

ITAM Channel interview with Kylie Fowler, June 2019

An interview with a true advocate for ITAM and the winner of the ITAM Award 2019

Kylie, welcome and thank you for joining us for this interview. But first of all, another big congrats on being the 4'th winner of the ITAM Award and thus becoming member of this "ITAM hall of fame"! It was a quite clear nomination and lots and lots of nice words about your contribution to, predominantly the UK ITAM industry.

So for those out there that may not know you so well, please could you share a bit about your background and what you're doing?

Kylie: Hi Jesper, yes, it was lovely to receive the award – and a total surprise. You and the judging panel kept the secret very well!

As for me, I'm an independent ITAM consultant, so I help organisations think through how to do IT Asset Management. I'm also the convenor of the UK SAM Networking Group, which organises industry meet-ups and an annual conference in the UK. I also present regularly at conferences and ITAM events. On top of that I am also a member of Working Group 21 which is driving the development of the ISO19770 family of standards. I started working in the industry nearly 15 years ago now, and I love it!

As a consultant working with SAM and ITAM on a daily basis, where do you see companies struggle the most?

Kylie: Well, of course, the organisations I see are those which are really struggling with ITAM! I rarely get to see organisations which do it well!

My approach is to help organisations define a vision for how they want their IT Asset Management to look over the next 2 – 3 years, and then help define a high level roadmap that they can implement during that period.

The reason implementing ITAM takes so long is because you have to drive cultural and process changes through the entire IT organisation, and that isn't easy. You need to work hard to get senior sponsorship to allow changes to cascade through the IT organisation, even to people who don't realise they 'do' IT Asset Management. You first have to educate people that they need to change, then help them understand how to change, and then help them actually implement change.

That's an interesting perspective, which is often overlooked! What suggestions do you have for achieving this?

First and foremost, I listen to people. When I start working with an organisation, I spend at least an hour talking with all the key stakeholders, and the focus of the conversation is not on what they need to do, but on what their pain is. When people feel listened to, they know you are taking into account their perspective and their problems, and I find that even if I end up making recommendations that they don't necessarily agree with, because I have listened to them, they are more likely to feel that the recommendation is a considered one that takes into account things they aren't aware of or that I have had to prioritise other issues over theirs.

I also always ask people what they want to achieve in the future, and factor this in – there is nothing as powerful in winning over supporters than that sense that you are focused on helping them succeed in their own jobs and it's not all about you.

Finally, I would say don't get down into the details too quickly. Start by presenting a high level vision for how things should look, then get agreement to that, then take it to the next level of detail, get agreement for that, and so on. At each stage, reuse material you created in previous stages so that people have a sense of familiarity with what you are doing and how you present it – successful change is about making the strange familiar and small tricks like reusing slides from previous decks can really help.

If anyone is interested in finding out more about organisational change management, [PROSCI®](#) has some interesting material and have developed a helpful framework for implementing organisational change which is worth taking a look at. If you're like me and enjoy reading, there is also a [book!](#)

In a previous article published also on the ITAM Channel you advocate for proactive IT Asset Management. Could you please elaborate a bit about what you mean by this and why this is so important?

Kylie: I find many IT Asset Managers are stuck in the past – they are fixing up mistakes people made in the past, they are constantly discussing the bad news about how what someone has done in the past has had an impact now.... not only is it dispiriting, but for organisations which are rushing headlong into the brave new world of digitalisation, it's also largely irrelevant. The future is coming up at them much too fast to worry about the past.

I firmly believe we need to step out of our compliance comfort zone and be proactively engaging with these new technologies and understanding what the risks are and what controls we should be putting in place NOW to manage them. We also need to develop a much stronger sense of our organisation's risk appetite and ensure our activities are aligned to that. Risk is like porridge – everyone likes it a different temperature, and we have to understand what is 'just right' for our own company.

If you aren't thinking in terms of defining process controls to enable you to manage new technology, if you don't implement a programme of assurance to assess whether the process controls are being followed, and communicate where process issues may have impacts in the future to senior management, then you are failing as an IT Asset Manager, no matter how compliant your organisation is.

At ITAMOrg we try and put a lot of effort into the competencies and the sharing of knowledge between people and organizations. If you also believe this is important then how would you like to see this evolve further in the future?

Kylie: I'm a passionate believer in the importance of professional development for everyone. ITAM is an interesting career because the interplay of constant changing license metrics and technology mean you need to be very focused on maintaining your technical skills. Alternatively, like me, you can take a non-technical route, where your professional development needs to be focused on developing the vocabulary and basic understanding of your different stakeholders so you can communicate more effectively with them, explaining the reason why they need to change the way they do their day jobs.

Although it can be difficult to get out of the office, making sure you attend professional development events which focus on the future, like conferences, at least once a year, is

incredibly important. Training courses are important, of course, because they provide a foundation of knowledge and understanding, but conferences and networking events are where you get the space to build on those foundations and focus on what you need to do in future.

In ITAM, training only gets you so far. You need to make sure you get to conferences and networking events on a regular basis.

Over the last year or so we've seen the tools maturing further and even a company like ServiceNow who's a true innovation leader, has gone further into the SAM & ITAM area. Do you see this as a good thing as opposed to people and organizations have a wider understanding of the challenges and the way to go about these?

Kylie: You need tools to do good ITAM, but you can't do good ITAM with just a tool. Personally, I think the buzz around ServiceNow is symptomatic of the way we are being forced out of our compliance comfort zone into being much more focused on ensuring we're fit for the future. From a tool industry perspective, over the last 10 years the winners have been those which did compliance and did it very well, but far too often the tools were isolated from the rest of the organisation, the tool wasn't maintained and managed properly, and the tool encouraged IT Asset Managers to sit in an ivory tower divorced from the rest of the Organisation.

Fully integrated suites such as ServiceNow represent the complete opposite. Their compliance engines may not be the best, but their value is immeasurably increased by the fact they are embedded within the broader organisation, the accuracy of the data within the tool is constantly being tested because it's being used by lots of different people for lots of different purposes, and they allow process controls to be easily implemented across the entire software lifecycle.

This isn't to say that implementing a fully integrated suite doesn't require a huge investment in time, money and energy, and you need to ensure you have a well-defined service wrap just as you do for any other technology. However, if you get it right then the benefits are real.

But the question of specialist tool vs integrated suite is an old one that has been rehashed in many industries (including our own) many times in the past... discussing the pros and cons of best of breed vs suite is always a great way trigger some great conversations!

You facilitated a very interesting panel discussion at the BCS CMSG Annual Conference the other week, on 'ITAM 2029' – I was sorry to miss it! What were the highlights of the discussion?

Kylie: We had a really interesting group of people on the panel – Victoria Barber from Snow Software, Julia Veall from Vodafone, Sanjay Singh of KloudControl and Chris Gough from Derive Logic. It was a real spread of people from the industry.

We started off by defining digitalisation and how that relates back to ITAM. IoT looms large in terms of what needs to be managed, but I was surprised that Robotic Process Automation wasn't seen as more important for ITAM. I think RPA will be huge – because not only does it have huge potential to cause problems - how will a 'robot' be licensed? – it also has huge potential benefits - what a great way to upload entitlements, for instance!

We also discussed what the ITAM team of the future would look like, and I thought Julia's take on it was very interesting – as an ITAM manager, she is moving away from engaging domain specialists eg Oracle or SAP licensing specialists, to employing people with much more generalist skills, some of whom come from outside the industry. She sees ITAM and SAM becoming less

specialist in future, but recognising that where she does need specialists she'll go outside her organisation to engage them.

Finally, the entire panel thought that the way businesses will buy software and IT Assets is going to change – it will become much more decentralised, with business units going out and buying what they need. So really, 'shadow IT' will become bigger and bigger, until it just becomes 'IT'! IT Asset Managers need to work out ways of engaging directly with the business to help them manage the assets they are purchasing and using – becoming an enabler rather than a gatekeeper.

Thanks so much for your thoughts today Kylie... is there anything else you'd like to say before we close?

Kylie: Not really, just to say thanks again for the recognition! Like you, I'm also passionate about learning and education and helping people obtain ongoing professional development, and it's really nice to have that passion recognised by the industry!