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Niek Ruiter  
Program Manager

## AkzoNobel

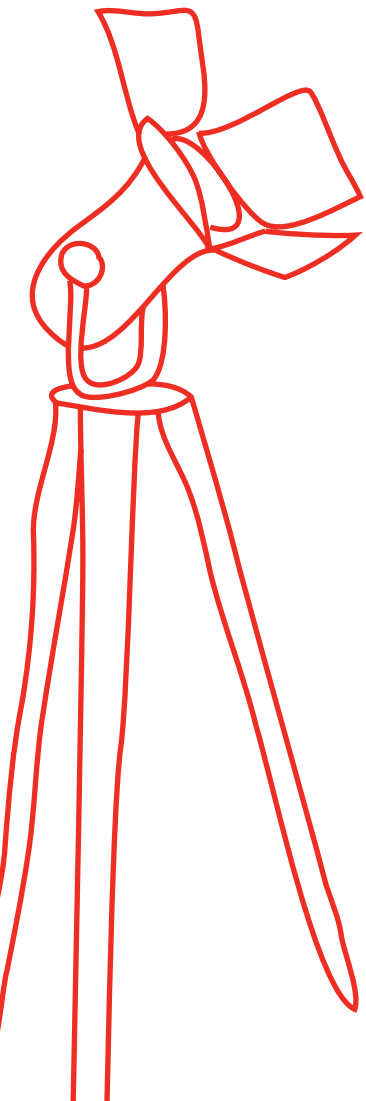
AkzoNobel is a leading global paints and coatings company and a major producer of specialty chemicals. The group employs around 47,000 people across more than 80 countries. Its brands include well-known names such as Flexa, Sikkens, International, Interpon and Jozo. Inspired partly by a new vision of the future encompassing the key concepts of standardisation, consolidation and centralisation, AkzoNobel chose IT-Guardian, the turnkey ITSM solution from Logicalis SMC based on ServiceNow. Program Manager Niek Ruiter was tasked with completing phase 1 of the implementation within six months. He succeeded give or take a few days. Niek talks about his experiences and also has some advice for IT managers.

“The whole project was part of a reorganisation of the IT department,” he begins. “The reorganisation included designing a brand-new IT operating model for AkzoNobel. This comprises 40 processes, nine of which we are looking after in our

program, including Service Request Management, Incident Management, Problem Management and Change Management, all based on ITIL. It was a vast rationalisation process, because a very wide range of ITSM tools and processes were still in use worldwide and that remains so today.”

### Adopt, not adapt

“As well as deciding to use a single tool in those 80 countries, we also wanted the tool to be based on a proven best-practice process model. That fits in with our vision of the future, where standardisation and centralisation have a prominent place. It’s not about reinventing the wheel by defining your own standards, but about working with the tool as it’s supplied, including the processes. Adopt, not adapt. IT-Guardian is just such a tool. It saves you time and money. And key customers we sounded out confirmed that it also works really well. It’s only with Change Management that I find working with standard processes a bigger challenge, because there you encounter application owners with very specific requirements. Other than that it’s mainly a



question of making choices and sticking to them. Of course we receive customisation requests from many quarters, but we invariably ask the same question: Would it also work without that change? And the answer is almost always 'yes'."

## Phase 2: Change and Problem Management

The project as a whole consists of two phases, each with its own focus. Niek: "In phase 1 we transferred the service desk for the workstations, which is staffed on our premises by HP, to IT-Guardian for Incident Management and Service Request Management. We completed this phase with a Change Management pilot in the Application Services unit. In phase 2, which is now under way, the emphasis is on Change and Problem Management. In that phase we're also rolling out and fine-tuning the phase 1 processes in both Platform and Application Services. They're running well already, but there's still some dotting of i's to be done. I give people a lot of freedom to take responsibility themselves. I believe that contributes to success. I don't like micro-management and believe in the power of each individual in the team. I can see from the weekly reports whether things are running as agreed. But as a professional you can't get anywhere without room for manoeuvre. People perform better if you give them the space they need. The great thing about this project is that it affects the entire organisation, so it's highly visible. The 47,000 end-users will soon all have access to an IT user portal where they can report incidents and order items such as a new laptop or a mouse. That's a nicer way of working and also eases the pressure on the service desk."

## Management of Change

AkzoNobel realised early on that making a success of the program would take more than just smart tools, and it set up its program accordingly. "We brought in Logicalis SMC for the technical implementation of IT-Guardian and HP for the consultancy on Service Integration

Management," says Niek. "By that I mean we're managing the various providers horizontally across the services, so that they're managed end-to-end. That focus on Service Integration Management proved to be an important prerequisite for success, as did the reorganisation, which coincided nicely with the implementation project. People are more open to change then. But that doesn't happen spontaneously. We therefore devoted a lot of attention to the Management of Change. The value of timely, detailed communication and training should not be underestimated. They're at least as important as the technical and functional implementation. And I'm also pleased that we kept control of the program management. That meant we could stay on top of it. The risk in outsourcing program management to your partner is that as a customer we might sit back and relax, whereas actually there's still a lot we should be organising internally ourselves."

## Good job

"Is IT-Guardian a good solution? Certainly! From all the various options we chose the right tool. Is it perfect? No, of course not. By definition a best-practice model must be constantly open to new experiences and lessons learnt. Further adjustments will no doubt also be made on the basis of our own experiences at AkzoNobel. There were a few functionalities we'd been expecting in the solution, while others are less obvious and we're discussing them with Logicalis SMC. That will only make IT-Guardian stronger. I think it's important that Logicalis SMC not only supplies a good tool but also does a great job. There's excellent collaboration between their professionals and those of ServiceNow, HP and ourselves and it's progressing well. That's why I keep going on about openness and transparency, even when things go wrong. Making mistakes is fine, but keeping quiet about them isn't. Keep communicating! And fortunately that's something that's working really well in this project."

## Benefits

Niek cannot say a great deal yet about the savings made with IT-Guardian. “We still have to do the maths. We’re going to switch off a lot more existing tools and disband or scale back some support teams. But precisely what that will deliver is difficult to say at this stage. We’ve already calculated that in terms of direct costs the payback period will be a few years. But I’m totally convinced that there’ll be many more benefits that can’t be simply expressed in euros. For example, AkzoNobel will benefit a great deal if the internal processes run more smoothly and complexity decreases as a result of our central approach with just one tool. It’s difficult to quantify in monetary terms, but we’re going to look at that. In May the customer satisfaction (CSAT) was over 90% on the basis of the old situation (an all-time high). After ServiceNow was introduced in July, the CSAT fell by 10%. That was expected, because a new tool and new processes always require some familiarisation and learning time. It

was also the holiday period and in relative terms very few people completed the CSAT survey, which can also produce a distorted picture. I expect the first real benchmark figure in September, after the holiday period. What we must all do, though, is ensure that the CSAT returns to the old level (or higher) in the period ahead.”

## Very satisfied

“The new user portal will presumably also ease the pressure on the service desk. The service desk agents are very positive and find the tool nice to use. We’re not there yet, but I’m very satisfied with the way the program is going, the performance of the parties involved and IT-Guardian. Logicalis SMC has developed a great product. And together with the other parties it’s achieving something very special here for AkzoNobel, enabling us to take another step towards standardisation with the aim of delivering greater value to our business units.”



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