



Transform Your
IT Service Desk
Stephen Mann

MMG
Case Study

The Survival Trap
Paul McCarthy

Nevine Iskandar in
Conversation with
Brendan Cullen

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FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Members

As members and professional practitioners of our Service Management community you would hardly need me to remind you that these are challenging times. Nor to also remind you that things may well get worse before they get better. One thing that can be stated with certainty though, is that we're all in exactly the same boat.

However the news is not all bad for itSMFA members: far from it.

We are working to continue to support the Service Management community in a number of ways. For a start we recently decided to move all of our 'Events' on-line, to virtual meetings and the first of these, in VIC, was a success. Other states, indeed ALL states and territories will be asked to do the same – this is a matter of necessity of course, but we're finding it is an entirely viable alternative to our traditional meetings.

And our Flagship event, the National Conference, has been delayed, but will still be held. This will not be a virtual event, far from it, and I am looking forward to greeting you in person as we

celebrate our association and the weathering of this viral storm.

Your Forum continues to function and work as a primary resource of professional development and informal learning: these are the things we are good at as we continue to actively engage with members, with our business partners and with our wider communities.

My message to you is to continue your great work, as best you can in these constrained circumstances, to continue to engage, to reach out to your fellow members and to keep in mind that my message to you today is on behalf of a great team which continues to work hard on your behalf.

All the best in these coming weeks and months. Try to stay well. Look after yourselves and your loved ones and look forward to the day when we can fairly say, that this is all behind us. That day will come.

.
Bradley Busch
Chair, itSMF Australia.



Transform Your IT Service Desk Through Self-Service, Knowledge Management, Automation & AI

by Stephen Mann

Most modern IT service desks aspire to improve across all three of “better, faster, cheaper.” But what does your service desk need to do to jump from good to great? There are, of course, many opportunities to improve upon the IT service desk status quo – it’s therefore critical to understand which improvement opportunities will deliver the greatest return on your time and cost investments.

There are also a number of best practices which can be adopted, but unfortunately, there is not a one-size-fits-all approach. It is still essential to prioritize your efforts to make the maximum positive impact as early as possible.

This paper offers ten quick tips to help drive IT service desk improvement through three high-value IT service management (ITSM) capabilities – selfservice, knowledge management, and automation and artificial intelligence (AI). Importantly, it explains how best to avoid the common pitfalls to success.

Here are the 10 quick tips to transform your IT service desk

Self-Service

- 
- 1 Truly understand what your employees want and expect from IT self-service
 - 2 Avoid starting with cost savings as the primary objective
 - 3 Focus on enablers and capabilities that encourage employee adoption
 - 4 Invest sufficiently in organizational change management

Knowledge Management

- 
- 5 Focus your knowledge management initiative on people change
 - 6 Start where you are. Don't start with capability design and creation
 - 7 Embed your knowledge sharing capability into business-as-usual operations

Automation & Artificial Intelligence

- 
- 8 Sufficiently set corporate expectations of AI
 - 9 Focus on the quality of your data, knowledge, and information
 - 10 Ensure that your initial AI strategy covers a number of key perspectives

Identify the Right Improvement Opportunities

There's always going to be a wealth of opportunities to improve your IT service desk, especially when you consider the number of different perspectives you can take to identify and agree on improvements. For example:

- Focusing on business needs versus employee needs (and appreciating the mutual wins)
- Addressing pain points versus realizing opportunities
- Tackling people, process, or technology issues (or combinations across all three)
- Improving something that's already in place versus adding something new
- Improving a weakness or improving an existing strength
- Working with an existing ITSM best practice versus leveraging a new approach

Understand the Common IT Service Desk Challenges

There are a variety of commonly felt challenges and available opportunities to improve. For example:

- Working with high IT support volumes and reducing budget – the pressure of more IT services, and perhaps people, to support and the need to “do more with less”.
- Service desk tool issues – the current tool hinders more than it helps. And it probably never delivered on its promises and the expected return on investment (ROI).
- Staff recruitment and retention issues – this might be due to budgetary limitations or the availability of suitably skilled staff.
- Struggling to quantify what “value” is for your organization – there's a need for IT service desk to be more focused on what's important to the organization and the key stakeholders within it.
- Keeping up with changing business needs and technology landscapes – the business wants quicker change and innovation. And there's more technology to support.
- Meeting increasing employee expectations – employees are bringing their personal customer experiences into the workplace.

- Getting the basic ITSM capabilities right – there are a number of commonly adopted ITSM capabilities that IT service desks continue to struggle with.
- Finding the time for improvement – IT staff can often be too busy “fighting fires” to spend time preventing them in the first place.

Address What's Most Important for Your Organization

In the context of the above-listed points, there are likely to be many other improvement opportunities available. Some will be quick wins, while others will take considerable time and effort. Some will be costly, while others will not make a dent in your limited budgets.

- Budget, time and resources are key factors in deciding which improvement opportunities to tackle first.

But, importantly, it's the understanding of what's most important for your organization. There's a need to ensure that whatever you plan to improve, it is truly aligned with what's needed at a business level, rather than simply something that will improve IT operations and outcomes.

Avoid Potential Improvement Conflicts

- This might be an odd situation to consider because surely every positive change in IT is a positive change for the organization as a whole? Sadly, it's not. A simple example is the reduction in ticket handling costs by taking measures to shorten the average call handling time. It might save IT a dollar per ticket, but what if the quality of service is impacted negatively? The business-level cost of the affected employees not being able to work could easily be ten times the savings.

The improvement might meet the need for faster, but it doesn't necessarily meet the need for better.

Some other potential conflicts that you'll need to be aware of when prioritizing your improvement activity are:

- Only improving what's already performing well. It might be easier to do, but it's not likely to deliver as much benefit as tackling a problem boldly with something new. An example of this is continuing to improve mature incident management capabilities while completely ignoring the opportunities to improve problem management.

- Being aware that improving a weakness might also weaken a strength. The above example can also be viewed as this – where reducing what's seen as an overly-expensive ticket-handling cost potentially reduces customer satisfaction and/or increases the level of employee lost productivity.

- Being mindful that a balance is needed across improvements. Try not to focus on one improvement at the expense of others.

The most important factor to consider across all of these is whether your improvements will make the greatest difference in terms of being "better, faster, cheaper" from a business perspective.

In addition, when considering self-service, knowledge management, automation and AI for transforming your IT service desk, these ITSM capabilities also need to be viewed in this context. Because while they're applicable to many organizations, you'll need to ensure that there aren't other challenges and opportunities that need to be prioritized ahead of them.

Driving IT Service Desk Improvement Through Self-Service

There are many benefits of IT self-service. Self-service is an extra access and communication

channel for IT support and it can enable improvements across all three of "better, faster, and cheaper," such as:

- 24x7 support availability
 - A better employee experience (and lower levels of employee lost productivity)
 - Quicker issue resolution and service provision
 - Lower issue and request handling costs versus Level 1 support via the IT service desk
- In many ways, the power of self-service looks too good to be true, with so many upsides.

However, the benefits of your self-service capabilities will be significant only if they're designed and delivered in a way that employees want to use them.



Common Issues and Root Causes

There are a number of common issues experienced by unsuccessful self-service initiatives. It's important to separate what are often the symptoms from the root causes. For instance, if the issue is that employees aren't using the new self-service capability, then it's a symptom. The reason(s) for the lack of use might be that employees:

- Don't know that self-service is there to help
- See no benefit in using self-service over existing channels, like telephone and email
- Consider self-service difficult to access and use
- Find available knowledge articles to be insufficient

Of course, there are additional reasons why self-service adoption levels are lower than expected. These might be a mix of symptoms and root causes, with the need to trace each symptom back to the root causes.

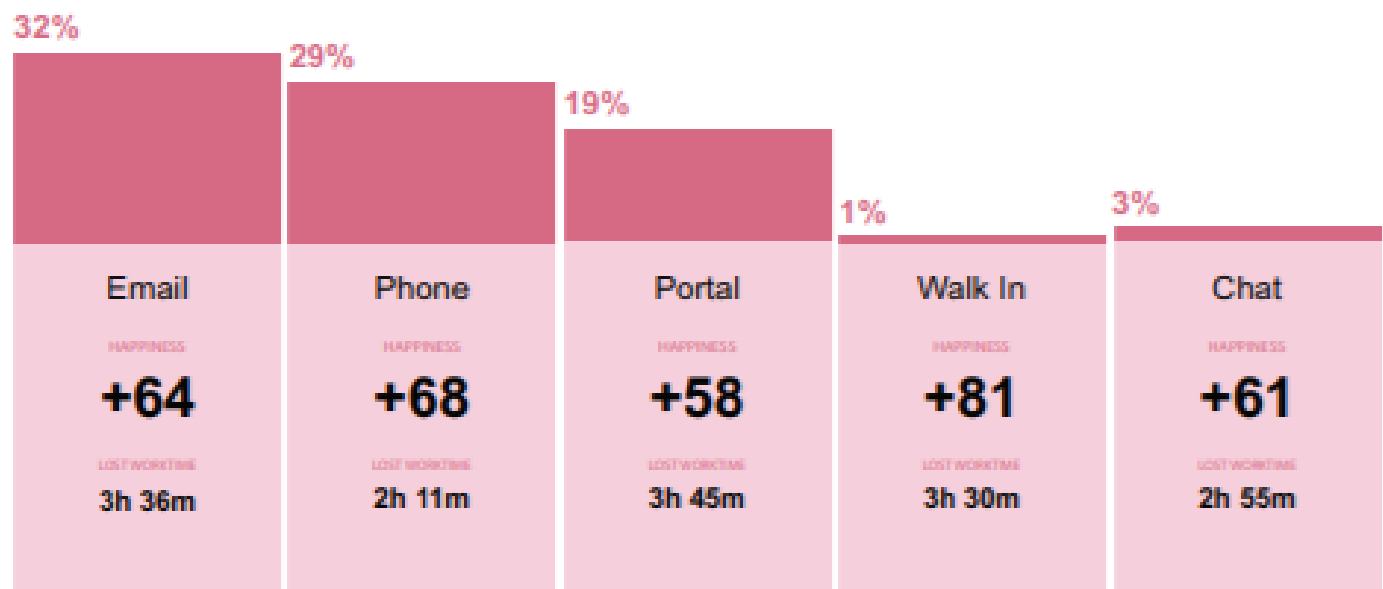
It's therefore important to dig deeper than these visible symptoms to understand what's really

causing the lack of self-service adoption for employees, including any issues where the selfservice capability is being used. For instance, as shown in the chart below, employees are less happy, resolutions are slower, and there's lower self-service portal adoption than expected

- A lack of automation for incident resolution and service provision
- Failing to continuously improve the self-service capabilities

There are many known root causes for the underperformance of IT self-service. These include:

- Focusing on technology implementation not the capabilities
- Not creating the self-service capability around employee needs
- Failing to provide sufficient knowledge articles for self-help (quantity and quality)
- Insufficient investment in organizational change



June 11th 2019

Source: HappySignals, based on 303k pieces of employee feedback in the previous six months

Source: HappySignals, based on 303k pieces of employee feedback in the previous six months

Achieve Self-Service Success with 4 Quick Tips



TIP

1

Truly understand what your employees want and expect from IT self-service



IT self-service is not a case of "build it and they will come." Successful self-service capabilities are designed to be chosen and used ahead of other channels by employees. So, there's a need to truly understand what your employees want and expect from IT self-service. It's also a good idea to understand what they dislike about using self-service, including examples of the self-service capabilities that have encouraged them to use alternative channels.



Avoid starting with cost savings as the primary objective

To start with cost reduction as the primary objective for IT self-service is simply a shortcut to failure. If employees see IT self-service as an inferior support channel to telephone and email, they won't use it. And if they don't use it, there'll be insufficient volumes to realize the anticipated benefits and the associated ROI. Instead, focus on creating something that employees will want to use. When designed correctly, the high level of adoption and use will be the driver for the desired cost savings.

TIP

2



TIP

3

Focus on enablers and capabilities that encourage employee adoption



Focusing on techniques that encourage employees to get started with self-service is another tip to increase your self-service success. For example, access to user guides and self-help, automated service provision and issue resolution, and a continuation of the existing IT support channels. In this way, employees are not rushed into using self-service for every issue or request.



Invest sufficiently in organizational change management

There's a need to minimize employee resistance to change, including effective handling of fear of the unknown. Organizational change management tools and techniques will help show people "what's in it for me" and drive the required behaviors. They will also help to ensure sufficient communication of the key activities required and the associated milestones, and that the necessary levels of education and training are provided.

TIP

4



Driving IT Service Desk Improvement Through Knowledge Management

The ability to capture, share, and reuse knowledge has been a corporate ambition for over two decades in particular that is applicable to ITSM and IT support. Best practice approaches have been documented, enabling technologies designed for many IT organizations; however, knowledge management continues to be a suboptimal organizational and operational capability. The ability to manage and exploit, knowledge offers IT organizations a wealth of benefits, including:

- Better employee experience and business outcomes
- Reduced levels of employee lost productivity through quicker resolutions
- Reduced operational costs, due to less duplication of effort and more innovation
- Maximized use of people resources and their knowledge
- Minimized impact of knowledge lost when employees leave and quicker new employee onboarding
- Greater consistency in operations and outcomes
- Increased employee morale and motivation

The impact of these benefits will increase with additional use cases for knowledge management in IT support; initially in helping service desk analysts to extend their personal capabilities and knowledge through service desk knowledge bases. Then in supporting employees via IT selfservice and self-help facilities. And now, as the basis for a variety

of AI-based technology use cases, including chatbots and virtual agents.

Common Issues and Root Causes

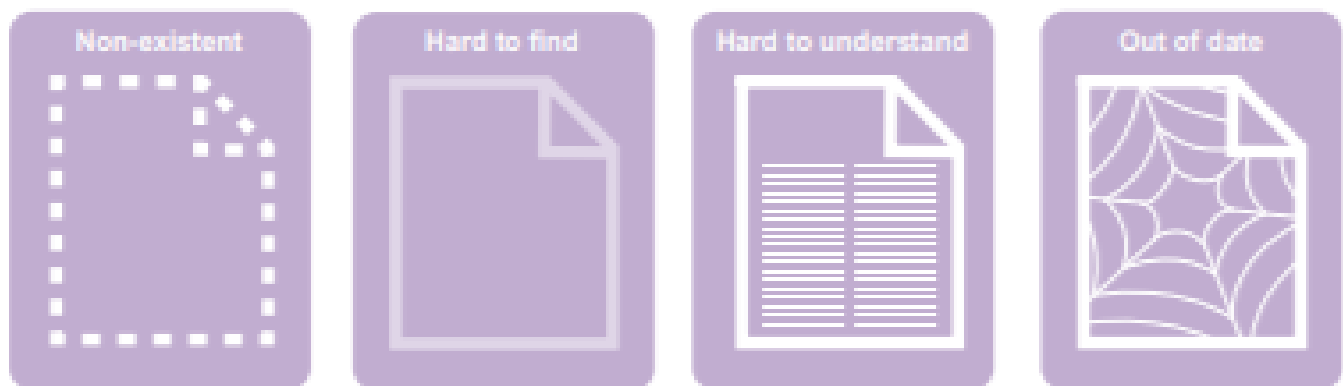
As for self-service, there are a number of common issues identified with unsuccessful knowledge management initiatives. Again, it's important to identify the underlying root causes, not just the symptoms.

For example, over-focus on knowledge capture might be due to a number of root causes (and it can also be a root cause itself). It can happen when IT staff are measured, and maybe even rewarded for knowledge capture but not knowledge use. Or, as we commonly do as human beings, we selectively start from the easiest to do rather than what offers the greatest value.

Another example is insufficient project resource which is usually due to not appreciating how much work is needed to get knowledge management right. This includes the required investment in organizational change management.

Finally, a lack of knowledge base use can be pinned on a number of root causes that can be recognized as poor capability design and execution, where the required knowledge articles are non-existent, hard to find, hard to understand or out of date. These potentially have their own root causes too.

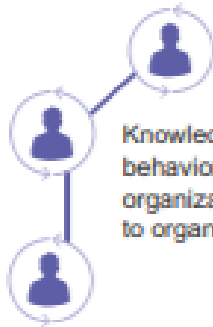
REQUIRED KNOWLEDGE ARTICLES



Achieve Knowledge Management Success with 4 Quick Tips



Focus your knowledge management initiative on people change



Knowledge sharing requires a change in employee mindsets and behaviors, and your knowledge sharing initiative **will likely fail** without organizational change management. This approach is also relevant to organizations seeking to improve their existing knowledge sharing capabilities.

TIP

5

Start where you are. Don't start with capability design and creation

It's logical to think of knowledge management as a process or a flow where knowledge is firstly captured, then refined, made available, used, and reviewed and otherwise managed. While being able to capture knowledge is a key part of this, this knowledge has little value if it's not being used. So, to "reverse engineer" your knowledge management, it needs to ensure sufficient focus on creating delivery and usage mechanisms that is fit-for-purpose based on employees' needs and preferred ways of working, instead of focusing on knowledge collection, storage, and management that have great capabilities without considering employees.



TIP

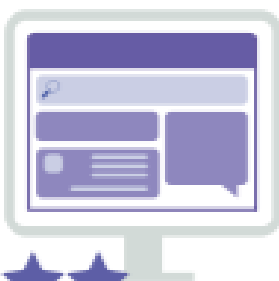
6

Embed your knowledge sharing capability into business-as-usual operations

Encourage knowledge sharing in your organization, including the ability to easily access knowledge, knowledge capture mechanism(s), and establishing rewards and recognition policies for employees. The aim is to make knowledge sharing "how we work around here."

TIP

7



Driving IT Service Desk Improvement Through Automation and Artificial Intelligence (AI)

It's unsurprising to find the key benefits of automation for IT support that include:

- Faster – increasing the speed of task, activity, and workflow execution
- Cheaper – offering reduced operational costs versus the human labor that would otherwise be needed
- Better – improving outcomes and the associated employee experience along with the ability for 24x7 operations (when cost and staff limitations make it otherwise prohibitive)

Automation also provides other benefits to IT service desks that shouldn't be overlooked:

- Augmenting human capabilities
- Reducing human errors
- Making change easier
- Providing a platform for additional improvement beyond manual activity replacement

All of these are now amplified with the addition of AI capabilities for ITSM and IT support, whether standalone or coupled with more-traditional automation



Existing AI Use Cases for IT Support

Chatbots

An automated 24x7 first-contact support capability that can handle simple issues and requests, including the provision of answers to employee questions. This can be **text-based** chat or via **voice UIs**. And it can take the form of a standalone capability or one that's embedded into an existing system or service. Many ITSM solutions like assyst have chatbot agnostic integration capability.



Virtual Agents

This capability works like chatbots but with the AI that is **augmenting service desk analyst knowledge and capabilities**. Again, solutions like assyst can easily integrate virtual agents with existing knowledge repositories.



Intelligent Ticket Handling

This is the **automated categorization, prioritization, routing**, and potentially processing of employee issues and requests. AI will get this activity right much more quickly and reliably than human workers.



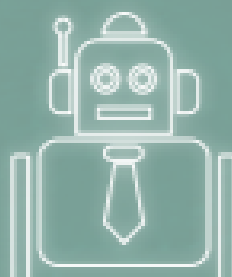
Break-fix-enablement

This is **AI-powered event management** that allows the important issues to be heard above the noise, plus the predictive identification of issues and potentially their automated remediation. AI excels here because of its self-learning analytical capabilities and its ability to handle much more data than a human ever could.



Trend identification and decision support

This includes obvious opportunities such as **problem management** and also includes **operational activities** like demand planning and staffing optimization.



AI-assisted knowledge management

This includes a variety of opportunities to improve and extend knowledge management capabilities. For instance, **intelligent search and "recommendations"** where the search facility comprehends context and meaning.



Common Issues and Root Causes

The adoption of automation and AI capabilities can be subject to a variety of obstacles and issues. But, as with both self-service and knowledge management success, it's important to look beyond the symptoms to understand the root causes.

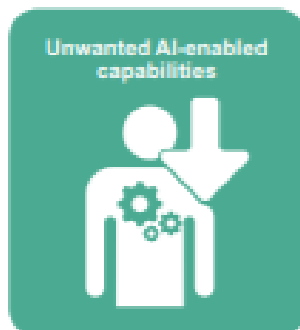
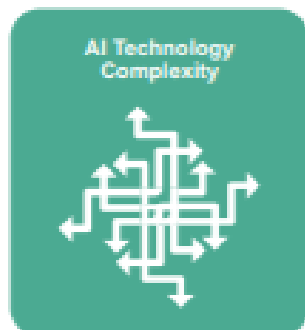
For instance, you can end up with AI technology complexity, where there are a variety of different AI solutions employed to undertake potentially similar tasks. It's the result of different teams working in silos rather than participating in an enterprise-wide approach to AI adoption. It wastes IT resources and makes life harder for everyone involved.

Or, you can end up with new AI-enabled capabilities that employees don't want to use. As with self-service and knowledge management, the new capabilities are created based on

what the technology can do rather than how people want to work. It might be a case of technology projects overlooking the need for organizational change management.

Finally, you can be slowed down and potentially defeated by attempting to build AI inhouse. Instead, use best in class third-party, cloud-based AI services, or software that already has AI capabilities built in.

Importantly, don't waste your IT resources on the fundamentals of AI. Instead, use these valuable resources and third-party AI capabilities to create beneficial solutions to business issues, challenges, and opportunities.



Achieve Automation and AI Success with 3 Quick Tips



TIP

8

Sufficiently set corporate expectations of AI

Firstly, what can be achieved through AI technology today and how fast this will progress. Secondly, the effect that AI adoption will have on employees, from job security through changing roles and skills sets to them being freed up to engage in more fulfilling work.



Focus on the quality of your data, knowledge, and information

You'll need to conduct an assessment, likely followed by a quality-based cleanup of what you have, and investing time and effort in getting what else needed for AI to deliver against your expectations.

TIP

9

TIP

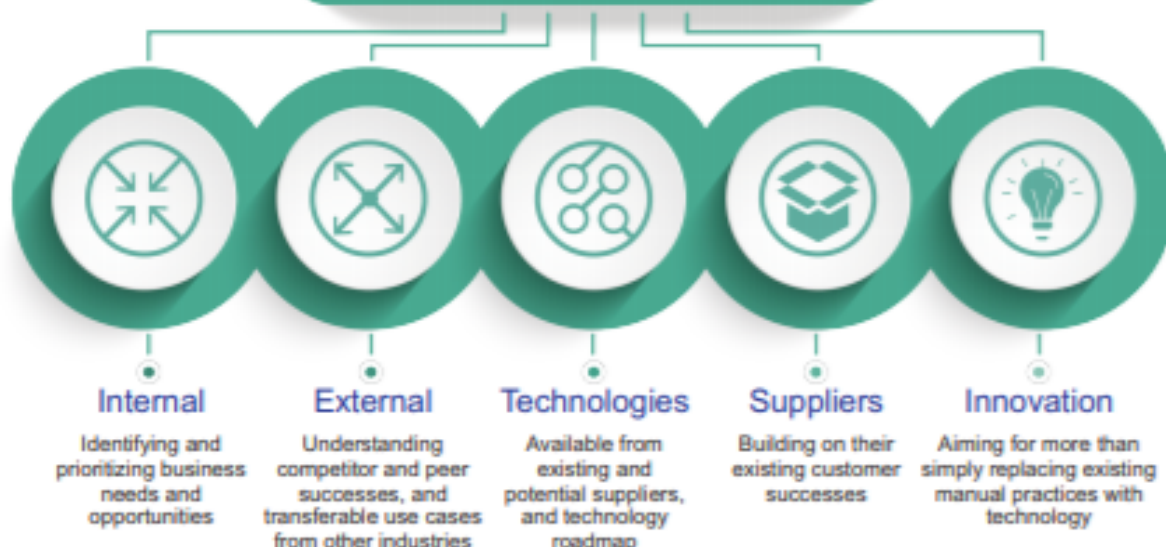
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Ensure that your initial AI strategy covers a number of key perspectives.

Your AI strategy might start out at a high level and then become more detailed as more information is known, such as business needs and opportunities, available technologies, and peer successes. Also, include an evaluation on AI capabilities and roadmaps of the existing and potential suppliers. Aim for more than simply replacing existing manual practices with the technology. Also, look for opportunities that previously weren't possible without AI.



The key perspectives your AI strategy should cover



About the Author

Stephen Mann

Stephen Mann is the Principal Analyst and Content Director at the ITS focused industry analysis firm ITSM tools.



He is also an independent IT and IT service management marketing content creator, and a frequent blogger, writer, and presenter on the challenges and opportunities for IT service management professionals.

He has previously held positions in IT research and analysis (at IT industry analyst firms Ovum and Forrester and the UK Post Office), IT service management consultancy, enterprise IT service desk and IT service management, IT asset management, innovation and creativity facilitation, project management, finance consultancy, internal audit, and product marketing for a SaaS IT service management technology vendor




MMG Case Study

About Axios Systems


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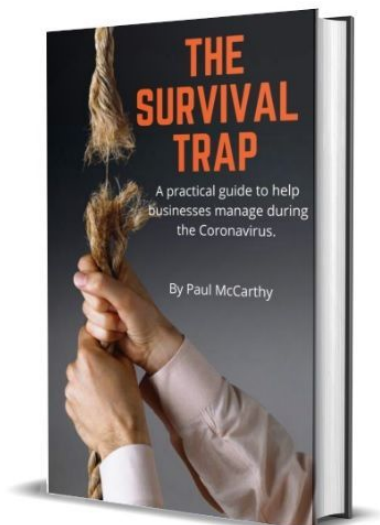
The Survival Trap

by Paul McCarthy

This book is a gift for any business who is tired of all the negativity associated with the coronavirus and is looking for some practical, proactive steps they can take to generate sales again. Simply click the button to download your copy.

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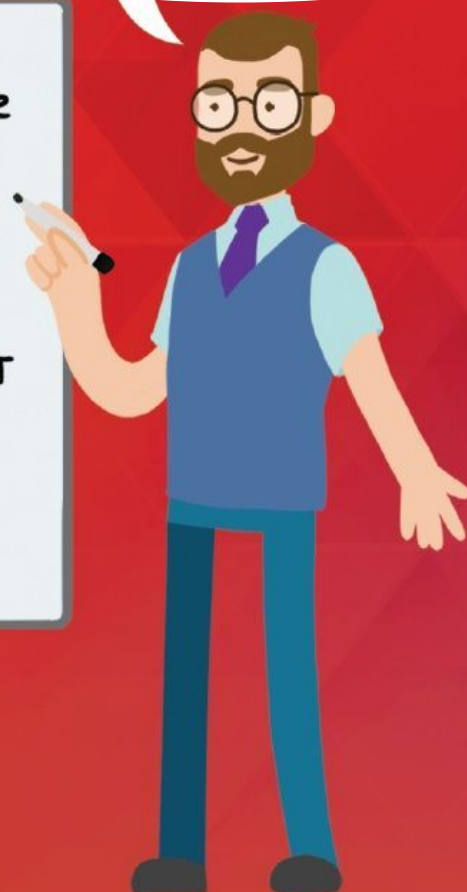

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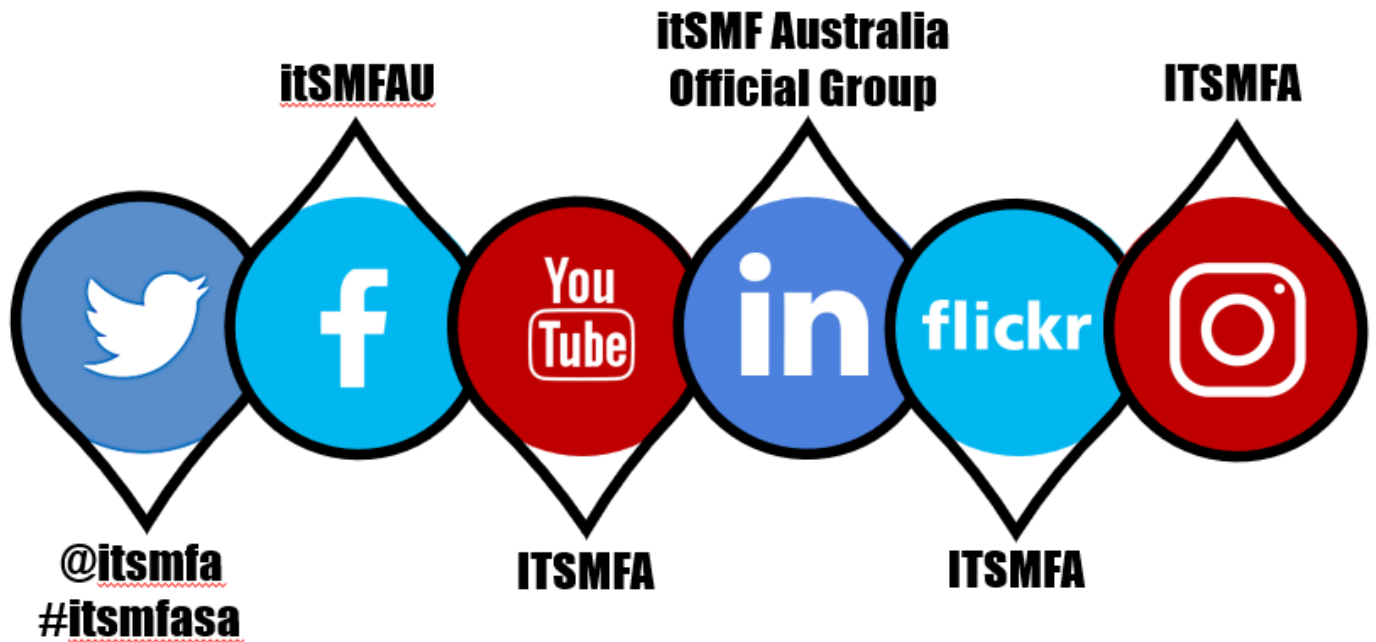
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Nevine Iskandar in conversation with Brendan Cullen

What is your current job title and industry and what do you enjoy the most about both?

- o Job title: Managing Director and Principal Consultant. Enjoy the flexibility and my ability to adapt to change
- o Industry: Consulting. Enjoy the ability to make a difference and add value through the application of my knowledge within customer environments

How long have you been an itSMF Member?

12 to 15 years

What itSMF Membership Benefits do you get most value from?

Seminars
ITIL Online
itSMF Bulletins / Publications
Past Seminar Presentations
Forums

What do you enjoy most about being an itSMF Member?

- o Being part of a community of like-minded people
- o Able to discuss important and very relevant topics
- o Have access to experts who can answer specific questions related to certain topics
- o Have access to online resources and discounts

Has being an itSMF Member benefited you professionally?

Absolutely; networking. Through itSMF Australia, I was able to meet and engage with several SM

professionals who became even friends. This friendship provided the trust needed as the foundation for many years of professional collaboration. Some of these memorable people have helped me throughout my career and provided me with many professional opportunities.

What ITSM related certifications do you hold, if any?

ITIL 4 Foundation
ITIL Intermediate (v3)
ITIL Expert (v3) working on completing the
ITIL 4 Managing Professional Transition
SO20000
CASM
CPDE (Certified Process Design Engineer)
CMMI Expert/instructor training

What has been your biggest workplace or career challenge and how did you face it?

Keeping up with the constant proliferation of qualifications in the industry as a consultant and as an instructor has been a challenge, however continually prioritising and upskilling is what I do to deal with that challenge.

Have you ever applied your ITSM skills outside of work?

All the time. ITSM skills are common sense practices which we can all use both in our private and professional life.

What do you see as the biggest challenge or 'next big thing' for ITSM professionals over the next couple of years and what do we as

ITSM professionals need to do to address these challenges/opportunities?

We are going through very unique and tough times. So rather than thinking about challenges over the next two years, it's important to focus our energy on staying afloat over the next few months first. Given the COVID-19 situation we're in, I believe the most pressing challenge for ITSM professionals (as well as most other professions) is maintaining some kind of continuity. In addition to staying safe, staying in business (for small companies and for consultants) and staying employed (for full time employees) is what's on everyone's mind. As challenging as it is at this stage of the pandemic, we need to be realistic and expect that things are going to get harder and more challenging over the next few months. As a community, we need to try to find ways to help and support each other as much as possible. itSMF is well positioned to be the platform of choice (by our community) to gather suggestions on this topic and implement out of the box solutions.

What's the most valuable piece of advice you have been given in your professional career?

If you always do what you always did, you will always get what you always got! So we need to continually improve and adapt to change.

What advice would you give young people who have chosen a career in technology?

Be willing to invest effort and time to gain experience in many disciplines even if that means volunteering. Expand your horizon and

develop supplementary skills. Think Comb shape skills as promoted by DevOps.

What do you like to do when you are not working?

Travel, socialise with family and friends, learn new things and new skills, watch sci fi and action movies.

What was the title and author of the last book you read?

The Phoenix Project by Gene Kim, Kevin Behr, and George Spafford.

One word that could describe your experience of itSMF Australia?

Memorable

Have you ever been to an itSMF Conference, if so what was your Conference experience like and do you have a lasting memory?

Attended several conferences in Australia and the US. Some as a volunteer when I was on the itSMF board of directors. My experience with the conferences is that there is a lot of valuable information and more importantly opportunities to meet with industry leaders face to face. Having the ability to ask this burning question to an author is invaluable.

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