

Navigating Your ServiceNow Success

Nine essential considerations before implementing ServiceNow ITSM.

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Navigating Your ServiceNow Success:

9 Essential Considerations Before Implementing ServiceNow ITSM

As an architect at Synechron, who has weathered the storms of many ServiceNow implementations, I have seen first-hand the challenges an organisation can face when implementing ServiceNow. Architects find themselves in a unique position, often bridging the gaps between business requirements and the technical implementation of those needs. We serve as translators, interpreting business objectives into actionable technical plans and ensuring that the technology stack is aligned with the organisation's goals.

If you're an IT manager, a system architect, or a C-level executive looking to bring the power of ServiceNow into your organisation, then this is for you. Some of the challenges while implementing ServiceNow can be daunting, but they are not insurmountable. By understanding the challenges and planning accordingly, you and your organisations can successfully implement ServiceNow at scale and reap the benefits of this powerful platform.

Here are some key areas where additional attention can make the difference between a difficult implementation and one that will lead to a successful and seamless adoption of ServiceNow across your organisation. While this list is not exhaustive, it does help provide guidance in some key areas that could potentially be a pitfall early in implementation or at least lead up to complications later that could be difficult to fix.

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1. Understanding the organisation's needs and aligning with business strategy

Imagine launching ServiceNow ITSM without fully understanding your organisation's specific needs, only to find that the features you've prioritised don't solve your actual challenges. This emphasises the first and pivotal step in a successful implementation, which is understanding your organisation's needs and aligning them with your business strategy.

ServiceNow is exceptionally flexible and capable of meeting various business requirements across different industries. While this flexibility can be a significant advantage, it can also be challenging. It makes it tempting to focus too much on how the software should accomplish tasks rather than what the desired outcomes are.

Be cautious of falling into this trap. Overemphasis on the 'how' can push you toward over-customisation or misconfiguration, making you bend the tool in ways it was not intended to be used. Concentrate on what the output should be, what problems it should solve, and what objectives it should meet. This focus ensures that you employ ServiceNow's capabilities in a way that aligns with your organisational strategy and avoids unnecessary complications.

To navigate these challenges, begin your journey with a comprehensive needs assessment. The assessment should scrutinise your existing ITSM processes, identify pain points, and lay out your IT and overarching business goals. Here's a breakdown of key focus areas for your needs assessment:

- **Key Stakeholders:** Consider who will be most impacted by the ServiceNow implementation. What are their specific needs and concerns?
- **Existing ITSM Workflows:** Review your current procedures for managing incidents, problems, changes, and assets.

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- **Areas for Improvement:** Identify the bottlenecks or shortcomings in your existing ITSM process. Is it slow incident resolution or lack of automation?
 - **Organisational Objectives:** Outline the primary goals you aim to achieve through implementing ServiceNow.
 - **Business Alignment:** How will ServiceNow support your broader business strategy?
 - **Operational Readiness:** Assess whether your organisation has the necessary resources and expertise to manage ServiceNow effectively.
 - **Compliance Needs:** Are there industry regulations or internal policies that the ServiceNow implementation must comply with?
 - **Financial Considerations:** Consider both the initial setup costs and the ongoing expenses of using ServiceNow.

You should take the time to perform a thorough needs assessment. This will pave the way for an implementation that is closely aligned with your immediate needs and broader business strategies. This will also set the stage for the effective and streamlined use of ServiceNow. But remember, the key is striking the right balance. We will now dive into how we can avoid the pitfalls of over-customisation, ensuring that your implementation remains agile, maintainable, and directly aligned with your goals.

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2. Avoid over-customisation

The Pitfalls of Over-Customisation

My role as an architect has given me additional insights into the realm of customisation. I've seen how the platform's high degree of customisability can be both a blessing and a curse. While it allows organisations to tailor the system to their unique needs, it can also lead to maintenance headaches and compatibility issues down the line.

Some of the issues that over-customisation can lead to are:

- **Increase Complexity:** The more your ServiceNow platform is customised, the more difficult it becomes to troubleshoot and understand its functionality.
- **Elevate Costs:** Custom code does take time to create and, depending on its design, could also be expensive to maintain.
- **Lead to Incompatibility:** Heavy customisation could make your system incompatible with future ServiceNow updates and may even prevent you from leveraging new features and improvements.

Key Questions to Ask: Wisdom from the Field

Drawing on my experience, before diving into any form of customisation, I recommend asking the following questions:

- **Do we actually need this customisation?** Often, organisations feel the pressure to say “yes” to all customisation requests, especially when they're coming from key stakeholders. At the same time, we do not want to say “no” to all requests either. Can a solution be devised that can be adopted by more than one area?
- **Does ServiceNow offer an alternative solution?** The platform is incredibly versatile and often has native features or plugins that can meet your needs without custom code. Go check out the plugins and store to see if there is something there that can address the requirements.
- **Does this customisation align with ServiceNow's best practices?** Ignoring these could result in more harm than good in the long run. Again, not all customisations are bad. Balance is the key.



Best Practices to Avoid Over-Customisation

To navigate this tricky aspect of ServiceNow implementation, consider the following guidelines that I've found helpful in my work:

- **Leverage Out-of-the-Box Functionality:** The platform comes packed with powerful features that can fulfil most needs without customisation.

- **Choose Configuration Over**

Customisation: You can usually change the platform's behaviour significantly without writing custom code, which is easier to maintain and upgrade.

- **Adopt a Phased Implementation Approach:** This allows for ongoing learning and adaptation, helping to prevent the pitfalls of over-customisation. Where possible, try not to do too much too early and fast. Consider delivering the minimum that will provide value. Then, build on your success.

- **Consider Third-Party Integrations:** Sometimes, a certified app from the ServiceNow Store or a third-party integration is a more sustainable solution than customisation.

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Remember, customisation is a tool, not a solution in itself. You shouldn't be afraid of customisations or block all customisations, but rather, the key is to use them judiciously. They can amplify ServiceNow's capabilities, but misuse can result in technical debt and future compatibility challenges. Always customise with caution and clear business justification.

Following these expert insights and best practices will set you up for a successful, sustainable ServiceNow ITSM implementation. Yet, customisations are only one part of the equation. Another challenge often lies in dealing with complicated workflows and outdated processes; let's look at some of the key points.

3. Review complicated workflows and outdated processes

In my experience, I've observed that implementing ServiceNow can present significant challenges, especially when an organisation has complex workflows or outdated processes. It's worth noting that the capabilities and limitations of available tools often not only influence but actually mould our approaches to problem-solving and process design. Each automation tool, like ServiceNow, comes with its unique set of strengths, limitations, and operational nuances, which in turn shape how organisations conceptualise and implement workflows.

Key Considerations for Managing Workflows and Processes

Here are some thoughts on how to tackle these challenges:

- **Assign Clear Process Ownership:** Ensure you have a designated owner for each process and that someone is accountable for its efficiency, effectiveness, and continuous improvement. Also, have succession processes in place to facilitate the handover of processes to new owners.
- **Conduct Regular Reviews:** Processes should not be set in stone. They must be regularly reviewed to ensure they align with the organisation's changing objectives and requirements. These reviews can identify redundancies, inefficiencies, and other areas for improvement.
- **Assess Your Current Workflows and Processes:** You want to understand the current state of the organisation's ITSM processes, identify any pain points or areas for improvement, and determine how ServiceNow can address these issues.
- **Align Processes to Business Objectives:** Separate the business needs from the technical implementation. This approach provides the needed clarity for future process implementation. Sometimes, these lines can be blurred and make what's really important difficult to identify.

In my experience, these approaches can lead to a more targeted and effective training program that not only educates but also resonates with the specific needs and culture of an organisation.

4. Bring in expertise

One of the most daunting challenges organisations face when implementing ServiceNow is a lack of in-house expertise. Without a deep understanding of ServiceNow's functionalities, configurations, and best practices, organisations are prone to various pitfalls such as misconfigurations, inefficient processes, and suboptimal utilisation of the platform. Ultimately this leads to a failure to realise the full potential of your ServiceNow investment. These are observations I've made while working with ServiceNow and its partners.

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Many organisations opt to collaborate with certified ServiceNow partners as an immediate solution to fill the expertise gap. After all, employing someone with the needed expertise could be challenging if you are unsure of how to measure their abilities and experience against something you don't know. While using partners is often beneficial for initial implementation, relying solely on external expertise is not a sustainable long-term strategy.

The Advantages of Building In-House Expertise

- **Holistic Understanding of the Organisation:** In-house experts are uniquely positioned to gain a deep understanding of the organisational landscape, including specific IT challenges and business objectives. They may be intimately acquainted with the organisation, which empowers them to design and implement ServiceNow solutions tailored specifically to the organisation's needs. This can improve service delivery efficiency and effectiveness.
- **Cultural Alignment:** Internal experts inherently understand the company culture, values, and work ethics. This insight is invaluable when

4. Bring in expertise (Cont)

implementing ServiceNow, as it can significantly ease the adoption of new processes and technologies among the staff. They can act as a buffer or translator, if you will, targeting concerns more effectively.

- **Continuous Improvement:** Having in-house expertise allows organisations to keep their ServiceNow ITSM implementation under constant review. Clear process ownership and regular review mechanisms should be in place to adapt to changing business needs and technological advancements. This iterative refinement ensures that the organisation remains aligned with evolving industry best practices.

Given the complexity and robustness of ServiceNow, multiple approaches exist to solve a given problem. Therefore, having well-informed, reliable expertise in-house is indispensable for leveraging ServiceNow effectively. Decisions may seem logical at first glance but may result in suboptimal outcomes if not guided by proficient platform knowledge.



5. Move beyond generic training

Based on my observations and experience, ServiceNow's foundational training offers a valuable introduction to the platform's functionalities and modules. While useful, this generic approach may not be sufficient for every organisation, given the unique IT landscapes, workflows, and strategic objectives that each possesses. Your organisation may find that relying solely on this generic training leaves gaps in understanding, especially in the nuanced ways that ServiceNow is configured and utilised within specific business environments.

To bridge this gap, it may be advantageous to assemble a training team and develop bespoke training programs. These tailored programs should consider:

- **Relevance to Business Needs:** Identify the modules and features of ServiceNow that align closely with your organisational goals. Not every feature will be equally relevant, but focusing on those most aligned with business objectives is generally more effective.
- **Custom Workflows and Processes:** Since ServiceNow is often customised to fit unique organisational workflows, training should include instruction on these custom elements. This approach ensures employees understand not only the general features of ServiceNow but also how it operates within their unique organisational context. implementing ServiceNow, as it can significantly ease the adoption of new processes and technologies among the staff. They can act as a buffer or translator, if you will, targeting concerns more effectively.
- **Continuous Learning:** As ServiceNow evolves, as well as your organisational needs, you should consider regular refresher courses or updated training sessions to keep everyone aligned, especially after system upgrades or significant organisational changes.

In my experience, these approaches can lead to a more targeted and effective training program that not only educates but also resonates with the specific needs and culture of an organisation.

6. Plan for resistance to change

Implementing a new platform like ServiceNow can be disruptive, and some employees may resist change. This is because change can be scary, and people may be worried about how the new platform will affect their jobs. You can overcome this challenge by communicating the benefits of ServiceNow to employees and getting their buy-in before implementing the platform.

The communication should focus on the benefits of ServiceNow for employees, such as:

- **Improved efficiency:** ServiceNow can help your employees resolve issues more quickly and easily. This can free up their time to focus on their core work.
- **Increased productivity:** ServiceNow can help employees to find the information they need more quickly. This can help them to be more productive and efficient. I've always said: "Get clever people to do clever things, not mundane things." ServiceNow is one of the keys to achieving this, so sell it.
- **Improved satisfaction:** ServiceNow can help employees have a better experience when interacting with the IT department or any business department when set up correctly. This can lead to increased satisfaction and loyalty.

The communication should also address employees' concerns about the upcoming changes. For example, employees may worry about learning a new system. The communication should address these concerns and reassure them that the transition will be smooth.

In addition to communication, you can take other steps to overcome resistance to change. For example, you can provide training on the new platform, offer incentives for employees to use it, and involve them in planning and implementation.



By taking these steps, your organisation can increase the chances of successfully implementing ServiceNow.

Here are some suggestions for overcoming resistance to change:

- Start by understanding why employees are resistant to change. What are their specific concerns? Once you know and understand their concerns, you can address them in your communication.
- Be transparent about the change process. Let employees know what changes are coming and why they are necessary and even beneficial. This will help to reduce uncertainty and anxiety.
- Provide training on the new platform. This will help employees to feel more comfortable with the new system and to be more productive using it.
- Offer incentives for employees to use the new platform. This could include things like gift cards, bonuses, or recognition. I've personally seen the appeal of "gamifying" something, and in this case, you could do that with adoption.
- Involve employees in the planning and implementation process. This will help them feel more ownership of the change and be more likely to support it.

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7. Change the business mindset

In addition to the challenges mentioned above, organisations must be willing to transform their ITSM mindset to implement ServiceNow ITSM successfully. In fact, this change of mindset goes beyond ITSM. Any business area that adopts ServiceNow needs to challenge its way of thinking on how it addresses its needs. This means being open to new concepts and working methods and ready to let go of old ones.

If organisations are unwilling to change their mindset, they may transfer the pain points from their legacy systems into ServiceNow. This can lead to problems such as decreased productivity, increased costs, and customer dissatisfaction. This will obviously vary from organisation to organisation, depending on their maturity and the state of their processes.

It's important that you and your organisation be open to change and embrace new working methods when implementing ServiceNow. By doing so, you will reap the benefits of this powerful platform and improve your ITSM and business processes.

Here are some specific examples of how organisations can change their business mindset:

- **Embrace a customer-centric approach.** This means focusing on customers' needs and providing them with a positive experience.
- **Use data to drive decision-making.** This means collecting and analysing data to identify areas for improvement.
- **Automate tasks.** This can help free up time and resources so employees can focus on more strategic work.
- **Adopt a DevOps culture.** This means breaking down the silos between development and operations and working together to deliver IT services more quickly and efficiently.

Changing your mindset doesn't just make IT more efficient; it also helps deliver real value to the right stakeholders. In other words, it ensures that the people who matter most in your organisation get what they need when they need it. We have already touched on the next point, but it's important to emphasise it, process ownership.

8. Make sure processes are owned

While some of the “bigger” and more important processes may be given additional attention, it’s important to ensure clear ownership of all existing and new processes. This means there must be a clear understanding of who is responsible for each process and who has the authority to change those processes.

Without an accountable person or team, you may find:

- Processes aren’t followed consistently.
- No one’s there to identify and resolve issues proactively.
- Missed opportunities for process improvements.

Every process should be well-documented, and this documentation must clearly identify the owner. Equally important is to equip these owners with performance metrics so they can ensure processes are efficient and continually improving. Simply cobbling together a process won’t cut it.



9. Think in terms of continual improvement

When it comes to implementing ServiceNow ITSM, one challenge that's often overlooked is the need for ongoing improvement. And I'm not just talking about IT services; this applies to every aspect of your organisation. Remember, continual improvement is more of a journey than a destination, it's an ongoing cycle, something that's been emphasised even more in ITIL 4.

In ITIL 4, 'Continual Improvement' isn't a phase you get to after you've set everything else up. There was a reason why this was changed from V3. It's a core principle that should guide every decision you make.

There are a few ways to achieve continual service improvement, including:

- **Keep an Eye on Feedback:** Make it a routine to look at what your users are saying. Sometimes, the smallest tweak can make the biggest difference.
- **Get Your Problem Management Sorted:** Don't wait for things to break before figuring out how to fix them. Have a system ready to dig deep and find out why problems are happening, so you don't find yourself fixing the same issue over and over.
- **Stay Updated with Tech:** Don't get comfy with your current tech stack. Always be on the lookout for new tools and tech that could make your services better.

So, the key is to never stop looking for ways to make your IT services better. This way, you're not just ticking boxes, but you're really getting the most out of your investment in ServiceNow. No one can predict all the outcomes from the onset, but making incremental changes can sharpen your organisation's edge and keep you ahead of the curve.



To add a few extra nuggets:

- **Create a culture of continuous improvement.** Make ‘getting better all the time’ your team’s mantra. Encourage everyone to shout out ideas to improve things and start doing this from day one.
- **Make it easy to report problems.**
Don’t make it a maze to report issues. Give folks a simple way to say, “Hey, this isn’t working right.”
- **Reward employees for identifying and implementing improvements.** Give out some high-fives or even small rewards for good ideas. People love knowing their efforts to improve things are not going unnoticed.

“‘Continual Improvement’ isn’t a phase you get to after you’ve set everything else up.”



Make it work for you

While working with ServiceNow at Synechron, I've seen first-hand how transformative it can be. But let's be real; it's not a "set and forget" type of tool. It's like a journey that keeps evolving, a journey that we at Synechron are committed to navigating alongside our clients. You've got to have the right mindset, a willingness to keep learning, and the guts to tackle challenges head-on. And don't forget, the people using it every day, your team, need to be on board, too. You can have all the fancy tech you want, but if your people aren't with you, it's a bit like trying to row a boat with a single oar.

At Synechron, we believe getting ServiceNow right doesn't only make your IT department better; it brings real value to everyone in the organisation. It's about freeing up smart people to do smart things and always looking for that next improvement to make things run even smoother. So, whether you're just starting out with ServiceNow or deep into the journey, keep an open mind and don't be afraid to shake things up.

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Synechron

Capture your future faster.

Synechron is an elite ServiceNow partner, experienced in delivering major transformations at scale for clients operating in complex and highly regulated environments - all delivered by our world-class team.

- Transform at scale
- Engineer expertly
- Build in resilience
- Accelerate with AI



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