

2013 Service Catalogue Review

 **BEST IN CLASS:**
Service Catalogue 2013



AXIOS: Scalable to big customized projects as well as nice UI for OOTB implementations. Strategic ITSM focus.

Service Catalogue' market is a niche sub-set of the IT Service Management (ITSM) Software market, which has seen considerable interest and growth in recent years.

Whilst 'Service Catalogue' can be given a clear definition, the term can be and often is used to cover a number of functional and strategic approaches that stretch from fairly low-level request fulfilment to strategic Service Design and Strategy.

This approach varies because there are several different components that can be described as 'Service Catalogue' – from 'front-end' portal to 'back-end' workflow and high-level business views of services. There are also potentially a number of different inputs and outputs – and types of document – that can be described as part of the 'Service Catalogue'.

This reflects the developing nature of how the industry has defined and understood what a 'Service Catalogue' is, which has led to some fundamental differences and interpretations of how to make this work and what the expectations are from implementation.

News, Reviews and Resources for ITSM Professionals.



Review by Barclay Rae

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In a nutshell the 2 main different approaches are:

Strategic/Top Down

This is where the organisation takes a strategic view of all IT services – including the business services (applications/departmental services, external customer services). Usually this will lead to a definition of an overall service structure of Core IT Services (PCs, Phones, email etc.) and Business Services (departments, business processes, applications).

This can then drive service reporting and service differentiation and is a long-term strategic approach to 'service' management and value demonstration. Request fulfilment follows out of this process, once the overall structure has been defined.

Technical/Bottom Up

This tends to be started by technical teams to 'discover' services, solve specific configuration management and integration problems and provide a practical user interface for consumption of core services and request fulfilment.

Both approaches are viable and necessary at some point to lead to a successful implementation:

Top Down is useful to ensure that the whole IT organisation is on board and that the wider goals and expectations are defined as part of a customer engagement process. Visualisation is useful for all parties to have a tangible view of the overall goals for IT.

Bottom Up can be a good tactical approach to get moving quickly. Request Management automation usually provides efficiency benefits and can significantly improve service quality to customers. The strategic view will need to be defined at some point so should be considered whenever (and as soon as) possible.

For the purposes of this review both of the above approaches have been considered and the overall key elements for tools defined as follows:

- **General** – user friendly and with proven integrations to other tools
- **Service Design** – the ability to create a database of service records, containing a number of business and technical attributes, processes and workflows
- **Service Structure** – the ability to organise and structure these services into a hierarchy of services and service offerings – ideally in a graphical format
- **User Request Portal** – a user friendly portal with an intuitive interface to request and track services
- **Request Fulfilment** – request management workflow and functionality that can be easily used and configured by system users
- **SLA and Event Management** – the ability to define SLAs that can be linked via Event Management to other ITSM processes
- **Demand Management** – the ability to provide real-time allocation and monitoring of service consumption, with e.g. financial calculations
- **Dashboard** – real-time user-friendly graphical monitoring and analysis of usage, trends and metrics across services and to various stakeholders
- **Service Reporting** – the ability to present output that summarises individual and 'bundled' service performance, consumption, SLA and event performance – in user-friendly, portable and graphical format

APPROACH TO IMPLEMENTATION

Organisations and their practitioners who are considering buying and implementing Service Catalogue technology should consider the following:

As there are a number of potential applications and objectives for Service Catalogue, these must be clearly defined and agreed in advance. This shouldn't be embarked upon because it is the 'flavour of the month' or it 'looks like a good thing to do'.

Key benefits that can be derived:

- Improved professionalism and quality of service experience to customers
- Value demonstration of IT through business and service based reporting
- Clarity around service differentiation and value – e.g. commodity versus quality, value-add, time to market
- Improved cost efficiency of request management and administration
- Improved quality and speed of service for request management and administration
- Greater visibility of IT costs and service level performance
- Improvement in Service Desk performance via better central access to information
- It is vital that all participants not only understand the expected benefits and objectives, but are also clear on the taxonomy of Service Level Management. This saves considerable time during projects, due to the fact that there are often many misconceptions and variances in understanding around basic concepts like SLAs, Service Catalogue etc. Time spent on some explanations and clarification of definitions is time well spent.
- The big mistake that organisations still make is to try to do Service Level Management (Portfolio Management, Request Management, SLAs and Service Catalogue...) all without engaging with their

customers and supported businesses. The process requires engagement (service definition, performance discussion, objective setting, feedback on the customer experience etc.) as a major input to this process. This provides business validation as well as improving the relationship and demonstration of understanding between parties. It also vitally provides clear goals in terms of service provision and performance reporting. Without this the process can completely miss out on customer requirements and expectation, and so is wasteful, arrogant and bad PR.

- Organisations should define their services in a simple structure – ideally that can be visualised and shown on 1 page or 1 slide for clarity. This can be done in a workshop, where key people are brought together to work through the concepts and definitions (this can begin with some education) and then use this to define the service structure for that organisation. There are always 'learning curves' to be overcome (e.g. the distinction between 'systems' and 'services') – however if this is done in a workshop then this build momentum and consensus.
- The Service Structure is a vital element as it provides the visual key to this process and also then the framework for a repository of information on each service. From this the project can start to create other outputs, documentation and service views as required from the project goals.
- Getting started and moving is a vital element to avoid long term prevarication and too much theorising. A lot can be achieved relatively quickly with some workshops and brief customer meetings. It's essential to produce a simple representation of the service structure that helps to visualise the process for all involved and give them a consistent view of what is being delivered and defined. All this can be done within a few days and weeks based around workshops and a clear set of objectives.
- Ultimately this is a business-focussed process so it's important to have people with business and communications skills to work on the project. Technical details and understanding will be needed but should not be the starting point, which tends to be what happens if this is given to technically-focussed people.

MARKET PRODUCTS

Products in this area fall into 2 main categories:

- **Existing ITSM Toolsets with Service Catalogue functionality**
- **Specific Tools with Service Catalogue and Request Management functionality**

Existing ITSM Toolsets

These often will have either modular or intrinsic functionality based around the 'ITIL' framework – Incident, Request, Problem and Change Management, plus Asset and Configuration Management and Service Level Management.

The Service Catalogue should be a valuable addition to this with a 'service layer' that can be added to the existing task and event management functions, as well as providing customer/user-friendly portals and 'front-ends' for requesting and tracking services.

Generally these products will be used by organisations to develop and to implement a 'service strategy' – as well as implementing request management – so these will generally follow a more 'top down' approach.

Ideally these will be able to leverage work already down defining existing ITSM processes and the Service Catalogue can then easily integrate with these. This is not always the case, as previous configuration structures may need to be revised to meet new Service Structure requirements.

Specific Service Catalogue Tools

These are newer, standalone systems that have come into the market in the last few years – initially as there was little functionality in this area in the existing ITSM tool market.

They will generally follow a more technical 'bottom up' approach that provides faster and more agile implementations. So they can deliver high quality user interfaces, discovery and request management workflow in short timeframes and deliver fast Return on Investment (ROI)/Time to Value (TTV) around the automation of a number of manual processes that speed up the customer experience.

Challenges can include how to reverse-engineer these systems for a strategic service structure once in operation, plus the need to integrate with a variety of other tools, including the existing ITSM solution.

These tools all have some level of basic Help-desk/Incident Management and support processes – the level to which these can either be used or integrated depends on the requirements and maturity of the existing systems (and organisations)

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OBSERVATIONS

'Service Catalogue' is a term that can encompass a number of areas – request management, user portal, service strategy and design, SLAs, portfolio management, service reporting, customer, business and technical views. There is no single product or view that is definitive and products that focus on one area only will require some technical and process integration.

In key areas of request management, portals and workflow, reporting and SLAs, most products offer very similar functionality. Variations exist in the development of Demand Management, strategic Service Design and Service Visualisation.

In particular vendors can be differentiated by their approach – strategic and technical, but also the level to which they can offer support and value added services to help with implementation. This is still a relatively new area and few practitioners and/or organisations have broad experience or even clear requirements for how to make this work – vendor support and guidance is a key asset and differentiator.

Implementation support should also be in the form of template and standard configurable data – i.e. to provide sample service 'bundles', workflows, reports, dashboards and in general as much practical guidance as possible.

Whilst implementation approach and product focus are the key differentiators – i.e. strategic vs technical Bottom Up / Top Down – a key strength is also the ability to show a clear path that encompasses both approaches.

Integration experience and proven capability is a key capability (more than just a differentiator) – this will always be required to some extent:

For 'Service Catalogue Specific' vendors this is essential to get their product working with a variety of monitoring, asset and event management tools, as well as interfacing with other ITSM systems. Usually they will offer a number of existing APIs and proven links as part of their approach. These tools are useful for standalone Service Catalogue implementation at mid-market level and can also be found sold into enterprise organisations at the technical and integration level.

For 'Existing ITSM Vendors' they will lead on the seamless integration with their own tools. This is a good pitch for their existing customers but a dilemma for the wider market, i.e. whether to buy a standalone Service Catalogue product (from one ITSM Vendor) separately from a new or existing ITSM product from another ITSM vendor. Many of these vendors will have already created links to other systems via their multi-source and managed services clients.

In all aspects of this area, consideration should be given to the customer experience in using these systems and the interaction with IT organisations, particularly in terms of how SLAs and service delivery expectations are set.

These toolsets can help to improve service quality and experience, as well as improving the value demonstration of IT. However this will not simply be delivered by tool implementation alone and care is required where systems and vendors promise this without some significant process and organisational change.

Overall the market has developed significantly in the last 2/3 years although most vendors are still developing their approach to financial and demand management. Some of this functionality is available across the market but generally only as reports and with some development rather than as an integral feature for dynamic business use.

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MARKET POSITIONING & APPROACH

Vendor	Mid-Market	Enterprise	Top Down	Bottom Up
Axios	✓	✓	✓	?
Matrix42	✓	?		✓
Biomni	✓	?		✓
ServiceNow	?	✓	✓	✓

✓ - Definitely
 ? - Possibly

TOP DOWN / BOTTOM UP?

Vendor	Top Down	Bottom Up
Axios	✓ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach geared to Business and Tech services • Good UI with visualisation of services and structure 	? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vendor and product can start from discovery approach • Unlikely to be sold as SC only bottom up product
Matrix42	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little product or vendor focus Business or Top Down approach • May not be relevant for some clients – e.g. MSPs 	✓ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product and vendor geared to discovery approach • Excellent tool for fast implementation of Request and self service for IT products
Biomni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little product or vendor focus on Business or Top Down approach • Commercial approach helps for quick start and visualisation 	✓ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product and vendor geared to discovery approach • Excellent tool for fast implementation of Request and self service for IT products
ServiceNow	✓ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach geared to Business and Tech services • Good strategic focus in dashboards and Demand Management functions 	✓ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can start from discovery approach • Sales focus on enterprise with Business and Tech capability





✓ - Definitely
 ? - Possibly

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COMPETITIVE OVERVIEW

Vendor	Overview	Strengths	Weaknesses
 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-end option for Medium – Enterprise • Simple intuitive UI/OOTB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seamless integration with assyst ITSM processes • UI • Strategic approach • Vendor capability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not geared up for standalone SC implementation • May be overkill for technical or small implementations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong request and Catalogue functionality – technical focus • Good option for Tech-only implementations (e.g. MSPs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good Request and Catalogue functionality • Speed of implementation – doesn't need other ITSM processes • Service Now integration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of US/UK coverage • Approach – little strategic implementation focus • Functionality gaps
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good functionality • Nice commercial approach • Good option for Tech-only implementations (e.g. MSPs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good intuitive functionality, commercial approach • Speed of implementation – doesn't need other ITSM processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little Strategic implementation focus • Functionality gaps
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High end functionality, enterprise focus • Strong corporate backing and growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive functionality • Best Demand dashboard functions • Flexibility of product 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UI busy and complicated • Flexibility of product • Organisation geared towards enterprise clients • Needs usability configuration/customisation

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Deep Dive

Further details for each vendor can be found by using the links below:

- [Axios](#)
- [Biomni](#)
- [Matrix42](#)
- [ServiceNow](#)

Further Reading

- [Barclay Rae: Assessment criteria for Service Catalogue](#)
- [Pink Elephant: Service Catalogue examples](#)
- [7 Golden Rules for Creating a Service Catalogue](#)
- [Rob England: What is a Service Catalogue?](#)
- [Rob England: What is a Technical Service Catalogue?](#)

DISCLAIMER, SCOPE & LIMITATIONS

The information contained in this review is based on sources and information believed to be accurate as of the time it was created. Therefore, the completeness and current accuracy of the information provided cannot be guaranteed. Readers should therefore use the contents of this review as a general guideline and not as the ultimate source of truth.

Similarly, this review is not based on rigorous and exhaustive technical study. The ITSM Review recommends that readers complete a thorough live evaluation before investing in technology.

This is a paid review. That is, the vendors included in this review paid to participate in exchange for all results and analysis being published free of charge without registration. For further information please read the 'Group Tests' section on our [Disclosure page](#).

FULL REVIEW ONLINE AT

<http://www.theitsmreview.com/2013/07/service-catalogue-review-2013/>

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