

The State of ITSM in the Federal Space - Part 1

The Federal Leaders Playbook - Season 1, Episode 4

Featuring:

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Tom Hamill: Hi, welcome. Today we're going to be talking about the current state of ITSM in the federal space; but, before we get going let's go around and introduce ourselves. My name is Tom Hamill. I'm a tactical lead for the BSM practice within Acuity.

Eric Lazerson: I'm Eric Lazerson, Vice-president at Acuity.

Kerri Posteraro: Kerri Posteraro, Managing Director at Acuity.

Jessica Alfaro: I am Jessica Alfaro, Senior Manager at Acuity.

Tom Hamill: Ok, we also have a special guest with us today, Jeff Collison from BMC...

Jeff Collison: Hey folks. I'm Jeff. I'm excited to be here talking about ITSM in the federal space. I've been working with BMC almost for 18 years covering the beginning of my career, I covered a lot of federal civilian agencies, since I'm so close inside of the Beltway, but for the last seven-eight years I've been covering Department of Defense and various other agencies out there but I have a lot of experience to share and hopefully everyone will get some good value out of this podcast.

Tom Hamill: Great, thank you Jeff. So, let's jump in. What is the current state of ITSM in the federal space?

Eric Lazerson: That's fascinating.

Jeff Collison: Yeah.

Eric Lazerson: That's a great question. I-I think if you go around this table you'll probably get a lot of different answers. I'll go first. I think it's a, it's a mixed bag. It's an understanding of what service management is, a willingness and desire to do it, but also a feeling of hesitation, of 'where do I get started, how do I mature what I've - what we've done thus far.' I think it's also a mind-set of I'm being sold these new tools, which tool do I pick? So, I think there's a lot on certainty in this, in the federal space, but recognition of the value. I think we've started to actually see some of the value in the federal space.

Jeff Collison: I see from visiting all my different customers, it's, you know some places I-I visit, it is definitely still a trouble ticketing systems that goes into the comments about maturity. There's also other places that I see there, where they have really centralized a lot of the capability inside of their organization or their agency...

Jessica Alfaro: Yup I think I see some confidence in and we spent a lot of time talking about Incident Management and service catalog request portal type of -of activity. I see that as organizations feeling a bit more confident in that, like they're doing an okay job and they're ready to move into some more complicated subject matters, so lots of focus around configuration management and some supplemental tools that can help automate that. So, I kind of see a shift into change and Config Asset Management.

Tom Hamill: You think the federal government seems to be buying more into the ITEL perspective, which helps us the ITSM?

Jessica Alfaro: I think it's there and you have to deal with it. I think levels of enthusiasm for it vary pretty greatly across different organizations, but I think people know the terms, people know what you're talking about; I think comfort around the concepts is, it's more approachable but it's a necessity right now.

Eric Lazerson: So, I was on the you know we've done a lot of work in the civilian agencies. Jeff you've spent some time in DoD. The word ITIL, is that embraced? Is that still something people say 'yes I want to follow some of that framework'?

Jeff Collison: Some-some organizations in DoD prefer not to use the term ITIL, but they definitely do like the term of 'best practice', capability out there. So, for instance whether it's you know civilian agency or a DoD agency there's definitely, what I've seen out there is definitely a-a silo between the information Insurance world and the operations world. No longer can anyone just pass a 500-page report, saying hey here's all the things that we're vulnerable at to the operations side where they they'll just look at it and say, 'geez I got to go through a 500-page manual report to read' and based upon the threats today it needs to be a better communication between both of those groups and those organizations.

Eric Lazerson: Excellent, I think the IA spin on that is, I mean it's certainly appropriate in today's world, the vulnerabilities aren't going away. They're-they're becoming more complex in one identifying which-which, you know the security operations is doing a really good job at identifying and then you know that hand off to the operation side on-on remediation and how do you track that and how do you automate that and how do you automate some of the tools to help you do that.

So, in the federal space I'll shift a little bit out there. We have Jeff from BMC here with us. Tools have been around the service management space for a very long time and they've evolved over you know the, I would say there was a heavy evolution of them years ago then it seems like a lull and everybody became comfortable. It seems like we're talking a lot more about tools and integration and automation. What are you seeing customers interested in, customers struggling with, what are some of the things that you're seeing from a technical or tools perspective in helping support ITSM?

Jeff Collison: I would say that, from a tools perspective often most of the customers that I talk to don't necessarily know what all their tools that they've bought do.

Eric Lazerson: Good with that.

Tom Hamill: The question 'well am I buying the same tool again?'

Jeff Collison: And often there is a tool capability overlap. So, you know from a tool perspective I kind of referred to it where I would like to see customers kind of get out of the tool mindset and talk about use cases across the board to accomplish you know things that they need to, for the mission that they're taking on and certainly from an application rationalization perspective what tools do I have out there and some customers don't know again don't necessarily know what they do and there's constant overlap but certainly if you can rationalize your applications, one, you have the capability of getting possibly rid of applications that overlap, technology wise. Also, you can start looking out to see what mission capability that you can have if you can move those to the cloud.

Eric Lazerson: So how often would you say is appropriate to kind of go through your tools and do an analysis or comparison. Like you said, there's a lot of organizations out there that are like I have so many tools, don't sell me another one and you come in there and like you're missing, you know, identifying those gaps. How frequently do you see that being an activity that someone should be doing?

Jeff Collison: I think it should be a constant activity with a, you know, Service Improvement plan from the Catalog Manager that each of the organizations actually have. So, whether you do it every six months, that's kind of immaterial but certainly need to start once and then actually keep your catalog up-to-date.

Eric Lazerson: Do you see a lot of catalogs out there that are up-to-date?

Jeff Collison: Unfortunately, no, but I do, I have seen and have heard and certainly waiting hopefully one of you on this podcast will kind of hear this, one of the catalog managers and chat with us. I've certainly heard that there is a federal mandate to have a catalog manager in place today.

Jessica Alfaro: Right I think that a lot of challenges come from buying power within the organization so when enterprise technology decisions are made at lower pockets of the organization where I'm looking at a tool that has a tremendous amount of capability but my use case for it is maybe one of what could be a hundred, I'm able to make that pitch get the funding and move forward with it without having to kind of socialize how my partner organizations might use some features of it and I think their pace at which tools are able to be purchased without that overarching use case just makes that environment challenging.

Eric Lazerson: I would say that the buying cycle has been extended, I mean for new products when there really is a gap and we've been at organizations where it's like you don't have a true discovery tool, you don't have a dependency mapping tool, you don't have these things and you're trying to cobble together monitoring tools, spreadsheets and a number of other repositories to build out of CMDB and you're not seeing the value because the level of effort to get there is you know so large that by the time you get everything into one location you start trying to use that throughout the rest of your processes. You are, you are beyond

frustrated so you try to sell a new tool and I'd feel like the walls are up – they don't want to buy.

They're saying, 'I need to do it with the tools that I have', or 'what is this tool replacing?', and I think that's a perfect you know, Jeff you mentioned looking at that analysis and where tools that we've purchased, we're paying every year maintenance on these tools you pay 20 typically 20% maintenance on these tools so after five years you've bought it a second time. Are you really seeing the value out of that tool for the amount of money that you're-you're paying for it? And often times the answer is no. This pendulum keeps swinging in different directions –one, anybody can buy and they're buying it for very specific and then you swing it the other way and it's like acquisitions is not allowing purchases to be made and I think you really have to build out that business case to say okay this is a tool that's going to do these 10 things, here are the three tools that you don't need any more and here's-here's the plan to implement that. I think you have to show quick value.

Jeff Collison: Definitely have to show a quick value and return on what you're investing in a more broader use case in this day and age.

Tom Hamill: Do you feel that the government's swinging towards you know when buying tools...solutions?

Jeff Collison: It's kind of mixed there is, it really depends on where the requirement is coming from as whether it will be best of breed or if I can get an 80% solution that satisfies not only, for instance discovery, but also satisfies an IA requirement, then you know I think you know customers will look at that as well.

Jessica Alfaro: But I think you know the challenge with that are the silos that are you know out there so you talk about use case, usually these tools, there is a use case that comes up...

Eric Lazerson: One. One use case.

Jessica Alfaro: Right, and they find a tool that is able to satisfy that one-use case but don't look across other organi- you know other groups or departments in the environment that have a similar need or that a tool can satisfy multiple different use cases. No one's looking across that and if it's the catalog manager or if it's like a-an you know an Enterprise Architect or someone who, I can see why they're hesitant to just want to buy tools and there is there-there needs to be some type of review or authoritative body that's looking across all of these requirements, does it exist today you know, are there other tools that we know we can utilize that meet multiple requirements. I feel like that is not done very well and that's a challenge.

Kerri Posteraro: Right. I think you're, it's sometime perceived as stepping on others toes or reaching in to, you're kind of crossing boundaries of what your particular group who may have drafted that single use case is responsible for and can control what technology is used. So those silos in the organizations, I think precipitates this-this purchasing trend of I might know that it does all these other things but if we do that, that means I have to come over into your territory and maybe try to influence how you manage your scope of work and that just...

Jessica Alfaro: The others definitely a control factor in that as well, that they're hesitant to open the door to just anyone utilizing a tool because you know that-that really releases some of the control that they have on it.