

Service Design Community of Practice - Case Study



Summary

Name: Irwin Mitchell
Location: UK Wide
Size: 3000+ staff
Industry: Legal Services

Solution

A structured evaluation framework was introduced to support timely, risk-aware decisions on supplier services. It ensures alignment with strategic goals, service requirements, and business risk appetite, using consistent criteria and tools embedded in the Service Design process.

Situation

In 2023 the Service Design team recognised the need for a structured approach to evaluating supplier service offerings as we move into a hybrid SaaS and Azure based environment. Historically, decisions around service provision lacked consistent, fact-based analysis, making it difficult for stakeholders to confidently assess risk exposure and operational impact. Concerns were often raised too late in the process, and risks were accepted by the wrong stakeholders. As a result, services were stood up with gaps in the service wrap, leading to delays in user support and incident resolution, with no recourse via SLAs, and increasing risk and impact to the Business.

Value Statement

The Supplier Service Evaluation Framework offers a consistent, evidence-based method for assessing services against strategic objectives, compliance needs, and risk appetite—enabling informed decisions and long-term service alignment

Task

To identify criteria and implement a Supplier Service Evaluation Framework that enables the Business to:

- Make timely and informed decisions based on objective criteria.
- Evaluate service offerings against operational, service, and strategic requirements.

Ensure that any service adopted remains within the organisation's defined risk appetite.

Provide an audit trail of service evaluation and decision-making.

Implement and adopt across 2024 and continuously improve and iterate in future years.

Actions

- **Requirements gathering**
 - Identified mandatory and optional assessment criteria.
 - Aligned to Service Design and Architectural Standards.
- **Framework creation**
 - Developed and embedded the Supplier Service Evaluation Framework into the service procurement lifecycle and Service Design process.
- **Artefact development**
 - Created templates and visual tools to support consistent analysis and presentation of options.
 - Socialised with Irwin Mitchell's Service Management community to obtain buy-in.
- **Application**
 - Applied the framework to current and future service decisions, ensuring alignment with business priorities and risk thresholds.



Result

- Improved Decision-Making: Stakeholders now receive clear, factual insights to support service choices. Decisions are made at the right time by the right people.
- Risk Visibility: The Business can see how each option affects its risk profile and resilience.
- Operational Consistency: Services are designed and evaluated using a repeatable, transparent process.
- Strategic Enablement: Supports cloud-first initiatives and continuous optimisation of service delivery.

Benefits

- Strengthened SLAs have been formalised within service agreements, contributing to reduced business risk.
- In early 2025 a strategic multi-million-pound procurement exercise resulted in the rejection of a SaaS offering as it exceeded the organisation's risk appetite. The framework made the Product immaturity and the risk to the Business visible - without it, the exposure may not have been identified.



Lessons Learnt

- Frameworks Drive Clarity: A structured approach removes ambiguity and supports confident decision-making.
- Visualisation Enhances Understanding: Tools like RAG scoring help communicate complex risk data simply and effectively.
- Flexibility is Key: Modular service design allows the business to adapt quickly to changing needs.
- Governance Matters: Strong supplier oversight is essential when services are delivered externally or via cloud platforms.
- Consistency Builds Trust: When decisions are based on facts, not preferences, stakeholders are more likely to support outcomes.
- Communication Builds Connection: It takes time and effort to embed and demonstrate the value. Don't be disheartened – keep going.

Case Study Owner



Sarah Routledge

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Sarah has over 25 years' experience in IT, spanning network and infrastructure support, service management, to her current role as Service Design Manager.

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