

My Antidote to Anarchy?

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When I took my first Service Management course in 2006 a phrase stuck with me; “Make it predictable and make it repeatable”. A phrase that stuck with me, as I have always believed in managing configurations and automating tasks. Proactively reducing errors, building consistency, driving efficiencies, all on the path to a stable operating platform, which in turn enables a focus on value, subsequently leading to an agile platform for advancement of the business.

At my previous company, a new CIO came in with a clear message of “Secure, Stable, Seamless and Scalable Services”. A more encompassing phrasing from mine that added a focus on information security and one which I was able to put at the heart of my messaging. So why did these phrases resonate with me? It was an easy and clear message to take to my team. In those few words, it summed up the vision for a service model that delivers for the business and the direction we were taking.

One other word I would add to this is adaptability. Just as technology and working practices have evolved, so have the flexibility to look to other methods that I can apply. Predictable and repeatable, Secure, Stable, Seamless and Scalable, Adaptable. These formed my core values for service operations.

For those that know me, my passion for Service Operations Management comes as no surprise. Nor would they be surprised that I continue to push forward with establishing a service model that is based upon these values. I do this because I believe that we can always be better than we are, the status quo is but a starting point to build upon and improve to better serve our customers. That improvement requires a toolkit, built on best practice, to make it happen.

 Malcolm McLaren in The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle, brandishing "Cash from Chaos"

"Cash from Chaos" was the line brandished by Malcolm McLaren in the Great Rock'n' Roll Swindle.

If you lack control on services, you will also lack control on your costs.

Turning the chaos on its head will stem the flow of cash!

Service Intelligence is the name for my service model, a model that can transform operations and embraces the business and a better future for all. Creating the structure of a scalable and stable service model, rooting out the anarchy that can reign. In its wake a place where we create a disciplined structure. This approach does not stop a business being disruptive in its chosen field, in fact I would argue the opposite as it can accelerate the outcomes. Stability enhances the businesses ability to service its customers. IT makes leaner services, being more effective, more efficient, timely and cost effective. IT transforms to becomes an enabler toward business growth.

I mentioned adaptability. As I became more involved with manufacturing and other business improvement processes, one thing became apparent. Although the terminology used was different, here I was applying similar methods and sharing a common goal of operational excellence. Both IT and the business are running production lines, but not embracing that commonality. It was for me to make that linkage for the business and translate what IT does into business terms.

- The infrastructure is the production line of IT. The product is Services, created and pushed out to customers.
- Work centres are defined with equipment, skills, capabilities, availability.
- The production line is maintained through an EMR (Engineering Maintenance and Repair) process. Keeping the technology functioning and performing updates, timing these events so as not to disrupt the core production hours of the business.
- Skills matrix and training aligned to functional demands.
- The Service Catalogue is constructed through a BOM (Bill of Materials) structure.
- Costings by finance with business numbers on fixed and variable costs.
- Changes to the services (our product) use an ECN (Engineering Change Notice) process to assess, select and implement changes.
- Jobs and activities are managed through Works Orders and tracked as WIP (Work in Progress)
- Incidents and events appear as rework and we use a RTPR (Real Time Problem Resolution) method.
- IT have measures with meaning, KPI's are in the same context as the rest of the business. Production Line Capacity, Efficiency Rating, Labour and Service costs.

Even if manufacturing is not your line of business, I would still be able to draw up parallels between IT and business functions.

IT is no longer the uncontrolled headless monster, full of mystery. The business can see IT in its own context, they understand the production line, we share values and apply these to produce quality products efficiently, reducing unit price, improving on profit and customer satisfaction.

Lean is not limited to manufacturing and we can collaborate and share on initiatives. One example is in value focused continuous improvement.

Activities are identified and will be categorised as either as Value-Add (VA) or Non-Value-Add (NVA). Of the NVA activities, some elements may still be deemed necessary, so we minimise what we can and seek to eliminate the rest.

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The measures established will show the impact on service operations in recovering both time and money for the business. Time recovered in waste can now be applied to value creation. Unused products result in further savings through cancelled contracts. Support overhead is reduced by not having to support and maintain out of date products. Technical debt is brought under control, all of which reduces cost of service and can fall to the bottom line or be reinvested in modern services, training, and development.

There will also be a tacit effect on teams, working on value projects is a motivator. Who really enjoys doing the same drudgery day in, day out? I certainly do not, but I do enjoy automating them to be consistent and releasing my time. Teams get the bug of optimising services. They move from the maintenance of technical debt to innovating.

How do you assess the required mindset change in your teams? I speak with them openly and freely, observe the way they work, give them opportunity to lead and give them the credit for success and mentoring for the mistakes.

To understand and identify the 8 ways of waste and be good at it is a learning curve. Collaborate and help everyone identify excesses in transportation, inventory, motion, waiting, over-production, over-processing, defects, and underutilised skills.

Fortunately, an incremental approach starting with the low hanging fruit will help in gaining the necessary experience to create a working practice. Reinforce the progress with KPI's, celebrate the successes of the achievement and the achievers, show how IT can partner with the business.

When IT truly works as part of the business, the business can truly transform.

#serviceintelligence #LEAN #servicemanagement #serviceoptimisation #servicecosts
#costmanagement #costcontrol #wasteelimination #digitaltransformation
#holisticserviceintegration #servicemodels #clarity #ideation #portfoliomanagement
#itilexpert #value #servicevalue #sharedservice #collaboration #manufacturing
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