

ITSM – It’s Not Just For IT Anymore

The Federal Leaders Playbook - Season 1, Episode 8

Featuring:

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Tom Hamill: Welcome. Today's subject is ITSM - Not Just for The IT Anymore Service Management Evolution. Ok, before we get going, let's do a round of intros. I'm Tom Hamill.

Eric Lazerson: I'm Eric.

Jessica Alfaro: I'm Jessica.

Kerri Posteraro: And Kerri.

Tom Hamill: And we also have a very special guest in the studio today - Brian Shealy with Kinetic Data. Welcome Brian.

Brian Shealy: Hey, thanks for having me.

Tom Hamill: Let's jump in. What do we mean by this 'ITSM not just for IT anymore'?

Eric Lazerson: Where I would start is just kind of the alignment of business and IT. So, we talked a lot about it service management we talked about the ITIL processes and we talked about the platforms that automate those. And, what I'm seeing, is that same process mentality - the communications, the education - it's starting to span into all aspects of business process and we're getting a lot of bleed over into the business process information and we're finding that these tools are really well suited to capture that information and make it relevant from the IT services to the business services. There's a lot of kind of you know, bleed-bleed over between those two.

Tom Hamill: So, what are, what are some examples of that Eric? that were just taken out of the IT world? I mean, I think that's what you're saying right. It's you know we're focused on IT for a lot of this service management but now we're kind of taking it out of that world and where does it go?

Eric Lazerson: Yeah, and I think this is where we start to look at that user interface. So where does a user within an organization go to request services? We've started to consolidate the number of places that they go and-and we do that from the you know you can request these IT services from this place and you have to go for facilities over here and HR over here. We've seen a trend towards one location. So, come-come to one spot and then once you start looking at bringing those customers together, then you look at the fulfillment on the backend. We have a lot of tools that that can facilitate some of those-those requests that are specific and specializing in an area but you get into some of these gray areas where it may just be a customized business process that needs a platform and I think that's where I see a lot of service management bleed over.

Brian Shealy: Yeah, I have a kind of a whole philosophy on why that's happening. I think it's fairly obvious, technology people tend to be, they break things down into processes, so IT also has access to technology – that's what they do. So, they're going to solve things with tools and you know automate processes that way and then what typically happens is another department that maybe isn't so technically-minded, maybe not as detailed in the process thing goes, oh man the IT people have a much easier way of doing their operational process than we do. So, at the end of the day it really comes down to supporting the business of the agency or the department. And its inputs and outputs, right as some famous people have said. So, I think that when we talk about the tool sets, what ends up happening is the incident form for say your ITSM platform is really no different than a case form in a case management system for an HR case or any other type of a case.

At the end of the day, they are all just sort of dynamic case management systems that have specialized workflows and field and form labels, and these, I think it's fairly easy to take something that is a prebuilt, like an incident system and reapply it for a facilities service request or a work ordering ITSM system is probably very similar to a work ordering facilities system, so if you have a platform that can do both and you don't need a special level of maturity in one area or the other and you don't need a say best-of-breed that is you know a purpose-built facility system why would you not build that capability or utilize the same capability in your service management platform? You know, there's obviously technical things to worry about in terms of governance, the access and things like that, separating the data, reporting, etc... but if you have the investment there and you don't have to recreate the wheel... to me it becomes a very logical thing for smart people to do.

Eric Lazerson: Yeah, and I-I would say when we talk about the evolution, I would like to look at it more in the pendulum swing, because it seems like we swing from one direction to the other. When I got into the service management space, I was a developer on a platform that automated process and we went around to business users and said look at this form we built for IT, this will work for you, we can share some of these fields, we can share some of the workflow behind the scenes and it just made sense, and then, there, there came this it's an out-of-the-box, it's an incident management change management IT specific application, get all that stuff out of here because you were now kind of merging these data sets, so HR data or timekeeping data or facilities request data is now kind of muddying the waters when you're looking for Incident Management records. So now, you know in present-day these platforms are the new kind of selling point, we're selling a platform that can do IT, it can do HR, it can do legal, it can do facilities and everything in between, and the way they're doing it is by sharing that common infrastructure, sharing that work flow but segregating it out. So, the core element of keeping the data separate is there but it's also leveraging the investment that you've made.

Tom Hamill: So, you always hear that's what we want but is that that we have?

Brian Shealy: I've heard that once or twice. I'm sure, today.

Eric Lazerson: Probably from us.

Brian Shealy: Once or twice today.

Tom Hamill: So, what we're looking at now is that there is one portal that anyone could go to that can get the IT services but also can request a car from a carpool, right?

Brian Shealy: Absolutely.

Tom Hamill: They're just using the same technology. You see more also leading technically more difficulty because you have to have more plug-ins, the different things to fulfill that request?

Brian Shealy: Yeah, I think with respect to that there is again it's literally not joking its inputs and outputs but what I think you need to do to succeed with whatever you're doing is provide a contextually relevant experience to that customer and again, I've made this point, you've heard me say it in the past, a customer is the rest of whatever the ask is. It doesn't matter if it's me asking Tom to, for half of his sandwich at lunch. I'm his customer, and you sir...

Tom Hamill: It has happened before

Brian Shealy: It has happened before, and you sir will as a good vendor will provide me half of your grilled cheese but you know being able to have the flexibility a lot of the more modern tools are becoming more flexible. API's are everywhere, right? So, you can get data from systems and push data system a lot easier than you could in the client server days for sure and the vendors are smart – they're architecting for this. They're architecting, realizing that best of breed is a real thing but the simplicity of providing a single point of entry is important, I think about it like this, does the end customer care about how that car request for a carpool is fulfilled? Probably not. They just want the car. They want to know what color it's going to be. Does the driver have a clean driving record and are they going to be on time or whatever they want, right? No different than if they request you know a brand new XYZ Poweredge server that would be, and they need it by this date and time to do this function. They want to know, what is it? how much does it cost? what are issues? etc... and the idea of a centralized portal single-single point of entry, I think is, you know people have abstracted that from the everyday life of dealing with large retail organizations such as those who may or may not be called Amazon. But it-it's you know, it's a context that we're used to as human beings and we apply that to our work life.

Tom Hamill: So, when we were getting ready, you know, for this podcast, one of the things we brought up was eliminate shadow IT. What is that?

Brian Shealy: Well people tell me that my points of view on this are fairly interesting.

Brian Shealy: So, shadow IT, I remember going to a Gartner conference, like two or three years ago and they were talking about shadow IT and-and you know, Gartner and Forrester and these big industry analysts, they're kind of the watchers of the industry and for patterns and then they have maybe the best business models ever, in that they research information and take the information and provide it back to people as a service, which good for them, right? They figured that out, but I remember hearing this concept of shadow IT and I'm like, shadow IT like what does that mean...

Tom Hamill: It's like a mystery. Yeah.

Brian Shealy: Yeah, it's a mystery- like what does that mean? And so, they go to these sessions and they would say, well you know it's-it's people doing technology projects outside

of the group using technology. I'm like well you mean they're using technology, like other people are using technology to solve a problem?

And I think, 'what?' I've watched this happen since when it started, a lot of the vendors in the space grabbed on to the idea of oh with our system you can govern your IT better. Well, here is the thing, you can govern things better, but chaos is uncontrollable and with the accessibility of technology it is very easy to solve things these days. So, it's one thing to have a good security policy and control your boundaries, your data - that's one thing, but my thought is what these providers and IT groups should be doing is figuring out how to empower shadow IT instead of eliminating shadow IT. I'll give you an example. The business group that you're supporting as an IT organization has a business goal that's driving in the commercial world, driving the business, the bottom line, keeping us all humming along and having jobs. In the government space the-the mindset is a bit different. I don't think these agencies and departments think of themselves as businesses the way that say a Fortune 500 company does. However, I think it's very important to remember that at the end of the day the USDA or the FDA or whomever, they're in business as policy enforcement and government organizations for the betterment of people in this country - that's what they do. They provide that as a service organization. They are not necessarily in the IT business, and the people doing these jobs are going to solve it with whatever means they have. So, if you have somebody that has a particular business need and you don't have the right tool set they have options. They can go out with their own budget, they can bring in their own vendor and-and you can't govern that. So, you're either going to and-and this is a philosophy that-that to our credit, John Sundberg, he's been saying this for years about service providers. He's the founder of Kinetic Data, and he said this is, service providers do not have the ability to say no, they have to say yes... and the example would be empowering shadow IT. I want this time capability because I need it for this policy we enforce. Well, if that's their business and they have the budget for it, that's going to happen. So, the IT department can either say we can provide that for you on time and within budget and you don't have to worry about it by empowering them with the tool that they need or the process that they need or the expertise that they need, or you can say no and one way or the other I think we all know, and being in this business, that project will probably still happen. It's probably going to be more expensive than had IT empowered them in the first place because IT is going to ask the important questions about the technology, right, you know, compatibility, etc, etc...

Eric Lazerson: Security.

Brian Shealy: Security yes, security is a big one, right? So, I, and that again is like I think our vernacular should as-as-as-as leaders or whatever you want to call us in the space, thought leaders, I kind of hate that term but thinkers in the space, [thinkers] in the space. I think what we need to do is change the vernacular and make it an empowerment approach and start thinking as IT providers that we are there to serve the business and solve their problem not tell them that they can't solve their problem. So, again my encouragement everybody is empower shadow IT.

Tom Hamill: Well, okay.

Eric Lazerson: Fascinating, fascinating.

Brian Shealy: It's rocket science.

Eric Lazerson: It sounds like rocket science. Yes, so you want to empower the shadow IT. We're talking about service management and we're talking about the evolution of service management. What are some ways that you could empower them through process through some of the technical tools that we have because we're constrained by they come to us with a request that's outside of either security, you know the security boundaries that we have set, the you know, we're framed in the federal space by the policies that are kind of thrust upon each agency and then you have to kind of work with that? In their private lives sure they can go to AWS, spin up what they need. They can go to you know Box and some of these other places to find you know, the technology they think will, you know, meet their needs but when they come to the IT organization, what are some things we can do to help them so we can empower them and not tell them no and not send them down a path you know of going around? I think that there's a couple things we've been backing up beyond specifically the shadow IT and I think that there's to your point I think that there are a couple of facets of that are unique to the federal space. First and foremost, the federal space, because of the way that goods and services are procured because of the law it's a bit different right. There's flexibilities that you just don't have legally that you have in a public commercial organization.

Eric Lazerson: Right.

Tom Hamill: Right.

Brian Shealy: However, the mindset to change can come with changing your thinking in the first place, and what I mean by that is, these organizations, if they were to think of themselves as a business as opposed to just well we're a government agency, I mean let's be real for a second what do people think of government agencies, kind of the connotation? Anecdotally, what it is, is well they're big, they're slow, they cost the taxpayer a lot of money and while those things may be truthful in a way, in reality there's a level of complexity and a level of challenge that is set up for these agencies that makes them unique. Many of the large agencies are run like gigantic commercial organizations but without the budget that a gigantic commercial organization has.

Eric Lazerson: Sure, sure.

Brian Shealy: So, instead of doing things that are going to grow their business and drive profit, they're looking at things like risk aversion and cost avoidance to drive their business because, well if, you know, the old thinking 'if I don't spend every dollar in my budget I'm not going to get that budget plus next year.'

Eric Lazerson: I've heard that one.

Tom Hamill: Yeah.

Jessica Alfaro: Yeah.

Brian Shealy: Right, so I think one of the things that could happen is some of these agencies could certainly take an approach and work with lawmakers to come up with ways to number one change that thinking. Hey if you can spend less than your budget this year and put money back into the coffer, we're going to give you plus X percent.

Eric Lazerson: Give you more.

Brian Shealy: So you incentivize the agency and we could get into the political landscape but I think that we do not have an incentivized system. I think the incentive is for figuring out how to work the system not make the end game better.