Defining and Applying the Role of Service Owners in the UC IT Community

Kevin Baldwin and Meggan Levitt
UCCSC 2018 at UC Davis

Session Agenda

1. Overview of EDUCAUSE Center for Analysis (ECAR) Paper titled *IT Service Ownership in Higher Education* (20 minutes)
2. Panel discussion on applying the concepts in real-life at the UC system (70 minutes)

ECAR Working Group

Co-chair: **Connie Deighan Eaton**, Carnegie Mellon University
Co-chair: **Robert Cheyne**, Texas A&M University
Michael Cyr, University of Maine System
David Foote, Wayne State University
Chas Grundy, University of Notre Dame
Todd Jensen, University of Nebraska–Lincoln
Andrew Labuda, University of Pittsburgh
Meggan Levitt, Director, Educational Technology Services, University of California, Berkeley
Ben Page, Boston University
Leetza Pegg, University of Washington
Deb Saks, Framingham State University

The Problem

- Many higher ed institutions have adopted ITSM
- However the role of the service owner remains not well understood
- As a result, roles and responsibilities that are critical for service delivery and aligning services with institutional goals are not optimized in our organizations

Many higher education IT organizations have adopted IT Service Management tools and practices to help transform from technology-oriented to service-oriented organizations focused on facilitating institutional outcomes.

While many IT organizations have defined their services in an IT Service Catalog, the role of "Service Owner" is frequently not well understood, and guidance from IT Service Management literature, such as ITIL, can require substantial investment in time and resources.

As a result, roles and responsibilities critical for alignment of services with institutional goals, and the delivery of services according to agreed-upon levels, are not optimized in our organizations. This paper is about the definition, roles, and responsibilities of service ownership in the context of higher education IT.

What is a Service Owner?

The **Service Owner (SO)** is accountable for the delivery of an IT service and the service offerings within.

- Ensures that the service receives strategic attention and appropriate resources
- Is responsible for the service as a whole through its entire lifecycle and is accountable to the person in charge of overall IT service delivery.
  - Independent of where the underpinning technology components, processes, or professional capabilities, needed to deliver the service and its offerings, reside.

The Service Owner (SO) is accountable for the delivery of an IT service and the service offerings within. The purpose of this leadership role is to ensure that the service receives strategic attention and appropriate resources to support the mission and needs of the Institution. The service owner is responsible for the service as a whole through its entire lifecycle and is accountable to the person in charge of overall IT service delivery. The service owner's accountability for a service is independent of where the underpinning technology components, processes, or professional capabilities, needed to deliver the service and its offerings, reside.
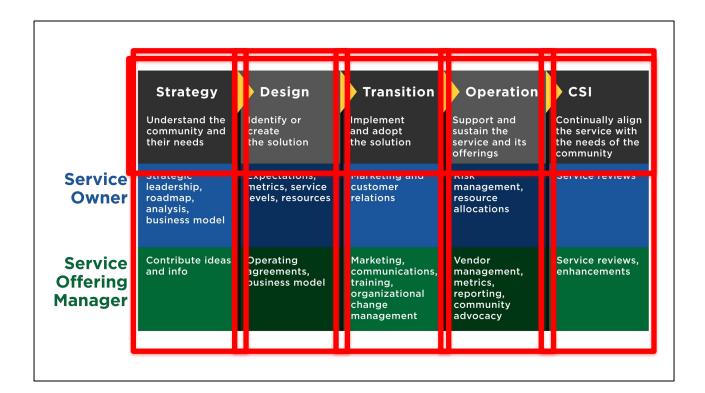
What is a Service Offering Manager?

The **Service Offering Manager (SOM)** is responsible for the delivery of an IT service offering.

- Ensures comprehensive, efficient, and transparent management of, and communication about, the IT service offering
- Is accountable to the service owner for the design, implementation, and ongoing maintenance and support of the offering.
  - Independent of where the underpinning technology components, processes, or professional capabilities reside.

The Service Offering Manager (SOM) is responsible for the delivery of an IT service offering. The purpose of this role is to ensure comprehensive, efficient, and transparent management of, and communication about, the IT service offering in accordance with the service strategy. This cross-functional role is accountable to the service owner for the design, implementation, and ongoing maintenance and support of the offering. The service offering manager's responsibility for a specific service offering is independent of where the underpinning technology components, processes, or professional capabilities reside.

SO and SOM Activities and Responsibilities

	Strategy	Design	Transition	Operation	CSI
	Understand the community and their needs	Identify or create the solution	Implement and adopt the solution	Support and sustain the service and its offerings	Continually align the service with the needs of the community
Service Owner	Strategic leadership, roadmap, analysis, business model	Expectations, metrics, service levels, resources	Marketing and customer relations	Risk management, resource allocations	Service reviews
Service Offering Manager	Contribute ideas and info	Operating agreements, business model	Marketing, communications, training, organizational change management	Vendor management, metrics, reporting, community advocacy	Service reviews, enhancements

Unlike a project, a service does not have a defined start and end. Throughout the service life cycle, the responsibilities of service owners and offering managers will vary and shift.

Early in the cycle, a service owner will be more active in defining the strategy. As the service is deployed, a service offering manager will take a more direct role in implementing this work.

These roles work together for the life of the service to sustain, continually improve, and eventually retire service offerings. **As a general rule, service owners operate at the strategic and tactical levels, while service offering managers operate at the tactical and operational levels.**

Please note that these two roles may be filled by the same person.

This will vary based on an organization's size and culture, the type and scale of service, and the individual staff. Furthermore, the size of an organization should not determine whether this work is done, though it might affect the extent to which these activities are carried out. A successful service will have all of the components identified in Table 1.

Service Owner
The service owner is involved in all stages of the service lifecycle, accountable for the end-to-end service.

The service owner **primarily concentrates on the strategy, design, and continual service improvement (CSI) phases of the lifecycle**, passing off the service during transition to the service offering manager(s) for operation, but remaining accountable for the delivery of the service to meet agreed upon service levels.

Strategy
The service owner **provides strategic leadership with respect to their service and its ecosystem**.

In order to do this effectively, they must understand the needs of the community related to their service, ideally ensuring those needs are **documented and agreed on** with community representatives.

They should also understand how others are providing similar services in their own communities, particularly in the case of service offerings where people have the option of utilizing free or extremely inexpensive alternatives. The use of **benchmarking, industry analysis and peer networks can be important here**.

The service owner is responsible for **periodic review of the service roadmap**, including existing and projected service offerings. This evaluation ensures **strategic alignment of assets with desired outcomes**, attention to critical success factors, and appropriate resource allocation, prioritization, and both IT organization and institutional, strategic plans.

If a new service offering has been identified as a candidate for delivery, the service owner should sponsor a **strategic assessment** of both internal and external aspects of the service. These include competitive service offerings, resource availability, risk and cost considerations, and strength of the business case.

Common questions about the service offering being considered may be -
what value will it provide?
To what part of the community will it provide that value?
Does the service offering replace or augment any other offerings?
How will we deal with external competition?

The service owner should determine when significant changes are needed to the service or its offerings as well as assessing when the service or its offerings are ready for retirement.

Legacy service offerings that continue on indefinitely can be a substantial cost strain for many higher ed institutions, and the service owner, in exposing the cost and risk of such offerings, can be of great service to their institution.

The service owner is **accountable for the effective budgeting, billing, and rate**

setting activities for their service, **even when the budget is not directly under their control**. In cooperation with the institutions administration, higher ed IT organizations may often choose to operate services at a loss and/or at no cost to the community, because the benefit to the organization of doing so outweighs the expense. Understanding what it costs to provide the service is always useful information however, even when there is no billing.

SOM Strategy
For new services, the service offering manager (SOM) **may not have been identified during the strategy and design stages**; this section assumes that the role has been filled.

Within the strategy lifecycle phase, the SOM role is **largely supportive in nature to the service owner**. The SOM **provides data** about the service offering, **product feature roadmap as well as customer satisfaction and quality metrics. Usage statistics, feature requests, incident resolution are examples of metrics** that are reported to the SO.

Design
The service owner has ultimate accountability for design of the service and related offerings. He/she establishes service level targets, ensuring that the resulting design supports delivery of the agreed-to targets (e.g., availability, capacity, security).

This encompasses the technical solution, including monitoring and event management, even if the solution is cloud-based.

This includes planning and securing the resources needed for service operation; development of incident and request models that are in line with the organization's service management processes; and publication of the service and related offerings in the service catalog. Where applicable, the owner is also accountable for ensuring a disaster recovery response and business continuity procedures.

The service owner also also develops KPIs and metrics that aid in management of the service, providing key inputs into service improvement initiatives.

As with other stages in the life cycle, the service owner may not personally undertake all of these activities, but is ultimately accountable for them.

SOM Design: The SOM's focus during this phase is largely **tactical**, and includes working with the service owner to develop a business model for the offering (within the broader service), which also encompasses the service catalog listing(s).

They are responsible for development of **incident and request models that are focused on empowering users** (e.g., self-service) and front line support teams; this also includes ensuring there are supporting **knowledge management artifacts such**

as self help, FAQ, and tier 1 support articles.

When the service is dependent on teams that are outside of the service owner's sphere of influence, **SOMs might take some responsibility in developing underpinning contracts and operating level agreements** (OLAs), though the service owner is ultimately accountable.

Transition
The service owner is responsible for overseeing transition of services and service offerings. This includes **ensuring appropriate resources are available and assigned to service offering transition efforts**. Service owners are also responsible for **understanding obstacles** to successful transition of the service or service offering, and identifying ways to overcome those obstacles.

Lastly, service owners ensure that **stakeholders, including leadership, have the information they need about the service and service transition efforts**.

SOM Transition: The service offering manager supports the service owner during the transition of a service offering.

This includes **promotion of the service to partners and stakeholders**, **communicating with supporting and supported service teams, and keeping the service owner up to date on transition activities**.

In addition, the service offering manager manages changes to the **service offering catalog entry**, and ensures **appropriate training, onboarding, and documentation is available for users**.

Operation
The service owner, generally, is not involved in day-to-day operational activities, but remains accountable for continued management of the service, including **adherence to financial models and budgets and ensuring staff have the necessary skills and resources to support the service**.

The service owner is accountable for the **confidentiality, integrity, and availability** of all service assets, information, and data and identifies and **manages all risks** associated with the service. The service owner maintains **regular communication** with all service offering managers to ensure the health of the service, changes to service metrics and performance criteria, and **provides feedback on the performance** of the service offering managers.

SOM Operation:
The service offering manager is accountable for **all daily operations of the service** offering, including **monitoring and analyzing metrics to evaluate the performance of the service** offering and coordinating with internal providers and **performing**

vendor management to ensure service delivery meets business objectives.

Participation in **change management**, service continuity, availability and capacity, **configuration management, release management, problem management, and incident management related to the service** offering is critical to the success of the service. This extends to monitoring end-user experiences, working with support teams to ensure the offering meets the support needs of the end users.

Continual Service Improvement
As the service owner is ultimately accountable for the lifecycle and value of each service offering, the service owner must see that the offerings are **appropriately managed, maintained, and improved.** In this way, the service owner can ensure that the user needs are met and the lifecycle is extended to provide the greatest return on investment for the organization. This includes **regular service reviews, advocating and providing resources for service improvements, and ultimately determining when a service retirement is appropriate.**

SOM CSI:
Over the life cycle of a service offering, both users' needs and the offering itself are likely to change. A successful service offering manager will maintain a **continual service improvement register: a list of opportunities, challenges, feature requests, unmet needs, and other enhancements. These may come from direct user feedback, stakeholder focus groups, service desk incidents,** or other sources.

By maintaining a relationship with vendors and project teams, the service offering manager will have an opportunity to advocate for these improvements, enhance the user experience, and extend the useful life of the service offering.

Selecting Service Owners

- Typically IT Leaders
- Highly Effective Communicators
- Sufficient Authority and Visibility

Typically IT organization leaders
Service owners should be **strategic, critical, and creative thinkers** who understand the value to the institution of services provided and can effectively balance competing strategic priorities.

Highly effective communicators
They will often **interact with academic and administrative executives, IT staff, and other stakeholders**. It is important for SOs to have the ability to build trust and foster relationships across these groups.

Sufficient authority and visibility to be able to fulfill the needs of their role.
The easiest way to ensure that is if they already have these as part of their hierarchical position, for instance if they report directly to the CIO or executive IT leadership. Otherwise, authority will need to be borrowed or formalized in some other way.

Selecting Service Offering Managers

- Critical Thinkers
- Strong Communication Skills
- Relationship-Building, Connectors

Service offering managers are assigned at the service offering level. They should be **critical thinkers who understand the people, products, partners, and processes involved in delivering their service offering. Service offering managers understand the dependencies upon which their services interact , and what other services may depend on them as well.**

Like service owners, service offering managers need **strong communication skills as they are often called on to facilitate discussion between technical staff and clients or decision makers who may not be fluent in IT speak.** They may also, depending on the service offering and organization involved, provide technical leadership for their service team, particularly in the areas of problem management and continual service improvement.

In cross-functional service teams the service offering manager **needs to be able to pull diverse resources together into a cohesive whole, working together with an eye on the desired outcomes of the institution**. That could be done by means of relationship building, or authority, or some combination of the two.

Challenges

As with any initiative, there are risks and challenges to successfully defining and implementing Service Owner and Service Offering Manager roles in your IT organization.

Common risk areas include:

- Structure and Culture
- Resources
- Tools

Structure and Culture
IT organizations that are IT-asset focused, rather than Service focused, may find it challenging to identify and empower service owners and service offering managers.

Fundamentally, service ownership starts with a single point of accountability for the delivery of a service at agreed upon levels (SLAs). Service-focus requires an IT organization that is able to **make, monitor and deliver upon internal commitments** between collaborating services areas. Lack of commitment to develop, monitor and enforce Operating Level Agreements (OLAs), reflecting the need for accountability across the IT organization is an indicator of risk that SOs/SOMs will run into barriers coordinating service strategy, design, delivery and transition across the organization.

Cultural challenges, such as **lack of governance that effectively links IT organization planning, prioritization and resourcing with the institution's goals and priorities**, will leave SOs and SOMs without necessary guidance and access to resources in which to successfully plan, and oversee service delivery.

Highly-siloed IT organizations (horizontally or vertically) will likely **present communication and territorial barriers to effective implementation of the SO and SOM roles**. Similarly, in these organizations, Service Owners, who are not also responsible for service offering delivery, may encounter territorial or political barriers to engaging strategically with stakeholders.

Finally, in IT organizations that **lack a basic level of understanding or commitment**

to ITSM principles, especially Service Lifecycle Management, SOs and SOMs will likely be frustrated and unable to realize benefits of these definitions and recommendations.

Resources
When developing and implementing formal roles and responsibilities for Service Owners and Service Offering Managers care should be taken to plan for the additional workload. However, utilizing the role definitions laid out in the paper may result in resource efficiencies through reduction in unnecessary duplication of activities.

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Tools
IT organizations **lacking mature ITSM tools**, such as organizations dependent upon spreadsheets for their service catalog, may find it difficult to empower and engage service owners/managers in an effective manner.

Panel Discussion: ITSM at UC

Panelists

Kevin Baldwin
Informatics Portfolio Manager
UCLA Health Sciences

Allisa Becker
Web Content Services Manager
UC San Diego

Phyllis Franco
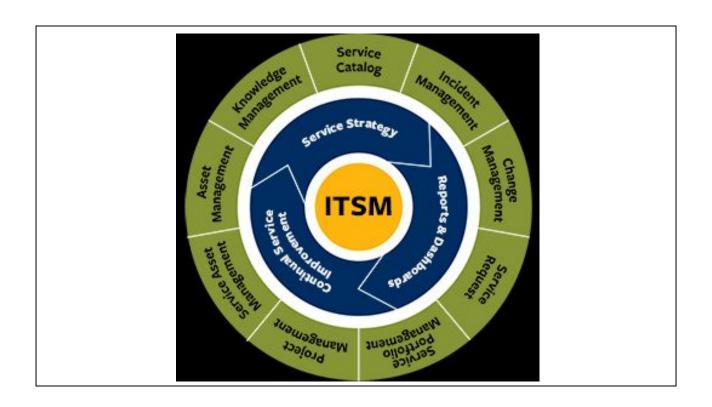Manager, ITS BearHelp
UC Riverside

Quico Gonzalez
Professional Services Manager
UC Davis

Anita Nichols
Director of Client Success
UC Davis

Marc Weisbrod
Senior Information Technology Manager
UC Office of the President

Questions

1. Describe your ITSM operations. *Reality versus theory!*
   a. Are you specifically using the Service Owner or Service Offering Manager roles?
   b. How do they compare/contrast with the activities and responsibilities that were presented?
   c. How 'adopted' are you?
2. What have been some of the cultural challenges you've face in adopting ITSM at your institution? With IT staff and with customers?
3. What tools are you using to facilitate ITSM at your organization? What is working well? What would you change?
4. Tell us about how you gather feedback from your customers and incorporate it into your continuous service improvement?
5. Time for Audience Questions!

5 questions at 15 minutes each means 2-3 minutes for each panelist a question. First question should be the longest with the most description.