

ITAM Evolution: Embracing Necessary Change for a Prosperous Future

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This article is intended to act as a guide to help highlight the need for ITAM's evolution.

Executive Summary:

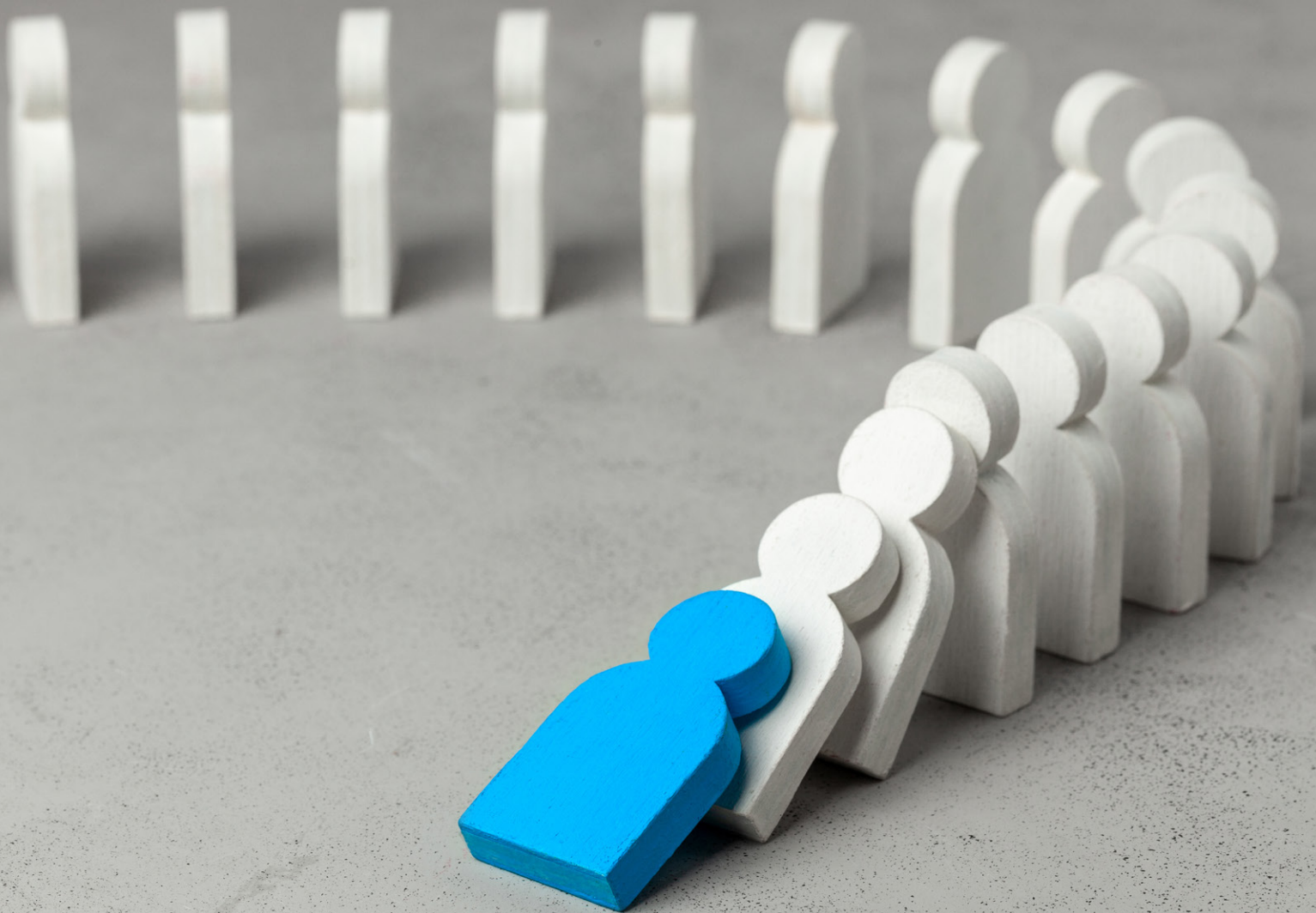
The value of IT Asset Management (ITAM) is under greater scrutiny than ever, driven by siloed and conflicting stakeholder demands along with the growing influence of cloud computing. IT leaders and asset managers must reimagine and modernise ITAM by managing technology through a holistic, flexible approach that prioritises collaborative management, distributed decision making, and practices focused on **value**, **experience**, and **risk** to maximise technology's impact on business outcomes.

Key Takeaways:

- **Erosion of Value and Stakeholder Misalignment:** ITAM teams feel unprepared for emerging trends due to a focus on Software Asset Management (SAM), leading to a disconnect with stakeholders who need a broader asset management approach.
- **Complexity and External Pressure:** Rapid changes in business, regulatory, and technology landscapes complicate ITAM maturity efforts, necessitating shifts in strategies to adapt to modern applications, AI, and ESG considerations.
- **Embrace and Lead Convergence:** Redefine and rebrand ITAM as Technology Management to adopt a comprehensive approach that encompasses all technology needs, moving beyond mere cost optimisation and license compliance.
- **Relinquish Control:** Shift the focus to providing the right data to the right people at the right time, fostering visibility and ownership in technology decisions while holding individuals accountable for transparency and alignment.
- **Rethink Skills and Tools:** Re-evaluate the skills and tools used. Move beyond specialised licensing skills to develop a comprehensive approach that includes augmenting complex licensing and FinOps expertise with external service providers where appropriate. Additionally, look beyond traditional ITAM and CMDB tools with rigid data models toward more flexible, sustainable ecosystems of data that enable better, automated management of technology.

“ IT leaders and asset managers must reimagine and modernise ITAM.”

The Hidden Decline: The Diminishing Perception of ITAM Value



A 2023 Deloitte-led ITAM survey revealed that only 30% of ITAM teams felt well-equipped to deal with emerging topics. This is alarming when considering the rapid changes happening and trends that touch very closely to ITAM such as Cloud Computing, FinOps, Edge Computing, Artificial Intelligence (AI), IoT, Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG), and Digital Employee Experience (DEX).

I believe there are two root causes for what is perceived as ill-prepared ITAM teams:

- 1. Too SAM and SLM focused for too long**
- 2. Misaligned stakeholder perceptions**

Let's take some time exploring these, as I think it's vital to the ITAM revolution.

1. Too SAM and SLM focused for too long

Before We Begin – I want to make it crystal clear: I believe managing licenses is still an important part of ITAM and will remain so for some time. Now, please read on with an open mind.

Despite nearly 30 years of existence, the perception in the industry is that ITAM struggles to gain prominence and sustain long-term success. Many ITAM professionals express frustration that leadership does not fully understand or appreciate the value of ITAM. While this may have been true in the past, I believe the narrative has shifted. Instead, IT and business leaders have a preconceived notion about the value of ITAM that we created, which has led to our long-standing limitations.

Around 2010, ITAM – particularly Software Asset Management (SAM) – gained prominence as software publishers like Microsoft, IBM, Oracle, and Adobe employed what some consider predatory business practices. These practices included overly complex licensing terms that made it challenging to measure consumption and manage inventories, followed by audits aimed at imposing fines or driving investments in their new products.

In response, IT and Procurement leaders recognised the importance of ITAM and made significant investments in SAM to ensure license compliance. ITAM practices became highly specialised in managing software licenses, focusing on audit defense and cost optimisation. Today, these areas

continue to dominate ITAM's focus. According to a Deloitte survey, reducing financial exposure from vendor audits was the second most common driver for ITAM investment, [with 60% of respondents listing it as a top priority](#). In another survey conducted by Flexera, audit compliance tied for first as the metric used to measure the success of SAM initiatives, [with 47% of respondents selecting it as their primary measure](#) of success.

This hyperfocus has limited ITAM ability to adapt and rise to new challenges, particularly with managing cloud services.

As cloud computing has become central to businesses, the frequency and severity of hard audits has seemingly diminished, leading to a decrease in leadership's attention to ITAM/SAM. More publishers have changed their tactics to become better business partners, emphasising product adoption.

While managing licenses and optimising software spend remains valuable, the time and effort required for ITAM teams to specialise in managing complex licenses has consumed a vast amount of focus and attention, often resulting in missed opportunities to manage cloud spend.

Although [software spending](#) still exceeds cloud spending, Gartner anticipates that total cloud spending will [exceed \\$824 billion USD by 2025, reflecting a 22% increase](#). This surge has CIOs and CFOs eager to gain control while pursuing innovations through cloud services, particularly in AI investments.

Given SAM's limited capacity to support these efforts, many leaders have turned to bespoke SaaS management approaches and initiated new FinOps initiatives to manage these cloud costs.

Evidence of this is found in the fact that many SAM teams still lack interaction with FinOps teams, despite [77% organisations having dedicated FinOps practices](#). [According to the Flexera State of ITAM report, only 32% of respondents interacted with a FinOps team last year, and only 46% of SAM teams reported having responsibility for tracking/optimising IaaS/PaaS](#). The top two responsibilities for SAM teams were identified as "responding to audits" and "maintaining an accurate inventory of licensed software". This illustrates my point: cloud management and other facets of managing technology have been neglected by ITAM teams, leaving them to focus narrowly on license management while missing broader opportunities to adapt and thrive in a changing landscape.

“This illustrates my point: cloud management and other facets of managing technology have been neglected by ITAM teams.”

2. Misaligned stakeholder perceptions

Through my experience as an ITAM analyst, I've worked with hundreds of organisations across various sizes and industries. In these conversations, I've engaged with a diverse array of stakeholders, each with a vested interest in different aspects of IT Asset Management.

Unfortunately though, many ITAM professionals have their own preconceived notions of what is and isn't ITAM, which is typically a narrow, myopic approach heavily on license management, leaving stakeholders frustrated. At time, these stakeholders may not even call out the need for ITAM by name, and lament about the challenges they face, which relate to an immature or incomplete approach to ITAM.

In **Graphic 1**, I've highlighted the various stakeholders I've encounter for asset management followed by their expectations from effective ITAM in **Table 1**. Important to note: Solid pink arrows represent current stakeholders; solid dark blue arrow represents bi-directional, well-established stakeholders; dark blue dashes represents emerging connections; and light blue dashes identify future-forward relationship stakeholders.

Graphic 1: ITAM Stakeholders

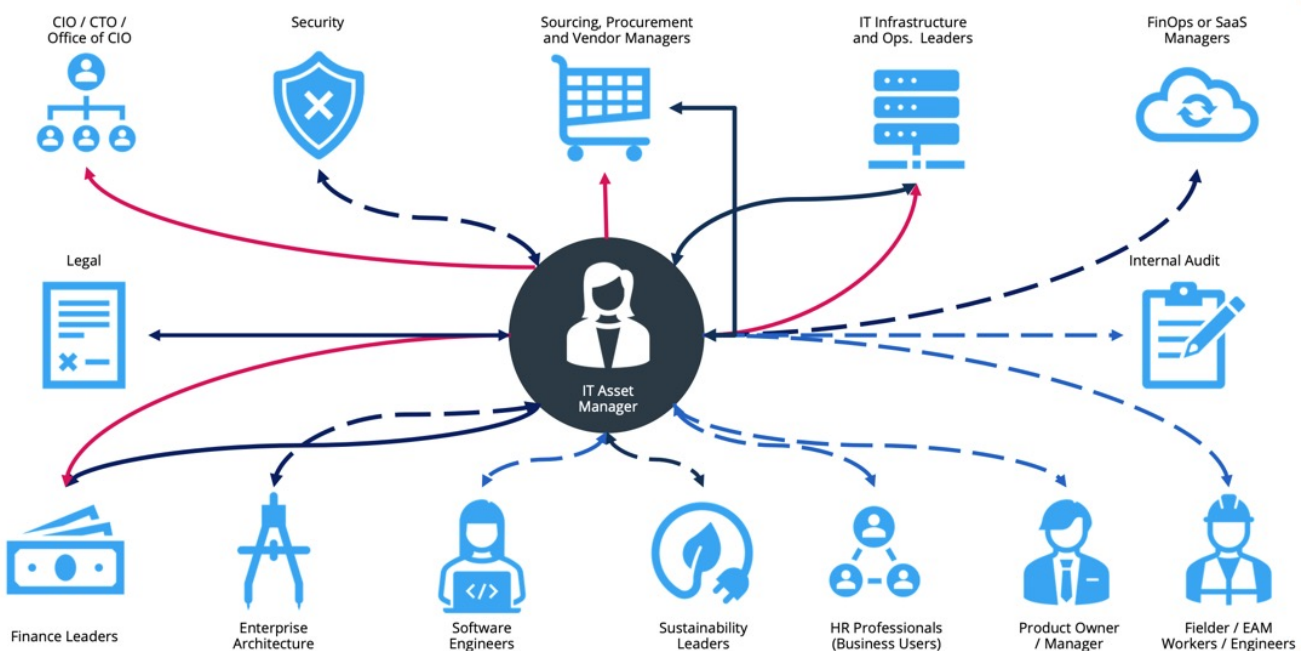


Table 1: ITAM Stakeholder Roles and Expectations

Roles	ITAM Expectations Examples
CIO / CTO	View of all technology aligned to business value, spend, and risk
Security and Data Privacy Officers	End of Life (EoL) / End of Support (EoS), Shadow Technology, Patching, Data Destruction, Offboarding, Attack Vectors
Sourcing, Procurement, and Vendor Management	License Management, Compliance, Software Spend, Shadow IT, Hardware Maintenance, Vendor Risks / Performance, Category Management
Service Desk, IT Infrastructure and Ops	CMDB, Change Controls, Ongoing Support Documentation, Incident Management Data
FinOps Practice Leads	BYOL License Management, Cost Optimisation, Value Realisation, Overlapping Contracts
SaaS Management	Employee Experience, Shadow SaaS, Vendor Management, Licensing
Digital Workplace Leaders	Digital Employee Experience
Finance	Budgeting and Technology Value Alignment
Legal	Contracts
Enterprise and Business Architects	Business Services/capabilities aligned to technology
ESG Leaders	Carbon Emissions, Energy Consumption, Green Software, Contracting, Disposal
HR Professionals	Employee On-Boarding and Off-Boarding
Software Engineers	SBOM Risks and License Management
Product Owners / Managers	Line-of-site of product risks, costs, value, and technology disruptions
Field Workers	Lifecycle management of business-led technology like IV Pumps, Control Planes, Specialised Software
Internal and External Auditors	Risk Management: Effectiveness of Controls, Regulatory Compliance, Financial Accuracy, Third-Party Contracts

This long list of stakeholders and their demands represents a significant untapped opportunity for ITAM. Unfortunately, our narrow focus as an industry is often restricted to a limited segment of stakeholders and specific challenges. As a result, other teams create fragmented asset management initiatives that lack a comprehensive view, damaging the internal perception of ITAM's effectiveness.

More critically, these bifurcated approaches hinder organisations' ability to make fast, effective, and informed decisions about their technology. Siloed practices lead to conflicting or incomplete decisions regarding the impact of technology on products and services. This can result in waste, increased emissions, poor service delivery, negative experiences, and underwhelming business performance. Ultimately, this dynamic forces ITAM to cede its role as a strategic partner within the organisation.

“This long list of stakeholders and their demands represents a significant untapped opportunity for ITAM.”

Adding Strain to ITAM



Beyond the perception challenges ITAM faces with stakeholders, we're also experiencing increasing pressure from broader macro factors, making ITAM more complex than ever. [According to a Deloitte survey, 81%](#) of respondents believe that rapidly changing business, regulatory, and technology environments are making it harder to enhance ITAM maturity.

Below, I've highlighted six macro factors that impact ITAM, along with the challenges they present. These topics often overlap and intertwine.

1. Artificial Intelligence (AI): It's impossible to ignore AI and its potential impact on the ITAM industry. While we've only scratched the surface with machine learning for data normalisation and its influence on licensing and service subscriptions, AI's role in ITAM is poised to expand significantly. [A 2023 Deloitte survey](#) indicates that **79% of business and technology leaders expect AI to drive substantial transformation within the next three years, with 31% anticipating change within the next year.** Current AI efforts focus **56% on efficiency gains and 35% on cost reductions.** Although ITAM may not currently be at the forefront of AI investments, these advancements can align directly with ITAM goals.

- **Cost and Risk:** Investing in AI is crucial for business success but comes with challenges. In ITAM, we are already seeing AI drive up hardware and software costs as new AI services often require more advanced hardware, impacting existing device lifecycles. Onboarding AI services introduces risks, including data sharing, storage, processing, and reuse – especially as vendors refine their AI algorithms. Security, procurement, and vendor managers must navigate these risks while balancing innovation.
- **Efficiency Gains:** There's been some hype about AI potentially replacing ITAM, but this is exaggerated. Instead, AI can enhance ITAM processes. Currently, AI applications are limited to data normalisation and natural language processing for asset data analysis. Looking ahead, AI could process unstructured data to improve decision making and recommend workflows that automate IT process controls based on desired outcomes. While this level of AI adoption is still emerging, it presents an opportunity for asset managers to collaborate with stakeholders and create a more unified, stakeholder-driven model.

2. Convergence of Business and IT: While not a new trend, the convergence of business and IT is stressing traditional IT governance, and I don't believe this shift will reverse. The days of distinct "IT" and "Business" departments are gone; the business is now intertwined with IT. This evolution brings four key focal areas.

- **Information Technology (IT) and Operational Technology (OT) Convergence:** Businesses now have technology embedded – such as drones, IV pumps, control planes, sensors, and more – within their daily functions, exposing organisations to new risks, potential service disruptions, and licensing challenges that are no longer siloed from IT systems due to advances in IoT, edge, and cloud computing. This shift, which was often left to the business to manage, is no longer viable.
- **Business Led Technology Decisions:** Business users are becoming more 'technology savvy' and aware. This brings an increased appetite for speed and innovation. Both of which are easily enabled through the like of a SaaS delivery model. This trend will continue to circumvent traditional IT controls. In fact, [the 2022 Gartner Market Guide for SaaS Management Platforms \(SMPs\) stated that on average, organisations have 125 different SaaS Applications equaling \\$1,040 per employee annually.](#) Without effective central governance and management, these challenges will remain a challenge as mentioned in Gartner's initial Magic Quadrant in 2024 for SMP.
- **Citizen Developers:** [Gartner predicts that by 2025, 70% of applications will be low-code or no-code,](#) leading the way for citizen developers. This enables tech-savvy users connected with modern apps to now create and/or integrate workflows, exchange data across apps, and build APIs leading to new management challenge.
- **Digital Employee Experience (DEX):** While DEX is often viewed through the lens of the tool market – highlighted by [Gartner's Magic Quadrant](#) – the concept of monitoring and managing the digital employee experience is becoming increasingly vital. This encompasses everything from how we provision technology to how employees interact with their tools. In the ongoing war for talent, providing a seamless and efficient digital experience is more critical than ever for attracting and retaining top performers.

3. Modernised Applications: While monolithic applications still exist, modern applications are rapidly becoming the norm. These applications are characterised by easy integration with APIs, microservices architecture, and containerisation. This shift not only facilitates business innovation and provides easier access to applications but also introduces significant management challenges. These challenges include: licensing complexities, new consumption models, reduced visibility, difficulties in mapping services to CMDBs, managing container images, and controlling service costs.

[The 2024 Flexera State of ITAM](#) report highlights that managing new environments – such as SaaS, cloud, and containers – has emerged as the top challenge for both intermediate and advanced maturity SAM respondents.

4. Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG): There's been a growing focus on ESG, particularly sustainability. According to the [Flexera State of ITAM report, 95% of companies have implemented sustainable hardware policies](#), but we're still just scratching the surface. Most initiatives primarily concentrate on hardware reuse and disposition. However, the rise of AI and cloud computing has led to increased energy consumption, carbon emissions, and accelerated hardware refresh cycles. We must also address green software development, ethical sourcing, and the principles of the circular economy. As resources become scarcer and regulatory scrutiny intensifies, asset managers will face mounting pressure to adapt.

5. Modern IT and Business Operating Models: Traditionally, ITAM operated under a centralised model, leveraging the organisation's reliance on IT as a gatekeeper to control the IT environment and mitigate costs and risks. However, ownership of IT has increasingly shifted to decentralised product and service teams, which challenges the effectiveness of traditional ITAM practices. The rapid pace enabled by Agile and DevOps methodologies – driven by containers and cloud computing – means business units can no longer wait for ITAM teams to analyse licenses and make decisions, often resulting in the circumvention of ITAM altogether.

Moreover, asset managers have long prioritised cost optimisation and risk mitigation, but this approach is becoming untenable. Recent years have seen a shift toward value creation, as reflected in [ITIL v4](#) and the FinOps principle that “[decisions are driven by the business value of cloud](#).” Yet, ITAM has not fully adapted to this change. As a result, asset managers struggle to meet organisational demands, particularly with their centralised gatekeeper approach to licensing analysis and data management.

6. Increased Security and Regulations around Technology: [A significant 77% of teams believe their IT Asset Management \(ITAM\) team is foundational to an effective cybersecurity strategy. However, only 54% report alignment with their cybersecurity teams](#) – this figure should be at 100%. As security frameworks and regulations like [PCI DSS](#), [NIST Frameworks](#), [ISO/IEC 27001](#), [CIS Controls 1](#) and [2](#), [CCPA](#), and others increasingly emphasise the need for effective ITAM, and this trend is likely to continue. The expanding definition of 'IT assets' will amplify this call to action, especially with the rise of IoT devices, cloud services, API calls, and AI services.

So, What Do We Need to Do for
Asset Management to Prosper?



After outlining what seems like an insurmountable list of challenges facing ITAM, you may be asking yourself: What can we do about it? My call to action is for a complete transformation of the asset management discipline to ensure its prosperity. We can no longer rely on past best practices or the marketing hype surrounding the “future of ITAM” or “modern ITAM.” These often lack a holistic view and are regurgitated with a siloed, biased perspective that serves self-interests.

We must redefine, rebrand, and reinvent what we know as asset management. While the core principles may remain the same, our approach must evolve.

These 4 steps may not be perfect, but they will initiate crucial conversations needed to propel the industry forward.

Step 1: The ITAM Rebrand

The notion of rebranding ITAM may seem trivial or even silly, but the reality is, the ITAM brand is currently damaged. I can see the eye rolls from the old guards of ITAM. However, as we touched on earlier, stakeholders are confused about what we do, and some perceive us as a relic of the past.

Organisations often rebrand for various reasons, and I believe several apply to our situation.

- **Repositioning:** We need to change perceptions to resonate with a broader audience of stakeholders.
- **Mergers and Acquisitions:** The convergence of FinOps and ITAM calls for a unified brand identity.
- **Product or Service Expansion:** As our focus broadens to include security, ESG, FinOps / cloud cost management, our brand must reflect this evolution.
- **Crisis Management:** Addressing the current confusion around our purpose requires proactive rebranding.
- **Outdated Branding:** The term “IT Asset Management” itself feels antiquated and no longer encapsulates the full scope of our responsibilities.
- **Consolidation and Streamlining:** A more cohesive brand can enhance our value proposition and align our services more effectively.

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We ultimately need to rebrand and evolve ITAM as we know it. ITAM is a legacy term and approach that really focuses on control style governance approaches focused on legacy technology that is really antiquated.

Let's go ahead and break down the name:

IT: The inclusion of 'Information Technology' perpetuates a divide between business and technology teams. This division is increasingly irrelevant as technology evolves. We now have many new elements – like IoT devices and Operational Technology (OT) – that do not fit within traditional IT frameworks. This limitation constrains our scope and potential.

Asset: The term 'asset' has long been a point of contention within the ITAM community. Debating what falls within our scope leads to unnecessary semantic battles. Instead, we should focus on the management of technology. By shifting our emphasis away from 'asset,' we can be more inclusive of cloud services, APIs, and other emerging technologies that may present low-value yet high-risk scenarios.

To effectively address these challenges and set ourselves up for future success, I propose we redefine our discipline as **Technology Management**. This is a pivotal step toward redefining our identity and value in an increasingly complex technological landscape. By addressing the pressing challenges of repositioning, crisis management, outdated branding, and the need for consolidation, this new terminology not only clarifies our mission but also aligns us with the future of technology.

This evolution empowers us to move beyond traditional asset-focused governance, embracing a broader, more inclusive approach that encompasses all facets of technology management. It positions us as strategic partners in driving innovation, efficiency, and business value across organisations.

Ultimately, adopting **Technology Management** is not just about a name change – it's about embracing a forward-thinking mindset that recognises the critical role we play in today's digital transformation. Let us take this bold step together, ensuring we remain relevant, agile, and indispensable in a world where technology continues to redefine business success.

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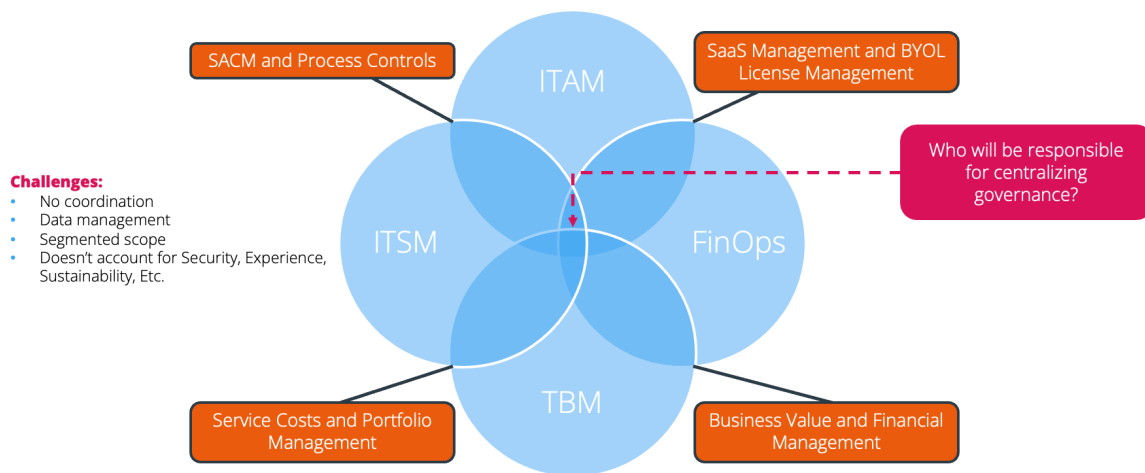
Step 2: Embracing and Leading Convergence with a Holistic Approach

FinOps has emerged as a pivotal concept in the realm of ITAM and cloud cost management, and it's easy to see why. The discussion around the convergence of ITAM and FinOps is gaining traction, especially with updates to the FinOps Foundation framework, which now includes License and SaaS. At its core, FinOps embodies a modern approach to technology management that ITAM has traditionally encompassed but has often struggled to effectively implement.

While the convergence is a promising development, it only scratches the surface of what's needed. Gartner predicts that "by 2025, 50% of organisations will unify SAM and FinOps into a consolidated discipline delivering portfolio cost management and governance." However, this projection highlights a need for deeper integration and collaboration.

The graphics below helps illustrate the point.

Graphic 2: Convergence of Disciplines



The overlaps between ITAM (as we know it) and FinOps are evident and really tend to focus in the areas of SaaS Management and Bring Your Own License (BYOL) management. However, to truly manage business value and align with the capabilities that technology delivers, we must broaden our perspective. For instance, the intersection of FinOps with Technology Business Management (TBM) emphasises the importance of business value, while the collaboration between IT Service Management (ITSM) and TBM focuses on capturing service costs. Moreover, the integration of ITAM and ITSM reveals significant overlaps in Service Asset and Configuration Management (SACM) and process controls.

Despite these connections, we still face challenges in coordinating efforts across disciplines, capturing the necessary data, and addressing the segmented scopes involved. There are additional critical areas of technology management – such as security, end-user computing experiences, and sustainability – that must also be considered in this conversation.

With this broader view of convergence in mind, we must ask ourselves: who will take responsibility for coordinating these efforts and addressing the needs of all stakeholders? This question remains unanswered, highlighting the need for leadership and collaboration as we navigate this evolving landscape.

To further illustrate this concept, let's take an additional step back and explore the taxonomy of technology typically aligned with various teams or business units, as shown in **Graphic 3**.

Graphic 3: Silos By Technology Categories

Business Units	ITAM		Cloud Cost Management		Marketing
EAM	HAM	SAM	SaaS Management	FinOps	DAM
Medical Equip.	PCs	Enterprise Apps	Enterprise Apps	IaaS	Fonts
Security Cams	Mobile Devices	Entitlements	Mar-tech	PaaS	Audio Files
Smart Vehicles	Infra. Hardware	Infra. Software	API Calls	DaaS	Video Files
Sensors	Consumables	Virtual Machines	Point Solutions	CaaS	Artwork
		Source Code			

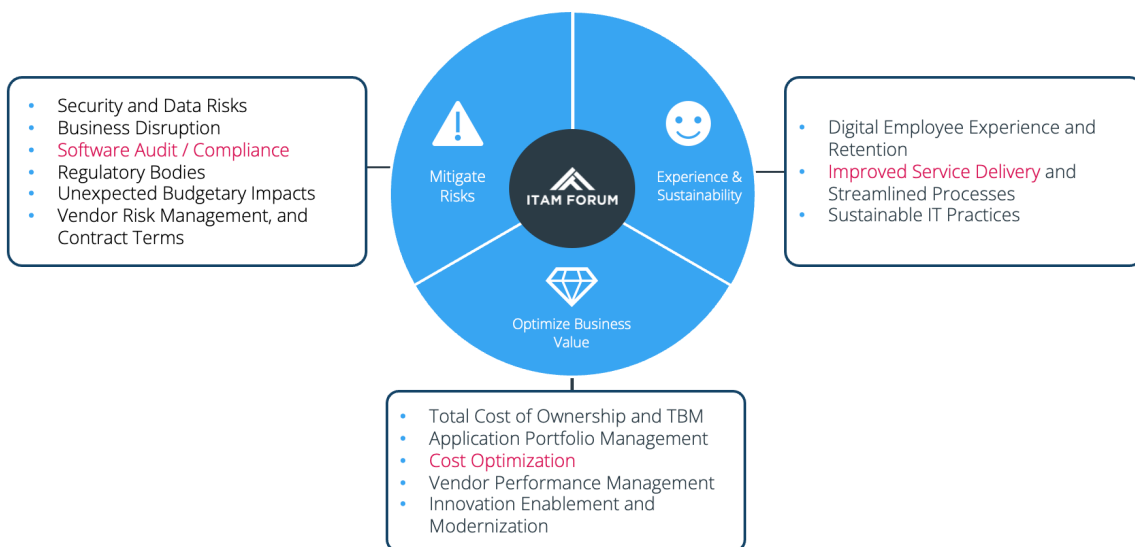
As you examine these taxonomy-specific approaches, you will notice significant overlaps. Let's explore how data and information intersect within these frameworks. This convergence often leads to siloed efforts, duplicate work, and partial views of technology management.

Moreover, we frequently observe that different teams tend to concentrate on only a few areas.

For instance, in the FinOps realm, while business value is emphasised, there is a strong focus on cost optimisation. In Software Asset Management (SAM), the conversation often revolves around software compliance. In various business units, the priority might be on machine uptime with technology integration. While each of these focuses has merit, they also present limitations.

What organisations need to do is prioritise the holistic approach to managing technology with three key areas in mind (Risk Mitigation, Experience/Sustainability, and Optimisation), as listed below.

Graphic 4: 3 Technology Management Key Areas



Today, organisations often focus on just a small segment of these categories and present those as their KPIs to measure success for managing technology. Yet, this frustrates stakeholders, and doesn't really provide proper information to improve decision making. Or, technology managers become so fixated on a singular element they lose site of the business' needs and appetite.

Now, I'm not advocating that every technology program should perfectly manage all technology across all three of these categories. Instead, we need to establish metrics that allow us to monitor how our technology is performing and what is tolerable based on the current macro factors impacting our business and our own business strategy, then, continually monitor and adjust based on those factors. This is the essence of what we should be doing as asset managers.

Step 3: Relinquish Control

Now, this is going to be a tough pill for us asset managers to swallow. We must relinquish control. The days of tightly controlled, authoritarian, super centralised processes are no more. Innovations in development, speed, and agility make ITAM a roadblock to the business. Let's face it, we've also been circumvented. You cannot rely on central IT controls to tightly control technology like we used to.

Instead, we need to embrace the implementation of guardrails for our IT and business stakeholders. Let's explore what this looks like. I really think this is where the FinOps foundation excels, and ITAM needs to rapidly adapt to.

In **Graphic 5**, I've modified the FinOps Principles to give examples of what this modern governance style looks like.

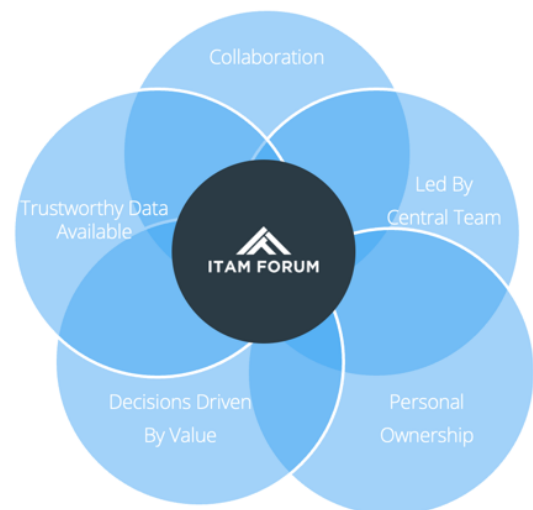
Graphic 5: ITAM Principles – Modified from FinOps

Eliminate Control-Style Governance:

- Tightly regulating processes and actions
- Strict rules
- Limits flexibility

Embrace Guardrails:

- Encourages autonomy and distributed decision-making.
- Guardrails or constraints to guide or prevent deviations outside of acceptable boundaries
- Enables Flexibility and foster innovation



Modified from FinOps Principles

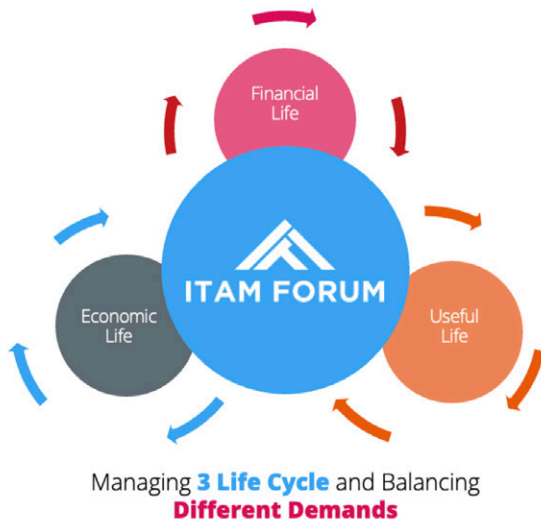
“Now, this is going to be a tough pill for us asset managers to swallow. We must relinquish control.”

Table 2: ITAM Principles Modified

Principles	Overview
Collaboration	Technology Management cannot be executed in a vacuum. It is vital that technology management be completed with all stakeholders continuously and constantly collaborating towards the three key areas of experience, risk, and value.
Personal Ownership	Technology Management decisions should not be led by a central team but instead, be owned by product and technology managers.
Decisions Drive by Value	Rather than focusing on cost optimisation or risk in a vacuum, all technology decisions should be focused on business value. The risk or costs can be high if the value from the risks and costs are worth it.
Trustworthy Data Available	Like ISO 19770-1, trustworthy data is key. Technology management however should be focusing on providing the right trustworthy data to the stakeholders personally responsible to make value-driven decisions. This does not mean ALL technology data needs to be perfectly trustworthy. That is a recipe for failure.
Led By Central Team	Whilst the technology management team does not make technology decisions, it does govern centrally to assign ownership, drive collaboration, improve data quality and availability, and report on value decisions to improve and adjust guardrails.

Now, this doesn't mean that technology managers just step away and cease to exist. Instead, it makes the role much more strategic by managing the three different life cycles that exist today. Yes, I said three different life cycles.

Graphic 6: Lifecycle Management



Skills Required To Centrally Manage

- Data Management and Analysis
- Financial Management
- Process Management
- Governance, Risk & Compliance
- Procurement, Licensing and Vendor Management
- Technology Literacy
- Communication and Collaboration

I can't take credit for this. While at Gartner, I worked with Stewart Buchanan who introduced me to the idea that ITAM should be centrally governing three different lifecycles that are constantly in conflict. Initially, I was against this idea as I bought into the standard lifecycle image that everyone regurgitates. However, as time went on, I realised this is the problem. We believe that from a central point, we're managing a singular lifecycle. That's not the case.

Instead, we have three lifecycles (Financial, Useful Life, and Economic Life) with different stakeholders involved at each stage, which are often in conflict. Asset management often gets aligned to one of those lifecycle owners and fights for their needs.

In this new age of asset management, we need to be the neutral party balancing the demands of those three lifecycles while entrusting each of them to share and consume information in near real time to make better technology decisions. And moreover, we need to be focused on ensuring we have the right data shared with the right stakeholders at the right time to make the right decisions based on our organisation's priorities. Think of it as master data management and governance of asset data, which can become very powerful with new data architecture and the use of AI to adjust our guardrails.

“Think of it as master data management and governance of asset data, which can become very powerful with new data architecture and the use of AI to adjust our guardrails.”

Step 4: Rethinking ITAM Skills and Tooling

While I've categorised this topic into one step, it could be beneficial to break it into individual components. Let's start with skills.

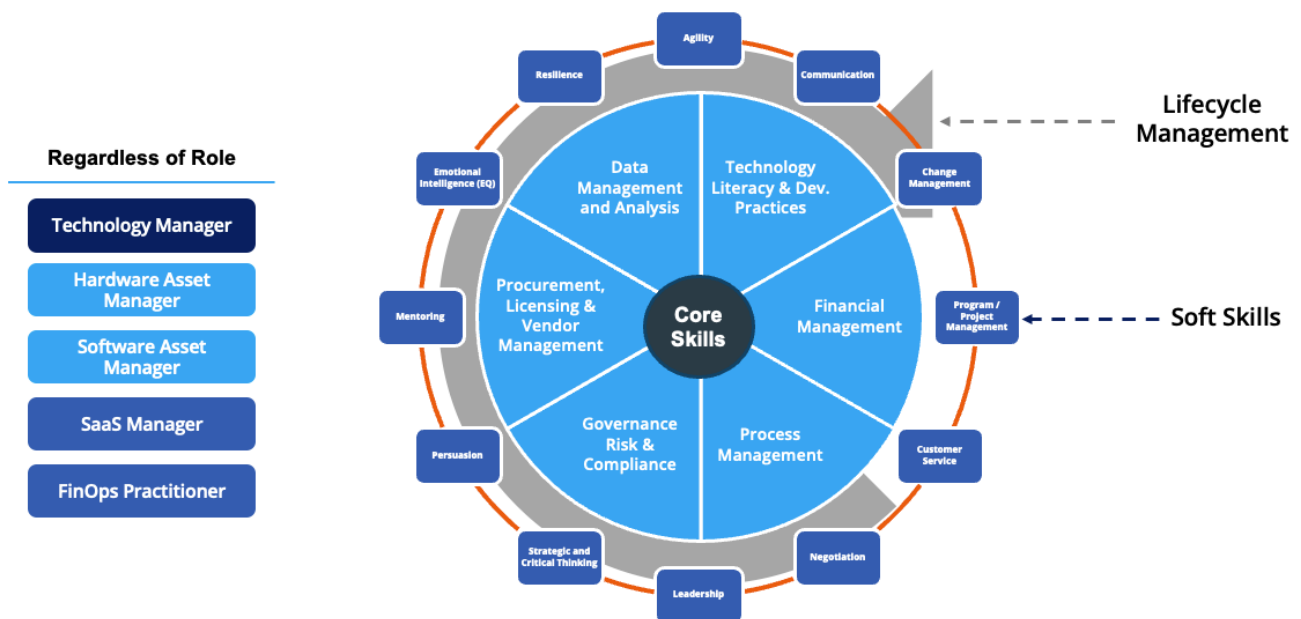
Skills: In the Gartner report, "[4 keys to unlock SAM's strategic value in 2024](#)," the need to upskill SAM resources is acknowledged, but the discussion remains vague. There is a significant gap in addressing technology management skills challenges. Often, we treat the ITAM discipline as an afterthought, joking that no one chooses to be an asset manager. This perception is detrimental, as managing technology holistically is a complex challenge and arguably one of the most diverse career paths in IT. There is a notable parallel

between this role and that of a CIO. Diminishing the importance of asset management inhibits organisations' ability to attract new talent.

According to the [2023 Deloitte Gen Z and Millennial Survey](#), younger generations derive a strong sense of identity from their work. We need to emphasise the potential this role offers to maximise its impact on organisations, rather than degrading it or lamenting our lack of recognition as strategic partners.

Unfortunately, many professionals in the industry focus narrowly on vendor-specific licensing knowledge – particularly in IBM, Microsoft, Oracle, and SAP. While mastering these areas can lead to rewarding careers, it can also be quite challenging. Below, in **Graphic 8**, I present the **Wheel of Technology Manager Skills**, which identifies core and soft skills needed to manage technology, regardless of the type. The nuances lie primarily in lifecycle management. Given that most ITAM teams consist of only 3-4 members (with some exceptions), it is nearly impossible to become a subject matter expert (SME) in all aspects, especially when considering various technology types and licensing skills.

Graphic 8: Wheel of Technology Manager Skills



Instead, I advocate for technology managers to prioritise learning core principles of technology management, including program management, stakeholder engagement, finance, and contracting, over deep licensing expertise. Rely on SMEs in the world of procurement, or, I encourage the industry to consider adopting Software Asset Management (SAM) services. [In fact, 81% are using Managed Services for all/some aspects of ITAM \(up from 35%\).](#)

These services provide highly-skilled expertise in licensing and can act as trusted partners to help teams move beyond solely SAM licensing concerns. Asset managers should also invest in ITAM training through platforms like [LISA](#), join the [Technology Business Management \(TBM\) Council](#), and the [FinOps Foundation](#), and stay updated on general technology trends.

Tools: A common misconception in ITAM is the belief that full automation of ITAM/SAM is achievable. Currently, this has not materialised, especially concerning licensing, and I doubt it will soon. However, innovations in low-code platforms, composable applications, and advanced data architectures – enhanced by AI – offer significant

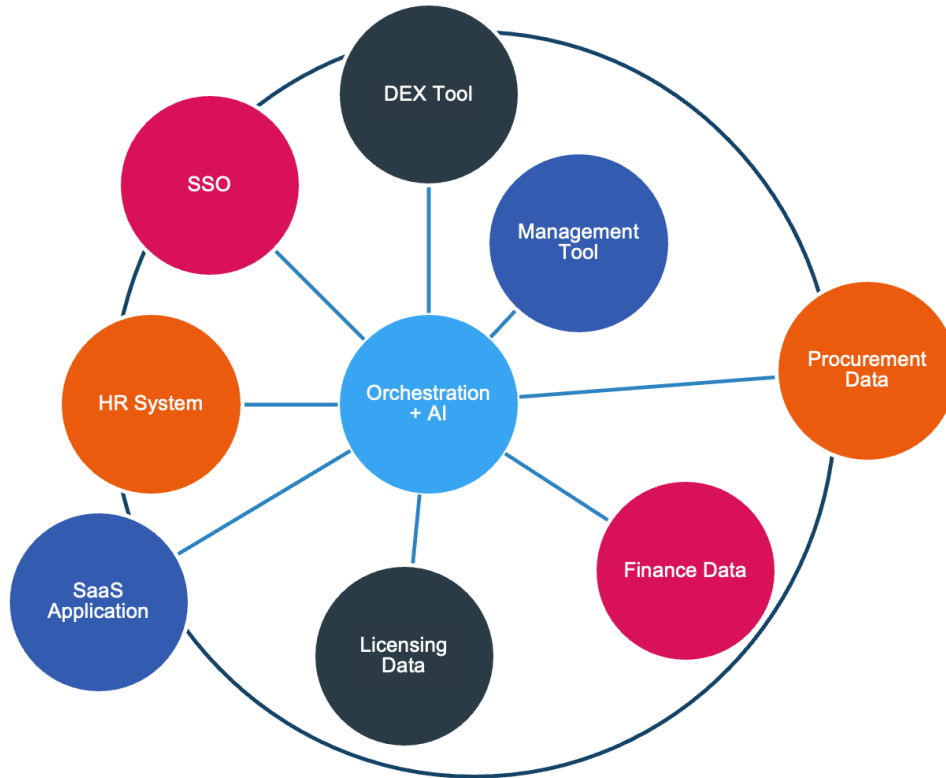
potential to alleviate some burdens faced by ITAM teams.

It is crucial to move away from the notion that any single tool can solve all ITAM challenges. For years, asset managers have sought the elusive ‘silver bullet,’ the ‘single source of truth,’ or a ‘one pane of glass.’ [Many pursue the perfect Configuration Management Database \(CMDB\); in fact, over 77% of asset managers incorporate a CMDB as part of their ITAM practice, with 61% using ServiceNow](#) in hopes of achieving this ideal. However, as former Gartner colleague Ken Gonzalez and I discussed in the ITAMantics episode titled “[Are ITAM and ITSM Dead?](#)”, we have yet to see this successfully realised. With the increasing number of assets or configuration items in dynamically changing environments, achieving this ideal seems increasingly unlikely. [Currently, only 47% of respondents believe they have complete visibility into IT assets and their impact on business outcomes, and I remain skeptical of that figure. Only 27% of CMDB users track containers in their CMDB, which is essential for understand.](#)

“I advocate for technology managers to prioritise learning core principles of technology management, including program management, stakeholder engagement, finance, and contracting, over deep licensing expertise.”

Instead, I propose embracing a variety of tools (FinOps, SaaS Management, Discovery, DEX, etc.) to manage diverse lifecycles and data sources. The industry needs a disruptive approach to connect, orchestrate, and share this tool ecosystem, as illustrated in **Graphic 9**.

Graphic 9: Tool Ecosystem



At the center of this ecosystem lies an opportunity for disruption: an orchestration, normalisation, and AI-backed solution that can normalise and consume data in an unstructured manner. This solution would allow various stakeholders to use natural language to make informed, real-time decisions based on their specific needs. Additionally, it would recognise patterns based on defined business outcomes and make recommendations or take actions to improve technology management.

This does not negate the need for traditional SAM tools, inventory sources, or procurement tools.

Instead, it enables us to realistically assess our data and take actions that align with our desired business outcomes.

I believe some vendors in the market are beginning to explore this approach, which aligns with the concept of Digital Platform Conducts (DPCs) that my friend and former colleague Roger Williams has discussed. However, asset managers have not yet fully embraced this perspective; we seem fixated on the traditional methods.

Conclusion

While some of the elements of this analysis may be hard to hear, and could be slightly wrong, it's largely rooted in factual evidence. This article isn't intended to be the perfect overview for the future of managing technology. I omitted cool topics like Block Chains impact on ITAM, just scratched the surface on the convergence of disciplines, and just started to create the elements of a proper technology management framework. However, we here at the ITAM Forum want to lead the ITAM transformation and set up everyone for success. We welcome feedback and collaboration from all within in the industry to shape the future of technology management and build a more complete and refined framework that propels the discipline forward.

To get involved, please register for our upcoming sessions throughout the year, and join our communities. Help shape the future of technology management!

About the ITAM Forum

The ITAM Forum is a global trade body for the advancement of the IT Asset Management industry. We are a not-for-profit membership organisation, led by ITAM professionals for ITAM professionals. Our members are passionate about IT Asset Management and the business value it brings to companies regardless of size and industry.

The ITAM Forum has two primary objectives:

1. To elevate the position of ITAM by sharing knowledge and best practices that focus on business value and aid to grow the profession.
2. To create – and be a caretaker of – the new ISO 19770-1 standard certification program so organisations can demonstrate the quality of their ITAM practices.

About [Ryan Stefani](#)

Ryan is the Product Manager of LISA, the training platform dedicated to HAM, ITAM, SAM, and software licensing professional.

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