Case Study

My name is Sean Harley, and I work for Sky IQ as a director of technology operations, the team that supports our data centre environments and our client systems. Our parent company, BSkyB, is a provider of television content in addition to broadband and telephone services. Sky IQ is an organization delivering solutions to Sky and other FTSE 100 companies. We provide consumer and media insight that allows our customers to manage real-time advertising so that they can plan their marketing services and activities.

We've been in operation about twelve months as a team of 225 people with expertise in analytics, market technology and real-time media. We currently have offices in St. Albans, Bristol, Scotland and Osterley with about 500 devices in our infrastructure.

ITSM Maturity

As part of the acquisitions that created Sky IQ, we ended up with IT assets, intellectual property and people, but we didn’t acquire many IT service management processes. There were some principles, but not many processes, and certainly no tools. So we began shopping for ITSM tools and became convinced that the cloud was the way for us to go due to the timescales in which we needed to deliver to our business.

Software as a service (SaaS) and the cloud aren’t new to our organization; we host services for our clients today in our own data centre facilities as a private cloud, and our email systems are SaaS-based. We understood that if we wanted to set up a service management solution with relevant incident, problem and change principles in the timeframe we had, the SaaS model was likely to be more successful than the on-premise model.

We were a company formed from a significantly larger organization that had many ITIL principles and processes in place, but didn’t come across to our IT team. We had to build an IT infrastructure delivery team from the ground up after the acquisition. We needed a solution that, out of the box, could support our business and the processes we needed to build around incident problem, change, configuration management and so forth. We have processes in place for incident, problem, change, and are currently rolling out configuration management in the next few months. All these applications are aligned to the objectives that support our business processes. We’re not adopting ITIL at the company, but we are adopting ITIL principles, and I think that Service Now gives us what we need to support our business out of the box.

Sky IQ Builds New
IT Department Around ServiceNow

“We are delivering services through ServiceNow at least 40 percent cheaper than in the on-premise product used by the company from which these assets came, before the acquisition.”

This ServiceNow case study is based on a webinar with Sean Harley, director of technology operations at Sky IQ, part of the BSkyB group.
Why SaaS?
We didn’t take the decision for SaaS lightly. Our managing director comes from an operations background and is very technically aware of what my team does as well as what we need to do as a business; we had to research our move thoroughly.

My background is in business service management and I have worked everywhere from CA Technologies to Mercury (now HP), and I’ve also had relationships with BMC Remedy, so we looked at these vendors plus ServiceNow. Three of them had on-premise solutions that they were trying to bring into an on-demand or a SaaS-model, but one of them – ServiceNow – was already based purely in SaaS.

Because we provide consumer insight, we have access to our customers’ customers’ data: Sky has 10 million customers/subscribers and we process consumer insight on them. We needed to be sure that any SaaS-based product addressed our concerns about security, processes and data privacy. As part of our vendor selection, we wanted to know who would have access to the data (incident, problem and change) and we wanted details of the data centre where data would be stored. We took an all-or-nothing approach to data governance and security in a SaaS-based product, which ServiceNow addressed.

The operational overhead of managing, maintaining and upgrading is a big factor for us, being a new IT organization. So when we go through a major release of ServiceNow without anybody else in our business realizing it had taken place (apart from the client notifications received), it’s proof we picked the right ITSM tool. The other tools we evaluated were going to take time to get where we needed to be – time we didn’t have.

We were on a very tight timescale for the acquisition, for providing services to customers and for recruiting people to work in the organization. It was a big load off of the team that we had the first part of the project running so smoothly.

Adoption hurdles
One of the biggest adoption hurdles we had was in controlling our managing director’s enthusiasm. We got him engaged early in the selection process, and he absolutely bought what the SaaS-based, ServiceNow model could bring us. He could see the value in the workflow aspects, the release management and the time management, and he keeps giving us new requirements all the time.

Because we were a new organization introducing assets and people into the business, we had a problem keeping up with the amount of new staff coming in from our aggressive recruitment process. We corrected some workflows and used ServiceNow to help our HR department onboard new employees providing true business value outside of technology operations.

We didn’t face any technology hurdles, since we completed our due diligence back in August. There were a few, low-level hurdles: getting people to buy into a new tool after using a different one, training them on it, gaining buy-in from the various department heads, and capturing everything in the tool. Culturally the organization was expecting change and this was seen as a positive one.

Any hurdles were overshadowed by the smooth implementation and intuitiveness of the tool. We have one support guy running the ServiceNow project for us, and he has picked it up as part of his day-to-day responsibilities.

We have not had to make any infrastructure upgrades at all as a result of our implementation of ServiceNow. From the monitoring we’ve done across the link,
the required Internet bandwidth is minimal. We planned our infrastructure not so much to support our tools, but to support the growth of the business, so whether we had chosen an on-premise or SaaS-based solution, that infrastructure would still be where it is today.

It was six months ago that we deployed ServiceNow and I’m confident that our incident and problem processes would hold up against any ITIL-certified organization. We are currently rolling out change and configuration management, and within a couple of months from now, I expect those processes also to hold themselves up against any enterprise-class organization.

**Impact of SaaS**

First, I would say that SaaS has helped us build a standard for ourselves on how quickly we can support the business. We’ve seen about 25 percent financial growth in the last six months. SaaS will allow our team to support workflow and business intelligence processes, an area in which we have a number of requirements.

Second, we have been able to give our end-customers controlled transparency through the self-service capabilities in the tool. I would like to think that, as a result of the transparency we’re offering, some of the end-customers we support today feel that they’re getting better service than they were before the acquisition. They can see where their tickets are, how long they have been in a particular queue, who is dealing with them, where they are on our contractual SLA, etc., none of which they could see before.

We now deliver much more value as a technology operations organization. When our sales guys speak to prospects, a member of my team goes along to talk about how we deliver better service than the competition, and ServiceNow’s features help us differentiate ourselves.

During the due diligence process and acquisition, we looked closely at the costs of implementing. On-premise solutions were quite expensive, so we estimated that we could reduce our operating costs by 20 percent, with no associated capital expense for start-up or infrastructure. We are delivering services through ServiceNow at least 40 percent cheaper than we were in the on-premise product before the acquisition.

I can’t point to any disadvantages of SaaS. We’ve used SaaS for service management and messaging, and I haven’t seen any service interruption or downtime. Of course, we’re working in a different way, but the benefit is that we don’t have to worry about infrastructure – we can spend all our time focused on the front end.

**Lessons learned**

When we implemented ServiceNow, we didn’t have a set of measurable goals that we wanted to achieve with IT service management from day one. We had a remit to improve service, and we defined that vaguely as greater transparency and more management information. But I would say that we had an overriding objective to improve service and provide transparency, and we have delivered on that 100 percent. In our next integration, we will start with tangible goals for improving the SLAs and measurements for greater efficiency in our processes.

I believe that, if we had chosen an on-premise solution, we would still be working out how to implement the service in a resilient architecture in our data centre. We’d probably still have 100 days of professional services left to use from the vendor. We were a brand new team that had to negotiate with new data centres, migrate them, outfit our new office space, build out Internet IT infrastructure and much more. If we had also had to build a help desk system with relevant processes

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and workflow, we would still be initiating the project instead of delivering services. I feel that we’ve delivered and been effective because we chose a SaaS-based product.

**Next steps**

We have to provision infrastructure all the time, and we’re looking into using SaaS to make sure we have sufficient capacity in our data centre to support the growth in the business. How do we provision workflow, for example? If we do need capacity, when do we need it? How do we provision it? How do we de-provision it once the business no longer needs it?

We’re implementing configuration management in this phase as a foundation. We’ll use asset management on the infrastructure that we migrate into our data centres, then we’ll federate the data from that into ServiceNow. Finally, we’ll run change, incident and everything else on top of the configuration management database (CMDB) that we have populated through asset management. We also plan to use the CMDB to provide us with information on software license usage, fulfilling a business requirement from our commercial and legal teams to feed into the larger Sky organization.

When we make changes to a particular server, database, environment or business service, we want people to use the terminology as part of our culture and understand the impact of those changes. The information in our CMDB will help us provide this kind of informed change in the organization.

Eventually, we’ll create a service catalogue in which we can make checklists for, say, configuring new servers. We then want to link that into a system that will provision that server either in a virtual sandpit, or into a cloud, private cloud or cloud-based environment.

We’ve not done much reporting with ServiceNow so far. We’re in the process of creating a business office for technology operations, and one of its functions will be to report key performance indicators (KPI) on the services we provide as a team. I expect we’ll use ServiceNow to facilitate some or all of that reporting.

We’re looking at the cloud for firing up training environments, and also for quick test/ QA environments where speed is of the essence.

My advice to companies that are contemplating SaaS is to use the cloud to help you innovate. You can use it to deliver more to the business and challenge your current processes in service management today.”