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AI won't fix your CMDB



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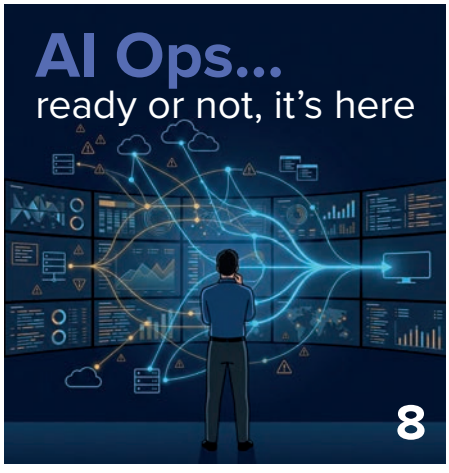
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35 years and counting...

This year marks an impressive three and a half decades of industry leadership for itSMF UK, with many of our sister chapters across the world following close behind.

Throughout that time, our objectives have remained the same: to provide a forum for service management professionals to come together, share ideas and solutions, develop new guidance, and tackle mutual challenges as they come along.

For itSMF UK, content is king, and we now have over 600 hours of on-demand event recordings, plus numerous blogs and white papers - including the highly successful series of member interviews undertaken over the last 18 months, focusing on problem, change, incident and configuration management – (check out our blog page for more information).

Throughout the life of itSMF UK, ServiceTalk has provided a sounding board for members to share their views and experiences, and this issue is no exception.

It will come as no surprise to discover that there's a big focus on AI, including a report on our recent AI Ops lunch & learn. You can find details of the other excellent events in the AI & service management lunch & learn series in the recordings section of the website.

Among other pieces in this issue, we consider why so many service transitions fail before they get started; how to build enterprise service tiering; how Norton Rose Fulbright transformed its Service Design &Transition practice; and the problem with IT cost transparency.

Whatever your immediate service management concerns, you'll find something in our magazine to enlighten, guide or amuse. And if you have an appetite for more, why not dip into the ServiceTalk archives on the website? Of course, it's not always easy to pinpoint the precise article you need, but our new AI assistant Betty Bee (www.itsmf.co.uk/bettybee) will be only too glad to help.



Mark Lillycrop
Head of Professional Services, itSMF UK
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Events Update

Once again we have an exciting range of signature events for members to attend – some online, others in person at interesting venues such as the Magic Circle and Bletchley Park. Check out the list below and be sure to reserve the dates in your 2027 diary. More information coming soon.

28 Jan
Online

22 Feb
Bristol Museum & Art Gallery

4 Mar
Ascot Racecourse

24 Mar
National Rail Museum, York

22 April
Online

10 June
Online

29 June
Fort Nelson, Portsmouth

8 July
Bletchley Park, Milton Keynes

23 Sept
Online

5 Oct
The Magic Circle, London

October
Online

8-9 Nov
Stadium MK, Milton Keynes

Changes on the Board

Three new members have joined the itSMF UK Board, following recent elections.



Rebecca Lloyd, Global Program Director at Kinly, has over 24 years' experience in IT programme and ITSM leadership, having built her career around delivering customer-centric services, driving continual improvement, and fostering strong relationships between customers, suppliers, and service providers.

At BAE Systems, she led the service integration and operational readiness of collaboration services supporting approximately 40,000 users across the UK. During this time, she received a BAE Systems Chairman's Award for driving the adoption of collaboration technologies and delivering measurable business value and return on investment.

AS an itSMF UK member, Rebecca has been actively involved in the Leadership Council and Women in ITSM, and says she is passionate about mentoring and supporting aspiring leaders, helping to develop the next generation of talent and strengthen our community for the future.



Iain McCracken is Director of Service Delivery at the London School of Economics, and one of Higher Education's most engaged voices in service management. He sits at the top table of digital leadership across UK HE as an elected Trustee of UCISA and Director of UCISA Services Limited, co-chairing the joint Risk Committee.

Iain believes service management is strongest when practitioners across industries compare notes rather than working in silos, and sees real, mutual opportunity in bringing his sector's experience to itSMF UK's broader membership while learning from theirs in return.

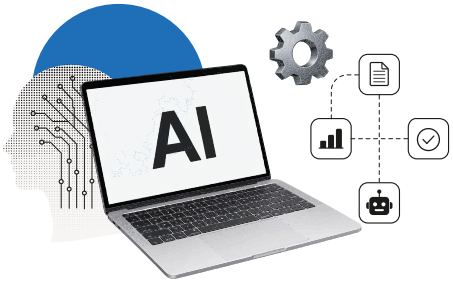


With more than 35 years' experience in IT and service management, **Simon Powell** is a Principal Service Architect at AtkinsRéalis, a Chartered IT Professional and ITIL Master who has led complex transformation programmes across defence, government, telecommunications, and managed services.

He currently serves as Chair of the itSMF UK Defence Community of Practice, and believes itSMF UK has a unique role to play in developing the next generation of service management professionals, promoting professional standards, and providing a trusted independent forum for collaboration and innovation.

All our new board members can be contacted via the itSMF UK office.

Software selection and AI governance join our maturity portfolio



This past year has seen record levels of demand across our skills & maturity portfolio of member services – focused on delivering value by enabling the outcomes needed for individuals; and at an organisational level to improve service management capabilities.

The mentoring programme has continued to grow, with over 30 mentees currently on board. Free to itSMF UK members, the programme supports service management professionals at every stage of their career by helping them identify key goals, reflect on their career direction and develop the skills needed for standard industry roles. Mentees complete the SFIA-based PSMF skills assessment to highlight their strengths and development needs, before being matched with an established ITSM professional whose skills, knowledge and experience are suited to supporting their personal development.

We have also been extremely busy delivering ITSM maturity assessments to a wide range of organisations across different sectors, offering a variety of services in the UK and internationally. The demand for maturity assessments is driven by a number of things. Some organisations want to understand how well their digital transformation efforts are progressing, some want formal certification as managed service providers, and others are looking for benchmarking information to inform continual improvement initiatives. During the last 18 months we've also supported many organisations responding to the Crown Commercial Services (GCA) TS4 framework – which included the requirement for an assessment be conducted, and maturity levels of 2 of above achieved.

Alongside this, we've been working on two new offerings – with 'pilot' programmes being launched before the end of 2026.

Our new Software Selection Support Service offers independent, expert guidance to help organisations choose the right service management platform with greater confidence, clarity and control. Using a structured, evidence-based process, we will work with stakeholders to define and prioritise requirements, assess suitable solutions consistently, and build a clear, defensible business case - reducing procurement and implementation risk while ensuring the selected platform supports people, services and wider organisational outcomes.

The new ITIL AI Governance Maturity Assessment will provide organisations with an independent, structured way to understand how effectively AI is governed and where improvements are needed. Based on the PeopleCert ITIL AI Governance Maturity Model and aligned with internationally recognised governance principles, the assessment will examine areas including strategic alignment, decision-making and transparency, ethical and responsible AI, data quality and security, regulatory compliance and operational readiness - helping organisations reduce AI-related risk, strengthen accountability and ensure that AI initiatives deliver sustainable business and service outcomes.

For further information about any of the above, or to register your interest in the pilot programmes, please speak with your Member Engagement Manager.



What's new in the Communities of Practice?

itSMF UK's Communities of Practice (CoPs) offer a very practical way for members to become involved in the work of the organisation, focusing on common areas of concern where service management practitioners can come together to produce new guidance and share advice and ideas.

In this issue of ServiceTalk, we've asked the chairs of each of our current CoPs to say a few words about their aims and activities over recent months.

Defence Community of Practice: Building Momentum Across Defence

Simon Powell, AtkinsRéalis



The itSMF UK Defence Community of Practice continues to build momentum following its relaunch earlier this year. Our aim is deliberately ambitious: to create a genuinely Defence-wide community connecting service management practitioners across the MOD, Armed Forces, industry partners, suppliers and consultancies, while retaining our original commitment to supporting service management careers for the Armed Forces community.

Our recent community meeting provided another opportunity to bring practitioners together and, importantly, reinforce that this is intended to be a member-led community. Members are encouraged not simply to attend, but to shape activity by leading webinars and workshops, contributing articles, joining working groups and sharing practical experience. That philosophy is also reflected in our plans for an upcoming member-led webinar, further extending the opportunities for members to learn from one another and develop capability across the community.

We are also looking beyond traditional ITSM boundaries. Developing stronger links with those organisations that support people transitioning from the Armed Forces is a natural extension of our continuing focus on careers, mentoring and professional development. If you're lucky enough to catch our talk at Conference this year, or the recording, you will hear of the practical engagement supporting Service leavers through coaching, networking and helping translate military experience into civilian career opportunities.

Looking ahead, the Defence CoP will continue to focus on Connect, Learn, Share and Improve, creating stronger relationships across Defence while turning shared practitioner experience into reusable value through member-led events, knowledge sharing, working groups, careers and mentoring.

Strategic Service Design & Transition Community: vibrant meetings and member research

Chevonne Hobbs, CGI



It has been a fantastic year for the Strategic Service Design & Transition CoP.

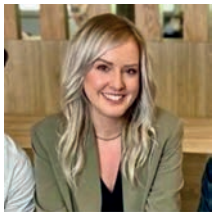
Our vibrant quarterly gatherings featured lively discussions

hosted by members, including a University of Birmingham session with local Indian samosas and a CGI Fenchurch meeting complete with a Sky Garden tour. Comprising senior public and private sector practitioners, our community has deep dived into team structures, AI benefits, and product release maintenance, publishing several articles and whitepapers.

We always start the new year with a revised strategy and are preparing for our exciting signature event. We also reviewed our recent community survey data, which highlighted strong member interest in support model design, service mapping, and service design packages. We are tailoring upcoming whitepapers around these core areas to provide actionable insights and support for our wider network.

Operational Service Design & Transition Community: building on member enthusiasm and engagement

Katie Edwards, DWP



It has been an incredible year for the Operational Service Design and Transition Community, creating valuable opportunities for knowledge sharing and professional development as our community continues to grow.

We've delivered a varied programme of webinars, covering Service Design and Transition governance, with perspectives from HMRC, DWP and easyJet; how to demonstrate value through reporting, delivered by Defra; and automation, presented by Karen Brusch.

A particular highlight has been the enthusiasm and engagement from our members, with insightful questions, lively discussions and connections continuing beyond the sessions themselves.
We'll round off the year with our December webinar on service blueprinting - a topic that has generated significant interest across the community!

Looking ahead to 2027, we're using insights from our recent community survey to shape our programme of events, ensuring we continue to deliver content that is relevant and valuable to our members. We're also looking to diversify how we deliver our sessions, exploring more interactive and collaborative formats that encourage participation and practical learning. We're also really excited to bring the community together at our first signature event!

Women in ITSM: building connections, growing confidence

Val Wilson, BT



The Women in ITSM Community of Practice brings women together to share experiences, build confidence and support one another throughout their careers. This year, our focus has been on strengthening those connections and building a year-round programme.

Our International Women's Day event, Unapologetically Visible, brought us together at the Bombay Sapphire Distillery on 5 March. We were inspired by the theme Give to Gain, passing on experiences and advice so that everyone could benefit from the insights of their peers.

My personal highlight was looking around a room filled with around 70 women, all supporting and encouraging one another. That is still a rare sight in our industry, and it was wonderful to be part of it. The accompanying group photograph is a lovely reminder of the women who made the day so special.

To keep that momentum going, we have established a sub-committee comprising Rebecca Lloyd, Vawns Murphy, Jane Holmes and myself. Meeting monthly, we are shaping events and creating more opportunities for members to connect. My thanks to everyone for their enthusiasm and commitment.

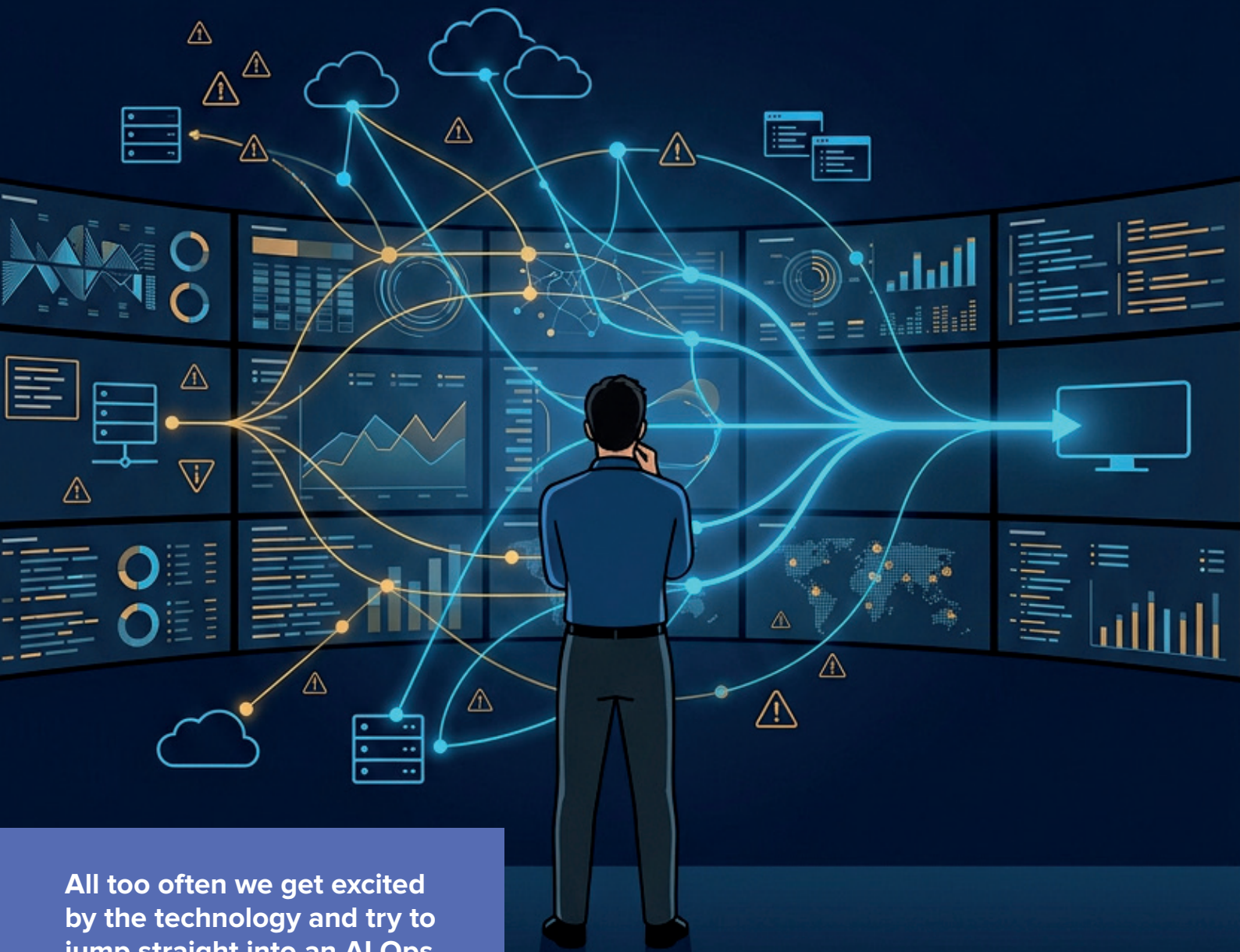
September's 'Mentoring: both Sides of the Mirror' session explored learning from both mentor and mentee perspectives. Next, we are planning meet-up drinks at ITSM26, with introductions and networking. Whether you are attending your first Conference or are a familiar face, please come along.

Looking ahead, 'New Year, New You' on 20 January 2027 will focus on personal branding and building your network. My goodness, I am so excited for our next in-person International Women's Day in March – this cannot be missed!

We would love you to be involved—join a session, bring a colleague, suggest a topic, be on the committee or introduce yourself at Conference. Your experiences and ideas will help shape what comes next.



AI Ops...
ready or not, it's here



All too often we get excited by the technology and try to jump straight into an AI Ops project without a solid plan or data check. This blog is a recap of a recent itSMF UK AI Ops webinar by all-round rockstar and fellow itSMF UK board member Val Wilson.

Why do we have to transform?

Val opened the 'lunch and learn' session by talking about the importance of taking the time to plan and organise so that our AI Ops implementations go well. The key message was that, before organisations implement AI successfully, they need to get ready for it.

She used the BT Group's journey with AI Ops as the basis for her session. In the case of BT, they had a new CEO who was completely focused on transformation. The reality is that it's 2026 and customers and markets are demanding AI and innovation; if it's not the current offering the question becomes "why not?". For BT, it became not just about a nice to have – it became about surviving and indeed growing in the current market.

The current landscape

BT has a large and complicated service ecosystem (or as Val put it, "it's quite the beast"). To add to the pressure of the situation, many customers are critical national infrastructure customers who are the heartbeat of UK and therefore failure is NOT an option. This infrastructure is supported by over 2.5 thousand colleagues making up the service desk, technical teams and all the wider ITIL teams. BT have been migrating to ServiceNow for the last 18 months and are in the latter stages of what has been a long migration to this strategic tool.

The organisations that succeed with AI won't be the ones that move fastest. They'll be the ones that prepare properly.

Val continued by talking about how having a solid business case will set you up for everything you know and love when you go into delivery mode. BT partnered with Accenture to ensure their AI Ops journey had the best possible start, and one of the key areas of focus was getting the vision right. As Val put it, what vision do you want to achieve, what problems do we want to solve, and how will we get there? The business case should be a living, breathing document with referenceable documentation that will help people go back and review.

Understand patterns, performance and pain points using trusted data.

Before introducing AI Ops, it's essential to understand the reality of your current service ecosystem. This means building a picture from trusted data rather than assumptions. Look at the fundamentals: your addressable support base, staff locations, ticket volumes, technology landscape, recurring incidents, closure codes, alert volumes, MTTR, MTBF, customer feedback, user sentiment, running costs, architecture, and even future revenue forecasts. The goal is not simply to collect data, but to understand the patterns, performance trends, and operational pain points that exist today.
Even in highly mature environments like BT, there is often more complexity than we expect. In Val's case, BT were not starting from scratch as there was extensive automation and zero touch ticketing, yet there was still work needed to understand how services worked at a component level, service mapping and what operational friction existed, and what incidents were generating the biggest pain points.

Start with high impact, achievable use cases that deliver value.

Now we're going to use those data insights to focus our use cases. In the case of BT, knowledge came from lots of different places, for example, service management tools, monitoring platforms, documentation, support teams, and business stakeholders. A key priority is to understand your workflows, broken down by tasks so you know exactly how they work before you try to automate them. Working with ServiceNow, BT employed a sandbox environment with different use cases to demonstrate proof of value for one customer, and used practical guidance from ITIL 5 and visualised how AI would work with the SXP platform.

Engage the right people, align priorities across the organisation.

With AI Ops there are lots of different stakeholders and we need to look after them all:

- Strategic; there are many doors to get through and the right stakeholders will help you open them
- Operational; the colleagues that will help you figure out what works in real life
- Technical and delivery; the people who do the day-to-day work so it's really important to keep them close.

It's important to set expectations early on. AI isn't a quick win 'one and done' exercise. It's typically a 2 to 3 year programme so when we introduce AI Ops we need to get some quick wins so that we can deliver some value quickly. Some prerequisites for success are:

- Trusted, accurate, connected data for mature processes is essential for AI to work
- Service mapping so you can understand events and how they correlate
- Incident and problem resolution information. Do a refresh of your knowledge and check to make sure it is up to date and ready for AI.
- Measure value, outcomes and operational impact continuously
- Look at getting the revenue right – will implementing AI Ops get you more business?
- Get feedback from customers and insights such as NPS to help drive you forward
- Pragmatism is needed so we can demonstrate value – let's just move forward and finesse it as we go
- Do your programatics – what are the big tech things that you do that give you the best outcomes? We need to do this to grow and be competitive.

Build a culture that embraces change.

Adoption and early life support can wreck your digital implementation because, if people think they won't have a job, then adoption will stop so we need to have the important conversations first. To this end, BT runs AI apprenticeships which are supported by the government, helping colleagues who could be displaced by AI move into different roles. This can give people different pathways in a secure environment.

How can we derive more value from AI Ops?

Here are Val's top tips:

- From greenfield to RFP, it's 6 to 9 months
- Do the prep work, for example making sure your data is solid and you have the right people engaged
- Make your service catalog modular
- Train your sales guys to talk about AI Ops
- Look at where we have adjacencies and where we can deploy AI in the wider business.

That was my take on Val's 'lunch and learn'. What do you think?



Vawns Murphy

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

AI in Higher Education: what we must do next



Chevonne Hobbs reports on the challenges facing our industry as we prepare the next generation to manage AI.

I recently attended the itSMF UK's online sector spotlight on AI in higher education. The three university case studies presented from Glasgow, Birmingham and Oxford, highlighted their advantages of using AI within their institutions.

These were great presentations, and a clear requirement of where IT Service Managers have an important role to play in all of this. As some of the challenges were presented, the themes were recognisable to ITSM professionals: unclear ownership, fragmented support, variable data quality, changing user expectations, lacking governance, and user adoption.

Stanford University 2026 AI Insights Report

In a recent AI Insights Report from Stanford University; they conducted a survey spanning 15 countries, which showed 80% of university students using generative AI to support their studies, this is double the percentage reported back in 2023.

The report mentions that 56% of students use AI to look up key concepts or subjects. This was followed by researching assignments at 52%, generating initial ideas at 46%, and writing or editing work at 41%.

Students also perceive tangible benefits from using AI. Half reported better understanding of the topics they were learning, 49% said AI helped them complete assignments and 55% believed it helped them learn faster. At the same time, the report highlights legitimate concern, where 55% college students said generative AI had produced a mixed effect on their critical-thinking skills.

This mixture of value and concern is recognisable to any service manager. Users adopt a useful technology faster than the organisation can develop a policy, deliver a suitable AI solution, maintain and support it.

This is where having a strategy for AI is imperative to any organisation, whether you are an institution or a corporate organisation. Building a strategy based on real use cases that drive efficiency from the benefits of implementing AI, also requires a solid AI-Operating Model foundation to support the future state. From an AI-Operating Model, you can start to understand the requirements for your processes, people, data, technology, and supplier dependencies.

University of Glasgow RO:bot chatbot

The University of Glasgow's Reach Out Chatbot (RO:bot) service brings together support for their IT team and for Student services through a shared front door. Users can search for answers by interacting with RO:bot, using a live chat or request face-to-face assistance without first having to understand which internal team can help with their request.
The University of Glasgow achieved this by providing users with:

- one recognisable point of entry.
- access to cross-departmental knowledge.
- sufficient context to avoid repeatedly asking the same questions.
- transparency between automation and human support.

The objective showed higher satisfaction feedback from IT and Students who said it helped them with less manual navigation that typically led to time delays and frustrations.

University of Birmingham: AI improves operational intelligence.

The University of Birmingham case study focused on bespoke AI capabilities integrated with ServiceNow. The institution has used AI to analyse incident volumes, identify trends and highlight areas where problem records may be missing. It has also explored AI-generated summaries of priority incidents, assessments of the completeness and likely disruption of change records, and transcription of post-incident reviews to produce timelines, actions, and recommendations.

This is a strong AI use case used in ITSM because AI can help by reducing the administrative burden and highlight patterns that genuinely take a long time to analyse with human investigation. However, the human oversight should not be removed completely as an AI model may overlook the context known to an experienced analyst.

The session also emphasised the importance of staff knowing the ethical use of AI, and clearly communicating how the data is being stored, processed, and used.

University of Oxford: multiple products, one service

The University of Oxford case study offered another valuable message: ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, Google Gemini, and other platforms each have their strengths. Rather than searching for a single "best" tool, Oxford's approach has been to create an environment in which staff and students can use multiple approved AI tools safely and securely for different task objectives.

The University has given access to their enterprise agreements, security assessments, guidance, training and communities such as AI ambassadors and specialist interest groups.

They also have set-up an AI Competency Centre providing a central point for guidance on the available technology portfolio.

This confirms that different AI models will continue to provide a combination of capability to an organisation, including costs, accessibility, integration, and data protection.

AI models current performance will also change frequently, and this is something to be mindful of whilst maintaining a close relationship with your AI model suppliers.

The University's approach is not to build the AI strategy around one product. It is to build a governed service wrapper around a managed portfolio of AI products.

Key takeaways

These sessions highlighted three main practical use cases I have seen for AI to date:

- Chatbots
- Workflow integration
- Productivity efficiency

For the Use Cases to be successful, the presenters shared the following considerations:

1. **Responsible AI** is included and embedded within your AI Strategy
2. **Personas & User Journey Maps** should be used when designing for AI.
3. **Data Quality** should be a policy standard that is consistently followed.
4. **Human Escalation** needs to exist, and AI should be included within your RACIs.
5. **Multiple AI Tools** can be used, when it's for the right job.



Chevonne Hobbs

Chevonne has worked in IT for 25 years with organisations as diverse as Coca Cola, Leeman Brothers, CAP Gemini, Ricoh and Illuminet Solutions. She is currently Senior Manager Business Consultant at CGI.

AI won't fix your CMDB



Organisations should rethink their Configuration Management in the age of Artificial Intelligence, says Cam Bianchi.

Over the last few decades, we've seen that every technology cycle has its silver bullet. Cloud promised unlimited agility. Automation promised operational efficiencies. Now Artificial Intelligence promises to solve decades of Configuration Management challenges.

"Turn on AI within your ITSM platform, connect your discovery tools, point it at your data sources and you'll have an accurate, trustworthy CMDB!". Unfortunately, it doesn't work quite like that.

AI is incredibly good at recognising patterns, identifying anomalies and supporting human decision making. What it can't do is invent governance or decide what "good" looks like for your organisation. Like every other technology investment before it, AI simply amplifies the quality of the foundations beneath it.

If your strategy for configuration management is poorly defined, AI won't fix this. It will simply help you fail faster... and potentially at a greater cost to your business.

AI Is only as good as the data you give it

I'm sure every IT professional has heard the phrase: "Garbage in, garbage out." AI hasn't changed that principle. In fact, in many ways, it has made it even more important.

Machine learning models excel at recognising relationships and patterns between information. They can identify duplicate Configuration Items at pace, spot unusual or unauthorised changes, recommend appropriate relationships and can even predict where data quality issues are likely to exist. These are exactly the capabilities that make AI so valuable in Configuration Management.

But none of these matter if the underlying data lacks consistency. If your organisation and its suppliers have five different naming conventions for the same type of server, business application records exist without owners, software assets cannot be linked to hardware... AI has no reliable definition of what "correct" looks like. Instead of creating trust, it just creates a confidence in inaccurate information which leads organisations down the pathway of untrustworthy data. Which I'd argue is more dangerous than not jumping into AI at all.

It's no different to asking a satnav to navigate using an outdated map. It will still give you directions, it just can't guarantee it's the best route to lead you to the destination you intended.

Strategy before technology

One of the biggest mistakes organisations make is treating AI as a feature instead of a capability. Switching on AI isn't a strategy but adopting it effectively is.

Start with three questions: Why do we need a CMDB to exist? Who owns and manages the accuracy of the data? Which outcomes do we need to deliver? These questions existed long before AI.

The difference now is that AI forces organisations to answer them. Without clear answers, AI simply exposes the weaknesses that already existed.

Another trend I see is organisations being encouraged to start again with a clean CMDB, so AI has a pristine baseline to learn from. While that sounds attractive, there's a risk of discarding years of operational knowledge in pursuit of perfection. Of course, legacy data contains noise, but it often contains invaluable business context too. Good Configuration Management isn't about erasing history; it's about understanding which of it still creates value.

Building AI principles and use cases into your strategy

AI often enters Configuration Management almost by default because it's embedded within your ITSM tooling. Rather than allowing the technology to dictate how it is used, organisations should design the Configuration Management standards, governance and controls that enable AI to support clearly defined business outcomes in a trusted and controlled manner.

The four foundations of your strategy that I would focus on first would be:

Data standards

AI needs consistency to be powerful such as a minimum dataset with consistent CI classes and definitions, standard naming conventions, defined relationships, mandatory ownership and lifecycle states, all documented and translates data standards into meaning something to everyone.

These standards give AI a definition of "good" but without them, every analysis and recommendation AI produces becomes subjective depending on the user's interpretation and knowledge of the maturity of the individual fields and values being assessed.

Business-led use cases

Don't collect Configuration Items just because the platform allows you to. Collect them because they answer business questions. When I work with organisations to develop configuration management strategies and policies, I always guide them towards a baseline understanding of their existing related strategies (like their Digital, Data and ITSM strategies) and get them to ask questions like:

- Does tracking this help improve your cyber resilience?
- Does tracking this improve our understanding of related services, dependencies or risks?
- Can this help assess change risk?
- Does this help with our financial decision-making & technology budget planning?

And remember that tracking a CI has a cost attached! If a CI contributes to none of these outcomes, you really must ask whether it belongs in your CMDB at all.

Data quality

Data quality shouldn't just become a quarterly clean-up exercise for your Configuration Management team; it needs to become an operational discipline that's supported by your people and technology.

This is where I find AI begins to provide real value to the practice. It shouldn't add value by replacing all important data quality governance, but by continuously reinforcing it, as guided by the data policy your people have designed. Use AI as your data quality investigator and champion, showing you where the misaligned or miscategorised data is before they become a road blocker for your ITSM function. This keeps the human-in-the-loop because people apply the judgement to the evidence AI brings.

Governance

It should be reassuring to all of us in the IT industry that AI still requires human judgement. After all, our goal should be to become AI-enabled, not AI-replaced.

For example, AI may identify a recurring relationship between two CI classes and recommend adding it to your service model. What it cannot decide is whether that relationship reflects how your organisation delivers services or who should own them. Those decisions remain firmly with people.

Policies. Decision makers. Defined ownership and escalation paths. The organisations that will succeed in the advent of AI won't have fewer governance processes but simply have smarter ones that deliver outcomes faster and more cost effectively. And that's because these organisations use their people who know their culture and how the business operates, to work with AI to develop governance and necessary workflows that are robust and achievable without affecting delivery.

Think of data standards, governance and ownership being the equivalent of keeping the map up to date. Without continual maintenance, even the smartest navigation system gradually becomes less reliable.

Where AI can truly add value to Configuration Management

When these strategic foundations exist, AI becomes incredibly powerful. Not because it replaces Configuration Managers but because it removes the bottleneck of the repetitive work.

Imagine if AI is used to continuously:

- Detect orphaned Configuration Items and unusual relationships before a Change Request gets to CAB.

- Identify conflicting discovery records and recommend reconciliation actions.
- Validate new service models against defined standards before the busy service owner must commit their time to a weeklong review.
- Prepare audit reports and evidence for monthly governance meetings.
- Identify trends before they become operational issues that the service desk bares the pain of.
- Highlighting legacy technology and technology debt that could put your business at risk.

Unlike people, AI doesn't experience review and decision fatigue. It doesn't become bored after reviewing thousands of CI records. It doesn't overlook anomalies because it's Friday afternoon and you're already busy supporting resolving a major incident. Instead, it becomes the analytical engine that supports Configuration Management teams while allowing experienced practitioners to focus on governance, stakeholder engagement, identifying technical debt, strategic decision-making and continual improvement of the practice.

Think of AI less as an autonomous Configuration Manager and more as an exceptionally capable sidekick that accelerates the heartbeat of your ITSM function.

Don't ignore the risks

Of course, there is another very important side to this conversation. I often describe the CMDB, if done right, as the crown jewels of any organisation's IT operations. And that's for good reason, because it doesn't just contain an inventory list of servers and applications. A mature CMDB can contain infrastructure locations, network information, IP and MAC addressing, vulnerability information, software deployments, service dependencies, business criticality and ownership data all in one place. When you take all this together, that's an extraordinarily detailed blueprint of how an organisation operates.

Exactly the type of information a threat actor would love to obtain. And introducing AI into your environment requires careful consideration, especially if you don't have Robert De Niro-style character on hand to sign off on its entry into your organisation's 'circle of trust'!

Questions that you should be asking are "where is the model hosted?" "Which data is being shared and what data is ringfenced in a dedicated environment for privileged access?", "What information from prompting is retained and does it align to your retention policy?" and "How is sensitive information protected?".

These questions should be answered with your security, cyber and risk teams, not after you've been blinded by the limitless capabilities AI can offer. AI governance should become a part of your configuration management and broader data information governance, not treated as a separate discipline.

AI as a configuration item

Ironically, in the rush of AI, many organisations are overlooking one final point around how AI itself is managed.

Whether it's an embedded capability within your ITSM platform or an enterprise AI service used across multiple departments, it is still an *application* providing *business capability*.

Which means it has models and versions, owners and suppliers, licences, integrations, security requirements, lifecycle activities, and business dependencies. And let's not forget modern considerations like prompt history, approval workflows and decision logs.

This all sounds familiar...oh yes, it's exactly how I help organisations define the characteristics of what is a Configuration Item. Yes, AI is essentially another CI that needs to be controlled.

Tomorrow's auditors may ask which model produced a recommendation, which version was in use and whether the output was reviewed by a human. That makes AI not just an application, but another Configuration Item that deserves governance, just like every other critical business application.

Final thoughts

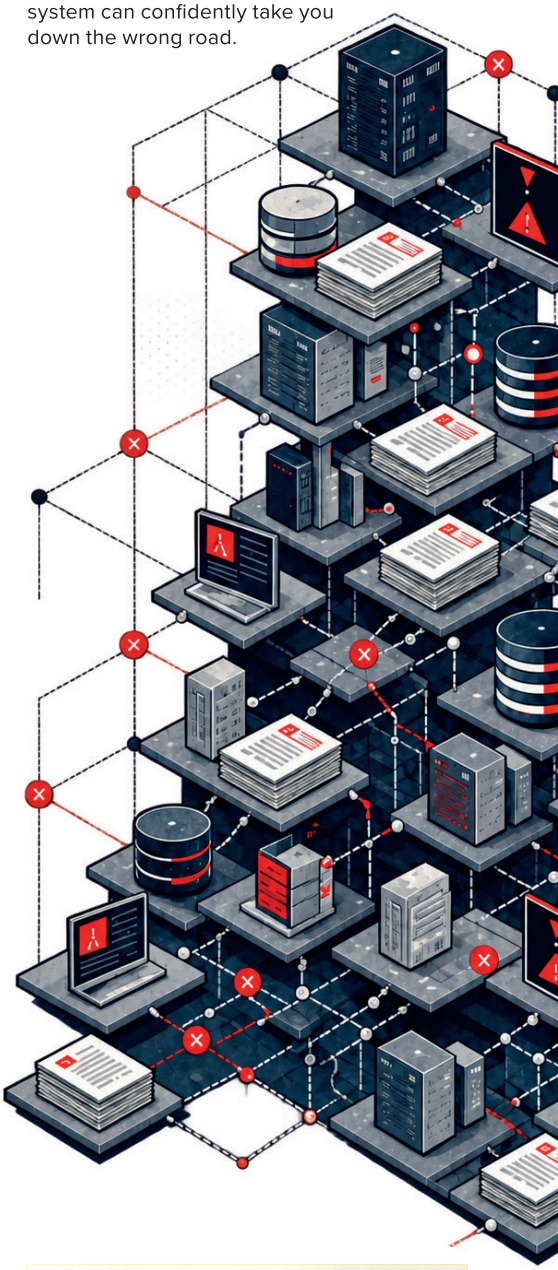
The conversation shouldn't be whether AI will replace Configuration Management. In my opinion, it won't. The real goal should be building a Configuration Management practice that enables AI to deliver meaningful business value.

The organisations that succeed won't necessarily have the most advanced AI solution. It will be the ones that have the clearest strategy, that supports them in understanding their data, knowing which outcomes they must deliver and a governance that people can trust and implement.

And they'll use AI exactly as it should be used, not as a replacement for good Configuration Management, but as a multiplier for it.

In the end, AI is an enabler, not the strategy. Your strategy is what gives your practice and AI capability its direction, purpose and guardrails. Build that foundation well, and AI won't just help you manage your estate more effectively; it'll help you make better decisions across the organisation.

Think of AI as your organisation's satnav. It can optimise the journey, warn of obstacles and help you reach your destination more efficiently. But your configuration management strategy provides the map. Keep that map accurate, governed and aligned to where the organisation needs to go, and AI becomes a powerful guide. Neglect it, and even the smartest navigation system can confidently take you down the wrong road.





Cam Bianchi

Cam is a Managing ITSM Consultant at CGI

Why most Service Transitions fail before the contract is signed



Adam Phillips explains why engaging Service Transition early in the sales process can dramatically reduce delays and improve the customer experience.

One thing I learned quickly in this role is that a customer's perception of a managed service being successful takes shape very early on in the engagement, and the service transition stage is instrumental in shaping it. It's the first step after the sale is complete, and we all know how sticky a first impression can be. A bad experience can often linger with a customer long after go-live. But what surprises me most is that many of the problems we encounter could easily have been avoided if the right conversation had happened much earlier in the process.

Most transition failures start in the bid stage. Ambiguous assumptions, customer set timelines are unchallenged, and critically, the opportunity to highlight the key dependencies (and embed them in the plan) is missed. The service transition stage is the moment these errors can no longer remain hidden, and usually by now it's too late to avoid them, risk acceptance is the only option. The challenge is reduced to; how do we re-align the customer expectations, and mitigate the risks to our business?

What do customers really want?

Customers don't wake up wanting a managed service. What they want is the confidence that someone competent is on standby to take problems off their desk as they arise. When I meet customers at the start of a transition, their questions are rarely about the service description. They are almost always these five:

1. Will the service give them what they need?
2. How much disruption will the transition cause?
3. How long will it take?
4. What are the typical risks?
5. What haven't we thought of?

That last one is often the biggest, and no contract ever answers it. A well-run transition does: milestone planning, RAID management with named owners, service readiness assurance, processes & knowledge capture, tools configured, and third parties engaged; success measured by whether the service works rather than by whether the plan has finished. None of this is glamorous. All of it is required. Reassurance is what we are really selling. If you are on the buying side, those five questions are worth asking before signing, rather than them becoming an afterthought.

The commercial impact

Bad transitions cost money. When the scope is unclear, it results in higher onboarding costs, and providers often end up doing the work for free. When customer dependencies are underestimated, we wait, delaying the billing. When things become unstable, escalations pull senior colleagues into calls that nobody has planned for. Every one of those issues erodes our margin, and most can be root-caused back to a conversation somebody didn't have during the bid.

I once took on a service transition in which the sales team had agreed the solution, onboarding milestones, and go-live dates without involving service transition. By the time the deal reached us it quickly became clear that several critical requirements had been overlooked, support models were not fully defined, dependencies were not called out, and commitments had been made that weren't realistically achievable.

The result was entirely predictable. Delays, escalations, unexpected costs, and a strained customer relationship from the outset. Months were spent resolving issues that could have been identified and addressed before the contract was signed. It was a powerful reminder that service transition isn't an activity that starts after the sale; it's a capability that helps ensure what is sold can be delivered successfully, and on time. When that voice is missing from the sales cycle, everyone pays the price.

The reverse is just as true and far less discussed. A well-executed transition produces value sooner, generates fewer escalations, and leaves a customer willing to have the next conversation. Renewals are considerably easier when the last significant change went smoothly. And crucially, the cost to deliver remains predictable, keeping that margin profile healthy across the deal.

In an ideal world...

Sales should introduce service transition



early in the bid, using it as a differentiator to stand out and win the business. Present service transition as a capability that makes deals real and lowers risk, not as something that slows things down.

It's our responsibility, as the specialists in our field, to proactively collaborate with our fellow sales stakeholders. We can't expect them to know all the answers and identify all the risks when their core role is to win business. Yes, they should have a high-level ability to articulate the value, fundamental requirements and risks of the transition phase, but service provision can differ significantly from one deal to the next, and each typically carries its own unique set of requirements and challenges that only an expert can distil into a list of key considerations.

Some practical steps to take

Simply blaming sales when it all goes wrong is rarely a fair approach; in these situations, we need to ask ourselves: what could we have done better to support sales before it reached us?

Most practitioners reading this will agree and then point out that they are not always invited to bid reviews. So be practical about challenging this within your organisation. The below is a list of my top 5 practical steps that transition teams can employ to improve their chances of success;

- Collaborate and build trusted relationships with sales teams, building a culture that invites service transition to be consulted before the deal is signed.
- Align a named transition owner on the bid team early enough to influence the schedule.
- Ask for transition sign-off as a bid gate. Remember that sign off should be completed quickly to avoid it being seen as a bottle neck, but don't be afraid to challenge when things don't look correct or complete.
- Measure and track handover quality. Farm data which can then be used to drive the right behaviours that foster success.
- Build a library of collateral and sales enablement tools so sales can self-serve and increase their own confidence in with the topic. Keep the messages as simple as possible and ensure the door remains open to consult and collaborate when things are more complex.

Final thoughts

The best outcomes I have been involved with were where all stakeholders shared the same values; expectations set honestly and early, risks discussed openly while they were still avoidable, sales and delivery teams all working together before go-live rather than after it, and a customer who felt like we were a partner rather than just a supplier.

Engaging service transition early does not add cost or complexity. It adds credibility, reduces risk, and creates the confidence that successful managed services relationships are built upon. It may not be the most exciting part of the deal, but it is often the difference between a service that merely goes live and one that succeeds.



Adam Phillips

Adam Phillips is Practice Lead for Service Transition at CDW UK and a member of the itSMF UK Service Design & Transition Community of Practice.

The curse of knowledge in ITSM

One of the great benefits of ITIL in versions past was its ability to convey complex concepts to a wide audience, regardless of their existing knowledge and experience. But something has changed, argues Ian MacDonald.



Since its inception, one of the understated strengths of ITIL has been its ability to create a common language and provide a practical understanding of how to apply IT Service Management. Acronyms, definitions and concepts were generally easy to convey and, for those new to ITIL, gave an accessible understanding. Best practice only delivers value when practitioners feel confident they can apply it in the workplace.

As an ITIL author, I always worked to a simple principle: write for the people who need to understand it, not for those who already do. But something changed when ITIL went "digital".

ITIL 4 and 5 introduced a raft of overly complex words, definitions, theoretical models and directives, often wrapped in prose few people naturally understand. Unconsciously, it gave the impression of being intellectually superior to the people trying to learn from it. Suddenly, practitioners were faced with terminology that required a Google search or thesaurus just to understand the language being used.

As a trainer, I have little doubt, and students regularly echo this, that modern ITIL has made the simple seem difficult.

ITIL is a broad church, and the challenge is to write ITIL guidance in ways all practitioners can not only understand but relate to.

Don't assume every reader is a strategist or management consultant. On reflection, perhaps in its desire to become enterprise-wide, in doing so has lost some connection with its traditional audience?
The issue is not the inclusion of ideas such as Antifragility, VUCA, Cynefin or Wardley Mapping. The issue is that they are often not explained in ways operational IT practitioners can easily understand or apply.

What frustrates me most is when simple ideas are explained using words that themselves need translating into plain English. Whether it's SLM referring to "a balanced bundle of metrics", explaining Lean Culture as "a fresh, fun way of viewing ideas while simultaneously maintaining serious focus and whimsical silliness", or advising people to "move to the adjacent possible" when dealing with complexity.

It reminds me of the "curse of knowledge": when experts use jargon or overly complex explanations it's because they forget what it's like not to know the subject.

Take the definition of a Practice Success Factor (PSF). Success factors have existed for decades as a simple way to define "what good looks like" and the KPIs needed to evidence success. A PSF is essentially the same idea but is now described as "a complex functional component of a practice". In reality, PSFs are not inherently complex, yet the language used creates the perception that they are.

To be clear, there is a huge amount of value in modern ITIL. The broader thinking, enterprise focus and inclusion of concepts from other disciplines all help keep the framework relevant in a changing world. The challenge is not the ideas themselves, but how we communicate them to the people expected to apply them.
So beware the curse of knowledge! Perhaps the real lesson for all of us is this: when introducing new concepts, frameworks or ways of working, we should never assume understanding simply because the words make sense to us. Good communication makes complex ideas relatable, practical and memorable.

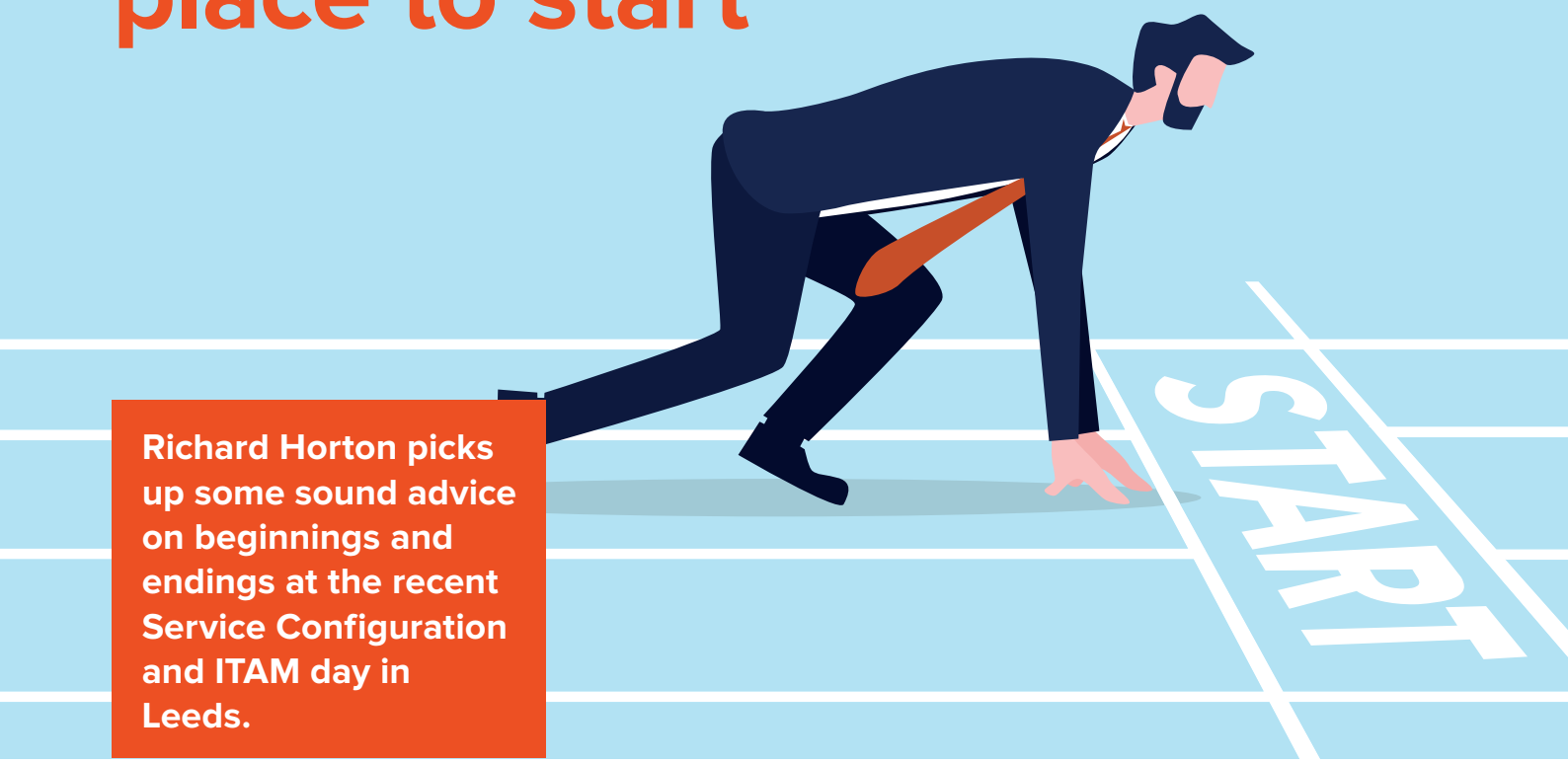
ITIL was once at its best when it translated new concepts into something practitioners could quickly understand and apply. As leaders, trainers and practitioners, maybe that is the standard we should continue striving for in how we communicate with our own teams and organisations.



Ian MacDonald

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

A very good place to start



Richard Horton picks up some sound advice on beginnings and endings at the recent Service Configuration and ITAM day in Leeds.

It's normal to start at the beginning. How about starting at the end? Or even, how about doing both at the same time? It felt like that was happening at the recent itSMF UK and BCS ITAM day in Leeds.

The beginning first. Pallab Dasgupta and Jonathan West presented their State of Service Configuration & IT Asset Management paper at the start of the day. Early on one of the attendees asked a "How do I get started with this?" question. You could almost hear the rest of the room hold their breath, hear the collected wisdom of decades of experience in this space, sense the waterfall of wisdom waiting to cascade. Don Page used to describe itSMF events as being the best form of free consultancy and this moment felt like it encapsulated that. The questioner went away from the day armed with a stack of tips and advice, and with quality contacts willing to help.

What about the end? The next presentation was from Kay Ratcliffe who has spent years carefully putting in place a working management approach. She walked us through her journey. Of course there is no such thing as "the end", and no one was more aware of that than Kay, but her achievements at Leeds Building Society (LBS) will have felt like that to many in the room.

ITIL advises us to start where we are and progress iteratively (excellent advice). But what are we progressing towards? Pallab and Jonathan's assessment of the state of CM gave a clear indicator of the need to plan before you do, tempting though it may be to start with identifying the tool you want to use.

Kay's talk illustrated how this can unfold and some of the perils along the way.

These might include your senior stakeholder who had bought the original vision leaving, major projects shifting the organisational focus, security constraints, and difficulty securing sufficient resources despite having saved the organisation money. At a more granular level the implications of your scope and the architecture you are working within come into play, and the question of data.

The temptation is to seek perfection, but chasing 100% accurate data may feel like chasing a rainbow. The crunch question is how trustworthy is what we have? If it is good enough to trust for the purpose that it is needed, then we can use it to inform and deliver business value. Then we can be seen as an active contributor to organisational success, rather than a cost to be minimised. Having said that, even then, work in this space is often undervalued within an organisation, so we need to be smarter about highlighting our contribution. In Kay's case there are the hundreds of thousands of pounds she helped LBS save over the years. True business value delivered.

We finished with a vision of what a zero ticket world might look like, how that would provide significant business value, and bridge the gap between user experience and SLA metrics widely experienced as the watermelon effect. Jaro Tomik, zero ticket evangalist, eloquently explained the concept: "The destination is not fewer tickets. It is fewer avoidable interruptions."

The problem here is less the data – after all we are swimming in it. It is more how we use the data, painting a picture of how our asset monitoring approach can be transformed by a methodical approach. In this the power of automation lets us reduce noise that overwhelms, and helps us stitch data together into meaningful connections.

So "the end" that we have reached and our current concepts of what is good enough are not the end. AI is enabling us to do more in the automation space and add power to our data. Our vision needs to continue to evolve. Days like this help us on that journey.



Richard Horton

Richard is Head of IT Service Management at NIHR RDNCC. He is a former itSMF UK Director with a history of running itSMF groups and events, and is the current Chair of itSMF International.

From classification to capability: building enterprise service tiering



Natasha French explains how service tiering evolved from a loosely discussed concept into a practical capability that shaped how her organisation designed, delivered and operated services and what they learned along the way.

Service tiering is often described as a tidy maturity step that organisations introduce once they reach a certain level. Our experience was far less linear. Tiering emerged gradually, under pressure and only became effective once we understood what problem it was really trying to solve.

This article focuses on enterprise service-level tiering in complex, client-facing, multi-supplier environments where services span business domains, shared infrastructure, and multiple delivery partners.

A follow-up article will explore consumer-level tiering in supplier-facing organisations, where services are uplifted through packaged capability models based on dependency, consumption, and business criticality.

Structure came first and exposed the gaps

Several years ago, our IT organisation moved to a tower-aligned operating model. Delivery capability was aligned to business-facing domains such as Rail, Surface, Digital, Payments, and Professional Services. Alongside these sat technology-focused towers – Network and Hosting and a shared EUC services tower.

Each business-aligned tower had service owners, product owners, and application teams. The intent was clear: improve accountability, strengthen business alignment, and enable scale.

What this structure did very effectively was expose something we had previously been able to work around: we did not have a shared, consistent understanding of what a "service" actually was.

Getting a grip on services: definition before differentiation

Before we could meaningfully talk about priority, resilience, or criticality, we had to answer some basic but uncomfortable questions:

- What do we mean by a service?
- Where does a business service end and a technical or underpinning service begin?
- How do shared services such as network, hosting and EUC support multiple business outcomes?
- Who truly owns what in a multi-tower model?

The first major step, therefore, was not tiering it was service definition

We revisited and agreed a common definition across business and technology, clarifying:

- Business-facing services
- Technical and underpinning services
- Shared services that cut across multiple towers

From there, we built service catalogues with clear tower ownership. Business services, technical services, and underpinning services were made visible- not as abstract concepts, but as real entities with named owners.

The outcome was a catalogue of over 400 services.

What visibility gave us (and what it took away)

Visibility was transformative. For the first time, we could see what existed across the organisation; ownership was explicit rather than assumed; duplication and overlap became visible; similar services delivered in different ways across towers were exposed; and dependencies on shared services were no longer implicit-they were documented.

However, this clarity also removed a layer of comfort.

Once everything was visible, it became clear that most services were being treated in broadly the same way, regardless of their purpose, impact or risk profile.

The limits of "everything is important"

With this visibility, several tensions emerged. Business-facing services and underpinning services competed for attention. Shared services underpinned multiple outcomes but were inconsistently governed. Delivery teams applied similar controls to very different services. Almost every service was described as "critical".. but critical to what, and critical to who, was often unclear.

We had classification and visibility but no consistent, enterprise-wide way to differentiate services. Criticality was subjective, inconsistent, and often asserted rather than agreed. Decision-making under pressure highlighted the gap: we could list our services, but we could not defend which were truly critical to the organisation as a whole.

The catalyst: the data centre outage

It was at this point that a major data-centre outage occurred.

The outage cut across business services, shared infrastructure, and multiple towers simultaneously. As services failed and recovered at different speeds, it exposed gaps that had previously been hidden.

Although we had a comprehensive service catalogue, criticality had been defined inconsistently:

some services for example had resilience far beyond what business impact justified, others lacked resilience that the business would reasonably expect.

"Critical" often meant "important to this tower" , rather than "critical to the organisation."

Shared services amplified impact, but their role in supporting high-criticality outcomes was not consistently reflected in design or investment decisions.

A necessary first step

The outage forced us to act. We introduced a lightweight, consistent method to assess criticality. The model reflected enterprise-level business impact rather than local importance, worked across towers and shared services, and aligned criticality with resilience decisions.

This initial tiering, expressed simply as Gold, Silver, and Bronze, was enough to prioritise investment and protect key outcomes.

At this stage, tiering was deliberately narrow in scope. It addressed the resilience gaps revealed by the outage, not every service design decision. It was pragmatic rather than perfect, but it gave the organisation a defensible starting point.

Growth creates a new challenge

Soon after, the volume of change accelerated. Digital delivery increased. Initiatives ran in parallel. Supplier involvement grew. Services became more tightly coupled through shared platforms and integrations.

The lightweight model remained valid, but scaling decisions became harder. Applying tiers relied heavily on individual judgement. Architects became informal gatekeepers. Similar services were designed differently depending on who was involved. The same tier triggered different expectations in different contexts.

Decisions slowed. Debates repeated.

The issue post-outage had been defining and protecting critical services. The issue post-growth was applying tiering consistently at scale. These were related but distinct challenges.

From classification to capability

To address scaling, we expanded tiering beyond resilience into a broader set of guardrails across the delivery value chain.

The tiering model evolved. Gold, Silver, and Bronze gave way to Mission Critical, Business Critical, Business Operational, and Administrative; reinforcing that tiers reflected business consequence rather than technical quality.

At the same time, we built on the original resilience-focused criteria. Tier-aligned expectations were expanded to cover service design and architectural patterns, supplier and sourcing models, integration approaches, service lifecycle decisions, and operational readiness.

Tiering was embedded directly into architecture and delivery standards, not treated as a checklist applied after the fact. New services were required to consciously choose an operating model aligned to their tier, rather than inheriting one by default.

This changed how decisions were made.

Conversations shifted from subjective importance to shared, impact-based judgement. Higher-tier services attracted deeper assurance and clearer recovery planning. Lower-tier services were still governed responsibly, but without being over-engineered.

The effect on speed was significant. In high-change, agile environments, tiering reduced ambiguity upfront. Teams could see immediately what they were working with, what was expected, and where trade-offs were acceptable. Fewer decisions were deferred, fewer assumptions went unchallenged and fewer late-stage redesigns were required.
Tiering also provided a practical way to align supplier models with business impact. Rather than assuming equivalence between vendor offerings, it allowed us to assess whether supplier capabilities genuinely matched the outcomes a service was intended to support, and to make gaps explicit early.

Operational expectations followed the same pattern. Support coverage, monitoring depth, escalation paths, and service levels aligned to tier rather than being renegotiated repeatedly. Tiering moved from something we discussed to something that actively shaped how work flowed through the organisation.

Making risk and exceptions explicit

As tiering became embedded, we learned to separate exceptions from risk.

Early on, exceptions were treated as failures, something to eliminate or defend. Over time, we learned this was unhelpful. Not all exceptions introduced risk, and treating them as such slowed delivery and blurred decision-making.

By explicitly recording what the exception was, whether it introduced risk, and what kind of risk that was, the quality of conversations improved dramatically.

Architects and delivery teams could see early where services did not fully meet tier expectations and why. When designing new services, teams could assess whether it was acceptable for a high-tier service to depend on an underpinning service with known exceptions and what mitigations were required.

As a result, risks were identified earlier, assessed more quickly, and addressed deliberately, rather than discovered late in delivery or during incidents. Over time, patterns in exception data highlighted systemic weaknesses and informed where standards or investment needed to evolve.

Tiering did not eliminate exceptions. It made them visible, understandable, and usable.. supporting better decisions rather than tighter control.

The tiering evolution

Service tiering matured in stages.

Post-outage, it focused on criticality and a small set of resilience criteria such as RPO, RTO, and availability. Post-growth, it expanded into full tier-aligned guardrails across design, supplier, integration, operational, and lifecycle decisions. Over time, it became an embedded capability: integrated into everyday decision-making, with exceptions tracked and reviewed.

This evolution reflects how tiering moved from reactive classification to a practical management capability that shaped behaviour, decisions, and investment.

Insights from the field

Looking back, service tiering only became useful once it helped people make real decisions.

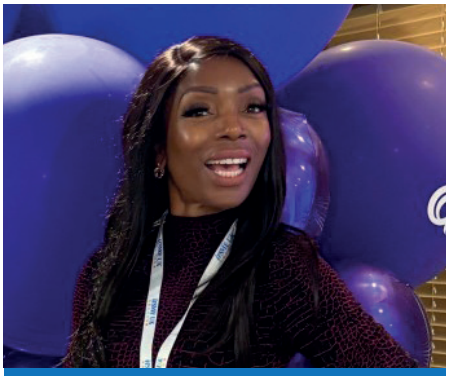
It mattered most when it was anchored in business impact and used to guide everyday trade-offs such as how much resilience a service needed, what level of support was appropriate, whether a dependency was acceptable, and where investment was genuinely justified. When tiering was used this way, conversations became clearer and far less subjective.

We also learned that tiers work best as prompts for judgement rather than fixed answers. Services changed over time. Usage increased, dependencies deepened, and what had once been acceptable became critical. Allowing services to move between tiers, and revisiting those decisions periodically, kept the model relevant rather than static.

Making exceptions visible proved just as important as defining standards. Tiering did not eliminate exceptions, it made them explicit. This allowed teams to understand trade-offs early, factor constraints into new designs, and avoid discovering problems late in delivery or during incidents.

In practice, service tiering only started to matter when it helped teams move faster and make decisions with confidence. It reduced ambiguity, aligned expectations upfront, and avoided repeated debate, particularly in high-change, resource-constrained environments.

Once tiering was embedded into design, change, supplier discussions, and risk decisions, it stopped being something people debated and became something they relied on.



Natasha French

Natasha is a service design and transition lead and a member of the itSMF UK Service Design and Transition CoP

From friction to trust: aligning Power Platform innovation with ITSM



“Innovation and ITSM are not opposing forces, they are strongest when they work together.” Rachael Elliot describes one project where success meant developers and service teams collaborating effectively.

In late 2025, I joined a client project as the service architect responsible for building an end-to-end service wrap for a new Microsoft 365 Power Platform Centre of Excellence (CoE). The goal was ambitious: establish the CoE, align it to enterprise operational standards, and successfully pass Operational Readiness Review (ORR) before the end of the financial year.

The project already had strong technical foundations. A Power Platform strategy had been approved, governance and guardrails were defined, and the technical design had passed assurance. The team consisted of highly capable developers who were passionate about delivering rapid, innovative solutions.

What they lacked, however, was experience with IT Service Management (ITSM), Service Design and Transition (SD&T), and the operational disciplines required to support enterprise-scale services long after deployment.

That gap quickly became both the project’s biggest challenge, and ultimately its greatest success story.

When Innovation Meets Enterprise Reality

The development team approached delivery with speed and agility in mind. From their perspective, the ability to build solutions in minutes meant traditional IT processes felt unnecessarily restrictive.

Questions commonly asked early in the engagement included:

- Why do we need lead time for deployment?
- Why can’t we just release directly?

- Why are there so many governance gates?

This is a challenge many organisations now face as low-code platforms become more accessible. Developers naturally focus on innovation and rapid delivery, while operational teams focus on stability, compliance, supportability, and user experience.

Neither side is wrong. The real opportunity lies in bringing both perspectives together.

Why ITSM Still Matters

One of the key lessons from this engagement was that ITSM is not designed to block innovation, it exists to protect the business and create sustainable services.

The organisation operated in a highly governed environment handling sensitive data. Existing ITIL-aligned practices, change enablement controls, and assurance gates had evolved over many years to reduce operational risk.

The Power Platform CoE could not simply bypass those controls because the technology was new or agile.

Instead, the CoE needed to demonstrate trustworthiness first.

By aligning with existing business processes, the team showed the wider organisation that Power Platform solutions could be delivered safely, securely, and with clear operational accountability. Over time, this built confidence and gradually shifted perceptions of what was possible.

That alignment also enabled several important outcomes:

- Integration into the organisation's SIAM operating model
- Alignment to existing ITSM tooling
- Clear support ownership and resolver groups
- Defined demand and change processes
- Established service reporting and governance
- Long-term financial and operational planning.

Without those foundations, rapid delivery alone would not have created a sustainable service.

Developers Pushing the Boundaries in the Right Way

One of the most positive aspects of the project was the developers' ambition.

They constantly challenged existing ways of working, questioned legacy processes, and pushed for more efficient delivery models. While this sometimes created friction, it also highlighted opportunities for the wider business to evolve.

For example, the team initially wanted to build their own Power App-based ITSM solution rather than use the enterprise ITSM tooling platform. While operationally unrealistic for Phase 1, the idea demonstrated genuine innovation and a desire to improve user experience.

Rather than dismissing these ideas outright, the focus became balancing innovation with operational maturity.

Together, we agreed a pragmatic model:

- Small and medium solutions could follow a streamlined Standard Change process with minimal lead time
- Larger or more complex solutions would require fuller SD&T engagement
- The CoE would initially align to enterprise governance while building evidence for future evolution.

This created a safe framework for agility without compromising operational standards.

Importantly, the developers began to understand that successful enterprise services are not measured only by how quickly they are built, but by how effectively they are supported, adopted, and sustained.

Building Collaboration across the Business

One of the biggest lessons for service architects is that successful transition work is rarely about process alone. It is about relationships.

At the start of the project, there was resistance from multiple areas of the business. Assurance teams felt excluded, operational teams were cautious, and the developers viewed governance as a blocker.

The turning point came through collaboration and inclusion.

A few approaches proved particularly valuable:

- ***Bring people into the journey early.*** Instead of waiting for ORR, transition review meetings were held months in advance with stakeholders across SD&T, assurance, operations, and support teams. This allowed concerns to surface early and avoided surprises later.
- ***Translate process into business value.*** Technical teams rarely engage with governance terminology alone. Explaining the operational impact, such as poor user experience, unsupported services, or unclear ownership, made ITSM far more relatable.
- ***Create shared ownership.*** The appointment of an official Product Owner became critical. Having a senior operational leader aligned with both the business and the developers helped bridge cultural gaps and reduce tension.
- ***Respect expertise on all sides.*** The developers brought innovation and technical creativity. Operational teams brought enterprise experience and governance knowledge. The project succeeded when both perspectives were treated as equally valuable.

Learning from Emerging Technology

Perhaps the most important takeaway from this experience is that new technology should challenge existing operating models. Power Platform was unfamiliar territory for the organisation, and naturally that created fear of the unknown. But innovation should not be resisted simply because it is different. Equally, innovation teams should recognise that enterprise governance exists for legitimate reasons.

The organisations that succeed are those willing to learn from both sides:

- Developers learning operational accountability
- Service teams learning how to enable innovation faster
- Businesses evolving processes based on proven outcomes rather than assumptions.

The Power Platform CoE successfully passed operational readiness with only one minor observation before progressing toward final operational readiness and project closure.

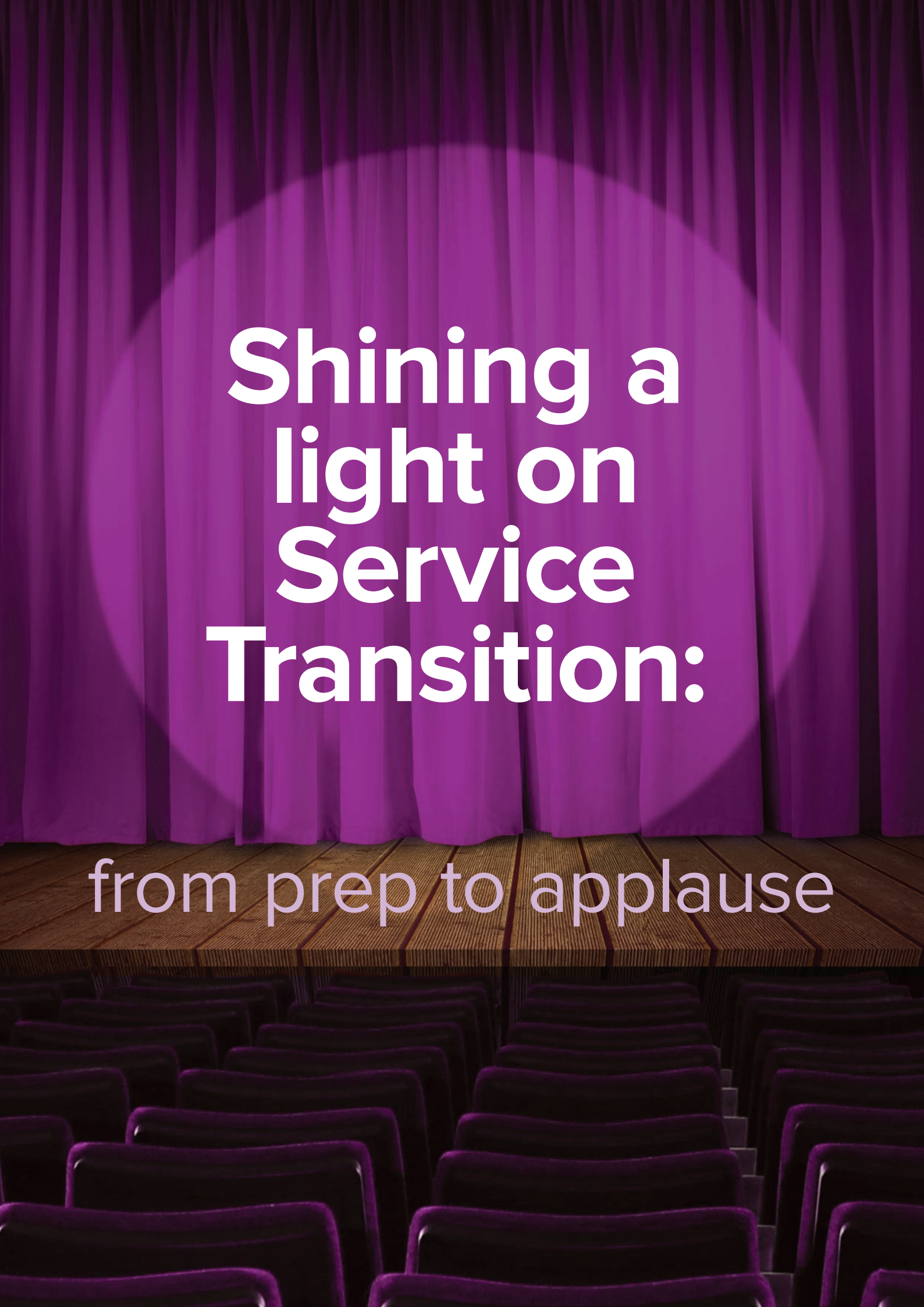
More importantly, it demonstrated something bigger than a successful project.

It showed that innovation and ITSM are not opposing forces, they are strongest when they work together.



Rachael Elliot

Rachael is a Principal Consultant at CGI UK. She is a highly experienced and qualified leader in IT operations, service design & transition, and service management. She partners with clients across sectors to deliver insight-led improvements and measurable business outcomes.



Shining a light on Service Transition:

from prep to applause

From curveballs to coffee-fuelled coordination, the Service Transition Team lifted the lid on how they bring new services to life and what's next for the future of transition in DWP.

Inside DWP's Service Transition team

Ever wonder who's behind the scenes making sure DWP's new or improved services go-live without a hitch? Who really keeps everything running smoothly when change happens? Spoiler alert – it's us!

Recently, our Service Transition Team hosted a Lunch and Learn session for itSMF UK via video call, and what a session it was! From planning the slides and picking examples to rehearsing and tweaking content, every part was about bringing Service Transition to life, even through a screen.

We had people joining from all over, both inside and outside DWP, and it was brilliant to see so much curiosity and enthusiasm on the call. The session became a conversation rather than a one-way presentation, as people asked questions, shared experiences, and got a clear view of what Service Transition really looks like in action, all from the comfort of their own desks. It's not every day you get to share what goes on behind the curtain and explain how much planning, teamwork, and problem solving it takes to make changes happen smoothly.

Bringing the presentation to life

Before the call, the prep was intense, in a fun and collaborative way! Brainstorming sessions got a little enthusiastic at times.

With four team members working on the slides, each slide initially had its own unique style, giving the deck a 'patchwork quilt of brilliance' vibe. We realised we needed to streamline the design, so the deck flowed smoothly and looked cohesive. During rehearsals, one team member forgot to add their speaker notes and ended up blanking on what to say mid-slide. Cue some quick thinking and improvisation, we pulled through and carried on without missing a beat.

Our goals were to show not just what Service Transition is, but how we do it at DWP, our connection with Service Design, tools we use, and a glimpse into the future of the function. We even included careers in Service Transition and why it's a brilliant area to grow in.

It wasn't just about process – it was about people, teamwork, and impact.

Showtime (virtually!)

When the day came, we were a mix of excitement and nervousness. How do you present behind-the-scenes work to a room full of experts and curious minds – all through video?

And here's where the first real-life 'curveball' hit. Three of us were in one conference room and the fourth joined from home. When we tried to connect the laptop in the conference room to the video call, neither the camera nor the speakers worked at first. Thankfully, we arrived 10 minutes early which gave us just enough time to troubleshoot and get everything up and running before the session officially started. A little reminder that even the smoothest presentations need a bit of early prep!

Once connected, the nerves disappeared, and we were on fire!

To keep the session interactive, we incorporated polls and invited attendees to add their answers in the chat. It was brilliant to see people engaging and sharing their thoughts, it made the session feel much more like a conversation that a one-way presentation.

The audience was fully engaged, the questions were thoughtful, and there was a real buzz as we talked through everything we are involved in. We also highlighted AI and automation, internal programmes like DEEP and ISOP, Governance, Risk and Compliance (GRC) in ServiceNow, other alternative Service Transition Assessment tools, and how we use tools like Power BI and ServiceNow to visually represent our work.

By the end, it wasn't just a presentation, it was a proper conversation, despite being delivered online.

And the feedback? Absolutely brilliant!

Attendees told us they'd never realised how much goes into Service Transition, or how central it is to keeping services running smoothly. Many shared their own work experiences in Service Transition and reflected on how our lessons and examples could be applied to their own jobs, from handling unexpected curveballs to using tools more effectively. Some said the session helped them see how their own work connects to ours.

Hearing that the relaxed, interactive style of the session worked so well, even virtually, made all the prep worthwhile.

Why sessions like this matter

This Lunch and Learn reminded us why sharing our work is so valuable. It's not just about showing off what we do, it's about building understanding, connecting with others, and celebrating the people who make change happen behind the scenes.

It also reinforced the values of community. Connecting with itSMF networks and colleagues across DWP helps us learn, share, and continuously improve.

And the best part? This is only just the beginning

Following the session's success, we have been collaborating with itSMF and DWP to launch a dedicated Service Transition Forum, a space for ongoing discussion, sharing best practice, and exploring ways to make transitions even better.

Meet the team!

We might be a small team, but we pack a punch! Between us, we've got backgrounds in tech, delivery, operations, and service management, so we bring a mix of perspectives to every project.

We tackle the tricky stuff, celebrate the wins, and support each other when the pace picks up. At our core, we're just people who love making things work and having caffeine-fuelled fun while doing it.

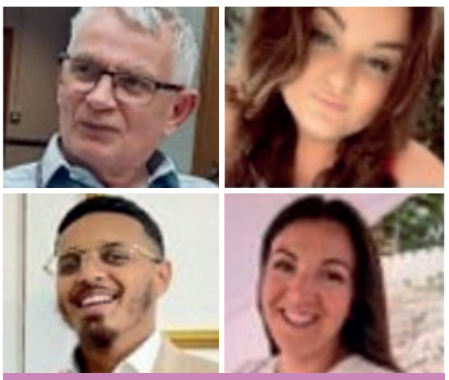
Closing thoughts

Putting together this virtual Lunch and Learn was a real team effort, full of laughs, late edits, and those satisfying 'aha!' moments when everything clicked.

We learnt as much from creating and delivering it as the audience did from watching it online. The positive feedback reminded us why we loved what we do, bring people together, building understanding, and making change work better.

If you've ever been curious about how all those moving parts of change come together, ever wondered what it takes to make it all work behind the scenes? That's where we step in. And we're always happy to chat about it, preferably over a good cuppa and a biscuit or two.

Because at the end of the day, change works best when we do it together.



DWP Service Transition Team

The DWP team are Phill McClure, Rachel Roper, Hasanath Ullah and Fabiana Lombardi-Barron.

IT cost transparency: a decision-making capability



IT cost transparency enables organisations to link technology spend to business value, argues Chris Good.

When organisations talk about reducing technology costs, the conversation often starts in the wrong place... it starts with budgets.

- "How much are we spending?"
- "Where can we cut?"
- "Can we reduce run costs by 10%?"

Reasonable questions. But often the wrong ones. Because the more important question is:

- What does it actually cost to deliver the IT services the business depends on?

And surprisingly few organisations can answer that with confidence.

That is where IT cost transparency – often enabled through Technology Business Management (TBM) – becomes valuable. Not as a finance reporting exercise. But as a decision-making capability.

Most organisations can tell you what they spend on:

- Infrastructure
- Software licences
- Cloud consumption
- Suppliers
- People costs

But ask:

- What does our Collaboration Service cost to run?
- What is the unit cost of our End User Compute service?
- What does our Customer Portal cost per transaction?

...and the answers often become much less clear.

Costs are usually managed in silos. Budgets often sit with technology towers. And spend is visible, but service economics are not.

That creates a problem. Because businesses make strategic decisions about services and capabilities. Not about server clusters or software contracts.

The shift from cost centres to services

This is where IT cost transparency changes the conversation. Rather than viewing spend through technology components, it aligns costs to the services the business consumes. For example, instead of saying:

- £2m hosting spend
- £800k licensing spend
- £1.5m support labour.

You can say:

- Email and collaboration service costs £X per user
- Customer portal costs £Y per transaction
- End-user compute costs £Z per employee.

That is a fundamentally different level of insight. And much more useful.

What sits underneath it?

This is often where people assume TBM is complicated. It doesn't have to be. At its core, it is simply about linking **cost → service → value.**

Typically, this starts by bringing together common technology cost categories such as:

- Labour (internal and third parties)
- Software and SaaS subscriptions
- Hardware and infrastructure
- Cloud consumption
- Facilities and data centre costs
- Shared support functions and tooling.

And then aligning those costs to services using defensible allocation methods.

Common methods often include:

- Consumption-based allocation – using measurable usage data:
  - Cloud spend by tagged workloadsStorage allocated by consumption
  - Licensing allocated by active users
- Utilisation-based allocation – allocating shared costs according to usage or workload:
  - Infrastructure by capacity consumed
  - Service Desk costs by ticket volumes
- Activity-based allocation – using effort or activities as cost drivers:
  - Support effort by service
  - Labour time aligned to service ownership
- Percentage or weighted allocations:
  - Using % of headcount in each business unit or location, used pragmatically where direct consumption measures are unavailable. Not perfect, but often good enough to support better decisions.

And that is usually the point. Perfection is not the goal. Decision usefulness is.

Why this matters commercially

Done well, this enables materially better decisions.

- Invest where value is clear. If a digital customer service costs £1m annually and supports £15m revenue... that is a stronger investment conversation. Not a cost-cutting discussion. A value conversation.
- Divest where value is weak. Legacy platforms often survive because their costs are hidden. Once service costs are visible, rationalisation decisions become easier. And usually less political.
- Optimise rather than blindly reduce. This is where mature organisations differentiate. They stop asking: "How do we cut costs?" and ask: "How do we improve the cost-performance ratio?" That is a very different mindset, and a better one.
- Support better business trade-offs. This is often overlooked. Good cost transparency does not just help IT decisions. It helps businesses invest, divest, consolidate, pivot and prioritise. Because the impact of those decisions becomes visible.

Where many organisations struggle

There are some common traps.

- Chasing perfect data
  - Trying to get 100% cost precision usually stalls progress.
  - Most organisations can derive significant value at 70–80% maturity.
- Over-engineering the model
  - A model nobody trusts or understands has little value.
  - Simplicity matters.
- Weak service definitions
  - If your Service Catalogue is poor, your cost model usually will be too.
  - This is often the hidden dependency.
- Treating it as a finance-only exercise
  - This rarely works.
  - Effective TBM is usually a shared capability spanning IT, finance and the business, not an isolated reporting function.
- Unclear TBM roles
  - Providing cost transparency is not a one-off activity.
  - Effective TBM requires ongoing sponsorship and management. Clear roles are required, including ownership of each data point that underpins the model.

What good looks like

In my experience, the most effective organisations:

- Start simple
- Build around business decisions, not reporting outputs
- Align to a clear service model
- Use pragmatic allocation drivers
- Iterate maturity over time
- Focus on unit economics, not just total spend
- Use transparency to drive conversations, not just dashboards.

And importantly, they use the outputs. Because visibility alone does not create value. Better decisions do.

A practical example

Consider a service costing materially above benchmark.

Without cost transparency: "IT is expensive."

With cost transparency: "This service costs 40% above peer benchmarks due to support model and licence choices."

Now you can act. Different conversation, different outcome.

Final thoughts

IT cost transparency is often mistaken for a financial control exercise. It is much more than that. At its best, it enables technology to be managed less like a cost centre, and more like a portfolio of business services.

And once you can connect **£ → service → value**, better decisions tend to follow.

That is where TBM becomes powerful. Not in the model. In the conversations it enables.



Chris Good

Chris is Managing Consultant at Mason Advisory.

Your service portfolio has dark matter



The service catalogue was built as well as it could be. It was never going to be complete, argues Steve Fleming.

Think of a tool nobody owns.

It isn't in the catalogue. No service owner has their name against it. No lifecycle, no review date, no box on the diagram. But if it stopped working on Monday morning, you'd know by lunchtime.

You didn't have to think hard.

That tool isn't an exception. It's a sample. Every IT organisation runs two portfolios — the one it designed and the one the business actually consumes — and only one of them is written down.

Shadow IT is the wrong name

The word "shadow" does a lot of quiet work. A shadow is cast away from a light, and in that metaphor the light is us. Call something a shadow and you have already passed sentence on it: unsanctioned, uncontrolled, waiting to be brought in.

Ask the people using it. For them there's nothing shadowy about it. It's just the thing that works.

Physics has the better term: dark matter. It isn't hiding — it just emits no light, so the instrument can't see it. And yet it's most of the mass, and the system doesn't hold together without it. Invisible doesn't mean absent.

Once you're looking for dark matter rather than shadows, the scope changes. It isn't only the uncatalogued tools. It's the service that outgrew its box — the collaboration platform filed under Communications that is also the phone system, the file store and half the development workflow. It's the workaround that quietly became infrastructure. All of it consumed. None of it visible in the portfolio that gets decided on.

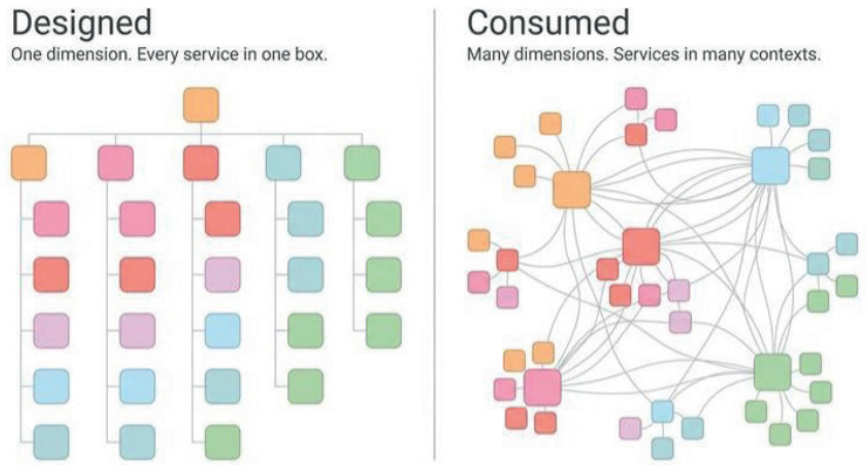
A perfect catalogue would still be incomplete

It's tempting to call this a maintenance problem. The catalogue drifted, someone stopped updating it, tighten the governance and catch up.

It isn't.

A catalogue is a hierarchy, and a hierarchy holds one dimension at a time. Every service has at least two legitimate truths: what it does for the people using it, and who owns and runs it. A tree holds one or the other. Never both.

That isn't a failure of discipline. It's the shape of the container. Which means the effort — decades of it, in some organisations — was never going to close the gap.



Every decision inherits the blind spot

Retirement is the easiest place to see it. A tool is slated for decommission because its category is covered, and it turns out to be carrying a workflow in a department the programme never had in scope. The portfolio on record is blind to it. The people using it never stopped seeing it.

The pattern is familiar enough to be boring. A shared mailbox a finance team set up years ago — never catalogued, never owned — which is now where every non-standard approval actually gets decided. Retire it and approvals stop.

The safe move is to retire nothing, so the estate only grows. That caution is rational: with only the designed portfolio visible, a dead service and a load-bearing one look identical.

But retirement is only one consequence. The same partial picture underwrites the migration plan, the continuity plan, the critical service list and the investment case. Every one of them inherits it. A dependency that was never a service was never in scope, and the first anyone hears of it is when something stops working in a department nobody thought to consult.

And the stakes are changing. Organisations are now pointing automation and AI agents at the service estate, and agents act on the catalogue. A partial picture used to produce slow, expensive decisions. It is about to produce fast ones.

The evidence was always there. Nobody could read it.

Curation is giving way to discovery

We have watched this happen elsewhere.

Music was once organised by genre and artist — a curated hierarchy, argued over by people who knew it was imperfect, because it was the only structure the shelves could hold. Then streaming could read how people actually listened, and the structure was discovered from consumption rather than assigned in advance. The web was a hand-curated directory until search could infer its shape from how sites linked to one another.

In both cases the curated structure gave way. Nobody went back.

Enterprise IT is still Tower Records. We hand-curate the shelves.

The mess is the signal

The prevailing advice on enterprise AI is to clean up your data first. Fix the taxonomy, then bring in the machines.

For this problem it runs the other way.

Inference doesn't need reality pre-sorted into a tree. It works on relationships, in many dimensions at once, and finds the structure actually present in evidence that is messy, cross-cutting and contradictory — rather than requiring the evidence to conform before it will look at it.

The messiness that defeated twenty years of curation is the exact condition inference was built for. A service can be five things in five contexts, because nothing forces it into a box at birth.

Portfolio discovery

Dark matter leaves traces everywhere, and the richest ones aren't operational.

Tickets and telemetry tell you what happened. They don't tell you what it meant — which tool carried which job, where the workarounds live, what people reached for when the sanctioned route didn't fit. That sits in what people say about the services they use, in their own words, at scale. Read together, with the human account as the anchor, the consumed portfolio emerges.

This practice needs a name, and it has one.

Portfolio discovery is not portfolio management. Management is the discipline of the designed portfolio — pipeline, catalogue, review, retirement — and it isn't going anywhere. Discovery is the discipline of the consumed one. It asks a different question of every service: not what did we build, but what is this carrying?

It doesn't combat shadow IT. It maps dark matter. Nothing consumed is invisible to it.

The questions worth asking

A discovered portfolio is an inference from evidence, so it inherits every question evidence raises. Three are worth putting to anything that claims to produce one.

- Where did the evidence come from?
- Could anyone with an interest in the outcome have shaped it?
- Does the discovery tool self-audit — transparent coverage, confidence, gaps — or does it ask you to believe?

A portfolio discovered from owned operational data alone is the owners' picture, rearranged. What anchors it is the account of the people the services exist for, gathered independently, at scale, from people with nothing to hide and everything to gain from an honest picture.

That account has a name: the ground truth of the consumed portfolio.

What has changed

The designed portfolio was never a mistake. It was what the tools could hold, built well by people who understood its limits better than anyone.

What has changed is the ability to read the evidence for the other one.

A second discipline is arriving alongside portfolio management — with its own question, its own evidence standard, and one promise the designed portfolio could never make: a picture that includes the work people actually do.

The practitioners now asking what would make a discovered portfolio worth trusting aren't early to a feature.

They're founding a practice.

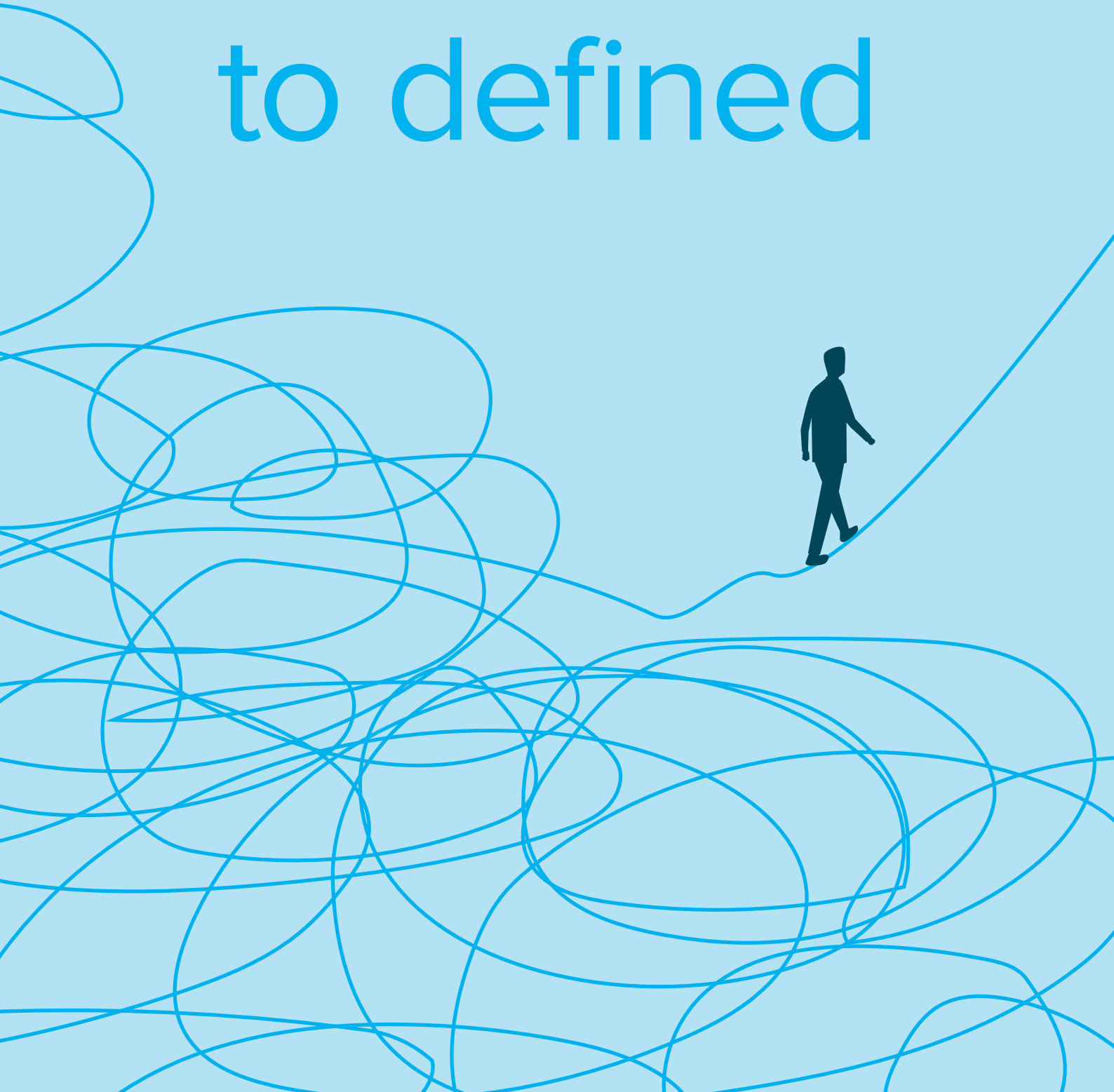




Steve Fleming

Steve is founder of Voxxify and has spent over 20 years in enterprise IT and service management. Voxxify establishes independent ground truth for IT organisations.

From ad hoc to defined



Andy Callan tracks Norton Rose Fulbright's Service Design & Transition journey over recent years.

Norton Rose Fulbright's EMEA ITSM function has transformed its Service Design & Transition (SD&T) practice. From a largely ad hoc position in 2022, SD&T reached defined maturity by late 2024 through stronger governance, documented processes and clearer ownership. The next target is Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMMi) Level 4 (Quantitatively Managed) by 2027.

This article describes the journey from reactive transition activity to a governed, repeatable and evidence-led SD&T model: the starting point, the vision, the improvements delivered, the benefits realised and the next phase of maturity.

SD&T Maturity Journey: 2022-2027

We were here: 2022 baseline maturity and challenges. **See figure 1.**

In 2022, SD&T was at a low maturity level. Service Design was not formally embedded, and transition activity was often handled reactively or by exception, usually for larger projects only.

Governance was limited, with handover relying on legacy templates, informal processes and late ITSM engagement. Service expectations, Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and handover measures were not consistently defined, increasing the risk of releases proceeding without adequate operational readiness, post-go-live issues and disruption. Operational teams often absorbed late changes, unclear support requirements and avoidable rework, while project teams lacked a consistent view of readiness. This weakened stakeholder confidence because outcomes were less predictable and ownership was not always clear. **See table 1.**

The baseline created three clear risks:

- **Meeting business needs:** The broader ITSM transformation aimed to align IT services with NRF's business and legal practice needs. Poorly managed service design or inconsistent transitions lead to disruptions in critical legal technology services, affecting client service quality
- **Risk and efficiency:** Ad hoc transitions carried higher risk of post-release incidents and inefficiencies. Without strong SD&T, time and resources were wasted on firefighting production issues that could have been prevented through better planning, testing, and standardisation
- **Strategic growth and compliance:** As NRF expands cloud and AI adoption, SD&T needs stronger governance to ensure new services are introduced in a controlled, supportable and compliant way.

In response, EMEA ITSM strengthened SD&T governance, Project Management Office (PMO) integration, process standardisation, Continual Service Improvement (CSI) and tooling. Earlier supplier engagement also reduced delays, duplication and escalation caused by unclear responsibilities, support arrangements and acceptance evidence. Setting the vision, bringing stakeholders on the journey.

Embedding SD&T into Project Delivery & Governance

The vision was to make SD&T a governed part of the project and service lifecycle rather than a late-stage handover. Embedding it into PMO gates brought ITSM leadership sign-off and earlier input from project, operational and supplier stakeholders, making expectations and concerns visible before go-live. Acceptance into Service (AIS) checklists, Early Life Support (ELS) planning, peer reviews, mock transitions and standard playbooks tested readiness and improved consistency. Adopting the controls initially increased workload and accountability, but reduced uncertainty, late rework and firefighting while improving confidence at go-live.

The EMEA SD&T Operating Model. **See figure 2.**

The model shows SD&T as the controlled route from strategy and design into live operation, supported by PMO governance, connected ITSM practices and knowledge throughout the lifecycle.

Delivering prioritised, incremental improvements

Improvement was delivered incrementally through regular stand-ups, focused priority sessions and checkpoint reviews. This kept work visible, aligned priorities and unblocked delivery issues early. The team replaced individual Excel trackers with a shared Azure DevOps Kanban board and standard transition checklist. Adopting a common way of working improved ownership, visibility and tracking across project gates and transition tasks, reducing duplicated effort and time spent chasing updates.

SD&T strengthened go-live control by making operational readiness visible and evidence-led. New or changed services are accepted into live operation only when agreed readiness actions are complete, tracked through Azure DevOps and reviewed with the relevant project, ITSM, supplier and operational stakeholders. Regular checkpoints provided a practical route to challenge gaps, agree ownership and resolve issues before they reached live support.

Using tooling, automation & AI where valuable

Tooling supported the shift, but the main gain came from better control and discipline. Azure DevOps gave teams a shared view of work, ownership and deadlines, while targeted automation and early AI use improved responsiveness in specific areas. Practical guidance, peer support and reinforcement of the governance helped embed adoption rather than relying on tooling alone.

Building backlog & CSI discipline

A formal CSI backlog created a clear pipeline, ownership and prioritisation route across documentation, readiness checks, service catalogue foundations and review routines. This improved up-front planning, transition quality and operational readiness.

2022 Baseline	2022–2024 Improvement Approach	24/25 Defined Practice
Low maturity / ad hoc SD&T activity was reactive, inconsistently applied and often engaged late in the project lifecycle, increasing the risk of blind releases and post-go-live issues.	**Internal reviews and improvements implemented** SD&T was embedded into PMO gates, with ITSM leadership sign-off, peer reviews and mock transition exercises improving readiness, validation and CSI.	**Defined and repeatable** By late 2024, SD&T had moved to a defined maturity position, with clearer ownership, documented processes, improved readiness controls and stronger evidence of operational benefit.

Table 1

Maturing the wider IT service ecosystem

Shared governance and standard ways of working improved the wider service ecosystem, giving the organisation more predictable launches and teams a clearer route to raise and resolve operational concerns.

SD&T owned and delivered several direct improvements, but wider maturity was strengthened by related ITSM practices. Change Enablement moved from Level 2 to Level 4, supported by stronger governance, testing and risk evaluation. Problem Management moved from Level 1 to 4, reflecting a more proactive approach to root-cause resolution.

Together, these improvements supported smoother transitions and fewer recurring issues. Service Level Management (SLM) and Supplier Relationship Management (SRM) also matured, clarifying service expectations, supplier accountability and launch documentation while reducing post-go-live support gaps.

Benefits and evidence of maturity

By late 2024, the improvement journey was validated through an independent maturity assessment. SD&T had moved from an unstructured baseline to a defined practice with clearer governance, documentation and operational control.

The key evidence points were:

- **SD&T maturity:** SD&T scored 2.7 out of 5, up from 0 in 2022, placing the practice at a defined maturity level
- **Design-stage involvement:** ITSM is now represented earlier in the project lifecycle, helping identify support needs and operational impacts before go-live
- **Transition outcomes:** Stronger Change Enablement supports more consistent outcomes, fewer incidents and less post-release disruption
- **Backlog & CSI:** A central CSI backlog improved prioritisation, tracking and visibility of improvement work
- **Measures & client value:** Key performance indicators [KPIs] provide a clearer view of transition effectiveness and support the aim of making change less disruptive for users

Delivery and confidence: Better readiness controls reduced production surprises, firefighting and early-life support issues. Clearer gates, evidence and ownership made delivery more predictable and improved stakeholder confidence.

Efficiency and ownership: Shared Azure DevOps tracking and closer alignment across SD&T, PMO, operational teams and suppliers improved visibility, follow-up and accountability. Guidance, peer support and clear expectations helped embed the controls in day-to-day delivery.

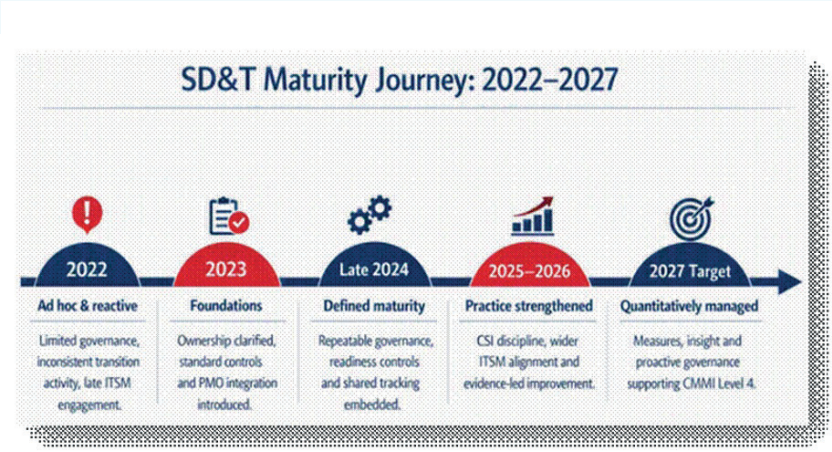


Figure 1

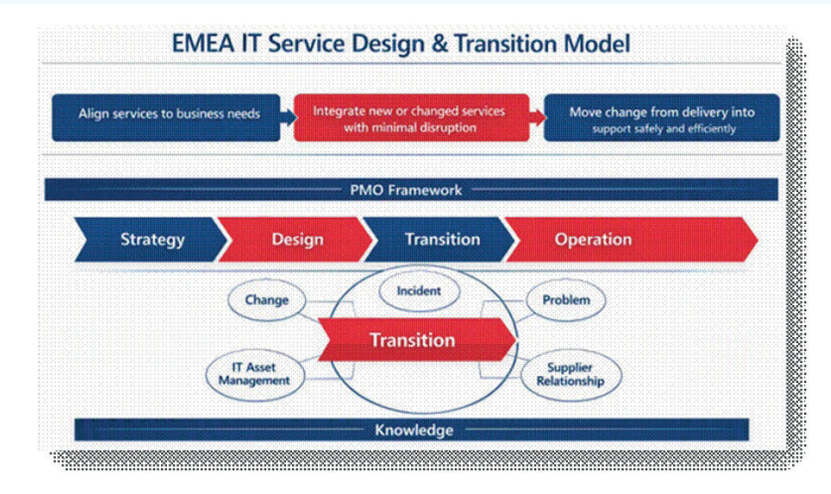


Figure 2

Continuing towards CMMI Level 4

Having reached defined maturity, the next phase focuses on measurement, proactive governance and better use of data to manage SD&T performance.

Key priorities moving forward include:

- Defined KPIs and thresholds for transition quality, readiness and post-go-live performance
- Stronger use of data to identify risks, trends and improvement opportunities
- Continued integration of SD&T governance across project, supplier and operational delivery
- Improved visibility of workforce capability and the supporting technology landscape
- Targeted automation and AI adoption where it delivers measurable operational value
- Regular maturity reviews to track progress towards CMMI Level 4.

NRF has moved SD&T from ad hoc delivery to a defined, repeatable model. Stronger measurement, governance, capability and technology insight will underpin the next step towards CMMI Level 4.

Lessons learned

The journey highlighted several practical lessons for organisations looking to mature Service Design & Transition:

- **Engage ITSM early:** Operational requirements are easier and cheaper to address during design than immediately before go-live
- **Make readiness a shared responsibility:** Successful transition depends on clear ownership across project, ITSM, operational and supplier teams
- **Keep governance practical:** Controls must be proportionate, easy to understand and

embedded into existing project gates

- **Focus on adoption, not just process:** Guidance, peer support and regular reinforcement are essential to making new controls part of day-to-day delivery
- **Use evidence to support decisions:** Clear acceptance criteria, documented exceptions and visible ownership reduce ambiguity and improve go-live confidence
- **Improve incrementally:** Prioritised improvements delivered through a visible backlog are easier to sustain than attempting wholesale change

Where we hit resistance: The hardest part was not designing the process; it was changing when and how people engaged with it. ITSM was often involved too late, ownership became unclear between project, operational and supplier teams, and fragmented tracking made gaps difficult to see. There was also an understandable concern that additional governance would delay delivery. Progress came from embedding proportionate SD&T controls into existing project gates, assigning named owners and showing through live transitions that earlier readiness activity prevented late rework, support gaps and avoidable disruption.

What we would recommend: Before introducing new tooling or extensive measures, agree the minimum readiness standard, decision points, evidence required and who is accountable at each stage. Secure PMO, operational and supplier support early, use existing governance wherever possible and allow time for guidance and reinforcement. Start with a small number of practical controls, prove their value through real deliveries and improve them incrementally. Tooling, automation and advanced metrics should follow once the underlying process is understood, consistently applied and trusted.

Key improvements and outcome summary

The journey can be summarised as follows: **See table 2.**



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Stage	Key Improvement	Outcome / Value Realised
We were here	Baseline maturity was low, with SD&T activity handled reactively and inconsistently.	The need for stronger governance, earlier operational input and more consistent transition controls was clearly established.
We set the vision	SD&T was repositioned as a governed part of the project and service lifecycle, not a late-stage handover activity.	Project, PMO, ITSM, operational and supplier teams aligned around shared readiness expectations, earlier engagement and clearer accountability.
We brought people on the journey	SD&T activity was embedded into PMO gates, with ITSM leadership sign-off, peer reviews and mock transition exercises.	Operational readiness became a shared responsibility. Training, guidance, peer reviews and practical checkpoints helped people adopt the controls, reducing late rework and strengthening confidence before go-live.
We delivered incremental improvements	DevOps-managed tracking, Kanban delivery, standard transition task lists and CSI backlog discipline replaced fragmented manual tracking.	Visibility, ownership, follow-up and predictability improved, reducing rework and supporting more consistent change outcomes.
We matured	SD&T moved from an unstructured baseline to a defined practice, supported by improvements in Change Enablement, Problem Management, SLM and SRM.	The maturity assessment confirmed stronger process robustness, clearer governance and improved operational control.
We continue to mature	The practice now has a clearer route towards CMMI Level 4, focused on metrics, governance, workforce capability, technology landscape visibility and targeted automation and AI adoption.	NRF is better placed to deliver supportable services, reduce transition risk and continue improving service quality at scale.

Table 2

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