



Softcat enables McBride to enhance ITSM strategy

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McBride is a Global manufacturing organisation operating across multiple countries, supporting a large and linguistically diverse workforce.

The business runs complex, business critical operations that rely heavily on effective internal IT services to maintain productivity, ensure security and support continuous improvement across the organisation. Its IT leadership team is responsible not only for day to day service

delivery, but also for setting a long term technology strategy that improves user experience, drives automation and enables the business to scale efficiently.

Key Facts

1

McBride employs over 3400 people across multiple locations, supporting a multilingual user base.

2

The IT function supports a high volume of service requests across IT and wider business services.

3

The organisation operates with a strong ITIL aligned service management framework and governance model.

The Challenge

McBride’s IT leadership team had already invested significant effort into building strong foundations. Processes were formalised, governance was in place, and the organisation had moved decisively towards an ITIL aligned operating model. As Barry Akers Donnelly, Head of Service Delivery at McBride, explained, “I’m very ITIL focused and started to push McBride further into ITIL based service management... We had a great base to build on but needed some innovation.”

While the operational framework had matured, the tooling and wider technology strategy had not evolved at the same pace. The existing service management platform was stable and familiar, but increasingly limiting. It supported day to day operations, yet didn’t enable McBride’s ability to improve user experience, introduce automation or meaningfully explore emerging capabilities. “We did as best as we could with it,” Barry said, “but it never felt quite like it was really doing what we needed it to do.”

At the same time, responsibilities for the IT department were expanding. McBride’s workforce was geographically dispersed and linguistically diverse, placing greater emphasis on consistency, usability and efficiency. The service delivery team needed to do more with the

resources available, while also demonstrating tangible value back to the business. Investment decisions were therefore carefully considered. “We like to make sure when we’re spending money, it’s absolutely certain that we should be spending it,” Barry explained. “It’s always been crucial to demonstrate tangible value, but that certainly doesn’t mean it’s always easy.”

The challenge was not simply choosing a new platform, but navigating the procurement process itself. Barry had a clear vision of where he wanted service management to go, but needed a more structured way to translate his vision into something the market could respond to objectively. “I had a plan on a page,” he said, “but I wasn’t sure how I would bring that to life, how I would build the processes around it, or what technologies were actually available to do that.”

Previous experiences had shown how easily procurement could become vendor led, with technology conversations shaped more by sales narratives than genuine business need. McBride wanted a way to retain control, increase efficiency and build a defensible business case to ensure that any decision aligned with long term strategy, rather than short term compromise.

Critical Success Factors

A structured method for translating strategy and stakeholder sentiment into clear, defensible requirements.

An independent, unbiased procurement approach that avoided technology first decision making.

Strong stakeholder engagement to build alignment, confidence and internal buy in.

The Solution

Softcat worked with McBride to reframe procurement as a strategic exercise, not a purchasing activity.

Rather than starting with tools or vendors, the engagement began by focusing on what McBride was trying to achieve and how service management needed to evolve to support the business. As Oliver Meadows, Service Management Consultant at Softcat, explained, “We don’t really centre around the technology choice. We want to use the customer’s requirements, the customer’s objectives, and some of the stakeholder sentiment to drive the decision on technology. This is what produces the best strategic outcomes.”

The process started with a structured discovery workshop designed to surface not only functional needs, but the thinking and priorities behind them. Softcat worked closely with stakeholders across IT and the wider business to understand pain points, ambitions and constraints. This avoided the common pitfall of reducing procurement to a checklist exercise. “If you go to market with a set of ITIL requirements,” Oli said, “everyone will tell you they can do it. You spend forever trying to evaluate tools, with little view of what differentiates them in relation to your needs. It just doesn’t work.”

Instead, the workshop created a shared narrative of what good looked like for McBride. Barry described the experience as visual and collaborative: “We had a massive whiteboard in the room, and drew out the whole journey. We worked out all of these different things could come in at different points to enhance the user experience.” This

approach allowed McBride to articulate its priorities in plain terms, grounded in real operational context rather than abstract theory.

The outcome was a comprehensive requirements and strategy document that clearly defined what McBride wanted to achieve, what it did not want, and where flexibility existed. For Barry, this clarity was transformative. “That document clearly said: this is what McBride is, this is what they want and don’t want,” he said. “It felt like being matched with three blind dates!”

Softcat then took responsibility for managing the market engagement. Vendors were provided with standardised, consistent requirements and outputs; avoiding repeated conversations for McBride and ensuring fairness and equal access for all parties involved. “You do it once, you do it right,” Oli explained. “The vendors come back with tailored demonstrations rather than going in blind.”

Throughout the process, Softcat acted as an independent advisor and moderator. By coordinating vendors, structuring feedback and maintaining fair competition, Softcat ensured McBride stayed in control. “If I went direct,” Barry noted, “they’d be telling me this is all you’re ever going to need. Whereas Softcat were able to narrow down the best options, kept them honest and made sure they were informed enough to be able to answer the right questions.”

Solution Highlights

Strategy led, requirements first procurement focused on business outcomes.

Deep stakeholder discovery translating sentiment into clear, market ready documentation.

End to end vendor engagement and commercial management to reduce risk.

The Benefits

The most immediate benefit for McBride was confidence. By following a structured, evidence based process, the IT leadership team was able to make decisions knowing that nothing important had been overlooked. The discovery phase ensured that strategic intent, operational reality and stakeholder priorities were all captured upfront, reducing uncertainty later in the process. “It was a thorough, informed approach,” Barry said, “and didn’t let me forget things we said we absolutely needed.”

This confidence extended beyond the technology decision itself. Internally, the process created alignment across teams that previously viewed service management from different perspectives. Because stakeholders had been involved early, there was a shared understanding of why decisions were being made and what success would look like. “Everyone had been briefed well,” Barry explained. “It felt like nothing important was missed.”

Softcat’s approach also reduced the cognitive and operational burden on McBride’s leadership team. Rather than juggling vendor conversations, chasing information

and second guessing decisions, Barry was able to focus on evaluating outcomes and strategic fit. “I felt like I could sit back and be taken on that journey,” he said, “without constantly worrying, did I ask that, did I forget to ask that?”

From a procurement perspective, McBride benefited from a clearer, more efficient market engagement. Vendors were better prepared, demonstrations were more relevant, and comparisons were easier to make. This shortened evaluation cycles and reduced the risk of selecting a solution based on surface level impressions rather than genuine suitability.

Perhaps most importantly, the process left McBride better equipped for the future. The framework Softcat introduced was not a one off exercise, but a repeatable way of approaching strategic change. Requirements gathering, stakeholder engagement and objective evaluation became strengths rather than obstacles. As Oli reflected, “As a Softcat customer, we coach you and guide you towards the best options. When you’re ready, you have all the information you need to make a decision.”

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Barry Akers Donnelly,
Head of Service Delivery

Benefits at a Glance

Increased confidence through structured, evidence based decision making.

Stronger stakeholder alignment and reduced internal friction.

A repeatable framework for future strategic initiatives.

Why Softcat

For McBride, Softcat’s value lay in its independence and its willingness to prioritise outcomes over sales. “I never felt like I was being pitched or sold to or pressured into anything,” Barry said. “The pace was perfectly appropriate for what I was doing.

Reflecting on past experiences, he added, “I’ve never had that experience with any other partner. It’s usually all about me buying something.” From Softcat’s perspective, the engagement reflected a simple philosophy. As Oli put it, “We simply help customers do what they need to do to deliver a great service.”