ALCOR
ENABLING CLOUD

A Start to Finish Exploration
of the ServiceNow Helsinki Platform

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INTRODUCTION

ServiceNow's Geneva release in May 2015 was seen as a major release with many new features and a series of tactical and strategic shifts signaling a clear direction. In line with the theme of the ServiceNow annual event, Knowledge15, the stated objective was to showcase the possibility of "Everything as a service."For truly achieving this vision, those parts of the business that are traditionally seen as non-IT would have to port their processes onto SaaS platforms (like ServiceNow). ServiceNow's current release, Helsinki, is a major step in this direction. ServiceNow Helsinki, seeks to create a platform that anyone with a business-focused app can hook into and create a comprehensive and dynamic eco-system. Of particular interest is the added capability to build self-service portals with the Service Portal feature.

This Whitepaper will introduce some major features of the ServiceNow Helsinki release and specifically zoom in on the Service Portal, to introduce the benefits, and offer a compelling reason to upgrade to Helsinki.

KEY FEATURES OF THE HELSINKI SERVICENOW PLATFORM

ServiceNow Helsinki sees feature improvements on a number of the applications and also the introduction of some completely new functionalities. There has been a substantial focus on providing users the capability to add functionality themselves, as well as on improving the user experience. ServiceNow themselves define the intent thus "no more application backlogs, no more integration boundaries, and less development time and cost. ServiceNow Platform delivers exponential value with every cloud-native, workflow-based application your stakeholders create. Built on ServiceNow's application platform-as-a-service (PaaS), these apps automate work and orchestrate processes, both inside and outside your enterprise. With unique pre-built services and reusable components, you can rapidly build, integrate, and extend your apps to meet the dynamic requirements of your business."[1]

Larger improvements can broadly be classified into the following three areas:

Managing Service Delivery
The new Workbench view in Project Portfolio Management gives transparent visibility into resources, costs, risks, and issues and hence promotes more informed decision-making about projects and how to prioritize them based on their impact on service delivery.

ServiceNow Helsinki, seeks to create a platform that anyone with a business-focused app can hook into and create a comprehensive and dynamic eco-system.

Collaboration between the IT and the business users has been improved with the addition of audio notifications to Connect. Workflows that span groups and departments stand to really benefit from the enhanced collaboration capability. The addition of social functions that allow chat also promotes enhanced collaboration potentially allowing increased productivity of the service delivery team.

The HR Service Management plugin allows as many as 20 of the most-used HR services to get started in a very short time. Based on the status and category of the user, the portal provides just the right kind of functionality – for e.g. onboarding when the employee joins. A significant value of this feature is the ability to move away from paper forms and records and to then significantly enhance the traceability of all documents. Security-oriented enhancements include the eSignature functionality.

Like HRSM, the Customer Service Module has been greatly enhanced. There is a renewed focus on those users taking responsibility for their own customer service operations and in helping them integrate much better with internal and external entities involved in the process. The objective is to provide a unified experience that has a greater chance of being able to address the service delivery issues of the business.

Reporting and Analytics

ServiceNow has always laid great emphasis on leveraging Performance Analytics. The objective is to use data to improve service delivery, make better decisions about improving service quality, utilizing resources more efficiently, and in improving the alignment of the service organization with the business goals – this emphasis carries over into Helsinki too. There are nearly 50 new dashboards and close to 200 additional reports that address several different applications.

The CMDB Health Dashboard offers a simple, console view for configuration managers to keep an eye on accuracy, completion, and compliance related parameters. This allows them to proactively address issues regarding data integrity and ultimately to improve service quality.

Developing Apps

There has been considerable mention of Delegated Development, i.e. the greater control of the distribution of rights to the developers who want to develop their own applications and modules within the ServiceNow platform. In Helsinki, clear separation can be provided for the areas within which specified developers can carry our configurations within the overall control of the main system administrators. This helps those organizations that want to create new applications and modules.

Security in the Cloud has always been of concern to organizations. Helsinki has added significant enhancements in this areas with more embedded tools, Threat Intelligence, Vulnerability Response, better scoring of the likely impact of threats on the business, and new workflows. Security teams can take advantage of these features to assess potential threats and act on them proactively.

An effort has also been made to improve the contextual help documentation and to provide wizards that could help some new users attempt their initial configurations themselves. This allows users to get started faster and to potentially gain business value sooner.

Helsinki also provides better source code control and supports JavaScript 5. There is also the provision of native apps on Android and iPad in addition to the current iPhone app.

Bringing all these together, through much tighter integration between the platform, the tools, applications and CMDB makes for a much more comprehensive ITSM platform.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE SERVICENOW HELSINKI SERVICE PORTAL

Service Portal is among the biggest enhancements in Helsinki. ServiceNow themselves describe it thus, "Service Portal provides an alternative user experience to the standard platform UI. It is easy to configure, customize, and extend, similar to what users are used to in other consumer products. Use Service Portal to create a delightful experience for your users."[2]

Service Portal gives users an easy, new option for creating one or more, complete self-service portals that could be functional, elegant and easy to use. The Content Management System does not go away so portals built using CMS would still be supported by Helsinki but Service Portal allows the creation of responsive websites and apps by leveraging current web design approaches like Angular and Bootstrap. Helsinki includes 2 portals, HR and ITSM, built using Service Portal and these serve as great examples of the kind of engaging user experiences that can be created with Service Portal.

The objective here is to be able to build apps easily and quickly, while still keeping them usable as well as functional. Being a part of the overall ServiceNow platform the portal can interface with and access all the other components of the platform, thus providing a complete experience to the users.

ServiceNow has considered the needs of several different kinds of users in Service Portal. The Service Portal Designer helps to make the design and, eventually the deployment of the portals faster.

The Service Portal Designer providesauthoring capabilities, without the need for any coding. Branding Editor can be used by less-technical users to make simple changes to the configurations while still maintaining a consistent brand identity. Development tools like Widget Editor can be used for more complex tasks, like editing portals or pages or extending them, by those more technically equipped. For those capable of coding using AngularJS or JavaScript, the opportunity exists to create more advanced features and rich web applications. Used together, this allows users to create templates that are reusable and easy to maintain.

KEY BENEFITS FROM SERVICENOW HELSINKI

Earlier in this whitepaper we have touched upon several of the new features that have been added to Helsinki. Adding features, widgets, and workflows in themselves have little value if they don't translate into some specific business benefit to the organization implementing the solution.

➤ The principal benefit to users is from Service Portal – the ability to easily and quickly build engaging, fully-functional self-service portals can significantly enhance the service delivery capability of the service organization. In Helsinki, users can also create new applications easily and this has the potential to delivery real business impact.

➤ Another benefit is that these new apps can be created quickly – business users don't have to wait to realize the full benefits of the initiative and the value can be realized much faster.

➤ Helsinki also promotes a greater degree of self-reliance among organizations for simple issues like initial configurations.

➤ The enhanced dashboards and reporting capability gives the power of data to the service delivery team. They can make more informed decisions about where to spend resources, and which projects or initiatives need urgent attention based on their potential business impact. This could significantly improve the quality of service delivery across the organization while still keeping control of the costs.

➤ The tight integration between the various elements of the solution, as well as with external vendors and internal business users helps align the service delivery organization better with the business and deliver the greatest business impact where it is needed.

➤ The added security features help the service delivery organization be safer in the face of security threats in the Cloud by identifying threats early and proactively acting against them.

➤ Specific features deliver their own benefits to the organization. These include:

- ➤ The social / chat functionality enables better collaboration among the service delivery teams and between them and the business users. This promotes a better work environment and better alignment among teams.
- ➤ The HR plugin allows the organization to track employee information better while going paper-less.

SERVICENOW INTRODUCTION

IT Service Management is defined as a combination of people, processes, and tools that are deployed to support the production environment or for delivering other IT services to the organization's internal & external customers. ServiceNow is a leading cloud-based ITSM tool focused on the enterprise.

ServiceNow focuses on the workflows within the enterprise and helps enterprises define, codify and automate these workflows to ensure predictability and scalability on a day to day basis. Enterprises deploying ServiceNow leverage the capabilities of the product inIncident Management, Issue Management, Request Management, Knowledge Management and for Tracking and Reporting.

ServiceNow focuses on a variety of business domains including Financial, Healthcare, Higher Education, Managed Services and various Government sectors.

ALCOR CAPABILITIES IN SERVICENOW

Alcor is a global cloud advisory and implementation services company serving Fortune 500, Government agencies, and other leading organizations in multiple industry verticals across the Americas, Canada and India. Alcor is a ServiceNow Silver partner and also partners to FireEye, Salesforce, Dell Boomi, Nexthink, Microsoft and Bomgar. They advise leading businesses on cloud platforms, architecture, enterprise service management and integrating IT service delivery. They also provide business process consulting to capture, re-engineer and improve processes that can easily be automated to deliver real value. The Alcor consulting team is derived from a combination of experts in Business strategy, Cloud Technology and Organizational Change Management.

Alcor takes a strategic ITSM implementation approach and focuses on solving the business problems of their clients by leveraging an integrated business process design and technology implementation capability. Alcor's ITSM solutions with ServiceNow leverage a business view of IT services.

The objective is to enable the IT support organization to:
▸ Quickly resolve or escalate issues and problems
▸ Improve root cause isolation, and
▸ Provide higher levels of business user satisfaction.

Alcor brings substantial process expertise, ServiceNow experience and depth of organizational governance modeling to build solutions that are effective and provide complete life cycle support for Incident Management, Problem Management, Change Management and Configuration Management. Alcor has experience in Automating ServiceNow with external applications like emails, active directories, Adobe, assets, and Amazon Cloud Provision (LABS). This includes real-world experience of having worked with enterprises in the banking and financial services and retail sector where we have helped orchestrate transaction volumes running into the 100's of thousands.

Alcor Solutions deploys the best in class enterprise solutions to exploit the full measure of Performance Analytics across the business to deliver optimum benefits. This customized business solution has helped their clients gain insights into the performance of the IT systems critical to several areas of business operations, like human resources, finance, legal and administration. Their solution provides both performance reporting and predictive analytics, which in turn help's their clients gain insights that can help them get maximum benefit from their investments into their IT infrastructure.[4]

Alcor achieves this by leveraging their integrated business process design and technology implementation capability. Their professionals are the top talents in the business with deep personal understanding of the business verticals they service. This allows them to deliver flexible solutions that work in the real world. Their strength lies in delivering solutions that are customized to the specific requirements of their customers including complex integrations with the other systems in the eco-system like Financial and Procurement Management systems. You can get more information about Alcor and their capabilities by writing to information@alcortech.com.

CONCLUSION

In the annual Knowledge 16 event, where ServiceNow Helsinki was widely showcased, Frank Slootman, President and CEO of ServiceNow spoke at length about the motivations of the company. He spoke of how a wide gap was perceptible between how services were requested inside and outside the organization. He mentioned how research had proven that as far as enterprise applications went, what mattered most to the users was "ease of use". As he put it, the role of IT was expanding to become the backbone of the modern enterprise. It is this light that the rationale behind an easy-to-use, comprehensive ITSM / ITOM solution like ServiceNow Helsinki becomes apparent.

Alcor is a technology implementation company focusing on Enterprise and Government technology needs in ITSM, systems integration, web development and mobility space. We provide a strategic ITSM implementation approach to our clients and focus on solving business problems by leveraging an integrated business process design and technology implementation capability.

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