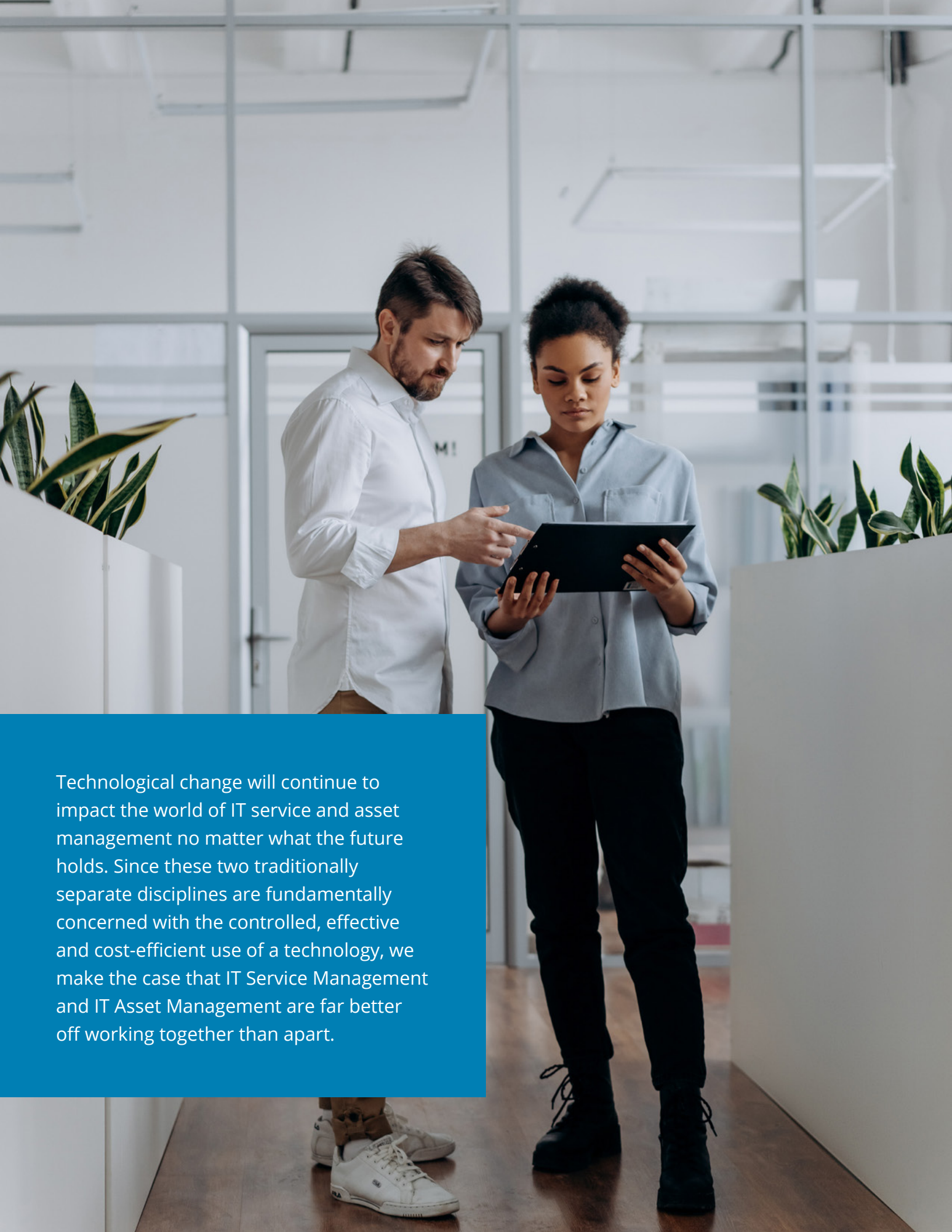ITSM & ITAM

A Powerful and Essential Combination

Authored by Roger Labelle
Director of Product Management

Technological change will continue to impact the world of IT service and asset management no matter what the future holds. Since these two traditionally separate disciplines are fundamentally concerned with the controlled, effective and cost-efficient use of a technology, we make the case that IT Service Management and IT Asset Management are far better off working together than apart.

Key Messages

- Remote/hybrid work is here to stay, demanding an evolution to how IT manages technology.

- Employee experience matters more than ever, including the experience employees have with IT and technology. IT now plays a crucial role in employee experience and retention.

- ITSM experts at ITIL® have finally agreed that ITAM practices can impact ITSM best practices and success.

- You shouldn't have ITSM without ITAM since IT assets are central to the processes of ITSM, which makes integrating ITSM and ITAM more important for the success of either discipline.

- The technology of today makes the integration of ITSM and ITAM much easier.

- Two customer scenarios are outlined in which integrating ITSM and ITAM positively impacted our customers' business.

By integrating ITSM and ITAM, your company will benefit through:

RESOLUTION
More efficient and rapid resolution of incidents & service requests

SECURITY
Better and more efficient security measures

ACCURACY
Greater accuracy and control over asset inventory

PROACTIVITY
More proactive and better ITSM and ITAM-related decisions

RISK MITIGATION
Lower risk change management

EFFICIENCY
Better self-service experience and functionality

VALUE
Greater value and cost-efficiency

Based on our experience, we outline 4 best practices for integrating ITSM and ITAM, including:

- Educate ITSM and ITAM employees.
- Don't rely solely on discovery tools.
- Allow the process to dictate the outcome.
- Start with quick wins like the self-service portal.

INTRODUCTION

The way we work and live is constantly evolving.

We used to keep our memories in filing cabinets, not in the Clouds. Email was once new, and chat was something you could only do around the coffee machine. All your co-workers likely lived within an hour commute, not in a different city or half-way around the world.

What brought about all these changes? The growing complexity of technology by way of digital transformation and the everywhere workplace. It's becoming increasingly difficult for ITAM managers as employees are taking their devices out of the office while still needing support with them. The longevity of technology is also decreasing so there is a need to track how devices are performing, their history, what it's costing the company, and if there's a way to reduce this cost. It's never been more difficult and complex to be an ITAM manager, and we're here to ensure their work is as seamless as possible.

And changes in technology will continue to impact the world of IT service and asset management no matter what the future holds. Since these two traditionally separate disciplines are fundamentally concerned with the controlled, effective and cost-efficient use of technology for an 'office', we make the case that IT Service Management (ITSM) and IT Asset Management (ITAM) are far better off working together than apart. In this whitepaper, we will delve into current trends, situations, and challenges to showcase the benefits of integrating ITSM and ITAM— helping you more effectively meet the IT challenges of today and tomorrow.

What's Happening Now & Trends that Will Have an Impact

Although there are many trends occurring in the world of IT that will undoubtedly have an impact, **we** want to concentrate on two trends that can most benefit from ITSM and ITAM integration: Remote/Hybrid Work, and Employee Experience Management.

Remote and Hybrid Work are Here to Stay

There are rumblings from company executives to do with trust and productivity issues, but remote/hybrid work presents lots of benefits for both employees and employers. For employees, remote and/or hybrid work offers more work/life balance. Employees are feeling less burnout and can use their time more effectively, leading to greater productivity at home and in the office.[1] For employers, on the other hand, remote and/or hybrid workers will lead to greater employee retention, a larger talent pool due to an increase in geographical size for recruitment, smaller offices and other cost-saving benefits.[2]

It can also be very tricky to try to take away benefits from people who already have them, as some employers have now learned. Famously, Elon Musk of Twitter had to reverse course after too many of his employees chose to exit immediately with his new office policy.[3] Employers might not experience such a dramatic exit if they choose to reverse their work from home policies, but many employees will likely put one foot out the door until they find another position.

[1] Ben Wigert and Jessica White, 'The Advantages and Challenges of Hybrid Work', Gallup, September 14, 2022 https://www.gallup.com/workplace/398135/advantages-challenges-hybrid-work.aspx#:~:text=The%20greatest%20advantages%20of%20hybrid,are%20most%20effective%20for%20them.

[2] Jo Constantz, 'Will remote work Continue in 2023? Companies are Starting to Pick Sides', Financial Post, December 29, 2022 https://financialpost.com/fp-work/remote-work-continue-2023

[3] Euronews with Reuters, 'Twitter Staff Quit in Droves After Elon Musk's 'Hardcore' Work Ultimateum Leaves only 7% Backing Him', Euronews, November 18, 2022 https://www.euronews.com/next/2022/11/18/twitter-staff-quit-in-droves-after-elon-musk-hardcore-work-ultimatum-offices-closed

While remote and hybrid work can bring about great benefits to employees and employers, for IT it brings about a whole new set of challenges, such as:

EMPLOYEE TECHNICAL SAVVY

Employees now have to ensure their home offices are set-up and functioning with the right (approved) software and tools. The more difficult, the greater likelihood of more inquiries to the service desk.

SECURITY

Control of documents and company proprietary data is more difficult because of different levels of home and device security (including during transportation to and from the office).

SHADOW IT

The risk of employees downloading software or purchasing assets without the knowledge of IT only increases with a dispersed workforce.

HIDDEN ASSETS

The financial impact of hidden assets can be great if asset managers are unaware of and unable to track an asset operationally or financially.

ASSET INVENTORY

Ensuring the correct assets are given to employees and returned upon their departure is more difficult with home and work-from-anywhere offices.

Employee Experience Management Matters

Until recently, employee working experience within their companies was not always a priority, the main focus has been on customer experience. Recent research, however, has been exploring a new link between happy employees and happy customers. For example, a study conducted by Glassdoor found, "A happier workforce is clearly associated with a companies' ability to deliver better customer satisfaction."[4]

Throughout an employee's day, there are various workplace interaction touchpoints, and a large part of those touchpoints often have to do with technology, and therefore IT. Fundamentally, IT is the backbone to every department. There isn't a single department in a modern company that isn't touched by IT. Remote and hybrid work have only increased this dependence on technology, with, for example, the use of software-based communication and collaboration tools. As employees face pressure to prove their productivity at home or work-from-anywhere situations, IT will face renewed pressure to ensure employees are able to remain productive and not impeded by technological issues. Not being able to do your job because of technical issues will contribute to employee satisfaction and in a tight labor market this could also make a difference.

[4] Andrew Chamberlain and Daniel Zhao, 'The Key to Happy Customers? Happy Employees', Harvard Business Review, August 19, 2019 https://hbr.org/2019/08/the-key-to-happy-customers-happy-employees

ITIL® 4 Incorporates IT Asset Management

ITIL (the IT Infrastructure Library) is a framework of best practices for delivering IT services and in February 2019, ITIL 4 was released in which ITAM is recognized as being an important discipline for ITSM best practices. The purpose of ITAM is described as: "...to plan and manage the full lifecycle of all IT assets, to help the organization:

- Maximize value.
- Control costs.
- Manage risks.
- Support decision-making about the purchase, re-use, retirement, and disposal of IT assets.
- Meet regulatory and contractual requirements."[5]

ITIL applies a four-dimensional model of ITAM best practices to support efficient services.[6]

These dimensions are:

ORGANIZATIONS AND PEOPLE

Asset managers should be responsible for asset lifecycle, updating asset registers, compliance issues and concerns, optimizing assets for costs.

INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Good ITAM practices rely on great technology for license optimization and management as well as lifecycle processes.

PARTNERS AND SUPPLIERS

Asset managers should create good relationships by storing accurate details about the asset, including lease and contract information.

VALUE STREAM AND PROCESSES

Service management includes ITAM, thus, asset managers should interact with the service management team to achieve better service delivery.

Although ITIL began in the 1980s, the initial publication came out in 1989, so it took 30 years for ITSM experts to recognize that great ITAM was important for ITSM best practices. What took so long?

[5] Axelos, 'ITIL® 4 Foundation' https://www.axelos.com/certifications/itil-service-management/itil-4-foundation/
[6] Ibid.

ITSM and ITAM Disciplines: A Brief Historical Look

ITSM is a discipline that aligns the delivery of IT services with the business needs of the enterprise. Better business and IT alignment means:

- Enhanced agility.
- Reduced IT costs.
- Better profitability.
- Reduced regulatory and security risks.
- Improved satisfaction with IT.

Where ITSM focuses primarily on effective IT operations, ITAM focuses on cost, contract and organizational management of hardware and software across their entire lifecycle. And with their different focuses came different objectives and different employees with different skill sets. Thus, as ITSM and ITAM matured, they continued to grow apart as separate disciplines, with their own processes, best practices and professional organizations.

Typical Participants and Stakeholders in ITSM and ITAM

IT Service Management

- CIO
- Director of IT Operations
- IT Service Manager
- Desktop Management Group
- Data Center Management Group
- Incident & Problem Manager(s)
- Change & Configuration Manager(s)
- CAB (Change Approval Board)
- IT Service Desk Analysts
- IT Service & Repair Technicians
- IT Operations Staff

IT Asset Management

- CFO
- Director of IT Finance
- IT Asset Manager
- Software Manager
- IT Procurement Manager
- IT Contract Manager
- Disposal Manager
- Legal Counsel
- Board of Governance
- IT Asset Management Analyst(s)
- Shipping and Receiving
- Warehousing

You Shouldn't Have ITSM Without ITAM

IT assets are central to ITSM—they comprise the hardware and software that support IT operations and service delivery. For this reason, ITAM is inextricably linked with the processes of ITSM. In order to be properly performed, Incident Management, Change Management and Service Request Management frequently require interaction with ITAM processes such as move/add/change, procurement, storage, and disposal.

Moreover, with Configuration Management, devices are stored as CIs in the CMDB, where both ITSM and ITAM manage the CIs, which combining this data allows for simplified decision-making because comprehensive information on service delivery and on asset lifecycle are in one place. This also helps other disciplines such as Event Management, which can provide teams with information on the failures of a device, yet again, providing more comprehensive visibility for better decision-making. Ultimately, IT assets are the foundation upon which all IT services are built. If having these disciplines operate separately made sense in the past, it no longer makes sense now.

Technology changes—with platform-based solutions—have made integrating ITSM and ITAM so much easier. The less customization required for integration, the better. However, to be effective, the software must support real-time integration. Even if you integrate processes and informational elements, if the service desk agent is trying to resolve an issue, but is looking at inaccurate and out-of-date asset information, then the benefits of integration will quickly evaporate. Accuracy, consistency, and timeliness is as important as the integration itself.

The Benefits of Integrated ITSM and ITAM

Individually, ITSM and ITAM deliver significant value to an organization; however, greater benefit is achieved by sharing knowledge and coordinating the independent activities of the separate organizations and programs. Below we outline 7 specific benefits:

More Efficient and Rapid Resolution of Incidents & Service Requests

Making supplemental cost, contract, location, lifecycle stage and organizational detail from your ITAM program available to the service desk agents speeds incident resolution and fulfillment of service requests. Service desk agents don't need to spend time tracking this information down, manually adding this data in (which is prone to errors) or asking the end-user for basic information such as the warranty information. Simply providing access to the relevant ITAM data can improve key service desk efficiency metrics like resolution time, volume of calls/emails/chat sessions processed, number of calls/emails/chat sessions closed per analyst and customer/employee satisfaction.
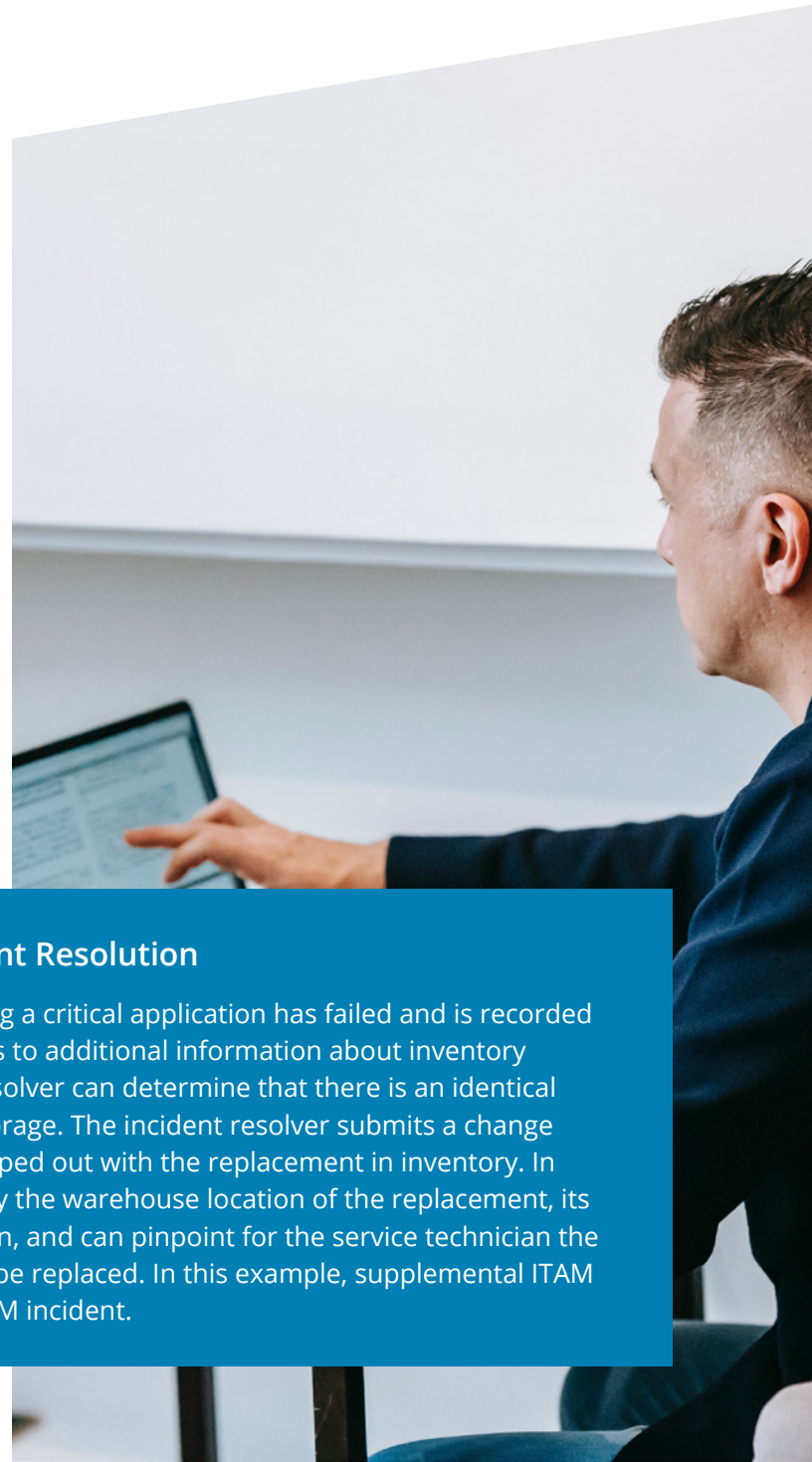
Scenario: More efficient and Rapid Incident Resolution

The hard drive on a rack-mounted server supporting a critical application has failed and is recorded as a critical incident in the ITSM system. With access to additional information about inventory and location from the ITAM system, the incident resolver can determine that there is an identical server of the same make and model available in storage. The incident resolver submits a change request to have the failed server immediately swapped out with the replacement in inventory. In the change request the incident resolver can specify the warehouse location of the replacement, its serial number and asset tag for proper identification, and can pinpoint for the service technician the exact building, room, rack and slot of the server to be replaced. In this example, supplemental ITAM information supports the rapid resolution of an ITSM incident.

Better and More Efficient Security Measures

When security is pierced it's your service desk that is the first responder. Certainly, work from home and hybrid offices have made security issues top of mind. Causes for concern include transporting assets to and from environments that IT cannot control such as the home or the neighborhood coffee shop, and downloading assets and/or accessing unprotected networks. ITAM can let you know who owns what, but ITSM is how you can remind wayward employees when they breach company protocols before they become a security issue, or to escalate when security breaches are a cause for concern. Giving ITSM access to all relevant asset details improves their ability to respond in a timely fashion while improving the accuracy of the ITAM data itself before or even during a security issue.

Scenario: ITSM and ITAM Work Together to Resolve a Security Breach

An employee left his laptop at a restaurant and only realized it the next morning when he went to leave for work. There's a chance the laptop would have been found by the staff and he could still claim it, but there's also a chance that someone could have stolen it after he was gone. Since the restaurant is closed, he decides to follow company policy and immediately calls the service desk to report a possible lost laptop. The service desk agent evaluates the risks and flags the device. She looks at the audit log to see if any attempts have been made to sign on to the device and discovers there haven't been, but immediately changes the password anyway. She advises the employee to check with the restaurant to see if it's still there and once that is known the appropriate resolution path can be taken.

Greater Accuracy and Control Over Asset Inventory

Since computers, software and other IT assets are constantly being updated, modified or moved, keeping information about assets and what's available is often a challenge. But your service desk and self-service portal are the first point of contact for employee questions and issues. They can serve as an important check point to capture and validate ITAM information, including confirming individuals have certain assets or requesting information on assets that may not be assigned but are being used (hidden assets). Details captured during issue resolution and requests, such as user location, asset location and configuration detail will greatly improve ITAM effectiveness and deliver a fuller picture of what assets are actually in use. Moreover, the service desk can also ensure that all requests are authorized and follow an approved process providing control and consistency for asset-based change.

Asset managers can also benefit from reviewing license usage before purchasing new licenses. Assigned licenses not needed by individual employees can be reassigned elsewhere.

Scenario: Remote Employee Has Incomplete Assets

As part of laptop refresh, an asset manager sends a remote employee a new laptop. But the employee is unable to connect the new laptop to their monitor. The employee emails the IT service desk for help. The service desk agent confirms what laptop was sent, and then tries to confirm that the employee has the correct monitor that was assigned. It's soon discovered that the monitor the employee has is not the original monitor sent and the current monitor is one purchased by the employee. This replacement monitor only has an HDMI input. The service desk agent looks at the asset inventory and arranges for an USB-C to HDMI connector to be sent. She also looks at the warranty information for the original monitor and sees that it is under warranty and so she arranges for the employee to send the broken monitor back to head office. She then wraps things up by sending the employee a link to company policy for acquiring new IT assets.

More Proactive and Better ITSM and ITAM Related Decisions

Each discipline can be more proactive and make better decisions if they incorporate ITSM and ITAM data. ITSM can supply a lot of information regarding asset performance and use, allowing asset managers to get a better understanding of how an asset is actually used, what business services that asset supports and why an asset is important. This leads to more proactivity and better decisions about asset purchases, lifecycle and refresh initiatives. They will also be able to take incidents, problems and service requests into account when assessing the total cost of ownership of an asset as well as vendor rating and agreement management.

ITAM data can also help ITSM to be more proactive and make better decisions. Since ITAM data contains specific details from warranty information to asset configuration, it can help the service desk to understand how assets are being used, what the terms of service are, how the assets are deployed and configured—all of which helps the service desk to resolve issues faster. Without asset information, the service desk is essentially flying blind when trying to make cost-effective and efficient decisions involving assets.

Scenario: Proactive Asset Management

An asset manager commences asset refresh planning and reviews all the PCs in their inventory. The standard procedure is to swap a PC 30 days before the lease return date. However, for one PC the asset manager can see by reviewing the ITSM related information that the PC is being used as a SQL server supporting dozens of applications, which will make it harder to replace. The asset manager allocates 90 days to this endeavor and minimizes any unintended impacts.

Less Risky Change Management

Technology is about never-ending change. Refreshes, updates and acquiring new software and hardware is business as usual at most companies. The goal of any change management process is to implement changes with as little disruption as possible. If you integrate ITAM information within change management during the risk analysis process, you'll reduce risk and more likely implement changes with minimal disruption. For companies that have a change advisory board, it would be a good idea to include someone from the ITAM team, so that potential issues can be addressed early.

Scenario: ITAM Data Improves Change Advisory Board Meeting Results

Several long running transactions are being canceled on a production application running in the corporate data center. The rollback is slowing the overall system availability. The IT support team identified a new feature available on Microsoft SQL Server 2019—Accelerated Database Recovery—as the best fix and using the asset inventory, was able to identify that other servers are running the same application and suggest they should all be upgraded as well. The asset manager reviews the asset information and states that the previous update of the SQL servers had taken place in 2016, when Microsoft SQL Server 2016 was just released. The asset manager also details that in 2020 it was decided to continue on with the 2016 versions of the SQL Servers—due to budgetary and resource constraints—even though the company would lose Microsoft's mainstream support for updates, bug fixes and new functionality. The asset manager is then tasked with comparing the costs associated with the ongoing performance issues and the cost for undergoing a company-wide SQL Server update. The change advisory board decides that it is more cost-effective to upgrade the SQL Servers in 2023 and allocates budget to this endeavor. The asset team begins planning for the upgrade immediately.

Better Self-Service Experience and Functionality

The benefits of a self-service portal are widely known. Increased agent productivity. Reduced tickets. Reduced customer service issues. Improved user and customer experience. Reduced costs. And so on. However, incorporating a request catalog can help you achieve even greater efficiency. A request catalog lets your employees select pre-approved IT assets to make their work more productive—whether at home or in the office. A quick turnaround of approved requests will contribute to employee satisfaction and productivity. But a self-service portal can do so much more than be an efficient asset ordering machine. Notifications can be released about problem assets as well as patches and fixes, reducing confusion and tickets. Knowledge articles can be presented based on employee known assets. Employees can be asked to confirm assets in possession as well as usage of assets, so assets not in use can be reclaimed. Employees can also be reminded about company policy and asked to expose "hidden assets"—helping to keep asset inventory accurate.

Scenario: Self-Service Portal Improves Employee Experience

An employee goes to the self-service portal because she's trying to run Power BI on her new Apple MacBook Pro laptop. When she searches for the solution, the system gives her the solution for her old Window-based Lenovo ThinkPad, but the employee and everyone else in the marketing department have just started switching to using MacBooks. She looks up her assigned assets and sees that although she returned the Lenovo to head office, the system still says she's in possession of it. The system also doesn't show that she received the new MacBook. So, the employee creates a ticket to let the service desk and asset managers know the error and to request steps on how to install Power BI on her MacBook. Since Power BI can't run on a Mac, the service desk sends her some workaround suggestions and creates a new knowledge article for the self-service portal as others in the marketing department will likely run into this same issue.

Achieve Greater Value and Cost-Efficiency

Although ITSM and ITAM are separate disciplines that provide significant value independently, they deliver even greater value and enterprise impact when combined. Access to ITAM information fosters more cost-effective ITSM decisions. Knowledge of hardware warranty coverage, support contracts, leasing agreements, unused inventory, replacement schedules, and more, enable front line IT staff to quickly determine which option not only meets the operational requirement but will do so at the lowest possible cost to the enterprise. Moreover, companies that have a better understanding of the costs associated with a business service will make better decisions regarding service levels.

On the other hand, ITSM data can inform asset managers as to which assets have performed well and which assets have not—hidden costs to a company that aren't reflected in the sticker price. Taking incidents, problems and service requests into account when assessing the total cost of ownership of an asset as well as vendor rating and agreement management, can make for more cost-efficient asset purchases. Additionally, applying ITSM process to common asset management functionality helps with inventory control. For example, asset managers can benefit if all IMACD (install, move, add, change, dispose) processes are handled as change requests, are tracked with proper process and approvals, which helps prevent assets from being accidentally lost only because there was no tracking of IMACD.

Scenario: Cost-Effective Service Management

A user has reported that they cannot power up their laptop computer. With access to ITAM information, the incident resolver can see quickly that the laptop is less than a year old and is covered by a full parts and labor warranty provided by the manufacturer. With this information, the incident resolver determines that the most cost-effective and efficient resolution is to have the laptop returned to the manufacturer for repair or replacement. The user is then provided a temporary replacement from available inventory.

How To Best Integrate ITSM and ITAM

1

EDUCATE ITSM AND ITAM EMPLOYEES

Before integrating ITSM and ITAM software, start by breaking down silos and educating employees about how understanding ITSM or ITAM data can help them make better decisions and be more productive. If employees understand how this integration can make them better and their jobs easier, they're more likely to leverage the integration whenever possible.

2

DON'T RELY SOLELY ON DISCOVERY TOOLS

The world is a complicated place and so are IT assets. There's more information than what your discovery tools can find. Often discovery tools run every seven days and there's a gap in information, for example, if people go on vacation for a couple of weeks the device won't report in to be discovered. Make sure you pay attention to information you already have regarding your IT assets, such as what you bought and when, and watch for managed devices not being discovered.

3

FOLLOW OUR PROVEN PROCESS FOR INTEGRATION SUCCESS

We recommend first starting with ITSM data and implementing the ServiceTeam ITSM connector gateways to pull in discovery data. Then, list ITAM configuration items and matching procurement information to discovery information. Then, add all the agreements related to specific assets.

4

START WITH QUICK WINS LIKE THE SELF-SERVICE PORTAL

A technology change is much easier to implement than a cultural change. A request and/or service catalog can be implemented and deliver cost-efficiencies and provable results quickly—helping to start and/or solidify a cultural change. People can't argue with success.

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