



AGILE Service
Management
Bas Blanken

How Can you Make
Self Service more
Useful?
Aprill Allen

The Future Is:
itSMF 2020 Service
Management
Conference

Aprill Allen
in
Conversation with
Brendan Cullen

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3 Chair's Report
- 4 AGILE Service Management
by Bas Blanken
- 10 How can you make Self-Service
more Useful?
Aprill Allen
- 14 itSMF State Events
- 15 BrightTalk Webinars
- 18 The Future is... itSMF 2020
Service Management Conference
- 22 Aprill Allen in Conversation with
Brendan Cullen
- 28 itSMF - Your Member Benefits



FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Members,

I'd like to kick off this month's report with the great news that we have signed on Knowledge Bird, Ivanti and ToPdesk as Conference partners. This is a tremendous endorsement by industry of the continued relevance and value of what is one of the best Service Management conferences in the world – and one of the few that's proudly badged as such. I'd just like to extend to these three companies my personal thanks and congratulate them for their commitment to the Australian Service Management Forum.

We're well into our new working year now, the Christmas break a memory and a productive and busy time ahead of us all. The State Branch seminars, recently re-named 'Events' are kicking off and we're looking forward to building on the strong numbers and excellent local organisation that characterised last year's efforts.

For this, as ever, we rely on the work of our State Committees, volunteers all, who do so much to ensure these events remain such a valuable means of informal professional development. It would be totally remiss of me not to mention the important social aspect of these as well – they really do provide the perfect vehicle for people to catch up, compare notes and scout for opportunities.

So 'Well Done' to everyone concerned and best wishes for your continued success over the course of 2020.

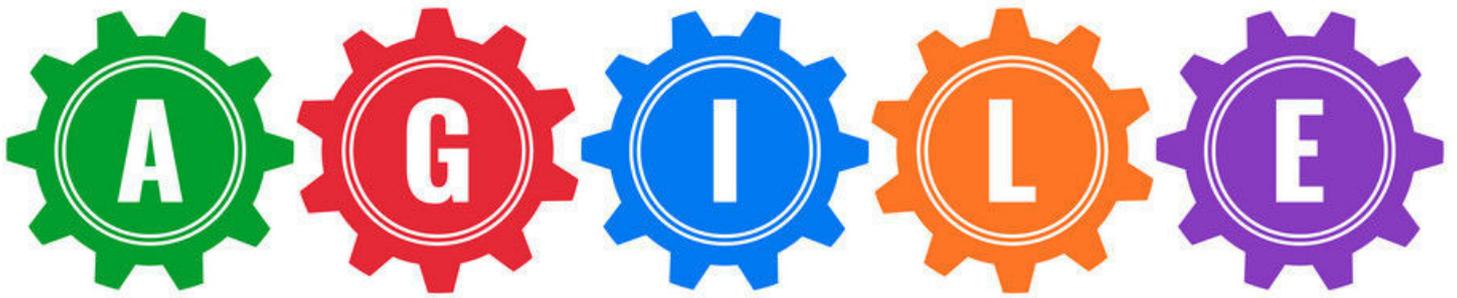
This is going to be a BIG year.

I must confess to being a bit fixated on our National Conference, even though it isn't until August. I'm genuinely excited by the prospect of this being an event that we'll be talking about for years to come – it is the culmination of all the hard work of recent times and demonstrates the continued relevance of your professional association. You told us you wanted it held in Brisbane and back to Brisbane we're headed. We have sponsors already on board, signed sealed and delivered, and more in the wings.

To our partners, both current and prospective, may I say thanks and we understand the value of making this a real partnership – we're here to work with you to ensure you get the maximum value of your association with us. That's my commitment to you.

Please take care.

Bradley Busch
Chair, itSMF Australia.



SERVICE MANAGEMENT

Bringing back speed, flexibility and customer focus to your IT team

Agile is increasingly popular these days. Originated from the Development world, it's quickly gaining ground in other domains. Service Management is not an exception. But what exactly is Agile Service Management? In this article, I'll give you answers to questions like: Can I work according to ITIL and agile at the same time? How do I put the agile philosophy in practice? And where do I begin? Using real-life examples, I'll show you what an agile mindset can do for you and your team. And how agile will help you improve your service delivery.

By Bas Blanken

What is Agile Service Management?

So, now you know where agile comes from and what it means. But the next question arises: what is Agile Service Management? The answer is surprisingly simple.

Simply put? Agile management is applying the agile mindset to IT Service Management. Nothing more, nothing less. The 4 values of agile software development just need one adjustment to apply to IT Service Management:

- o Individuals and interactions over processes and tools.
- o Working software services over comprehensive documentation.
- o Customer collaboration over contract negotiation.

- o Responding to change over following a plan.

The idea is that you keep to these principles when designing and delivering services. Sounds straightforward. And in a sense, it is. But how do you apply this in practice? And how do these agile principles relate to the framework that has been a golden standard at IT departments for decades: ITIL?

Individuals and interactions over processes and tools.

ITIL implementations at organizations mostly focus on process descriptions and systems. The goal is to get a steady quality of services. It shouldn't matter who supplies the service. ITIL often goes hand in hand with extensive process documentation.

Customer collaboration over contract negotiation.

Laying down contractual agreements and meeting them is an important part of ITIL Service Level Management. Making SLAs is one of the main goals for many organizations and it's often the most important criterion for managers or customers to judge the IT organization.

Responding to change over following a plan.

ITIL is about predictable processes. The idea: if you think out all the steps in advance and execute them accordingly, you'll always have the desired outcome. In many cases, the change management process is watertight and there's no way to deviate from the original plan.

Framework vs. Philosophy

So, agile and ITIL, not exactly a match made in heaven, right? That's jumping to conclusions. They do seem quite different, but it's not

hard to find a way in which they complement each other. Agile is a philosophy. A set of guidelines for your work. Agile principles help you make decisions in your everyday work, but they don't tell you how to complete specific tasks. ITIL is a framework. A collection of procedures that work in practice. As opposed to agile, ITIL does describe how to do your work — in detail.

Being agile with ITIL

It's not that difficult to approach ITIL with an agile mindset. You can implement the ITIL process Incident Management with the agile mindset, for example. This means you pick the best option for your organization for each part of the setup. The weird thing is that ITIL is quite suitable for an adjusted implementation.

ITIL does have a reputation for being rigid and unnecessary complex, but that was never the starting point. The starting point wasn't that organizations would implement each aspect of ITIL to the letter. The message of ITIL was always: make sure to apply this way of working to suit your own organization. And your way of implementing ITIL could very well be agile.



Agile Service Management in practice?

It turns out agile and Service Management go together quite nicely. But how? How do you translate the agile philosophy to actual changes in your work? Here are 6 examples.

1. Make sure everything you do adds value for the customer

IT departments too often put a lot of work into things that have little value for their customers. I recently visited an organization where the IT department had written an extensive manual for a new smartphone they offered. Sounds useful, but most of this information was already available on the internet. And the next OS update is going to make their manual outdated. A more agile way of documenting is to keep the information in your manual limited to what is strictly necessary and first give these instructions to a small test group.

Only describe company-specific information, like how to synchronize your work email with the new smartphone. Do you receive questions from your test group? Update the documentation before you officially start supplying the smartphone.

2. Always work closely with your customers

When designing services or processes, service organizations make a lot of assumptions about the needs of their customers. An example: for years, a facilities organization encouraged their customers to log a call when something was wrong in the office building. They recently discovered their customers found it quite annoying to receive five to six status update emails after they logged a call.

That was the reason many customers decided to stop logging calls altogether. In Agile Service Management, you involve your customers often and as soon as possible with everything you do. This way, you avoid working based on assumptions.

The organization from the example has come up with a solution together with their customers. When customers log a call, they can tick a box saying they want to receive status updates. One question and a single checkbox could have spared five years of frustration.

3. The right people in the right place

Many IT organizations lean heavily on processes. The goal of working with processes is to guarantee a consistent quality of services, no matter who supplies the service. Sounds good in theory. In practice, it does matter who supplies the service. An unmotivated service desk employee probably leaves a less positive impression on the customer than a happy, motivated employee.

You can't cover this difference with a process. An important part of the agile mindset is having enough time and attention for your team members. Your team only functions well with people who are good at the work they do, and when the work they do makes them happy. Is a team member no longer motivated? Talk to him or her. Maybe they're happier in a different role.

4. Make your processes as flexible as possible

ITIL processes are usually not flexible. Take change management. A Request for Change needs to go through a set number of predefined steps. The only choice you have in the process is approve or decline. There is no room to change plans. If you want to change them, you need to stop the process, make a new plan and get approval.

Make sure that the processes you design are flexible enough to deal with ever-changing demands. This however doesn't mean you need to implement every single change during the process. It does mean that you leave room for your team to deal with the processes as they see fit.

5. Design, implement and improve your services step by step

New software or services implementations can take up months, years even. When the implementation is finally done, you've gained so many new insights you probably want to change everything. But by that time there's no more budget left, the project team members have moved on and it's up to the application manager to process all the feedback on her or his own.

Delivering new services in an agile way means you deliver something workable as soon as possible, collect feedback, and use this feedback to improve the product.

6.Keep your services and operations straightforward

Request processes often contain a lot of unnecessary management authorizations. The IT department assumes that management wants control over every individual request. Or the IT department doesn't carry any responsibility. This makes for a process full of authorizations and a manager who gets loads of emails with authorization requests.

The process shouldn't be this cumbersome. It works better when the IT department asks the managers how much control they really want or need. They usually don't really want to receive all those emails.

An alternative solution: requests don't need to be authorized, and the manager receives a monthly overview of the costs. This way, the manager still has control and an overview, but he or she doesn't have to process a lot of emails. And the employee is helped quicker.



About the author

Bas Blanken

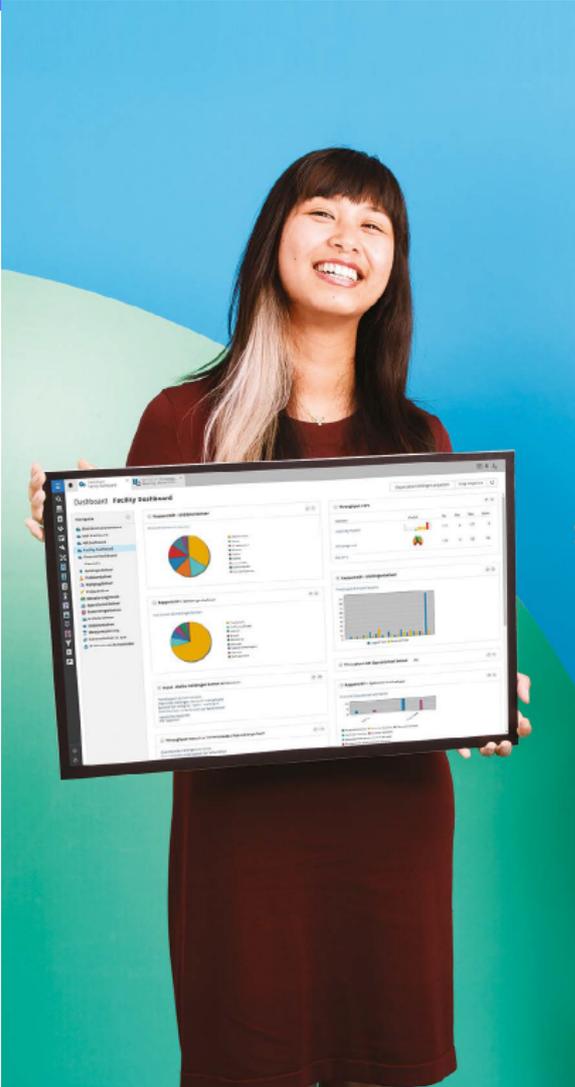
Bas is Service Management consultant at TOPdesk, specializing in Agile Service Management. 'What I really like about agile is that it makes work more fun. Agile helps you focus on what's really important and get results fast.'

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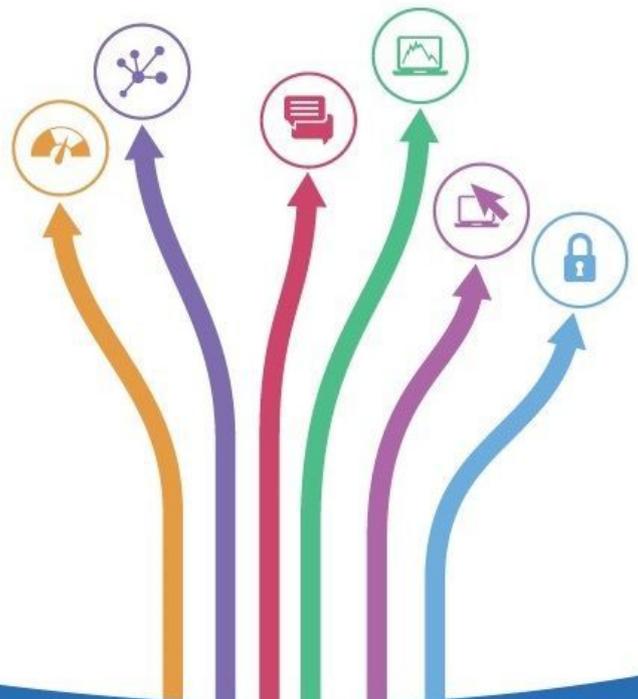
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How Can You Make Self-Service More Useful?

by Aprill Allen

Regardless of your industry, a knowledge base can completely revolutionise the way your customers and employees feel about using your product or service. Chances are, you already have a knowledge base. But if you're getting less than desirable feedback from your employees and customers about using it, you may be wondering: how can I make self-service more useful for my product or service? You're in the right place! Let's take a look at a few steps you can take to make self-service more useful to the people who matter the most.

Talk With Employees And Loyal Customers

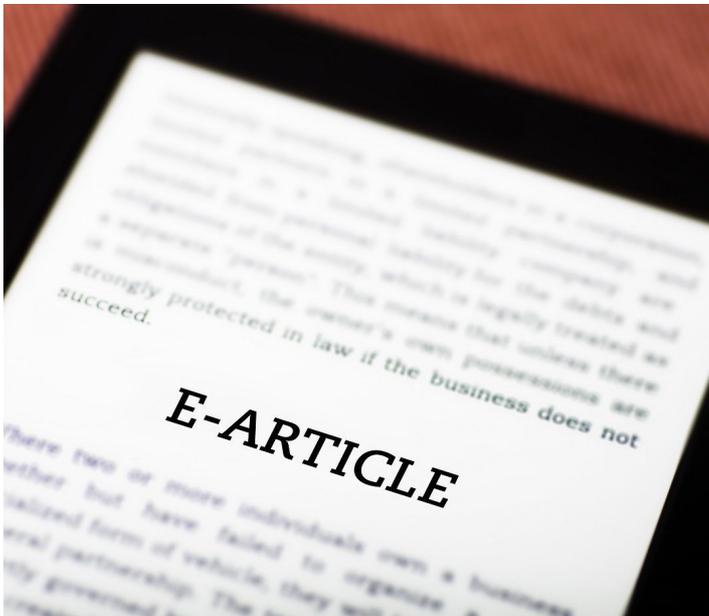
First, there is no better way to improve your self-service than to speak with those who actually use it. Gather a few of your employees, as well as a few loyal customers of your product or service, and have them fill out a questionnaire form about your knowledge base.

Be sure to include questions that touch on which topics were helpful, the topics they thought were missing, and allow them to rate the structure of the knowledge base.

Lastly, give them the chance to explain how they felt about using it, and any recommendations they would give to help make it better. This information is the first step to helping you make your self-service more useful.

Test Different Structures

Another thing to consider when improving your knowledge base is the structure. One of the most important things to have is a clearly visible search bar, but aside from that, the structure of your self-service program is largely left up to you. You have the option to arrange information by category, or display the most frequently asked questions at the top of the page and focus on categories after. Therefore, testing different structures and getting feedback from customers and employees is essential to ensuring that your knowledge base maximises self-service instead of hindering it.

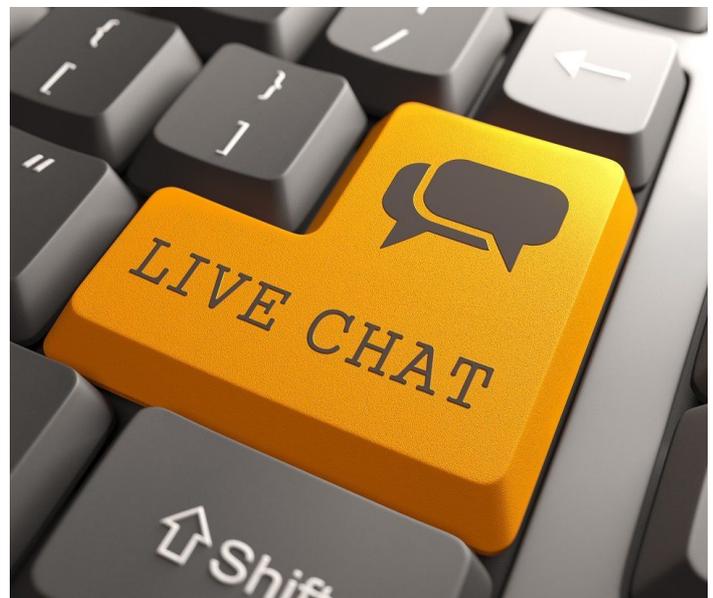


Cross-Link Articles

Articles in your knowledge base may be related to each other, whether by topic or that user may need an answer to another question after they got the answer to the first one. You can improve how useful your self-service is by cross-linking articles in a logical way. This intuitive process will help to move customers and employees through the learning curve easily, making them feel satisfied with their self-service experience. An easy way to do this is to include a pop-up or widget that triggers after they have scrolled to the end of the page that points them to related articles.

Integrate It With Live Chat

Another easy way to make your knowledge base more useful is to integrate it with your live chat system. Put simply, sometimes certain questions can't be answered through self-service. By including an easy-to-find live chat option in articles that touch on more technical topics, you'll be able to enhance the way customers and employees use your knowledge base.



Add Feedback Options

When it comes to business, there is no failure, only feedback. Making it easy for customers to leave feedback on your self-service process will make it possible for you to continue to improve your knowledge base. Collecting this feedback can be done in multiple ways. It can be as simple as adding a “Was this article helpful?” widget at the end of the page with either a thumbs up or a thumbs down sign; or more technical, like triggering a feedback pop-up if they’ve been browsing the knowledge base for more than a few minutes. With this invaluable feedback, you’ll know exactly where to concentrate your self-service improvement efforts.

With these five tips under your belt, you’ll be more equipped to improve your knowledge base and make your business renowned for its effective self-service process.



About the Author April Allan, Knowledge Bird



Like many of you, my career started in technical support. I've worked in customer-facing support teams, specialist escalation teams, corporate support functions; and I've been the single, remote customer support person.

Once or twice, I was under my desk crying from stress. Other times, there was so much repetition, I was out of my mind with boredom. In 2010, I found a way of working that empowered anyone in a problem-solving role to help customers be successful and productive with neither stress or boredom.

Small teams will get down-to earth advice and support that's relevant to where you are on your journey to scaling support and service operations.

For service management teams in complex environments with competing demands, you'll appreciate my pragmatic approach to improving outcomes with knowledge management in service delivery, preparing you for successful automation and more project delivery throughput.

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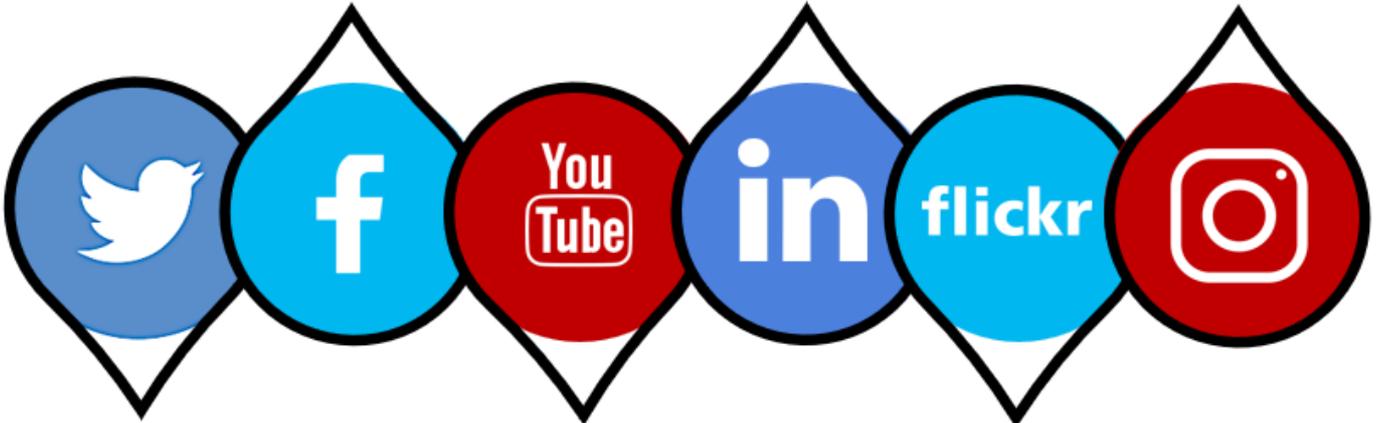


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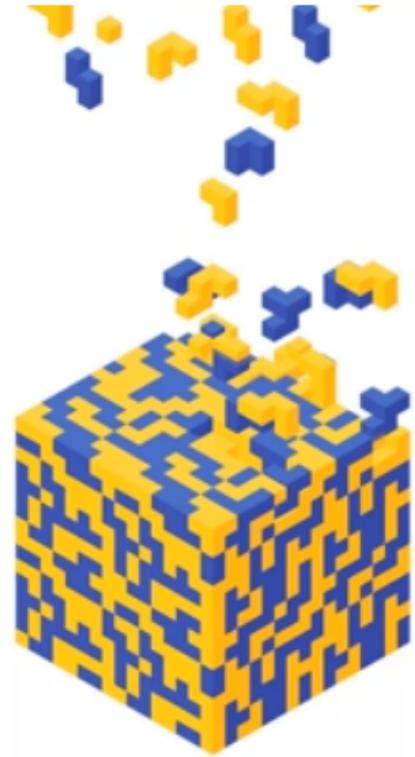
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DevSecOps: Closing The Loop from Detection to Remediation

Shiri Ivtsan, Senior Product Manager

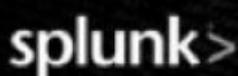


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KEYNOTE SPEAKER PROFILE:

MARK BUNN



As one of Australasia's leading experts on health and personal performance, Mark Bunn understands the difficulties facing workers and organisations today. More importantly, through his unique blend of modern science, the secrets of the world's healthiest, longest-living people and fascinating Eastern health insights (Ayurveda), he provides a refreshing change to the typical conference health speaker (calories this, 'get some exercise' that!), and delivers down-to-earth, user-friendly solutions audiences love.

After an inglorious career as an AFL footballer (he says not to worry, he can string two words together!), Mark's life was changed forever while working for an aid group in Sth East Asia. Visiting remote villages he witnessed how people who were as poor as poor and had never heard of good fats, antioxidants or sleep apps ... were remarkably ... HAPPY! This inspired him to research the Eastern traditions of health. However, it was the traumatic passing of his wife to stress-related breast cancer that turned his world upside down. It also gave him a deep empathy for people facing health challenges and motivated him to find answers to people's common health challenges.

More keynote and invited speakers at the Service Management 2020 Conference will be announced shortly.

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Aprill Allen in conversation with Brendan Cullen

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

My greatest joy is helping support teams improve their satisfaction at work. The way I do that is by focusing on improving knowledge flows. As Managing Director and Principal Consultant at Knowledge Bird, I advise startups and scale-ups on how to improve their customer service and success operations; and I help enterprise teams lift their knowledge management capabilities through Knowledge Centered Service consulting and training.

How long have you been an itSMF Member?

In 2011, I joined the ITSMF and attended my first conference, which was held in Perth.

What itSMF Membership Benefits do you get most value from?

- Professional Indemnity Insurance Discount
- Meeting other members
- Opportunities to participate in the Conference

What do you enjoy most about being an itSMF Member?

The friendships I made early on have deepened over the years, and my community has expanded, connecting me to generous and friendly people around the world.

Has being an itSMF Member benefited you professionally?

There are three areas the ITSMF has directly impacted my professional life:
- It's where I developed my confidence as a public speaker, contributing to my certifying as a KCS trainer

- It's provided a pathway to board participation, encouraging me to follow through with obtaining the AICD accreditation and actively seek advisory roles with startups.
- And, the network I mentioned earlier, has connected me with work opportunities and other boutique consultants whom I've teamed up with on collaborative projects.

What ITSM related certifications do you hold, if any?

ITIL Foundation – v3 in 2011, ITIL4 in 2019

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

My biggest challenges appear when I don't have a strategy that I'm working towards. I've worked in a place for too long—where my contribution wasn't linked to any organisational or team outcomes—so I felt lost and unsupported. I talked to a few people in my orbit, but they didn't have the influence I wished they did. If I could go back in time with what I know now, I would have asked more questions before I took that job. I would have taken more control going in, and I would have asserted some strategy of my own.

Have you ever applied your ITSM skills outside of work?

All the time. Life is an endless series of problem solving, process improvements, and managing relationships and expectations. Really, it's the other way around. Life skills apply to ITSM.

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?

Service management's greatest challenge is lack of visibility and understanding from the marketplace. The industry must get better at telling the stories of who benefits from the work we do and how it happens. Customer Experience is becoming a widely-recognised field with specialisations including Customer Success, User Experience, and the more familiar Customer Service and Support. As ITSM professionals, we should be leveraging that growing awareness and connecting the dots for people on how service management facilitates the customer experience.

When I say "how", I mean from the customer's perspective, not the technical details. It doesn't matter whether the customer got the outcome from the application of AI, Blockchain, a CMDB, or whatever. What matters is that they have more confidence, more revenue, more time...that enables them to get on with whatever they wanted to do.

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

Curiosity is a muscle that will wither if it goes unused. Curiosity about people leads to understanding their problems more clearly so you can solve them better. Curiosity about processes and products leads to creativity in the ways you go about things. Be curious and stay open to new and renewed ways of getting things done.

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

Be strategic about your career path. Articulate your ambitious goal and check in with yourself regularly. Ask yourself whether each decision you make contributes to that, in some way. Look for opportunities to tell the stories of how what you do each day contributes to the bigger goal—both yours and that of your team or organisation.

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

When I'm not consulting, I'm usually catching up with friends at one of the bars on Lygon St, at an art class, kickboxing or reviewing potential startup investments.

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

I was reading two books at once and finished them at the same time: *Boy Swallows Universe* by Trent Dalton, and *Dishonesty is the Second-Best Policy* by David Mitchell

One word that could describe your experience of itSMF Australia?

Expansive

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

I've been to every Conference since 2011. I still think Perth was the best—massive bowls of oysters. How can you go wrong?! That was also the year I won White Paper of the Year. And then I think Brisbane in 2016. It was my first time as Conference Director and I closed that event satisfied the program had been well-received.

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