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Balancing the Product Backlog

Mark Smalley

Cyber Risk Mitigation for the Service Desk

Brett Moffett

Service Management and what really matters

Gary Percival

In Conversation with Brendan Cullen

Feiser Joya

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Members,

Another year draws to an eventful conclusion and we're provided with another timely opportunity to look back at our successes and how we're placed for the, no doubt, challenging year ahead.

One thing I would like to remark on was the considerable success of our National Conference and this sowed the seeds for another outstanding conference in 2020. I can say that with some confidence given we have major sponsors already on board with another one signed up this week.

That is quite remarkable and is a living, breathing testament to our continued relevance in a very difficult environment. Speaking personally, this year has certainly brought its own challenges, but I have always felt the strength of our community behind me and have in turn drawn strength from it. We are in this respect quite remarkable and quite unique and we work hard as a collective to maintain these characteristics and to nurture both the professional development and social interactions of our members.

Of course, we're well placed to do so given our seminar program which continues to be a beacon of excellent informal learning while at the same time providing an invaluable social network which is the envy of many other professional associations. This mix of the social and professional, the networking and learning forms the foundations of the seminar program and we are drawing to an end of another very successful year.

I would like to extend my personal thanks to every committee member across all of the state and territory branches for your outstanding contributions in respect of the seminar program and I look forward to our close association over the next twelve months as well.

I would also like to offer my vote of thanks to the staff toiling away in the National Office. We run a tight ship and in fact are able to do so because of their commitment and professionalism. So to Sheryl, Alison, Michelle and Yvonne, please accept not just on my behalf, but on behalf of a grateful membership, our thanks and esteem.

Likewise, I have had the pleasure of working with a terrific Board this year and their stewardship of your association has been a credit to them. We are in a sound position and represent what a well-managed association should look like – well done to you all and again, thanks.

Finally I'd like to extend to all members and their families my best wishes for the coming festive season. I hope you all have a fabulous time with your families and loved ones, that you stay safe over the break and that you return to us in the new year refreshed and ready for the exciting times ahead.

Please take care.

Bradley Busch
Chair, itSMF Australia.

Balancing the product backlog

by Mark Smalley

Product-based software development teams are tasked with software design, coding and testing during the whole lifecycle of the software product, not just the initial development. The software product has a product backlog.

This is the list of the various work items that need to be done: additions, changes, repairs, and sometimes removal of software. The product backlog and the priorities of the backlog items are managed by the product owner, who is tasked with making the best investments in the product.

In addition to deciding which functionality is required first, the product owner also has to strike a balance between the functionality of the application and its technical quality.

An application's technical quality is often expressed as technical debt.

This is the estimated cost of rework to repair substandard software.

Substandard software is caused by lack of competences and/or lack of time and budget to develop to whatever standard has been set.

Just as with financial debt, technical debt comes at a cost. 'Interest' is paid in the form of incidents that cause disruptions to business operations, and required repairs or workarounds.

Technical debt is 'repaid' when substandard software is repaired.

Another analogy with financial debt is that it is often prudent to have technical debt.

Substandard software is often delivered quicker, generating the desired business benefits earlier. In addition, the time and money saved, can be spent on other functionality that adds value.

As long as the interest in the form of incidents is not excessive, this is often a wise decision.

It is also prudent to ensure that the technical debt remains within acceptable limits. It is therefore good practice to allocate a certain amount of the product's budget to repaying technical debt.

This can vary, depending on how many incidents ('interest') occur, but it is crucial that regular repairs are made. Lehman's second law of software evolution states that as an application evolves, its complexity increases unless work is done to maintain or reduce it.

Disciplined effort is therefore needed to manage technical debt.

In order to manage technical debt in relationship with functional 'credit', the following items should be tracked over time:

- Benefit and cost of new and changed functionality
- Cost of incidents as a result of substandard software
- Cost of repairs to substandard software. These should provide enough insight into the effect of investment in repairs in the form of reduced incidents, and budgets can be adjusted accordingly.

There are, however, other investments and costs to consider. From time to time, there are updates to the platform on which the application is developed and run.

Adoption of some of these updates is optional, but some are required because, for instance, the platform supplier no longer provides support for older versions.

These platform changes always result in development-related costs, even if it is

only testing whether the application still works on the new platform. In order to manage the investment in the product, insight is required in:

- Benefit and cost of adoption of platform updates.

Finally, there are often opportunities to improve the team's way of working. By reducing waste such as delay due to inefficient handovers or ill-informed or poorly-skilled developers. These opportunities also need to be considered, which adds a fifth item:

- Benefit and cost of improvements to the way of working.

The product backlog can therefore be extended with platform-related and organizational items:

1. Product features (new or changed functionality)

2. Product incidents (that often trigger product repairs)

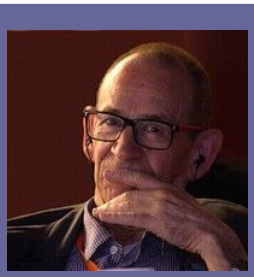
3. Product repairs (trigged by incidents or by structural repairs)

4. Platform improvements

5. Organizational improvements
All items should specify costs and benefits, where benefits also include avoidance of costs that are likely to be incurred when the item is delayed.

This extended product backlog gives the product owner better insight into all of the options

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Mark Smalley
Writer, speaker, trainer, bridge builder

Mark is an IT Management Consultant at Smalley.IT and Delivery Partner for GamingWorks' The Phoenix Project and MarsLander business simulations.

He is a contributor to bodies of knowledge such as ASL, BiSL, BRM, COBIT, DevOps, IT4IT, ITIL, and VeriSM. He is Lead Editor of ITIL 4 High Velocity IT.
Mark has lectured at various universities and has spoken at hundreds of events in more than thirty countries.
Would you like Mark to speak at your event?
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Cyber Risk Mitigation for the Service Desk

by Brett Moffett

All organizations struggle with the management of security and the ever-changing goal posts of a "secure" environment. With cybercrime expected to cost $5.2 trillion globally over the next 5 years, IT Support departments need to be extra vigilant to mitigate risk.

Most IT security departments want their front-line support staff to have as little administration access as needed to reduce the possible vectors for attackers, but also to reduce the damage capable of malicious internal staff.

However, support staff require administrative or elevated privileges to be able to provide end users support for the systems they require. Finding a balance between security and functionality is an ongoing, and often frustrating, task.

Here are some simple steps you can take today to mitigate cyber security risks on your Service Desk:

1. Apply Role Based Access Control (RBAC)

According to Varonis' Global Data Risk report[i], 53% of companies found over 1,000 sensitive files open to every employee. Over exposed data, and administrative access, poses a huge security risk.

To mitigate this risk:

- Create separate administration accounts for support staff with relevant elevated privileges, ensuring that the elevated accounts have the least amount of privileges needed to undertake the identified tasks.

- Provide a limited toolset that can perform the identified tasks required for each support staff member that is controlled by one or more limited service accounts. All actions taken by individual users should be recorded in a secure manner for monitoring and audit purposes.

2. Automate Processes

Human error accounts for nearly 37% of data breaches[ii]. To reduce human error, automate processes with the required level of authorizations and approvals to remove or reduce the possibility of a deliberate attack from a malicious staff member, or an unplanned security breach due to poor execution, understanding of the process, or basic human error by staff.

3. Perform Ongoing Validation & Review

The average time to resolve an attack perpetrated by an internal employee is 51 days[iii]. It's important to regularly revalidate all access granted to support staff, either via separate administration accounts or Role Based Access Control, to ensure the identified requirements are still relevant and required. It's also important to review audit logs on a regular basis and after any cyber security event.

4. Implement Authentication Controls

74% of data breaches start with privileged credential abuse[iv]. Be sure to enforce strong password or authentication controls on all accounts including elevated privilege and service accounts.

5. Align Your Technology with Best Practices

Select a common toolset or framework, such as the Cireson RS toolset, for administering an environment.

As the Australian Cyber Security Centre states, this will "...scale better than an ad-hoc configuration of dissimilar administrative tools.

This will reduce the complexity of network configurations (such as firewall rules) leading to a reduction in security risks associated with misconfigurations." [v]

References:

i 2019 Varonis Global Data Risk Report
ii Notifiable Data Breaches Statistics Report: 1 July to 30 Sept 2018
iii The Cost of Cybercrime to Australia
iv Forbes - 74% of Data Breaches Start with Priviledged Credential Abuse
v Australian Cyber Security Centre - Securing Powershell in the Enterprise

About the Author

Brett Moffett
Solutions Architect, Cireson

With over 20 years of experience in a range of industries, Brett is all too aware of the many challenges with IT support and associated ITSM tools. Having held most support roles, Brett's passion now lies in promoting the System Center platform. He has designed and implemented System Center and Cireson to customers in both Australia and globally. Joining the thought leaders in System Center Service Management and Asset Management, Brett is a frequent blogger and contributor to the Cireson Community and other online forums. He also hosts monthly Adelaide and Canberra Microsoft IT Pro Communities, as well as webcasts on technical or business process topics.

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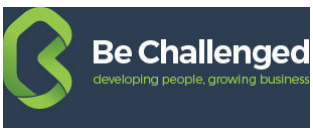

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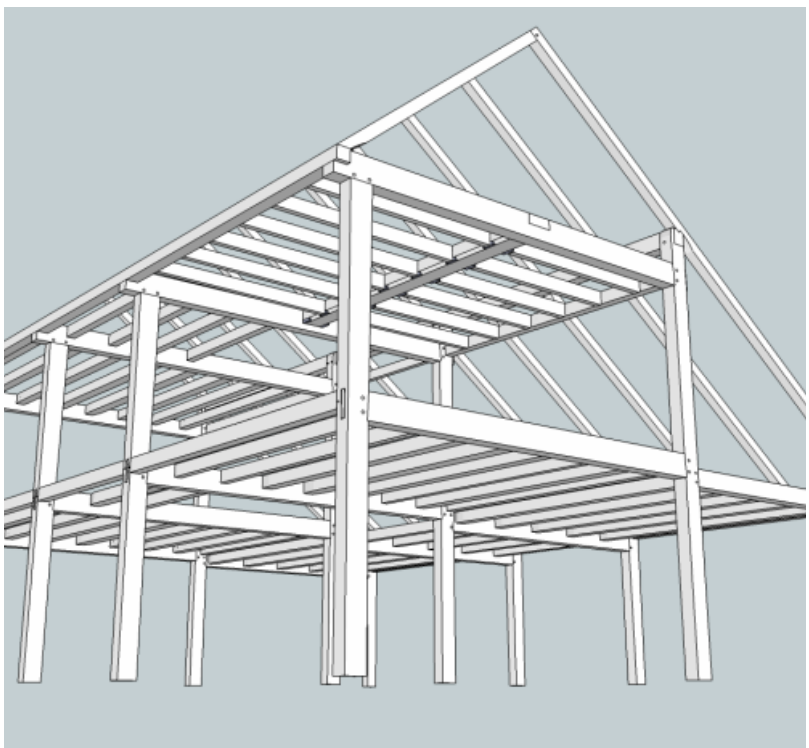
Service Management and what really matters

by Gary Percival

This is the fourth and final in a series of four postings on some new frameworks and methodologies around Service Management. How do they work together, and what really matters?

Frameworks, Shmameworks, get over it!



For Service Management we have the following frameworks and methodologies:

- ITIL DevOps Agile
- Lean SRE CoBit
- ISO20000 ITOM Togaf
- CMMI M_o_R And more

And there are many zealots of each, who will tell you why their favourite is 'the One' that works in all cases. (one ring to bind them!)

But does any of that really matter?

Do we jump on the bandwagon of the next great thing? Or is it time to go back to basics?

What really matters

In my humble opinion, there are two things that really matter:

1. You, and the skills, knowledge and experience you can bring to bare for the benefit of your client, and

2. Your Client, and the value they can derive from your services

YOU

What is your 'value statement'? what can you offer now, and into the future? You may be an expert in one of the frameworks or methodologies listed above. Is that good enough? Do you really think that every client issue can be fixed by your expertise, and that that is the only way it can be addressed?

Future-proof yourself by broadening your knowledge. Become a 'T-type' person. This means that you have depth in one area, and have foundation knowledge of others. Know where the other frameworks kick-in/overlap. Have the ability to apply more than one perspective to a problem.

If you're an ITIL expert (for example), I would recommend you include foundation level understanding of DevOps, Agile, Testing, Security and Lean, as a minimum. As each of these disciplines are expanding (see previous postings in the series), there is greater overlap in the areas they address. ITIL expands into non-IT. DevOps, into all things IT, Agile applicable everywhere. The overlaps increase. You need to be able to appreciate these overlaps. So as to draw from several where needed.

As an example, if the client's issue is that they are not getting the customer feedback, you can draw from ITIL, DevOps, Agile, Lean and others. Each has an approach to such an issue. Offer your client the versatility to look at options.

And now the 'T-type' person should be looking at becoming a 'π-type' person. Have a backup area of deep knowledge. Expertise, especially very technical knowledge, can become quickly out of date. I still consider myself to be an expert programmer in Cobol. Not a great demand for this skill anymore.

This approach, of being a 'π-type', can future-proof yourself. When the next big thing comes along, you need only study the basics, and relate it to your current knowledge. This is how I took on the Sire Reliability Engineering role. It is very technical. I will not be an SRE, but I do know what they are expected to do, when best to use them and how they can be expected to employ Service Management (ITIL) practices.

Your Client

They have a business to run. They do not have the time, or interest, to invest in coming up to speed with the various methodologies. How would they know which one is right for them? Will it address all of their issues, now and in the future? Have you ever seen an organisation trying to keep up with the latest, only to confuse their staff by constantly changing direction and strategy? It does not work for them. It cannot work for them. That is where you come in.

The client requires your services because they have a service-related issue. Begin by understanding what that issue is. Do NOT tell them how ITIL, or DevOps will fix it. Also, beware of a client that says, "We need to implement ITIL." They probably don't.

Collect information about:

- the issue,
- services impacted,
- how it impacts them,
- what they would like to see happen, and
- what they would like you to do

Speak in their terms. Be tool and framework agnostic. Explain back to them what you understand the situation to be. Once you and your client agree on this, then start talking about possible approaches. Talk at a practice level or lower.
You are not at a solution stage yet.
Use the practice within your expertise. See if this feels right for them. Think about the other methodologies that could cover the same ground.

Can you add to the perspective so the client feels they have options? Your job is to know the different options and offer them as means to address their issue.

See what sits best with them. Determine the timeframe and goals to be achieved. What fits best, small increments or big-bang? Let the client talk and you listen. I have seen consultants engaged where they wanted to convince the client how clever they were. The client wanted to escape the meeting.

Build a plan of attack. Work it through with them. Does this fit with their business / service strategy? If not, adjust accordingly. Beware if you ever catch yourself saying, "According to ITIL…".

For new clients, both you and they are not sure of the ultimate value outcome. Take an Agile approach of delivering something small, so they can try it, and give you feedback. Then plan the next steps together.

It will take longer this way. But you will get greater customer buy-in, build your own creditability, and find the best solution for their problem.

All this without mentioning any particular framework. Understanding the way frameworks interrelate is your job not theirs.

Remember, the two things that matter are You and Your Client – NOT this framework or that methodology. Be truly "Customer Focused". Always look for the best way you can assist them to solve their issues. This means keeping yourself relevant, and their situation upper most in your objective.

GOOD LUCK.

About the Author

"Gary is an independent Service Management consultant and trainer. He has been a member of itSMF for over 12 years. Gary is a ITIL v3 Expert and v2 Master, with supporting knowledge in Agile, DevOps and Lean Thinking."
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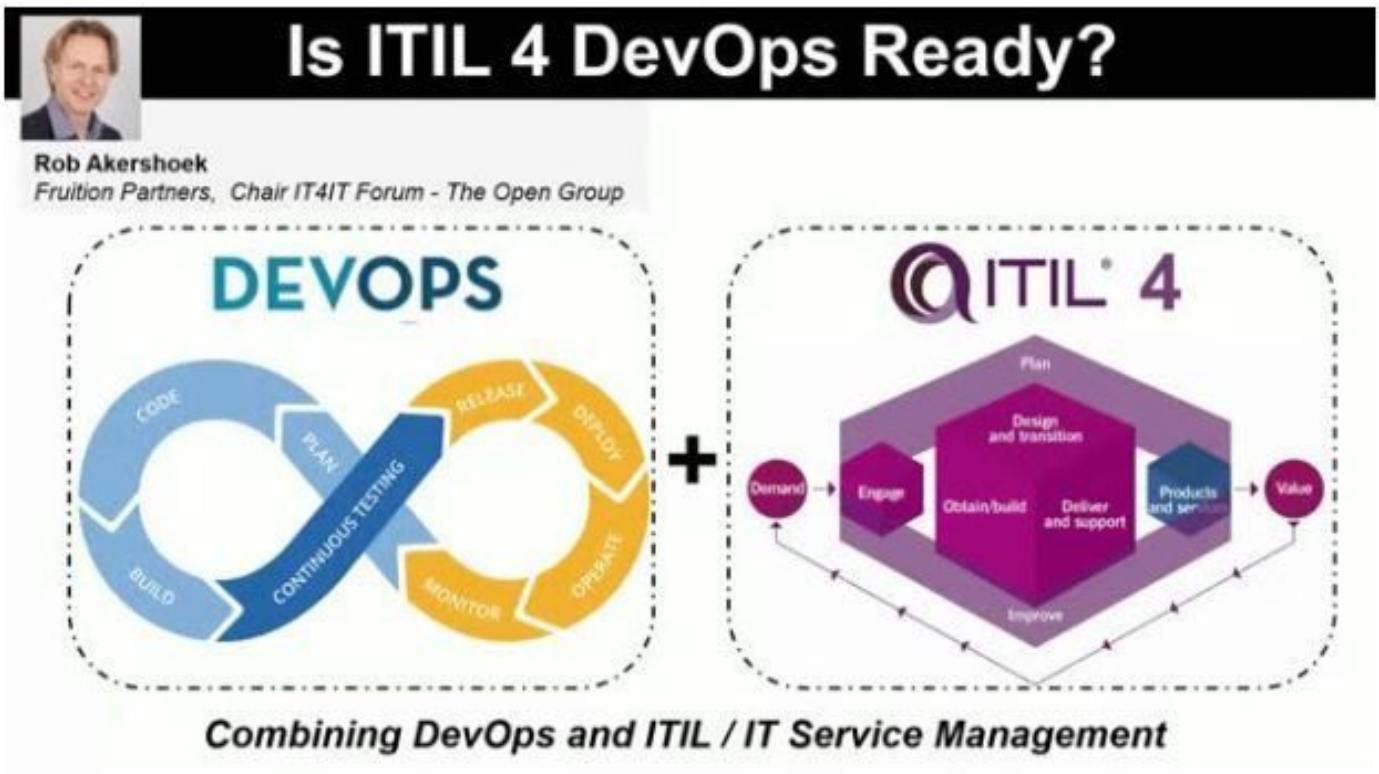

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Feisar Joya in conversation with Brendan Cullen

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

Associate Director, Client Services working in the Higher Education industry.

After more than 20 years in the commercial space managing and leading multimillion managed service contracts, I find invigorating the opportunity and challenge to focus on 'Client Experience/Service Excellence' where the outcome is benefiting the education sector and future leaders.
The amount of energy, innovation and opportunity to make a difference in people's lives is massive and provides you with a sense of contributing to a better society now and in the future.

How long have you been an itSMF Member?

More than 15 years with the majority of the time contributing to Service Management as a member of the South Australia Chapter of itSMF.

What itSMF Membership Benefits do you get most value from?

Seminars
Forums
Past Seminar Presentations

What do you enjoy most about being an itSMF Member?

The opportunity to share and learn Service Management best practices. As a member of itSMF, I have the opportunity to be part of a massive movement of individuals that like me are engaged in learning as well as contributing to others.

We achieve this by participating in a number of events including National Conference, State Seminars, Networking and the opportunity to see or give presentations. Also, it is one of the best options for me to give the opportunity to my team to participate and explore other perspectives that could shape current practices.

Has being an itSMF Member benefited you professionally?

Definitely. Most of my associations are a result of the opportunities from networking and references made during seminars on people that are clearly impacting through Service Management daily practices across many industries.

What ITSM related certifications do you hold, if any?

ITIL Foundation – V2, V3 done.
ITIL Expert - V2,V3 done and V4 Scheduled
DevOps Foundation - Completed

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

Great question. Perhaps the biggest challenge relates to the desire to change commercial organizations from been product to customer centric focus. Many will display proudly in their websites to be Customer Centric; however, time shows that only a percentage walk the talk.

I have been successful in several roles and customers are the biggest beneficiaries of the effort and approach taken. Operational teams

are the second beneficiaries as we have streamline processes and activities ensuring higher proactive approach to their operations.

Have you ever applied your ITSM skills outside of work?

Yes, perhaps not the IT but the Service Management. The way I see it, we all work in hospitality one way or another. The challenge and opportunity are to recognize this and apply it to every situation no matter if within work or outside.

We have the skills, knowledge and ability to make the difference.

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 professinals need to do to address these challenges/opportunities?

I believe that our focus must change from that of focusing on People, Process and Technology, to put all the effort on 'User Experience'. PPT and the fast pace of technology are just key ingredients to support our real goal of achieving Service Excellence.

How we achieve this will depend on the role, industry and commitment that the organizations put on it. As professionals we must look for the best environment where we can make the difference.

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

Don't look for your next role in roles that currently exist; instead, look at roles/activities that are not happening and create the opportunity. Any good leader/organization will create a role around it.

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

Stop looking at your current job description. Focus on what difference you can make daily around you and don't be afraid of going for gold. Continue your learning and don't be afraid to say, 'I don't know'.
Instead say it but find out so next time you know.

Your career will change many times; embrace it.

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

Spending time with my family, riding my bicycle and challenging myself up the hills. Coffee is by far my best pleasure.

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

Verbal Aikido from Luke Archer

One word that could describe your experience of itSMF Australia?

Engaging

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

Yes, been in many. The best experience was a presentation made in the last conference on Health – looking after ourselves better.

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