How to Start, Optimize, and Elevate your ITAM Program

AJ Witt, The ITAM Review
This whitepaper accompanies the series of three webinars the ITAM Review and ServiceNow delivered in May/June 2020. In this series, we set out to provide insight on how to start, optimize and elevate your ITAM program.

Introduction

2020 has presented businesses with an unprecedented set of challenges. IT departments have adapted rapidly to deliver safe remote working environments. They’ve accelerated transformation programs to enable organizations to pivot to new products and customer experiences. They’ve handled layoffs; and now, as the economy starts to open up again, they need to manage a new hybrid working environment.

Throughout this period, the focus has been on rapid enablement rather than cost and risk management. Now is the time to get to grips with those elements of IT governance; and ITAM is well-positioned to drive success against those objectives. How do you go about it? This article, along with the webinars and Gorilla Guides, provides a structure for starting, optimizing, and elevating your ITAM program.

Getting Started

If your organization doesn’t currently have an ITAM program, how do you start one? The best approach is to secure executive sponsorship with a well-researched business plan. You need backing from senior management to make this happen since ITAM touches everything that IT does and also has the ability to drive increased value from technology investments. Your senior sponsor may be your CIO, but equally it could be your CFO or even your CISO. How do you go about securing that backing?

In the first webinar, we presented the following approach to building a simple business case – a one-page statement of intent that provides compelling evidence to a prospective executive sponsor.
In this framework, we define the actions needed to deliver business value in response to a business issue. For example, the business issue might be a directive to reduce IT costs by 10%. In addressing that directive, we discover that a lack of cost visibility is hampering our efforts, and the lack of visibility implies that we may be over-spending on IT by up to 30%. We develop a position to resolve it – a set of activities that if carried out will solve the problem and deliver business value. For this example, it starts with gaining visibility, focusing on quick wins such as SaaS License Management, and driving process improvements through automation. The business value is that we’ve delivered cost savings of 10% in the first year. We’ve also delivered process improvements that mean our colleagues get the right tools to do their job quicker than ever before.

With executive sponsorship secured, we’re ready to get started with our program. Throughout this webinar series, we stress the importance of building momentum for your program; and the starting point for that is delivering quick wins. For further guidance on how to build your plan, secure sponsorship, and identify those quick wins, please register to view the webinar “Getting Started with ITAM” available ondemand here: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_mA1yNSwWShaDl3A_zU0sFA
Implementing and Optimizing your ITAM program

With your plan agreed and executive backing secured, it’s time to implement and optimize it. The question to ask yourself is “What do we need to do in the first 30/60/90 days?”. There are three key workstreams in this phase—getting trustworthy data, building strong stakeholder relationships, and delivering quick wins.

ITAM always starts with acquiring trustworthy data about the assets deployed in your estate and the license entitlements that you hold. Such data enables informed decisions to be made about current asset usage and future investment and is foundational to any successful ITAM program. A central repository of trustworthy data also enables ITAM’s ability to break down silos across IT and beyond. Being able to accurately respond to stakeholder questions is critical to building strong stakeholder relationships that are vital to delivering ITAM success.

With trustworthy data available and strong stakeholder relationships developing, we can start to build momentum with quick wins. For many SaaS-first organizations—or those that have turned to SaaS solutions to enable remote work—the ideal place to start is by reducing SaaS spending. The reason for this is that the Time to Value (TTV) is very short—measured in days and weeks rather than quarters. With trustworthy data from a variety of SaaS discovery methods, it is possible to determine and quantify where savings can be made. Furthermore, because SaaS is subscription software and typically on an annual contract, right-sizing the contract will yield rapid savings. The key to this approach is building and acting upon a renewals pipeline—determining which SaaS subscriptions are due for renewal in the next 2-3 months and acting as soon as possible to right-size those renewals.

With SaaS Optimization up and running and delivering results, your program naturally develops momentum, giving you the opportunity to focus on big ticket items with a longer time to value such as optimizing enterprise software spend and reducing audit risk.
For more on Implementing and Optimizing your ITAM program, including leveraging the IT Asset Lifecycle to drive continuous improvement, please register to view the webinar “Optimizing ITAM for Success”, available on demand here: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_G4qCP_y_Qt6N2qL0DIG0BQ
Embedding and Elevating

So far, we’ve built a plan, secured backing, and delivered some big wins. We have momentum behind our program. But how do we maintain that momentum? What’s next? The aim is to use ITAM to transform IT; and to do that, we need to move our program from being tactical and somewhat reactive to being strategic and proactive. The best way to approach this is to ensure that ITAM Operations (the day-to-day routine activities) are embedded in the fabric of the IT department’s business-as-usual operating model. This can be achieved through automation. By automating key processes such as Request and License Harvesting, ITAM teams can focus on tasks and programs with greater value-add potential. Automating routine tasks also improves governance because human error and delay are reduced. This is particularly important for time-critical tasks such as employee onboarding/offboarding—a vital process in these times of high employee turnover.

With the routine automated and embedded ITAM, teams are free to become strategic partners for IT senior leaders and beyond. Strategic ITAM teams directly improve the value companies derive from technology investments. For example, they work with Architects to proactively workflow data on which applications and technologies are reaching end-of-life in the medium term. They work with Program and Project Offices to ensure that the right technology investments are made on the right terms. With the shift to remote working, they have application usage data vital to HR departments adjusting to governing these new working arrangements. Finally, ITAM has always been closely aligned with IT Security as both functions are in the business of discovery and management of assets. The two teams can work together on a single data model to proactively reduce risk by identifying unpatched and unsupported software, and to respond quicker to vulnerabilities prone to a cyber-attack.

For more on embedding and elevating ITAM through automation and strategic engagement, please register to view the webinar “Elevating ITAM with Workflow”, available on-demand here: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_P1EaRUx2Sw-Pqxwplo_YAQ
Conclusion

For a digital business, a structured ITAM program is essential. You can’t run a digital business if you don’t know what it’s running on. On a single platform, ITAM teams are now in the nucleus of the means of production and value creation. They ensure that the right technology investments are made with automated workflow. They continuously manage the risks associated with the use of technology, elevating ITAM visibility with stakeholders across IT and beyond. And they ensure a “work from anywhere” workforce has the right tools at the right time to do their jobs, leveraging automation to streamline the asset lifecycle. The time is now to build your ITAM program.

Further Reading:

For more on this subject please click the images below to download ServiceNow’s Gorilla Guides to Starting, Optimizing, and Elevating your ITAM Program.
About The ITAM Review

The ITAM Review began in 2008 so that anyone involved in the SAM or ITAM industry could share their expertise, feedback and opinions of the technology and services in the market for the benefit of others. Driven by knowledge, our focus is to empower every ITAM professional throughout their career, every step of the way, providing the support, skills and confidence to succeed. The ITAM Review exists to champion the business value of the ITAM profession, develop ITAM industry leaders, and enable organisations worldwide to extract best value from their technology investments whilst minimising risk.