Digital Podcast Show Notes

Episode 14 with guest Akshay Anand

**Hosts: Barclay Rae, Ian Aitchison,**

**Guest: Akshay Anand**

BR: Welcome. Ian has drunk too much coffee. Any deep thoughts?

IA: Thinking about business productivity … are we starting to see all Agile modern working become normal in all departments in a business? Started in Dev and IT, now part of all modern working

BR: I see that too. And now to today’s guest.

AA: Hello! I’ve got a cold. And spent last weekend building my Lego R2D2.

BR: And what’s your background? How did you get to be in Axelos?

AA: By accident. I was interested in process engineering. Factory floor flow of work and supply chain management. Took a job with a Remedy reseller, set up operations and enjoyed the ITIL stuff. Moved into consultancy side and IT projects. Moved to the UK and head of ITSM for Macmillan Publishing.

People told me to network a lot and it didn’t seem worthwhile, but networking paid off, got me into Axelos in 2016 in product development, and then into ITIL and ITIL4. Now ITIL Ambassador. Most fun I’ve had in years.

BR: thanks. And on to the main section….

**Main Bit**

BR:Over to Ian...

IA: So, Akshay may have a different point of view to many others on ESM. **What’s your take?**

AA: I’m a big fan of ‘service management’ and services. I have scepticism about the concept of ESM. Paul Wilkinson likes to ask people at conferences ‘who has had ITIL training’ and then ‘who can describe what a service is’ and all the hands go down. My point is that after 30 years, not many people get the concept of a Service. If we’ve had this much trouble in IT and can’t describe a service after 30 years, how can we expect people from other parts of the organisation to get it.

I think a lot of it is vendor-driven. Enterprise Workflow Management would be a better description. But ESM has a long way to go.

BR: Isn’t that just taxonomy though? There is still something there, not matter what you call it. **Does it matter what its called?**

AA: Yes. At some point people argue about terminology, that’s OK. But at the same time, words confer identity. It’s important to know if you are a Service or a Product organisation. There is even an identity crisis.

IA: The first point you made ‘what is a service’. Is this a noun or a verb? Service as a Thing is confusing to many people. However having a service-centric mindset and to-serve does not require us to describe the noun. It requires us to perform the verb. Our purpose is to help the business and customers be successful.

AA: I agree with that. But is comes back to an identity crisis - noun or verb, product or service.

BR: organisations may be both Product or Service. And there is a service mindset that we see in service level agreements and service architecture and more. I do think that we are at risk of confusing things. Being service-orientated is important. Treat them as if they are all customers.

AA: Language matters. English is a difficult language. Geography and culture makes it worse. If we are talking about ESM we need to understand whether people see themselves providing a service or fulfilling a functional need.

IA: Yeah…. Here’s a proposition … there is only one body of work which describes a service centric set of activities, if you took the core of that into another department. **There is nothing else which can deliver that guidance is there?** It is only ITSM ?

AA: There are other methodologies. (Starts talking about Metallica and Deep Purple and Bach)... if you look at ITSM literature and look at Service Science or Service Logic you can see first principles there. You can go back into academia, which may be a place to start. I remember my wife complaining about not have team visibility at work. I suggested a kanban board. She said ‘thats an IT tool’ and didnt want to do it. There is an inherent doubt against IT.

BR: They hate us

AA: There’s a little tribalism there. We had Sammi Kallo here recently showing stats that IT is actually leading and well respected.

IA: that was the pandemic

BR: but it has been going in the right direction for some time.

AA: I think we would have better success with ‘these are the principles of service-centricity’. That’s my point that this is enterprise workflow management, not service management.

IA: There’s that big advantage of using IT tools across the business for workflow. But, you look at the big picture of why ITIL and Service exists, and to you it is frustrating that across the business they are trying to use it in a much simpler way.

AA: Not really. Here’s an example. Good service in a restaurant is monitoring and continually checking. It’s not just taking an order and fulfilling an order. It’s about Service.

IA: Yes, its not about turning the handle, it’s about ‘how was that for you’, ‘how can I make that better, what was your experience?

BR: I remember being on holiday, talking to a waiter who used to be a chef. The service job was a more highly respected position. Its mindset.

AA: Here's another example. My daughter is a foodie. She told me in a restaurant that there are two types of people - cookers and givers. And I remembered that. If you only think of the creators only, then you are a product company. But if you think about the givers, you are a service company.

IA: Hmmm… I don’t know. Products we build these days are Services and have been for years. Modern products are cloud products and are continually evolved and enhanced and the big picture is considered all the way at all times.

Meanwhile**. Does enterprise workflow help you get better?** Is this the only way to improve work.

BR: So, to wrap up, **is digital transformation the same as ESM?**

AA: Digital transformation is a fundamental change to the business model. You become a radically different business, or you do your business radically differently (quote Mark Smalley. If you are not changing the business model then it is not digital transformation, it is operational change. But to change your business model you will have to change the way you work, and that can be ESM, yes, that will lead to investments in ESM to improve productivity and efficiency of your staff. ESM is definitely a component of that but you can’t start with ESM.

BR:OK, let’s take a breath.

**Endbit**

Akshay’s recommended favourite drink:

Akshay suggests two drinks (maybe he likes a few drinks):-

Dancing dragon tail gin

Indian drink called chichaki (I think I got that right)

**Key Lessons from Akshay Anand**

1 - Not many people know what a Service is.

2 - Terminology and naming matters

3 - Service mindset means thinking about more than creation

4 - ESM can be a component of Digital Transformation

**Useful Links**

Akshay on Twitter: @bloreboy

Akshay on linked in: https://www.linkedin.com/in/bloreboy/

Those Axelos people: https://www.axelos.com/