Case Study

Consolidating HR and CMDB Systems on a Global Scale

Publicis Groupe is one of the world’s largest communications groups, with nearly 45,000 employees in 750 agencies in 104 countries and 196 cities. It provides clients worldwide with a complete range of media and advertising services through several different brands, many of which it has acquired.

Steve Arnold, manager of the global process team, describes the ways in which Publicis Groupe has used ServiceNow to consolidate IT tools and expand IT services in the three years since rolling out to the initial 20 countries.

Consolidating 12 tools into one
Publicis Groupe had 12 different tools deployed among four regions for various help desk functions, and they needed a common tool for passing tickets, incidents and events from one region to another. Across North America, they used HP OpenView Service Desk (OVSD) 5.1. Europe had three different solutions, Latin America had five more and Asia Pacific had yet another three.

HP OVSD offered many basics to support ITIL and it was consistent, but Publicis faced several problems with it:

- **Slow client** – The client software ran very slowly, which affected the productivity of their users. IT was outsourcing help desk functions to Costa Rica, where the software ran even more slowly.

- **Poor configurability** – It was not easily configured, so the company constantly had to make processes fit the tool, instead of changing the tool to fit its processes.

- **Limited reporting** – Two Publicis employees were tasked with using Crystal Reports to get useful information out of OVSD, a bottleneck that made it difficult to provide timely reports to management.

So Publicis Groupe began the task of finding a global ITSM solution and adopting ITIL processes worldwide. First, the company studied all of the ITIL-prescribed policies and procedures for such processes as change, incident, and release management. Then they took three months to rewrite their existing policies and procedures to form a common ITIL-compliant set of documents that would work globally. For instance, they reduced the set for North America from 70 pages to six and got agreement on them from all four regions around the globe. They were then ready to look for a tool for implementing those
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policies and procedures globally. Executive management decided to move off HP OVSD and onto ServiceNow because of the latter’s strong support for the ITIL processes they were putting in place. Implementation went smoothly. In every rollout to roughly 20 countries, Publicis Groupe started with incident management and configuration management. Then they rolled out basic self-service capabilities in each of the regions, and for mature regions with available resources, they also rolled out change management. As a result, they consolidated a resource-wasteful patchwork of 12 different IT tools with one ITSM tool worldwide.

**Using a flexible tool to build a flexible tool**

Has the move to ServiceNow addressed the issues Publicis Groupe faced? Arnold believes so: “Publicis Groupe is a single global company made up of many smaller companies. While IT is centralized within a group, some regions (EMEA, APAC, North America, etc.) in that group may have different needs. Most tools assume you are one big, happy family and everything you do is the same. ServiceNow has allowed us to customize so that each region has a separate service catalog and other functions.”

Arnold’s team has created a development environment called Flex for non-IT applications in Publicis Groupe. Users can go into the service catalog and submit requests to Facilities, Human Resources and other non-IT groups using the same UI as the IT requests. ServiceNow routes these requests to the appropriate group in a separate queue, with separate metrics and reports.

Flex came about after Publicis acquired a large company that used its own tool for HR, Facilities and other functions. “We knew that we had to integrate that tool to ours,” says Arnold, “and that we needed something long-term for non-IT requests, so we developed Flex. Now we can bring a new business unit into its own request environment within a matter of hours.”

“You could say that we used one flexible platform (ServiceNow) to develop another (Flex).”

**ServiceNow automation and integration in HR**

Publicis Groupe has automated the fulfillment of most IT-related HR requests through a ServiceNow app called IMAC, for Installs, Moves, Adds and Changes. IMAC processes approximately 2000 new hires, transfers and terminations per month worldwide directly from its service catalog. Every separate business within Publicis Groupe has between one and 10 different requestors authorized to submit requests for telephone, network account, email, special software, new equipment to be installed and so forth. Requestors fill out a form with appropriate details on the affected user, which generates up to a dozen tasks that go out to IT for fulfillment.

When Publicis Groupe acquired a large company, it set up its ServiceNow-based IMAC system to receive new-hire requests from the acquired company’s Oracle Human Resources system. Whenever the new business unit submits a new-hire request directly to the Oracle system, it automatically creates the account in the Active Directory, then creates an IMAC request in ServiceNow to generate requests for phones, email, computer, etc.

“We’re in the process of moving to a global HR system,” explains Arnold. “We intend to integrate with ServiceNow as the receiver and sender at two points. First, in our global directory system, where we’ll synchronize directories. Second, we plan for our HR system to notify our identity management system that a new-hire or termination is in progress, which will then notify all other systems, including ServiceNow. In this way ServiceNow will serve as the single point of interaction for employee self-service HR requests.”

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Business impact after three years
Arnold points to several business impacts ServiceNow has had on Publicis Groupe:

- **Agility** – Arnold’s group can respond promptly to requests from the business, compressing week-long tasks into a day. For example, businesses that need Web hosting have often gone to a Rackspace-like external provider because of the long, internal process required to get financial approval prior to implementation. Publicis Groupe is testing a new process and workflow in which businesses submit the request through ServiceNow. The tool immediately notifies the team responsible for hosting, which adds the server name, IP address and other configuration details. The team clicks a button to submit between three and eight tasks to the fulfillment teams, which have either a four- or eight-hour SLA. So, from start to finish, a user can request a new server and have it within the same business day.

- **Consistent experience** – By offering ServiceNow and Flex, Arnold’s group provides services with a uniform experience and makes a cost-effective tool available where none existed before.

- **Non-IT business value** – As other groups outside of IT move to ServiceNow, they quickly enjoy benefits like better directory access, lower operating costs and broader feature sets than in their previous tools.

- **Global reach** – ServiceNow is one of the company’s first global applications. Qualified users can finally run reports in a single system of record and see what’s going on in IT globally.

- **Business confidence** – In cost-effectiveness and feature set, Arnold has yet to find anything he and his team are unable to do in ServiceNow to support both IT and non-IT needs.

Even if creating the application takes a little time, they’ve been able to roll it out successfully.

**Desktop as a service, and a tighter CMDB**
Publicis Groupe focused originally on incident, request, change, configuration, CMDB, problem and service catalog. They have spent about three years strengthening those disciplines, and are turning to new initiatives.

They plan to consolidate knowledge management, first for IT, then for users companywide. Each region currently has its own knowledge tool, which IT is gradually consolidating into a single knowledge base.

Arnold’s team has new ideas for the CMDB. The first is their desktop-as-a-service initiative, a new model in which IT owns the company’s hardware assets. Whereas each group and brand in the company has been accustomed to buying its own desktop and laptop hardware, IT will centrally purchase the equipment and provide it on a leased basis to the business unit. Arnold believes this will help move hardware around the company more efficiently as employee headcount fluctuates. IT will manage all the equipment through its CMDB by importing details from vendor spreadsheets, then having field agents who deploy the assets tag them, associate them with a user and update the CMDB.

Next, the team wants to expand use and improve the accuracy of the CMDB. “Sometimes the servers are in there when you want to submit a change for them,” says Arnold, “but not always. We’re also going to set up relationships so that when a piece of hardware goes down, we know which business services will be affected. We’ll also have users subscribe to services so that we can associate them and notify them about problems with those configuration items.”

“With old tools we could say, ‘This is our process,’ but in fact our process was whatever the tool forced us to do. With ServiceNow, we can define process, then configure the tool for the process exactly as we want it.”
Arnold envisions doing this with Discovery, which will automatically inform his staff of changes and manual updates as new servers are deployed. Publicis Groupe uses Altiris for desktop and server configuration management, and they plan to supplement their ServiceNow discovery data with Altiris inventory data in the CMDB.

**Three years of ServiceNow in the organization**
Arnold is pleased with the high level of user acceptance around ServiceNow. His problem is that he has only three people to support 45,000 users worldwide, and while there are so many things his team could do, they need to prioritize the projects that will have the greatest impact. At the moment, those are knowledge and configuration.

“One of our business units tells us they don’t want to use expensive systems like Clarity to track their projects, and that they’d rather use the ServiceNow Project Management application. Unfortunately, we have to say ‘no’ because we have too few resources to maintain it and because it’s not part of our main goal of supporting IT.”

“After more than three years of using it, I can say that ServiceNow is more than a jack of all trades and master of none, because it does everything well.”