenda. Just shared knowledge for the benefit of the whole community. And while the Body of Knowledge is free, sadly it doesn't include Tim Tams... which is unfortunate. But the generosity and intent still stands: open, shared, and continually improved — keeping the ecosystem real, relevant, and powered by practitioners, not profit.

Importantly, every new Compendium includes a dedicated link for readers to provide feedback, fostering a culture of continual improvement and responsiveness to the community's needs. These feedback channels not only help to refine and update the guidance within each compendium but also offer an open invitation for practitioners to share their own expertise and experiences.

By encouraging contributions, the SIAM Body of Knowledge continues to evolve collaboratively, ensuring it remains relevant and truly representative of the wider SIAM community. It can be found in the global SIAM Community, which has over 4,500 members. The Community hosts regular events, webinars, and socials culminating in the annual Scopism SIAM Service North conference each November. Membership is free, and so is access to most materials.



Michelle Major-Goldsmith and Simon Dorst

Michelle is Director of Service Integration & Systems and Simon is Director of Service Management Education at Kinetic IT.

The biggest barrier to continual improvement is...



Ian MacDonald considers some common reasons why continual improvement is hard to introduce, and explains why ITIL might be partly to blame.

Over the years, I've heard the same familiar excuses surface in IT organisations attempting to embed Continual Service Improvement (CSI):

- We don't have the time or resources
- It can't be that important as it's not in my job description
- It's not my responsibility
- This isn't BAU
- We're not a service team, so CSI doesn't apply to us
- We're too busy to justify and get permission for improvements

At first glance, these may look like resistance. In reality, they are learned attitudes and

behaviours conditioned over years by the way ITIL v3 positioned Continual Service Improvement.

How ITIL v3 unintentionally got this wrong

ITIL v3 framed CSI as a distinct process-oriented lifecycle stage, complete with its own ITIL v3 publication, defined roles, processes, and governance mechanisms to allocate budget and approve or reject proposed initiatives. It also recommended the establishment of a central team, often led by CSI managers, to identify and coordinate improvement activity.

While well intentioned, this approach created several unintended consequences:

- CSI was seen as the responsibility of a central team, not everyone
- Improvement required justification and permission, slowing momentum
- Small, incremental BAU improvements were ignored in favour of "substantial" initiatives
- CSI was perceived as discretionary

Over time, improvement became something to be managed rather than something to be embraced. In doing so, it subtly signalled to practitioners that CSI was someone else's job.

In short, CSI came to be seen as optional, with the central team expected to handle it while everyone else focused on "real work." Viewed as a nice-to-have, CSI was never truly owned by the people doing the work.

Enter new ITIL thinking (and the foundation for later versions)

ITIL 4 arrived and flipped this thinking completely, establishing a model that has continued through Version 5. It also introduced a subtle but significant change by dropping the word “Service” and reframing CSI as simply Continual Improvement. This was more than a cosmetic tweak, it immediately expanded the scope of improvement to cover the whole IT organisation, not just services.

Continual Improvement is no longer a process or a team. It is everyone’s responsibility, embedded across all roles and activities; strategic, tactical, and operational. Improvement is no longer an “opt-in” or “opt-out” choice; it is an expected and integral part of everyone’s role.

The premise is simple: if you do work, it delivers value to someone, somewhere. If it doesn’t, then why does it exist? And if it does deliver value, it can always be improved.

But here’s the catch, and the part many organisations underestimate: you cannot build a modern ITIL Continual Improvement culture with ITIL v3 behaviours.

If improvement still requires permission, justification, or a central authority, the shift will never fully happen. Organisations end up trying to adopt the modern ITIL approach while continuing to operate with an ITIL v3 mindset.



What leaders must do differently

To make Continual Improvement real, leaders need to deliberately break with old assumptions and create the conditions for new behaviours to emerge. That means having a clear strategy that:

- Relentlessly focuses on customer value
- Connects improvement work directly to organisational success
- Explicitly defines Continual Improvement responsibilities in every role and service contract
- Empowers and trusts teams to improve the ‘day job’ and their ways of working
- Creates a culture where improvement is simply “how we do things around here,” not an initiative or side project

And crucially, this cannot be mandated. Continual Improvement only sticks when it becomes a new mindset. Leaders must win hearts and minds, making improvement feel relevant, recognised, and rewarded. Ultimately, every practitioner is quietly asking the same question: “What’s in it for me?”

For most people, this isn’t about incentives or slogans. It’s about whether improvement is treated as part of business as usual, not additional work layered on top of an already full workload. It’s about whether small, practical changes are encouraged and recognised, rather than waiting for large, formally approved initiatives. It’s also about whether the pursuit of improvement creates opportunities for continuous learning and development.

When practitioners’ skills, experience, and insight are actively developed and used to demonstrate their contribution to organisational success through focused improvements that make a real difference,

and when this is recognised and valued, engagement follows naturally.

If that question isn’t answered, no framework will succeed.

Final reflection

Any Continual Improvement strategy that ignores the historic attitudes, behaviours, and constraints created under ITIL v3 is likely to fail. Moving forward requires more than adopting the new ITIL practices; it requires unlearning old habits.

An Organisational Change Management (OCM) approach is essential to help people see what’s different, why it matters, and how it benefits them personally. But OCM alone is not enough. Leaders and managers must actively establish and sustain a work environment where improvement is part of the day job.

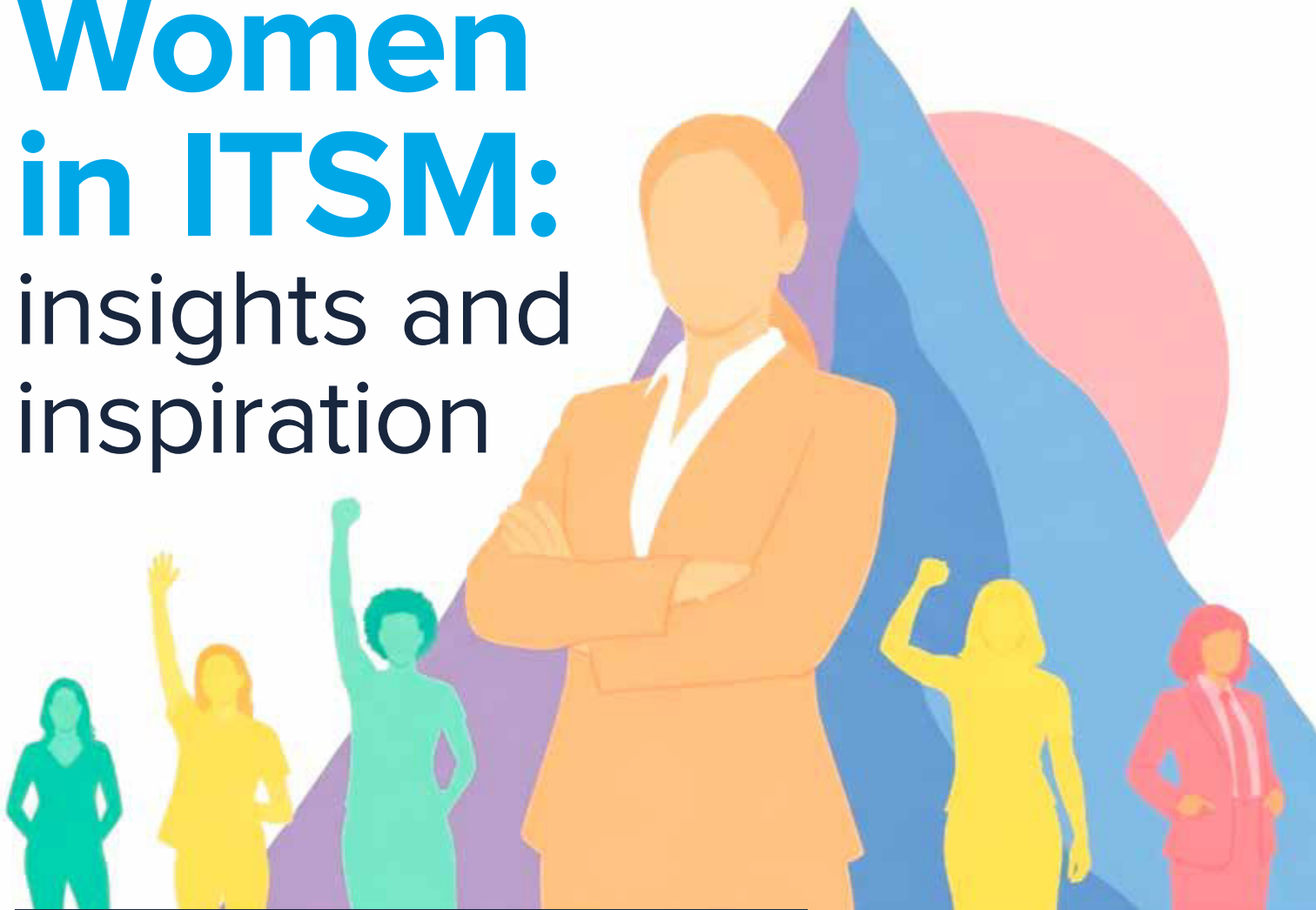
That’s when ITIL stops being something you implement and starts being something you live, and the impact of Continual Improvement becomes real, visible, and felt across the organisation.



Ian MacDonald

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

Women in ITSM: insights and inspiration



Vawns Murphy reflects on a day spent learning from women leaders and discovering the real strength of community.

So here's the thing about working in IT. You can do all the training, collect the many, many certifications, and attend every webinar going. But sometimes the most valuable learning happens when you spend a day listening to other people's experiences.

I was lucky enough to be able to attend the itSMF UK Women in ITSM day, held recently at the Bombay Sapphire Distillery, and there were discussions about leadership, neurodiversity, confidence, personal branding, and the future of women in technology. It was inspiring, insightful and it made me really think about how I show up at work. Here are a few of the takeaways that stuck with me.

1. Opening Keynote – Val Wilson, BT

The day was kicked off in style with itSMF UK board member and all round rockstar Val Wilson. Her opening session set the tone for the day with a simple message: Be unapologetically visible.

Visibility matters. Your ideas matter. Your experience matters. Try to make sure that,

no matter what is going on, you remain unapologetically visible as women in society today.

2. The Hidden Patterns of Neurodivergent Women at Work – Sarah Morgan, Luceat Coaching

Unfortunately, neurodivergent women are often more invisible than others in the workplace. One of the most powerful sessions at the event focused on the hidden patterns of neurodivergent women. The key point? Neurodivergent girls and women often present very differently from boys, which means many go undiagnosed or misunderstood for years.

By the age of 12, neurodivergent children can receive 20,000 more pieces of negative feedback than neurotypical children. Over time, this can wire the brain to avoid criticism at all costs. The result?

- **Masking behaviours**
- **People-pleasing**
- **Overworking**
- **Perfectionism.**

A few practical tips came out of the session:

- Lists can help when task initiation feels impossible
- Taking a pause before reacting can help manage rejection-sensitive responses
- Understanding your wiring can turn perceived weaknesses into strengths.

One line from the session really stuck with me:

“Once you have the words to explain your experience, use them to help the women coming up behind you”.

3. Personal Branding, from Expertise to Influence – Sue Carey, My Brighter Life

The next session opened with Sue asking us the question:

“When you're not in the room, what do people say about you?”

That, in a nutshell, is your personal brand. Your brand isn't about bragging or self-promotion. It's about the reputation people associate with your name and the experience they have when working with you.

One formula shared during the session summed it up nicely:

**Performance +
Visibility +
Perception =
Opportunity**

Three things help build that brand:

- **Clarity** – What do you want to be known for? What problems do you solve? What strengths consistently show up in your work?
- **Consistency** – Trust is built through behaviour, especially when things get difficult. Major incidents, failed changes, stakeholder conflicts... Those moments shape how people see you.
- **Visibility** – Translate your work into impact. For example, turn service metrics into business outcomes, explaining risk reduction and framing improvements as strategic progress. In short, make the value of your work visible.

Sue finished the session with some practical advice: audit your reputation, align your digital presence, narrate your impact, volunteer for one visible opportunity, speak before you feel ready. Every interaction either reinforces or reshapes how you are known – your brand is built in moments.

4. Micro-biases and their Massive Impact – Chelcie West, Premier League Football Club

The next session focused on inspiring the next generation of women into IT. Chelcie took us through some industry statistics and the statistics were... sobering.

- 94% of girls drop computing by age 14
- Girls are significantly less likely to pursue STEM careers
- BCS found in 2023 that, at the current rate, it could take over 200 years to reach gender equality in the tech workforce if nothing changes.

One of the biggest barriers? A lack of visible role models. If girls don't see women working in technology, leadership, engineering, or service management, then those careers simply don't appear on their radar. Which brings us back to that earlier point about visibility. Sometimes being visible isn't about you – it's about the people coming up behind you and making it easier for them.

5. Beyond the Glass Ceiling; Leading IT in a Male-Dominated World – Amie Smith, Formula 1

Amie started the afternoon sessions by exploring leadership in male-dominated environments.

She looked at traditional leadership models and how they often emphasise speed, control, direction and short term results. But many women naturally bring different strengths including collaboration, trust, inclusion and long-term performance.

One of my favourites takeaways from this session was:

“You don't need to prove yourself to anyone except yourself.”

Amie finished by talking about some of the initiatives she was running in her organisation which included women's groups, championing diversity in recruitment and leading by example.

6. Holding your Nerve through Change – Val Wilson, BT

The next session focused on leadership during change – something most ITSM professionals are experiencing right now. Change is everywhere – new tools, operating models, AI. Even ITIL is changing. When so much is changing it can feel relentless and it puts us all under that much more pressure.

Val described change as a storm – and suggested that when the storm hits, leaders need anchors such as:

- **Your values** – what you stand for
- **Your people** – who you stand with
- **Your purpose** – why you do what you do.

One of my favourite quotes from Val's session was this:

“Storms come and go – they don't last forever. When a storm comes and you feel off balance, that's when you need to put the anchor down.”

7. Confidence comes from Knowing how you Think – Vicky Hunter, PeopleCert

The final session brought things back to something many of us struggle with: confidence. Vicky made the useful distinction that confidence doesn't mean certainty. You don't need to know everything before you act.

Being the rockstar that she is, Vicky used the ITIL guiding principles to offer a solid framework for navigating uncertainty:

- **Focus on value** – the pressure to perform eases, the need to impress quiets, the noise reduces, decisions become clearer.
- **Start where you are** – you don't need to

be finished to begin, you don't need to be perfect to progress, you bring your experience, judgement, pattern recognition and values.

- **Progress iteratively with feedback** – give permission to move before you feel fully certain – progress, pause, reflect, adjust.
- **Collaborate and promote visibility** – collaboration does not equal consensus, visibility drives alignment. Bring the right voices in, listen actively, incorporate insight and share data.
- **Think and work holistically** – understanding how things connect feeds confidence. Holistic thinking is often a strength we bring instinctively – considering the impact, reading the room, seeing second order effects.
- **Keep it simple and practical** – simplicity builds control. What matters here? What is the simplest useful action? What would progress look like?
- **Optimise and automate** – it's not just about process, it's about energy. Where does your effort matter most? What is draining energy unnecessarily? What load could be better structured? Where is my best self needed?

Seen through that lens, confidence isn't about having all the answers. It's about knowing how you think, how you approach problems, and how you move forward.

That was my take on the day. Thanks so much to everyone at itSMF UK, to all the speakers, and to everyone who worked so hard to make this event happen.



Vawns Murphy

Vawns is Principal ITSM Consultant at i3Works and a member of the itSMF UK Board.

AI Governance does not start with AI



AI has made many organisations look again at their existing IT governance practices. Kaimar Karu considers how ready we are for AI governance, and how we should prepare for its challenges.

I have been spending a lot of time recently with senior IT leaders, working through their organisations' AI-related challenges and often landing on discussions about governance. These leaders have usually known, or at least suspected, that their governance-as-designed and their governance-as-practised had drifted apart even before AI debates entered the scene, and that business-led requests for wider AI adoption have made the distance between the two impossible to ignore. It is clear to them that AI governance cannot be just added onto this wobbly foundation, but the task of tackling deep-rooted governance structures at the same time as devising a plan for AI adoption can feel overwhelming. Let's look at why the usual approach keeps stalling and then at a few starting points that can help.

The state of AI adoption

Figuring out what and how to do with AI has been near the top of many organisations' priority lists for the past few years. Some organisations have done an exemplary job already – usually not without (significant) challenges, of course – but for most the path ahead is far from clear.

Unlike 'traditional' enterprise applications, AI (in its currently most widespread LLM-based form) often does not behave like software at all. It can be an add-on to existing software (e.g. how Copilot is usually introduced) or indeed an application you can buy a subscription for (e.g. various analytics and planning tools), but even then it feels different.

Sometimes, AI tools are purchased specifically to aid decision-making, but more often than that the decision-making aspect emerges from how these tools are used. An operational decision about workforce scheduling. A tactical decision about where to focus next. A strategic decision about investment opportunities. These all include a component of analysing and interpreting data – and then doing something about it. Making a choice and acting on it, including situations where one accepts the suggested wording for an email reply.

Much more than before

Enterprise software users are quite familiar with clicking a button (or tapping the screen) with a clear expectation for that software to perform a specific task. True, it can feel

like magic when Excel cleverly adjusts the forecast details, or when the monitoring software produces a dashboard that is so easy to look at you don't even mind everything being in the red, but you still kind of know how that happens and you also know what you are supposed to do next.

In contrast, the functionality of AI tools often goes well beyond just completing the task. The way they imply meaning behind the detailed information presented on the screen, suggest a few concrete next steps from a potential list of thousands, provide recommendations for follow-up tasks (using that same tool), allow the person in front of the screen to delegate action to automated workflows, and then decisions, too...

While it might feel unfamiliar at times, it can also feel... welcome. So much more can be done, and so much quicker. The amount of toil removed from everyday work can feel like the equivalent of Qomolangma being lifted off one's shoulders.

Also, not quite like before

From an enterprise point of view, employees being able to do so much more with so much less (not counting the AI tools' licence fees) is great news, of course. Yet it is also cause for concern as the usual constraints around enterprise applications do not hold anymore. Some approved tools can now do more than they were approved for, and using non-approved tools is as easy as opening a web browser. But what about information security? Data access rights? Regulations?

For that reason, the topic of AI governance has been near the top of many organisations' priority lists for the past few years. We discuss this in strategy meetings and include it in our annual plans; and in principle, we agree that we should probably get this sorted. Yet, when we get to doing, we still struggle with who should be responsible for governing AI in the enterprise, or how that

responsibility connects to the governance of technology already in place.

A common thread through these discussions in organisations is how the starting point itself is creating significant issues. "How do we govern AI?" is a fair question, it is the question, but as a starting point it also assumes that we are quite happy with our existing technology governance, and that for AI, we just need a fresh coat of paint for the south-facing wall.

In reality, though, how much confidence do we actually have in that existing governance? How certain are we that it is working well in 2026, having survived multiple industry and organisational transformations (Agile, Lean, DevOps, cloud computing, COVID-forced remote working and the first true digital transformation for many organisations etc.)? Are the foundations solid enough to deal with situations where a foreign nation's sponsored software accessing our sensitive data is one "Browse and upload" button away on every employee's screen?

Everything is fine. Probably.

Many of the leaders I've spoken to have struggled to answer these questions with strong confidence. They also recognise that this is not a case of FUD – the risks are real, and the impact can already be felt by most.

In any large organisation, we do have formal governance structures in place, and we do pass the mandated annual audits successfully, so the organisation tends to assume things are working. But those audits verify whether documented procedures, based on expectations from assumptions as understood several years ago, are being followed.

The questions being answered are different from truly knowing whether those procedures are producing the outcomes governance is supposed to deliver: confidence that

decisions are being made by the right people, with appropriate permissions, at the right time, and under proper oversight.

We do spot the occasional signs that something is off – perhaps accountability turns out to be unclear after a major incident, or a new critical risk surfaces unexpectedly in an area thought to have been safe and standardised. In many organisations – who are all dealing with strategic challenges and new technologies and once-in-a-lifetime disruptions on an annual basis – these often get resolved individually and we move on. AI is making that moving on much harder now.

What AI walked into

Why? Because our governance of technology was built around two assumptions that were, for the most part, relatively reliable in most organisations. We could see the decisions being made, and we could trace them back to a person who made them. Neither was guaranteed, but common enough and governance procedures could work around the edges.

The governance we are used to was designed for decisions that came through recognisable channels and followed approved workflows. For digital solutions, someone requested a change, a budget was approved, and the IT department knew what was supposed to be deployed.

Individual AI adoption activities can often bypass all of this. A single employee can sign up for a free AI tool in minutes. A department can make a decision about subscribing to a new browser-based AI tool "just to test it out, you know" in a single meeting, and execute immediately without ever involving the IT department. In these situations, there is no purchase order and no deployment request. Technology governance never engages because it never sees the decision.

And there is another challenge, even in situations where the decision was spotted by the governance in place. In pre-AI workflows, we could trace decisions back to people who made them, and these individuals could be requested to explain their reasoning if needed. We had someone to check things with.

Now, in situations where an AI tool recommends a course of action and a human follows that recommendation, the accountability chain is disrupted. It still exists on paper, sort of, but its essence has changed fundamentally.

The human-in-the-loop, sometimes mandated as a position due to legislation, may not have had the expertise to evaluate the recommendation. They may not have even known they were supposed to. And when someone does push back on an AI recommendation, there is rarely a framework in place for how to justify the override. How can a single person think they are smarter than almighty AI? The audacity!





The black box that got a seat at the table

We expect decision-makers to explain their reasoning. That is how accountability works. LLM-based AI does not reason. It processes patterns and produces outputs, and in most cases, no one involved can fully reconstruct why a particular recommendation appeared. We have introduced a black box into the workflow, and this is indeed a problem with a major societal impact.

When someone follows an AI recommendation, or overrides one, the existing governance mechanisms in most organisations have no good way of accounting for how the initial decision was actually made. Anyone can test this by trying to trace the last AI-influenced decision in their organisation back through the established and documented accountability chain. Most of us would run out of answers way before we run out of questions.

Invisible adoption and ungoverned decision-making are already the reality in many organisations, as both the approved and the covert use of AI in the enterprise have exploded. The organisation's governance is often failing catastrophically in identifying these situations, let alone preventing them. It is becoming quite clear that AI governance is not just 'a coat of paint' and requires changes to existing governance – which we need to understand first.

Know thyself (the governance edition)

The "how" of governance varies enormously between organisations, and often even within them, at different levels and in different teams. Without a better understanding of existing governance and without a shared frame of reference, any conversation about what needs to change re: governance tends to stall before it starts.

So how do you assess your existing governance and understand its characteristics? When we were working on ITIL (Version 5) and describing the governance-related aspects of managing products, services, and the whole system of

value co-creation, we discussed the practical difficulties and acknowledged the need for an easily adoptable model for this assessment.

(For those interested, most of the governance-related content in ITIL (Version 5) can be found in the Strategy and Transformation publications, and for AI governance specifically, in the AI Governance white paper.)
itil.com/itil-News-and-Announcements/ai-governance-white-paper

This model works along two axes, the first of which is authority. For example, is decision-making centralised at the top of the organisation, or distributed across teams and business units? How, and following which rules? Are these rules known and followed? Enforced? Useful? This is where many governance structures start to diverge from reality, because the formal authority map and the way decisions actually get made are often quite different, and the organisation needs to understand how.

The second axis is assurance. Again, for example, is oversight achieved through formal structures and documented procedures, or does it emerge more organically, e.g. through peer review and shared ways of working? How well is this supported and how much of this is real rather than performative? Do we expect one approach, but battle the realities of another on a daily basis?

Where an organisation sits on these two axes provides insight into which of the four BAU governance patterns it most closely follows. Directive governance operates through top-down control and formal hierarchies. Guided governance sets central direction while leaving execution to local teams. Federated governance distributes authority across units that coordinate through formal structures. Autonomous governance relies on self-organising teams and peer-based accountability. All with their nuances, of course, and no two organisations looking the same.

Even though most organisations have a pretty clear idea of which pattern their governance is supposed to follow, significantly fewer have a good understanding of which pattern it actually follows in practice.

Formal, documented and assumed governance might look like Directive on paper, with centralised approval chains and desired structured oversight, while the reality on the ground looks much closer to (uncoordinated) Federated or even (unsanctioned) Autonomous, with teams making their own decisions because the formal process is too slow or too disconnected from how work actually gets done.

These gaps between assumed and real governance hide risks that are hard to spot, and the workarounds people have built around them can amplify those risks once AI enters the picture.

Start where you are

We need to resist the common temptation to treat AI governance purely as a new layer, a fresh coat of paint; as just a new policy and a new committee added to a structure whose load-bearing capacity is, at best, unclear.

That approach will fail for the same reason the existing governance has been struggling, as it assumes the foundations are solid. So, before we can govern AI, we need to sort out how we make decisions now, and how those decisions are governed.

If you can say right now, with confidence, that the governance around (technology-related) decisions is functioning the way it has been documented, you're good to go and design your AI governance on that basis. It will require you to dismantle some of that foundation and rebuild some of the walls, but you are operating in a predictable world, right?

If, on the other hand, you do wincingly recognise some of the situations described throughout this article, the aforementioned AI white paper can help you figure out what to do next. Not make decisions for you, not dazzle you with easy answers, but help you start the journey confidently.



Kaimar Karu

Kaimar is a strategic adviser and architect on large-scale digital transformations and an ITIL lead author.



Avoiding ITSM tool implementation

Chris Good has seen too many organisations fall into the same traps when rolling out a new service management platform.

Here he explains how to avoid them to give your investment the best chance of success.

Are you sure you need a new tool?

Most tooling issues are not necessarily caused by the technology itself. Often they stem from:

- Poor or outdated data and content (e.g. Service Catalogue, Knowledge Articles)
- Weak processes and unclear policies
- Undefined roles and responsibilities (e.g. no practice owners).

A quick service management health check can tell you if you really need a new platform, or if you'd get faster, cheaper wins by fixing what's already in place. Even if you do move forward, you'll avoid carrying the same problems into your shiny new tool.

Treat it as an ongoing capability, not a one-off project

Your tool won't stay fit-for-purpose without continuous upkeep. This includes updating assignment groups, access controls, content, processes, patches, and vendor upgrades.

You could manage this fully in-house. But the industry is moving more to a hybrid model – keeping strategic control internally, while using a specialist Managed Service Partner (MSP) for execution. Source them through a formal procurement process to get the right fit.

Don't forget the people side

This is not just a technical rollout. It's an organisational change. Without strong Organisational Change Management (OCM), user adoption will stall and ROI will suffer.

If you don't have the capability or capacity in-house, bring in OCM specialists that have service management tool experience. In many cases, change management investment can match the cost of the technical implementation. It's worth every penny.

Choose your technical partner (and your approach) carefully

The right partner makes all the difference. The best implementations we've seen follow this three-step approach:

Step 1: Vision alignment

Agree the overall vision for service management, how practices fit together, and surface any stakeholder differences early. Resolving these now prevents expensive rework later.

Step 2: Configuration clarity

Your partner should give you a decision template for every configurable element (e.g. ticket routing rules, dropdown values) showing:

- Current out-of-the-box (OOTB) setup
- Their recommendation for your context
- Space for your decision.

Note: most OOTB settings are designed for generic use, not your specific organisation's circumstances.

Step 3: Controlled customisation

"No customisations". We often hear this, yet the final version contains hundreds of expensive and complex solutions with little documentation. Customisations are always required to some degree. Managing them is key to success.

Through structured walkthroughs of each module, your partner should identify and log potential customisations as user stories. Each story is then assessed for:

- Practice alignment (Practice Owner)
- Interdependencies (Service Management Architect)
- User experience (UX Lead)
- Security compliance (Security Lead)
- Technical debt (Technical Architect).

Only user stories with all approvals move to implementation, ensuring user acceptance criteria are clearly defined. Disagreements follow a pre-defined governance route.

All customisations should have an owner, and a review date, with the aim of developing out those customisations as vendor upgrades become available. In addition, all customisations should be included in a solutions design document (created by the implementation partner) to ensure maintainability when the initial implementation project closes.

Bottom line

All being well, this approach will ensure:

- Implementation is in months, not years
- Budget is adhered to (with a significant reduction in project spend)
- There are fewer surprises and tensions
- Greater user adoption and therefore a much higher chance of delivering on ROI.



Chris Good

Chris Good is Service Optimisation Managing Consultant at Mason Advisory



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