Now on Now: Taking charge of ServiceNow’s IT project portfolio

Creating visibility, driving business alignment, accelerating execution, and reducing risk
Our dark secret: We weren’t managing our IT project portfolio

At ServiceNow, growth and digital transformation go hand in hand. By streamlining, automating, and consumerizing our processes, we’re accelerating our business, creating visibility and control, and delivering fulfilling experiences for our customers, partners, and employees.

Digitalization depends on a close partnership between IT and the business. Delivering innovation is a team sport, with every player doing their part. For our IT organization, that means understanding business needs, prioritizing work to maximize business value, and executing with agility and precision.

But here’s a dark secret—although it may sound familiar. Up until a few years ago, we were struggling with our internal IT projects. ServiceNow’s IT team had skilled developers, experienced project managers, and a passion for success. But everything was disconnected. We wrestled with emails, spreadsheets, and siloed project management tools. There was no easy way to consolidate and prioritize business demands, create consistent visibility across projects, or ensure we had the resources and budgets in place to deliver across all of our commitments.

In other words, we were managing individual projects, but we weren’t managing our project portfolio.

In this ebook, we explain the ServiceNow® IT Business Management (ITBM) journey—how we’ve transformed the way we manage our IT project portfolio to deliver predictable, high-value business outcomes. As we share our experience, you’ll learn about our challenges, how we overcame them, and the benefits we’ve seen as a result.
Meet Lilly Souksamlane

Faced with an unsustainable IT project delivery model, we asked Lilly Souksamlane, one of our most senior IT program managers, to lead the way forward. Lilly has been responsible for transforming how we manage our IT project portfolio, leveraging ServiceNow ITBM to:

- Create end-to-end visibility
- Enable data-driven decision-making
- Strengthen relationships with our internal business partners
- Accelerate and safeguard project delivery

Lilly Souksamlane
Sr. Manager, Project/Program Information Systems
Disconnected data and manual processes

Lilly says, “When we looked at how we managed our IT projects, we knew we could do better. Data was spread out over emails, spreadsheets, internal wiki sites, and SharePoint, which made information hard to find and even harder to understand. When a business partner wanted to know the status of their projects, it would take us days to pull everything together. And, by the time we did, it was out of date. Since we had no real-time view, we would end up recalling and resending status reports because the situation had changed. That doesn’t build confidence with the business.”

Into the black hole

It wasn’t just about reporting project and portfolio status. “Because we didn’t have a consistent way of capturing business demands and committing to delivery, projects went into a black hole. Here’s a case in point: One of our business stakeholders needed a project delivered and got a verbal commitment from one of our development managers. However, the development manager forgot to put the request into his spreadsheet. Finance came back six months later and asked where the project was. It hadn’t been started,” said Lilly.

Overbooked resources

Managing resources and budgets across projects was another major issue. “We committed five resources to work on a project without knowing that these people were overloaded on another project. Because we had no centralized way to assign resources and track actual resource utilization, we couldn’t see the problem.”
Taking back control

So, how did we go about transforming the way we manage our IT project portfolio? How did we use ServiceNow ITBM to create business alignment, make more informed decisions, identify and eliminate risk, and execute faster and more predictably?

Creating visibility and aligning processes

It all began with visibility. "Our first step was to get all of our project plans in one place. We could have started by having a business process consultant look at our processes. This is a good approach—and one that I would recommend. But in our case, we were desperate for visibility, so the first thing we did was to import all of our project data into ITBM Project Portfolio Management. This only took about a week. We could import Microsoft Project files just by clicking the button, but massaging spreadsheets took a little more time," said Lilly.

"As soon as we did that, the issues became crystal clear. For instance, we tried to run a report showing the milestones of all of our projects. Guess what? We didn’t have consistent milestones across projects. Right away, we knew we needed to fix this, which we did. And, as we worked through the data, we uncovered other process changes and improvements we needed to make. Even today, we continue to refine our processes by looking at the data. Learning from real project information early on is really powerful—as long as you go back to designing new processes up front once you have the fundamentals under control."
Eliminating the black hole by empowering business partners

Now that there was clean data in the system and our project managers were actively using ITBM, it was time to engage with internal business partners and other stakeholders. Again, delivering visibility was a top priority. By giving each business unit real-time visibility in its projects, our IT team strengthened its relationship with the business by enhancing communications, transparency, and accountability.

According to Lilly, “There’s no more black hole. Now, our business partners can see exactly where their projects stand. We’re no longer scrambling to find the information. The same goes for our executives. We give them dashboards where they can see the overall health of the project portfolio, including demands, projects executed and not executed, and more. They can see their book of business for the year, along with the execution rate for that book—any time and anywhere, including on their mobile devices. And our time savings have been enormous. We’re saving more than 4,000 hours a year through real-time reporting and dashboards alone.”
Creating business alignment by centralizing demand

Visibility is only one part of the equation. We also use demand management to capture and prioritize all of the demands from our business partners. “We gave each business stakeholder self-service access so that they could enter requests by themselves. Nothing slips through the cracks, and we have one place to assess and prioritize these ideas. And, because everyone is working off the same information, we’ve been able to elevate our conversation with the business. We can have a fact-based discussion that leads to the best decisions and business outcomes. And, we do it more quickly. In fact, we’ve reduced the time to screen and approve projects by 60%,” said Lilly.

Resource management means we are green out of the gate

Combined with portfolio-level resource planning, this structured demand process also dramatically reduces risk. Lilly explains, “We don’t want our projects to be red out of the gate. Before, we would commit to the business and find out six months later that we didn’t have the resources or budget to deliver. Now, as we convert ideas into demands, we do our due diligence up front—building out stories, resource requirements, funding, and more. And with ITBM Resource Management, we have real-time insight to resource availability including both project and operations work assignments, so we can confidently commit available resources as soon as the project goes on the roadmap.”
Accelerating delivery and reducing risk

Once a project starts, this structured, integrated approach continues to deliver major benefits. For example, we’ve integrated timecards, so our team leaders can instantly see where people are spending their time—which helps them to manage workloads better and keep their teams on target. We’re also using the financial capabilities of ITBM, so we can see planned versus actual spend, which means that we have the visibility we need to stay on budget.

“We’ve got all the data we need in one place. I’ve worked at other companies where I had to go to seven different systems to get status information. We don’t have that problem. We can get a consolidated report simply by pressing a button. So, when we go to our weekly portfolio review meetings, we have an up-to-the-minute view of what’s going on. We know whether a project is red, yellow, or green—and we know why. That means we work faster, make better decisions, and take action more quickly. And, the results prove it. We now deliver projects 20% faster than we did before,” states Lilly.
Anticipating future risks with Performance Analytics

It’s not just about knowing where we are. With ServiceNow® Performance Analytics, we can also see trends, so that we know where we’re going. According to Lilly, “We can now easily slice and dice information to get far deeper insights into how our projects are doing. For example, we can see how much churn there is in a project by looking at the number of change requests or see how many times it went from green to yellow to red and back again. These metrics are leading indicators of risk, so we can focus on projects that need attention."

Delivering tangible business results

What about our business partners? Are they now getting the deliverables they need?

Lori Bausback, whose team manages IT programs for finance, legal, human resources, and facilities, says, “We now have a tight interlock meeting with our business partners, and we’re delivering far better quality. For example, we had a major procurement upgrade project that was in trouble and significantly delayed. With ITBM, we’ve now successfully delivered that project. We also have total visibility of our demand pipeline, so we can accurately estimate projects, prioritize and commit to them, and slot them into our quarterly roadmap without missing anything.”
The bottom line

With ServiceNow ITBM, we’ve created business alignment, enabled data-driven decision-making, accelerated project delivery, and reduced risk.

By replacing siloed data and manual processes with automated, end-to-end visibility, we’ve taken charge of our IT project portfolio. The results speak for themselves:

- 4,000+ hours saved annually with real-time reporting and dashboards
- 60% faster project approvals
- 20% faster delivery
- $350,000+ a year in project management cost savings

That’s why ServiceNow ITBM is one of our most strategic assets. It unlocks the potential of our IT team to drive meaningful and sustainable business value, supporting our growth as we continue to accelerate business velocity, consumerize our processes, and deliver the experiences that our customers, partners, and employees deserve.

$354,900
SAVED EACH YEAR IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT COSTS
Now on Now
How we use our own technology

About ServiceNow
ServiceNow was started in 2004 with the belief that getting simple stuff done at work can be easy, and getting complex multi-step tasks completed can be painless. From the beginning, ServiceNow envisioned a world where anyone could create powerful workflows to get enterprise work done. Today, ServiceNow is the cloud-based platform that simplifies the way we work. ServiceNow software automates, predicts, digitizes and optimizes business processes and tasks, across IT, customer service, security, human resources, and more, to create a better experience for your employees and customers while transforming your enterprise. ServiceNow is how work gets done.