

From Friction to Trust

*Why Information Technology (IT) Keeps Breaking—And How to Lead
What Comes Next*

*A leadership whitepaper for Chief Information Officers (CIOs), IT leaders, and executives who
need more than another framework.*

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Executive Summary

From Friction to Trust: Why Information Technology (IT) Keeps Breaking—And How to Lead What Comes Next

by Bob Roark

IT isn't broken because people aren't trying. It's broken because traditional fixes—frameworks, tools, Service Level Agreement (SLAs)—miss the real issue: **trust**.

For years, IT has been sidelined—treated as a service, not a partner. Misaligned goals, fractured communication, and mounting user frustration have widened the gap between what IT delivers and what the business expects (Edmondson, 2019).

Meanwhile, every other business function—Finance, Human Resources (HR), Operations, etc.—has evolved from back-office support to strategic advisor. IT hasn't made that leap.

This whitepaper explains why. And it introduces **The Grove Method**—a leadership framework I designed to realign IT around what matters most: outcomes, credibility, and the people behind the process, as well as exploring the path—and the leadership method to guide it.

You'll discover:

- Why well-intended frameworks often fail in reactive environments
- The six fractures silently undermining IT's influence
- What Other Business Units (e.g., finance, marketing, human resources, operations, and sales, etc.) figured out about alignment that IT hasn't—yet
- The leadership shift required to rebuild trust, drive adoption, and deliver results
- Practical tools to help you stop measuring noise and start measuring impact
- Why security and development must evolve from technical silos to trust accelerators within IT leadership

Whether you're a Chief Information Officer (CIO), IT Director, engineer, developer, or service leader, this is your playbook for leading with purpose—when dashboards don't tell the full story and the stakes are rising fast.

The Grove Method isn't about better tickets or tools. It's about better leadership across all of IT.

This isn't just for IT Service Management (ITSM). It's for transforming every part of IT—from architecture, development, and security to operations—into a high-trust partner the business depends on. That includes security as a strategic force in enabling trust, continuity, and resilience across the entire organization. It also means rethinking how developers are engaged as co-creators of business outcomes.

It's time to lead differently—so every part of IT, from Service Desk to Security, shows up as a trusted, unified partner.

A Note on Authorship

To keep this whitepaper fast and accessible, I used Artificial Intelligence (AI) to refine layout and structure. But every insight, every metric, and every leadership tool comes from the trenches—from decades spent leading real teams through real friction.

This isn't theory. It's what works.

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The Pattern We Can't Ignore

I've spent nearly 30 years inside IT—building, fixing, and leading teams across startups, government, education, and the private sector. I've held just about every role inside a traditional IT department—from field tech to developer, sysadmin to service desk, project manager to executive leader. I've worked both the backend (infrastructure, networking, security) and the frontend (service, delivery, and customer trust). I've earned both bachelor's and master's degrees, over 30 technical certifications, completed HR and leadership programs, and trained at Wharton. I tell you this, not to impress you—but to impress upon you this: I know where IT breaks, and more importantly, I know what it takes to rebuild it.

For most of my career, I assumed the frustration was just part of the job.

You build the process, train the team, implement the tools—and somehow, you're still chasing your tail. The backlog grows. Trust erodes. Leadership changes course. And your team? They burn out fixing problems they didn't create.

Whether you work in IT Management, Networking, Infrastructure, Development and Operations (DevOps), Cybersecurity, Engineering, QA, Project Management, Support, or IT Service Management (ITSM)—you've seen it before. The cycle is maddening.

But what if the issue isn't poor execution? What if the system itself is wired to react?

For decades, we built IT around the backend: networks, servers, systems, uptime. That made sense when IT was just a utility—something you installed, monitored, and fixed when it broke.

But that's not the world we live in anymore.

Today, every department depends on IT to function. From Human Resources (HR) and Finance (FM) to Communications and Curriculum, IT is no longer the sidekick—it's the infrastructure. The circulatory system. And when it lags, everyone feels it.

The problem is that the frontend and backend of IT don't always work well together.

This is the customer-facing side of technology—the touchpoints where users (employees, students, customers, or the public) directly interact with IT services. It includes:

- Service Desk and Field Services
- Customer portals, ticketing systems, and self-service tools
- End-user devices (laptops, Chromebooks, AV equipment, phones)
- User experience (UX), accessibility, and usability
- IT communications, training, onboarding, and support
- Web and application front-end development
- DevOps pipelines that support delivery to production
- Security interfaces: endpoint protection, compliance alerts, MFA prompts, incident triage

Their goal? To ensure users can interact with technology smoothly, confidently, and with minimal friction.

Conversely, the “Backend” is the foundational engine that powers the frontend—largely invisible to users, but essential for delivery. It includes:

- Servers, storage, networking, and cloud infrastructure
- Core security operations: detection, response, governance
- Identity and Access Management (IAM) and directory services
- Compliance, risk management, and vulnerability remediation
- Enterprise apps, middleware, integrations, and databases
- System administrators, infrastructure engineers, and back-end developers
- Enterprise architecture, platform engineering, and standards governance
- CI/CD infrastructure, build systems, testing environments

Their goal is to deliver reliable, secure, and scalable infrastructure and systems—enabling stability, performance, and continuous innovation.

And yet, security often operates as a parallel universe—accountable for risk, but excluded from service design and delivery conversations. Developers, too, are expected to push features fast, while navigating environments where infrastructure, compliance, and governance aren’t always in sync. It’s no wonder the business sees IT as fragmented.

THE IT DIVIDE:

When Frontend and Backend Don't Align, Everyone Feels It

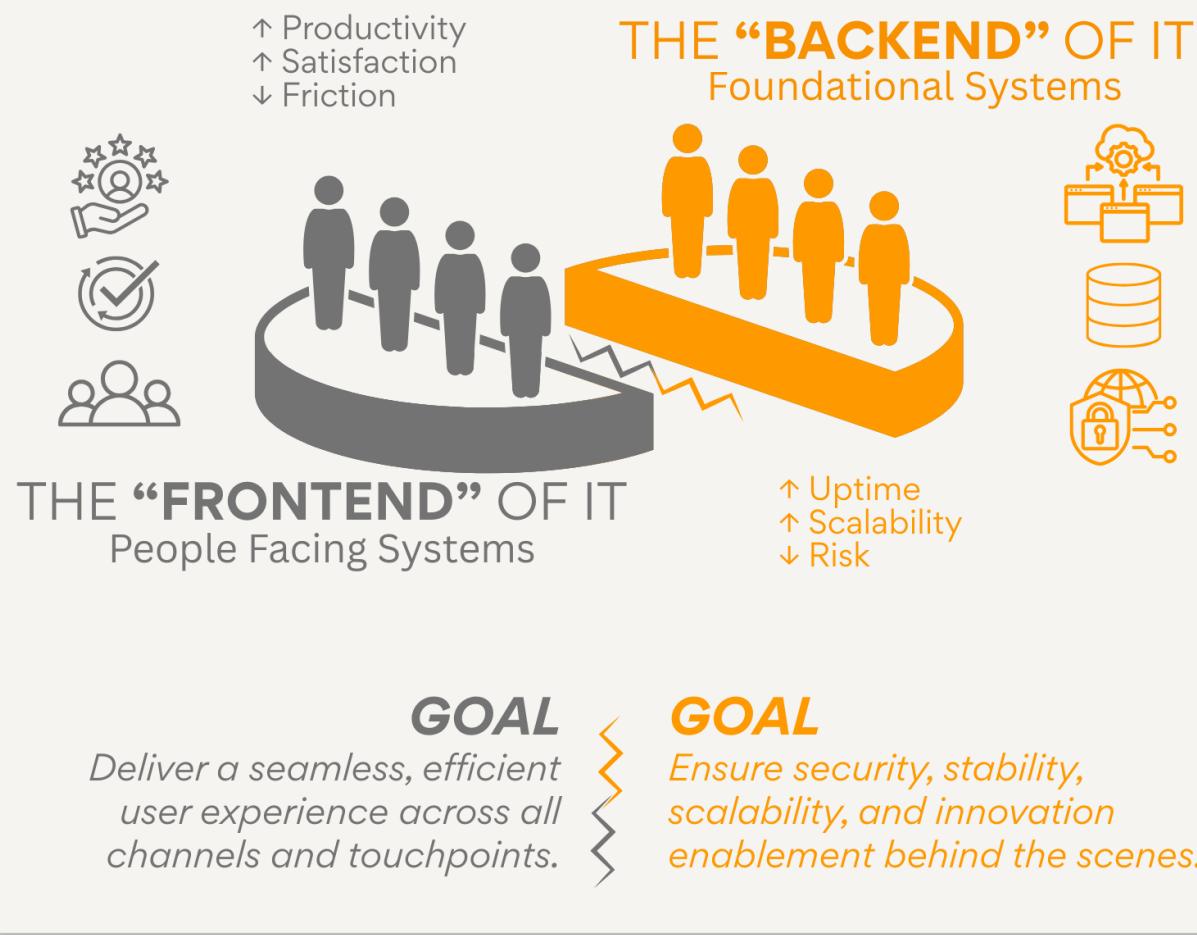


Figure 1: The Frontend and Backend of IT are two tightly connected but often misaligned domains. While the Frontend ensures smooth user interactions, the Backend powers the systems that make those experiences possible. Disconnection between these groups leads to delays, finger-pointing, and lost trust.

The problem isn't just that the frontend and backend of IT don't work well together—it's that internal silos, turf wars, and misaligned priorities prevent IT from acting as a cohesive partner to the business. Until that changes, outcomes suffer—and so does trust.

Ask any Service Desk manager—they're fielding tickets from frustrated users with zero visibility into backend decisions and developers often ship code into production environments without clear visibility into the support experience or user impacts.

It's not that either side is wrong. It's that they were never designed to work as one.

Instead of alignment, we get friction. And here's the kicker: the business sees it too.

This isn't a critique of infrastructure, security, or systems teams. Their work is mission-critical. But when backend expertise isn't aligned with the frontend experience, even the best tech foundation won't prevent friction at the point of use.

They don't care about backend vs. frontend. They care about outcomes—systems that stay stable, requests that get handled, and projects that move without IT throwing a wrench in the gears. When that doesn't happen, trust disappears.

And trust, once broken, is expensive to rebuild—if it can be rebuilt at all (Covey, 2006).

That's the pattern I kept seeing. Across education, enterprises, government agencies—same pain, different logos. We had siloed systems, siloed budgets, siloed teams, and somehow expected integrated outcomes.

We can't automate our way out of that.

We Have the Tools—But We've Lost the Trust

The irony is, we've never had more tools, frameworks, and training available. ITIL (AXELOS, 2019), DevOps (Google Cloud, 2022), Agile, Lean, Six Sigma—there's no shortage of good ideas.

But without alignment, implementation is just chaos in a suit.

DevOps (Google Cloud, 2022) promised to connect Dev and Ops.

ITIL (AXELOS, 2019) promised standardized services.

Agile promised flexibility. But none of these frameworks fully bridge the cultural divide between the people running the systems and the people relying on them.

And every time trust breaks down between IT and the business, what happens?

Shadow IT rises. Finger-pointing becomes the norm. Project costs balloon.

And the same cycle repeats—just with a different name (West & Lu, 2020).

That's why I created the Grove Method for ITSM Excellence (a field-tested leadership framework that aligns IT services around business value—through metrics, messaging, and momentum.)

Not as a replacement for ITIL (AXELOS, 2019) or DevOps (Google Cloud, 2022), or any other framework—but as a compass. A way to help IT leaders connect the dots, build credibility, and earn back the seat at the table.

Because here's the truth:

If IT doesn't speak the language of trust, the business tunes out.

Why IT Keeps Breaking Itself

Ever notice how IT falls apart right when it matters most?

Big initiative. Tight deadline. Make-or-break quarter—and suddenly, IT's scrambling. Again.

It's not that we lack knowledge. Or frameworks. Or smart people.

The harder truth?

We break ourselves.

We overcommit. We under-communicate. We adopt shiny tools without killing off the old ones. We accept patchwork policies from ten years ago as gospel. We fail to say "no" when it matters most. And worst of all?

We think this is normal.

The problem is systemic. It's cultural. And until we fix that, no platform or process will save us.

We Reward the Wrong Things

"You get what you reward." — W. Edwards Demming

Let me ask you...who gets promoted in IT?

Is it the one who prevents problems—or the one who swoops in when it's already burning?

Too often, we celebrate the firefighter, not the fire marshal. Hero culture rewards drama over durability. It's the late-night savior who gets the praise, not the quiet strategist who made the late night unnecessary in the first place (DeMarco & Lister, 2013).

We see this play out in performance metrics too. Dashboards full of closure rates and SLA compliance look great on paper. But they tell us nothing about whether our services are actually improving life for the user—or for the business. I call these vanity metrics.

And it's not just support—developers and security teams feel this too. Developers are rewarded for shipping code fast—not for ensuring it integrates securely, or works within the real-world constraints of our environments. When delivery gets rushed or security is bolted on late, it erodes trust and leaves teams scrambling.

Legacy Thinking Still Runs the Show

Most IT departments still think in infrastructure-first terms.

Hardware. Networks. Systems.

And to be fair, that made sense for decades. IT was the engine room, and our job was to keep the lights on. But that model doesn't scale in a world of cloud, Software-as-a-Service (SaaS), mobile devices, and consumer-grade expectations.

We're running modern businesses with Cold War-era control models.

And yet, I've been in rooms where we're arguing about printer access policies while entire digital classrooms are offline. That's not service management—it's service avoidance.

We Assume the Business Will Adapt to Us

This one stings.

For too long, IT has expected the business to bend around its processes, tickets, and timelines. But outside of IT? Nobody cares about your internal org chart. Nobody cares which queue owns the request. They care about outcomes.

When IT creates friction, people route around us. That's how Shadow IT was born (Gartner, 2012). That's how rogue tools end up in the budget. That's why departments roll out their own tech stacks behind our backs.

It's not malicious. It's human. And it's a direct result of IT failing to meet the moment.

CALL TO ACTION: Shift from Control to Collaboration

IT can no longer act like a toll booth.

If we force the business to adapt to our internal structure, timelines, and queues, they'll simply **route around us**—and they already are.

Shadow IT isn't a rebellion.

It's a response to friction.

When we align services to how the business works—instead of how IT is organized—we stop being a bottleneck and start being a partner.

Great IT doesn't enforce compliance—it earns alignment.

What Got Us Here Won't Get Us There

I'm not here to blame.

I've spent my career inside these very systems, leading teams through change, firefighting, and fatigue. I know how hard it is to hold the line when everything is moving fast and budgets are tight.

But here's what I've learned the hard way:

If we don't change the internal culture of IT, we will keep breaking ourselves—no matter how much we modernize on the surface.

We don't just need new tools.

We need a new mindset.

The Grove Method emerged from this need—to rebuild credibility, reconnect with the business, and start measuring what truly matters. Whether you write code, harden systems, ship features, or support users, The Grove Method helps align all of IT toward trust and business impact. To stop rewarding heroics and start designing systems that prevent the fire altogether.

Because at the end of the day, IT isn't just about keeping the servers running. It's about delivering trusted outcomes—from stable infrastructure and secure systems to resilient code and seamless support. Everyone in IT plays a role. And leadership is the thread that ties it all together.

Other Business Units (e.g., finance, marketing, human resources, operations, and sales, etc.) figured this out decades ago. They weren't invited to the business table—they earned their seat by aligning what they measured and how they worked with what the business valued. They stopped tracking outputs no one understood and started enabling capabilities the business couldn't grow without. IT has the same opportunity—if we lead for trust, not just uptime. As Kotter (2012) argued, real transformation depends on urgency, vision, and momentum—not just enforcing processes.

How IT Got Fractured

The fractures we see in IT today didn't happen all at once—they accumulated over time, as each technological shift introduced more complexity without resolving the disconnect between strategy and service.

Figure 2 maps this journey. Inspired by Charles Minard's 1869 visualization, it traces major milestones in IT's evolution—and shows how each advancement created new gaps in alignment, trust, and outcomes.

With every shift—from hardware to cloud, from tickets to self-service, from ITIL to Agile—one question remained unanswered: **are we building faster than we're aligning?**

This isn't just a timeline. It's a cautionary map of missed opportunities and structural drift. Understanding this helps explain why so many IT teams feel fractured—despite all the frameworks and funding thrown their way.

It's about helping the business thrive.

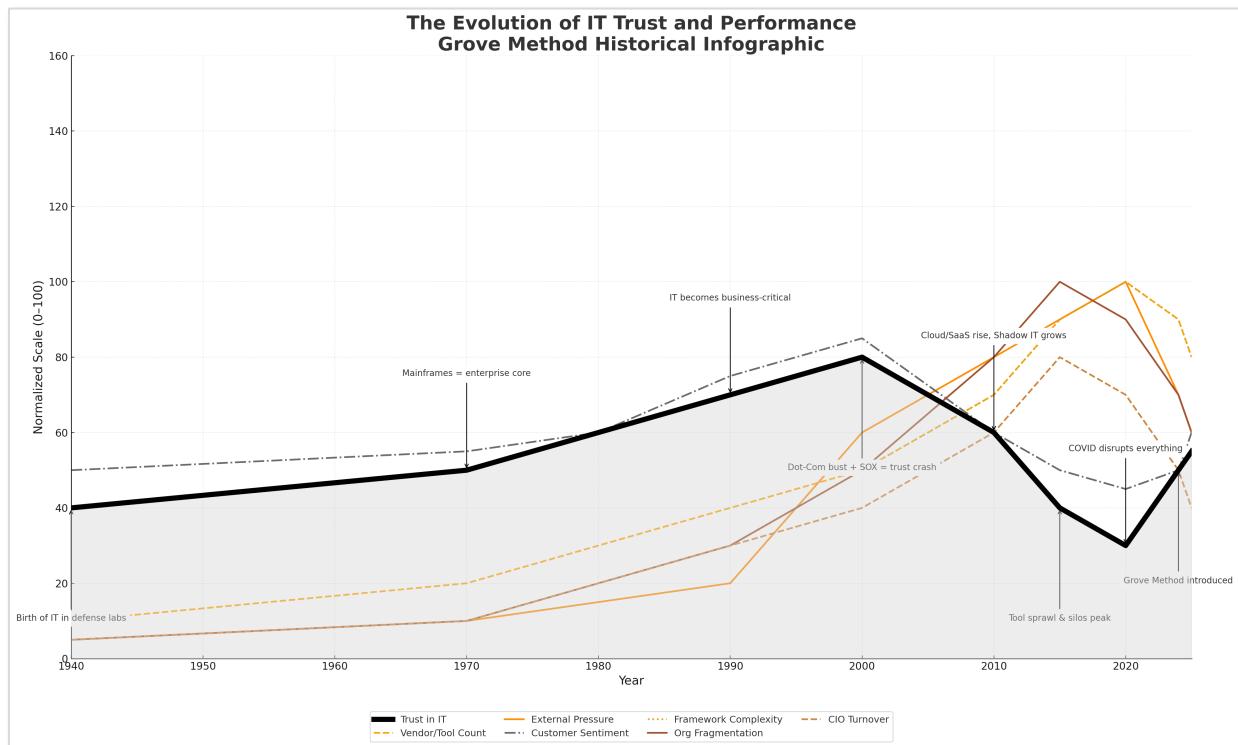


Figure 2: Major milestones in IT's evolution—and the fractures they created.

Source: Roark (2025). Visual inspired by Minard's 1869 campaign chart.

Inspired by Minard's 1869 visualization of Napoleon's Russian campaign (Minard, 1869)

Takeaway:

Every leap forward in IT brought new silos, new tools, and new handoffs—fracturing alignment between tech teams, business units, and end users.

Why Customers Hate IT (And Why We Blame the Wrong People)

Let's talk about something we all know but rarely say out loud:

Customers hate IT.

Not always. Not everyone. But often enough that it's become a running joke across the organization. We're the department of "No." The team that takes too long. The people who ask for a screenshot, then a reboot, then a ticket, then more patience. And when something goes sideways?

It's always our fault.

But here's the truth no one says out loud: they're not really mad at us. They're mad at the experience.

They're mad at how technology—something that should empower them—ends up slowing them down. Confusing them. Blocking their goals. And we, the IT team, are the human face of that frustration.

The Technology Works (Until It Doesn't)

Think about the average user's experience with IT. They don't see the network architecture. They don't care about our asset lifecycle plans. What they care about is whether their laptop turns on. Whether their tools load quickly. Whether they can log in, access files, and get through a meeting without embarrassing tech hiccups. When any of that breaks, we become the enemy.

And if that's their *only* experience of IT? They assume we're either out of touch or incompetent. Not because we are—but because that's how it feels from their side of the screen.

When the System Fails, So Does Trust

Over time, these little failures add up. The Zoom call that crashed during a board meeting. The password reset loop that locked them out during payroll. The app that worked fine yesterday—until an update broke everything today. Each one chips away at trust.

And when users stop trusting IT, they don't just complain—they start avoiding us. That's when Shadow IT takes over. When teams bring in unauthorized tools because they "just work better." When people stop submitting tickets and start solving things their own way, without regard to security, policy, or supportability.

We Point Fingers Internally—And Miss the Point

Now, let's be honest: we in IT are no strangers to blame either. The Service Desk blames the network team. The network team blames the vendor. The vendor blames the application team. And somewhere, someone mutters, "Well, they just didn't follow the process."

This isn't collaboration—it's tribalism.

The Blame Game Ends with Alignment

Here's what I had to learn the hard way: When customers hate IT, it's rarely about one ticket, one outage, or one person. It's about a pattern. A feeling. A belief that we're not on their side.

That belief forms when we prioritize internal efficiency over external impact. When we build workflows that work for us, not for the people we're meant to support.

That's why I built the Grove Method—to realign IT, both frontend and backend, around a single mission: delivering value together. Not just in uptime or ticket stats, but in the experience we provide.

Because when IT serves the other business units Other Business Units (e.g., finance, marketing, human resources, operations, and sales, etc.)—with clarity, consistency, and care—we stop being the team everyone dreads.

We become the team they trust.

How Tech Became the Business—and What That Broke

Somewhere along the way, the story flipped.

IT used to support the business. We built the infrastructure, kept the lights on, and helped others get things done. But when smartphones became appendages and data turned into gold, tech stopped working backstage—and took center stage.

Tech didn't just support the business. It became the business.

And that changed everything.

Digital Transformation Wasn't Optional

We didn't choose this path—it chose us.

As companies shifted online, every department suddenly needed apps, Application Programming Interface (APIs), dashboards, and automations. Customer expectations skyrocketed. If your service didn't work on mobile or deliver instant results, you were out of the game.

Tech wasn't just a helper—it was the engine.

The problem? We weren't ready to drive it.

We Were Given the Keys—But Not the Map

“Strategy is useless without execution. Execution is blind without strategy.” — Andy Grove

IT was expected to lead digital transformation. But no one gave us a blueprint. We were told to modernize without disrupting. To innovate without increasing cost. To integrate legacy platforms with modern UX expectations. And to do it all without increasing headcount.

You can guess how that went. We built faster than we aligned. We deployed before we defined.

Transformation Without Translation

When IT builds without business alignment, even the best tools fall flat.

Innovation must speak the language of the user—or it becomes noise.

We delivered tools that were technically sound but practically misunderstood. And somewhere in that flurry of innovation, we forgot to ask: what does the business actually need?

We Broke What Made Us Trusted

Back when IT was mostly infrastructure, we had one job: stability. People trusted us because we were consistent. When we said something would work, it did. When we implemented a tool, it lasted a decade.

But when tech became the business, our focus shifted from reliability to velocity. We started measuring success by deployment rates, release frequency, and CI/CD throughput. But while we were optimizing sprint cycles, our customers were still confused. They didn't care how fast we deployed. They just wanted tools that worked and made sense.

IT Started Running at a Pace the Business Couldn't Match

We built platforms, pipelines, and performance layers—but without a shared language between IT and the business, none of it landed.

Worse, we left critical voices behind: frontline staff, support teams, and the end users.

The backend evolved. The frontend lagged.

IT became two different worlds—speaking past each other.

That's Why I Built the Grove Method

I saw this split firsthand—on the ground in data centers, across the table in boardrooms, and in the heat of war rooms. I didn't create the Grove Method to slow IT down. I built it to align the entire function. To unite the frontend of IT (Service Management) with the backend (Infrastructure, Applications, Security) under one shared goal: business success.

Grove isn't about theory—it's about building trust by design. It's about giving IT leaders a framework that connects uptime to outcomes, strategy to support, and speed to sustainability.

Because tech didn't just become the business. It became everyone's business. And it's time we led like it.

The Battle Between Frontend and Backend IT

There's a tension in IT that rarely shows up in strategy decks.

It's not about budgets. It's not even about tools. It's about the cultural and operational divide between two sides of IT that should be working together—but too often aren't.

On one side, you've got backend IT: systems engineers, network architects, security ops, infrastructure leaders. On the other, you've got frontend IT: the Service Desk, Field Services, Application Support, Customer Experience.

And too often, they treat each other like separate species.

Why This Divide Exists

Let's be honest: it didn't start out of malice. Backend teams were tasked with keeping the digital skeleton running—servers, switches, protocols, platforms. Frontend teams were tasked with keeping people productive—resetting passwords, fixing printers, untangling strange user behavior.

But somewhere along the way, this division turned into friction. Backend folks saw the frontend as non-technical babysitters. Frontend folks saw the backend as out-of-touch elitists who never had to face an angry user.

The result? Silos, turf wars, and an invisible blame game.

The Problem with Invisible Work

Here's the catch: trust lives in frontend IT. It's where the users form their opinions. Where they decide if IT is helpful or hostile. You can have five-nines uptime and gold-plated firewalls—but if someone's laptop won't connect to Wi-Fi, they don't care.

Backend IT may keep the lights on, but frontend IT decides whether the room feels warm or cold.

Yet most organizations reward backend teams more. Infrastructure projects get treated as "real" IT work, while the daily labor of user support and service recovery goes unnoticed.

That's a mistake. And it's part of why trust keeps eroding.

Business Doesn't Think in Silos—Why Should IT?

Let's shift perspectives for a moment. You don't see Finance split between payroll and forecasting. HR doesn't pit onboarding against performance reviews. Only in IT do we let internal domains fight over who's more "real," instead of uniting under the mission.

If we're serious about enabling the business, then we've got to stop treating Service Management as the junior varsity.

Why Grove Was Built to Unite These Worlds

I built the Grove Method because I saw this divide killing team momentum—and costing companies their credibility.

Grove isn't just a framework for running IT better. It's a language—a shared foundation that helps backend and frontend IT understand what matters to the business and to each other.

It aligns how we measure success, how we communicate wins, and how we build systems that don't just work—they work for people.

And here's the secret: when you integrate frontend and backend teams around shared metrics, shared context, and shared goals, something amazing happens.

IT stops breaking itself. And trust comes back.

The Real ROI of ITSM: It's Not What You Think

Most IT leaders get Return on Investment (ROI) wrong.

Not because they don't care—but because we've been trained to watch the wrong scoreboard. Ask around, and you'll hear answers like "reduced ticket volume," "faster response times," or "lower cost per incident."

All valid. All tactical. But none of them are strategic ROI. They're operational metrics. And while important, they don't answer the question the business is actually asking:

"What are we really getting for the money we spend on IT?"

ROI Isn't a Cost Equation—It's a Value Equation

This is where traditional ITSM logic breaks down. If your primary goal is reducing the number of tickets, you're implicitly saying: "less interaction with IT = better performance." That's like saying fewer customer service calls means your product is amazing—when in reality, maybe people just gave up trying.

True ROI isn't about deflection. It's about restoration. Every minute you give back to a teacher, a nurse, a caseworker, or a developer is a minute they can reinvest in the mission. That's what real ROI looks like.

Especially in environments like education, where a 10-minute tech issue in one classroom impacts 24 students at once. That's not just downtime—it's lost instruction and learning. And when that happens at scale—across 56 schools, 1,700 staff, and 29,000 students—it becomes a systemic academic loss, not just a technical hiccup.

What IT Can Learn from Finance and HR

IT isn't the first department to struggle with alignment. Finance and HR faced similar growing pains as they shifted from back-office functions to strategic business partners. What changed? Their metrics, their language, and their posture.

The table below highlights how Finance and HR adapted to become aligned, trusted functions—and how IT is still catching up. While I highlight HR and Finance here, this could easily scale across all other business units (e.g., finance, marketing, human resources, operations, research and development, business development, and sales, etc.) as well.

ALIGNMENT	HR	FINANCE	IT
FRONT & BACK OFFICE	ALIGNED	ALIGNED	DISCONNECTED
WITH BUSINESS	ALIGNED	ALIGNED	INCONSISTENTLY
OBJECTIVE	ORGANIZATION GROWTH	ORGANIZATION GROWTH	LOWEST COST

Table 1: How Finance and HR Earned Trust—and What IT Still Needs to Learn

Source: Grove Method Leadership Briefing, Roark (2025).

Takeaway:

While Finance and HR matured into strategic business partners, IT remains stuck in support mode—often sidelined from decisions that impact it most.

This Is Why We Measure Trust

Here's one truth most dashboards miss: IT's value isn't measured in what we fix. It's measured in how confident people feel calling us in the first place.

Do they trust us to help—or brace for frustration? This is why I advocate measuring trust, not just response time. In high-trust environments, users call earlier, communicate more clearly, and follow through faster.

That reduces repeat tickets, increases self-resolution, and lowers escalations. Trust is the ultimate force multiplier. Without it, even the best tools stall out.

From IT Savings to Academic Return on Investment (A-ROI)

Here's one shift that changed how I lead: stop chasing IT budget savings. Start calculating Academic ROI or Operational ROI—metrics that tie IT impact to actual business outcomes.

For example:

- 10 minutes of lost instruction \times 24 students = 240 total minutes lost per classroom incident
- Multiplied by 50 classrooms per school \times 56 schools = 672,000 total minutes lost per incident type
- Teacher salary = (example) \$60K/year \rightarrow Every 30,000 minutes \approx \$1,000 in lost instructional time.

Suddenly, that printer ticket isn't just a nuisance—it's a \$1,000 event.

**Sources: DMGroup (2022); Colorado Department of Education Staff Reports; Grove Internal Time Studies*.*

Why I Embedded This in Grove

Grove Metrics weren't built to game the board. They were designed to shift the game entirely. When I designed them, I had one goal: make IT Service Management the trusted heartbeat of the business—not just a utility function.

That meant moving beyond legacy Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and building metrics that reflect human impact:

- **Tickets prevented:** *Net reduction in ticket volume after an IT change, measured by comparing average monthly tickets before and after the intervention.*
- **Instructional minutes restored:** *Total classroom time regained by resolving or preventing tech issues that would otherwise disrupt instruction.*
- **Trust Delta:** *Net change in trust ratings before/after an IT change or event.*
- **Time to Value:** *The time between request/need and perceived business impact or result.*

These aren't just numbers—they're proof that IT is reducing friction, restoring confidence, and delivering what matters.

When ITSM leaders start reporting these metrics, you don't just get better results—you get buy-in.

Measuring What Actually Matters

Traditional ITSM metrics—like SLA compliance, closure rates, and mean time to resolution—tell us how efficiently work is completed. But they rarely reflect the business's true experience or outcomes. These measures track motion, not progress. They count effort, not impact.

If the goal is to reduce friction and build trust, then the metrics must evolve accordingly.

Leaders aligned with the Grove Method shift their focus from volume to value. Rather than simply reporting how many tickets were closed or how quickly teams responded, they ask: Did this improve someone's workday? Did we give time back to the business? Did we make it easier to do the right thing, the first time?

That's where the Grove approach introduces three critical dimensions of measurement:

- **Friction Reduced → Time Returned to the Business**

This measures how much disruption was prevented or eliminated. Fewer handoffs. Clearer ownership. Better self-service. Each contributes to instructional time preserved, administrative overhead avoided, and interruptions minimized.

- **Trust Earned → Partnership Across Departments**

Beyond end-user satisfaction, Grove metrics assess how IT is perceived by internal stakeholders—finance, HR, operations, facilities. Is IT seen as a collaborator or a bottleneck? This cross-functional feedback is vital to long-term alignment.

- **Outcomes Achieved → KPIs That Reflect Real Business Value**

Instead of proxy metrics, Grove emphasizes indicators that matter to CFOs and COOs:

- Time to onboard new employees or teachers
- Reduction in abandoned tech initiatives
- Increased utilization of approved tools
- Reduced reliance on shadow IT

By reframing how we define and measure success, the Grove Method enables leaders to connect IT service performance directly to strategic priorities. Not just operational metrics, but meaningful outcomes—visible, measurable, and trusted.

If it helped the business move forward faster, it counts.

How Do You Measure What Didn't Happen?

Skeptical about measuring what *didn't* happen? That's fair. But it's possible—if you establish a clear before-and-after baseline.

For example: self-service password reset → 900 monthly tickets drop to 540 = **360 tickets prevented**.

It's not magic. It's math—and it changes how IT proves value.

The Grove Method (Roark, 2023): An Inflection Point for IT

After more than 20 years in IT leadership, I started to realize something I didn't want to admit: the internal conflict between the Frontend and Backend of IT wasn't going away. It was getting worse.

No matter how hard we worked or how many tools we deployed, our teams remained stuck in reactive loops. We had metrics. We had certifications. We had dashboards full of green lights. And still, the business didn't trust us. We weren't seen as strategic—we were still treated like a cost center.

That's when I started asking a different question:

If departments like Finance and HR had figured out how to align around value and trust—why couldn't we?

That question stuck with me. And the deeper I dug, the clearer it became: It wasn't about technology. It was about leadership.

That's when I found myself rereading the work of Andy Grove.

Andy Grove isn't always a household name outside of tech circles—but he should be. He was Intel's third employee and later became CEO, leading the company through some of the fiercest global tech competition in history. But Grove didn't just build semiconductors—he built systems that scaled. Systems that turned chaos into clarity—and aligned every function around execution, trust, and performance.

He didn't write theory. He delivered field-tested playbooks for high-stakes leadership.

Grove knew that trust and execution don't come from titles—they come from clarity, communication, and a shared mission. He gave leaders the tools to cut through noise and focus on what mattered. He wasn't flashy. He was disciplined. And his ideas worked.

And I remember thinking:

“What if IT ran like a business—one that delivers value from Day One?”

“What if IT started operating more like a business—one that delivers value from Day One?”

That's when I started building what eventually became **The Grove Method for ITSM Excellence**.

Back then, it didn't have a name. I didn't set out to write a book or create a brand. I just wanted to fix the parts of IT that were holding smart people back.

And for nearly two decades, I did.

In every role, my teams began earning trust instead of chasing it. We simplified processes, aligned with the business, and became true service partners—not just support providers. And I thought the industry was evolving.

Then, in 2022, I took a role in the education sector and something amazingly unexpected happened.

The moment I stepped in, everything I thought we (IT sector) had fixed, came roaring back.

Shadow IT. Silo wars. Reactive ticket queues. Metrics that punished the wrong people. Finger-pointing from every direction.

It was like stepping into a time machine—and landing in the middle of a firefight I'd already survived 20+ years earlier.

That's when I realized something hard:

IT hadn't evolved—I *had*.

All the progress I thought IT was making? It was just local. Isolated to the teams I'd led and the principles I'd applied. The system itself overall was still broken. So, I went back to Grove—not out of nostalgia, but because I needed a blueprint that could scale. And that's when the Grove Method moved from instinct to system.

I took everything that had worked over the years—every lesson, every adjustment, every battle—and I formalized it. I built a method that IT leaders could use to realign their teams, regain trust, and lead IT like a business function that matters.

What Happens If You Don't Change?

- Shadow IT expands—security and cost spiral out
- Service Desk becomes a scapegoat, morale drops
- Tech debt grows—without anyone noticing (until it breaks)
- Customers stop trusting IT—and stop asking for help
- High performers leave for organizations where they can thrive

Not just for one company or one role—but for anyone tired of spinning their wheels in a system never built for modern service.

That's why I wrote the books.

That's why I teach the method.

Because this problem isn't solving itself. And if we want to stop fighting the same battles—we have to lead differently.

This transition from support to strategic partner doesn't happen by accident. It requires intentional alignment across people, priorities, and performance metrics.

The graphic below captures this shift—showing how IT evolves not just through technology, but through human coordination. As alignment deepens, IT's value to the business increases—and trust becomes embedded, not earned case by case.

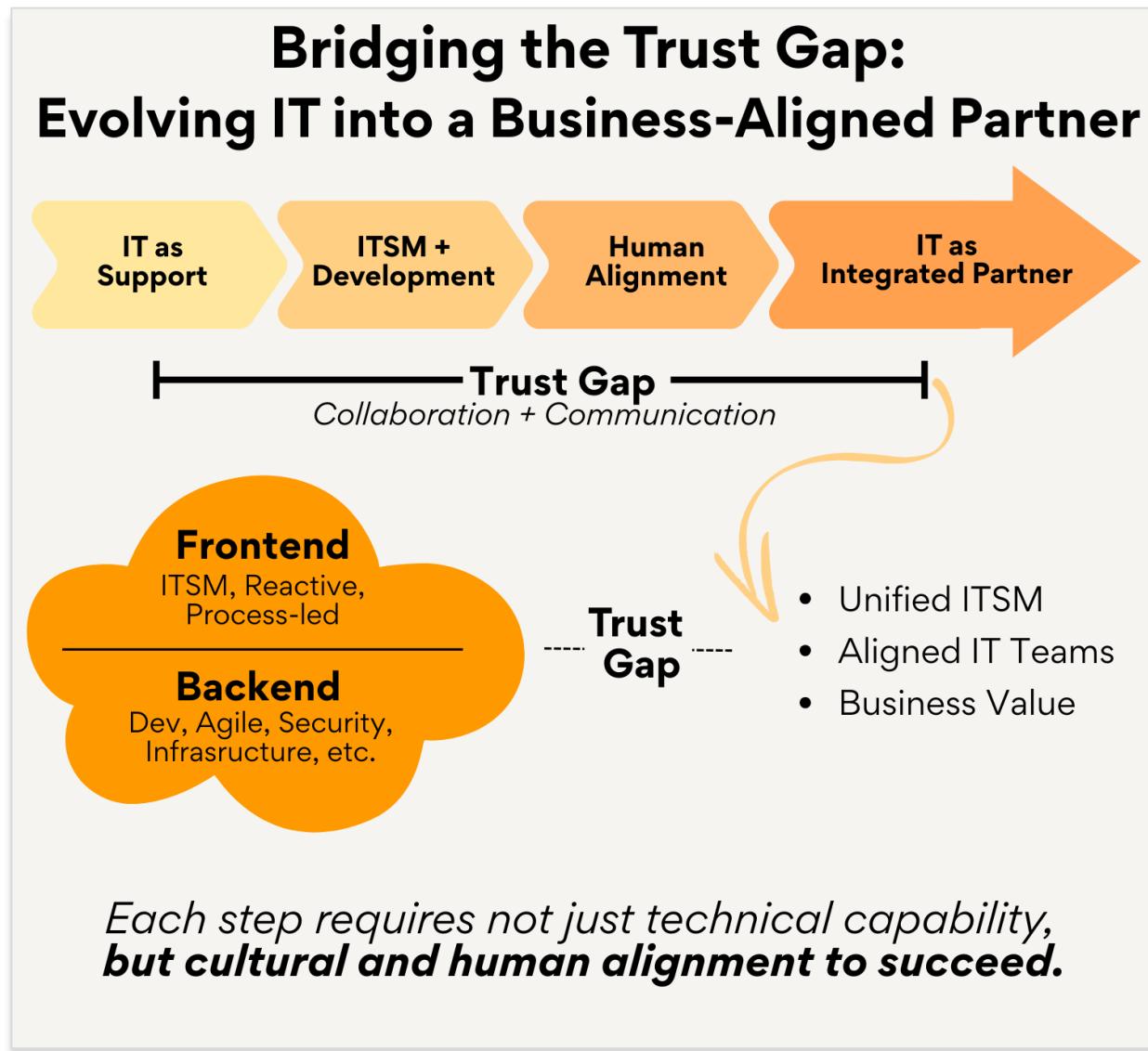


Figure 3: Evolving IT from Support to Strategic Partner: The Role of Human Alignment.

Source: Roark (2025). Grove Method Field Application Case Map.

Takeaway:

Shifting IT from a reactive service desk to a strategic partner isn't about tools—it's about aligning people, priorities, and purpose across the organization.

Why the Grove Method Needed to Be Different

Most frameworks, models, standards, and methods, teach what to do—but not why it matters, or how to make it stick in a high-pressure, real-world environment.

ITIL gave us structure. DevOps gave us speed. Agile gave us iteration. But none of them told the full story of what it takes to lead a trusted, aligned IT team—one that delivers value from Day One.

That's why I created the Grove Method—to solve what those frameworks couldn't:

- **Unite Frontend and Backend IT**—eliminating shadow IT (Gartner, 2021) and the endless blame ping-pong.
- **Bridge the human gap**—because SLAs mean nothing if your customers don't trust you.
- **Embed business alignment into daily operations**—so we're not just IT leaders, but business partners.

Grove isn't just a toolset—it's a mindset.

Yes, there are templates, dashboards, and metrics. At its core, Grove helps IT earn the right to lead—by delivering consistent, measurable, and human-centered outcomes.

That starts with:

- Leading with clarity
- Listening with humility
- Executing with operational rigor
- Reporting what actually matters (not just what's easy to count)

When I coach leaders on Grove, I'm not asking them to do more. I'm asking them to do what works. To stop chasing every shiny acronym—and start focusing on the fundamentals that actually build trust and value.

A System That Knows It's Part of a Whole

Finance isn't at war with itself. HR doesn't have shadow-HR running rogue. But in IT? That kind of dysfunction is practically tradition.

Frontend and backend IT teams often operate like rival nations—with their own languages, metrics, and allegiances. Grove forces a reckoning: If we want IT to be a strategic pillar of the organization, we must stop acting like rival kingdoms.

We are not here to serve IT. We are here to serve the mission of the business.

That means aligning how we work, what we measure, and how we communicate—with each other and with every other department.

The Inflection Point Is Already Begun

The truth is, you don't need permission to lead this way.

Every day, I see ITSM leaders rebuilding trust, one solved ticket at a time. I see CIOs shifting the conversation—from uptime to outcomes. I see service desks being reimagined not as complaint centers, but as value accelerators.

That's what Grove helps you do. Not by adding more tools. But by returning to what really matters: trust, clarity, action, and alignment.

That's how IT earns its seat at the table—not as a support function, but as a strategic driver of value.

Conclusion: Unified IT, Unified Value

Let's call it like it is:

Most IT organizations don't fail because they're under-skilled. They fail because they're out of sync.

Out of sync with themselves. Out of sync with the business. Out of sync with what real value looks like.

I've seen this from the inside—for decades. I've led the Service Desk. Field Services. Strategy. Delivery. And I've sat at the table where tech budgets get slashed while expectations rise.

The result? Burned-out staff, broken trust, and another generation of leaders convinced that IT is just a cost center.

But it doesn't have to be that way.

"Trust is built on credibility, and credibility comes from acting in others' interests before your own." — Stephen M.R. Covey

The Path Forward Is Alignment

Unified IT isn't just a slogan. It's a necessity.

We've unified other departments:

- Finance and procurement operate in lockstep.
- HR and legal move in tandem.
- Even marketing and sales—once natural enemies—have learned to align.

So why not IT?

Because our internal split—Frontend vs. Backend—is still alive and well. And it's killing our credibility.

What You Can Do Today with Grove

- Stop tracking only tickets closed—start tracking tickets prevented
- Add a trust rating to your post-ticket surveys
- Share Grove Metrics at your next leadership meeting
- Pair a backend engineer with a service desk tech for one week
- Ask: "Are we building faster than we're aligning?"

What Grove Offers Is a Way Through

Grove isn't a silver bullet. It's not a certification. And it's not a replacement for all the frameworks you've already invested in.

What it is—is a map. A way to get from 'we're doing a lot' to 'we're making an impact.'

It shows how to:

- Align IT from the inside out
- Rebuild trust with your customers
- Drive meaningful, measurable results

And above all, how to lead like the business depends on it—because it does.

You Don't Need a Title to Start Leading

You don't need to be a CIO to start this journey. You just need to care enough to stop repeating what's not working.

You don't have to convince your entire org overnight. Start with your team. Your metrics. Your service conversations.

Start with one aligned win. Then build on that. Brick by brick. Team by team. Until the trust returns.

That's what Grove is about.

Not another framework. Not another dashboard.

Just a better way to do the job you already believe in. Together.

A Roadmap That Starts on Day One

Digital transformation doesn't need another framework that collects dust. It needs a plan leaders can actually use—starting on Day One.

The Grove Method offers a clear roadmap grounded in real service leadership, not buzzwords. It starts by breaking down the first 90 days into meaningful, actionable shifts:

- **Day 1: Acknowledge the Friction.**

Begin by listening. Pinpoint where trust breaks down, where handoffs fail, and where your team is firefighting instead of leading. Don't fix symptoms—name the patterns.

- **Day 30: Align Around Outcomes.**

Redraw ownership. Shift from siloed tasks to shared goals. Connect teams across functions and focus your metrics on what matters most to the business: time, trust, and clarity.

- **Day 90: Operationalize Trust.**

Bake it in. Embed Grove-aligned metrics into reporting, establish shared OKRs across departments, and lead service reviews that focus on outcomes—not just incidents.

This isn't a reorg. It's a realignment. It's the shift from support to strategy, from frustration to confidence, from friction to trust. And it starts the moment you decide IT is more than a back office—it's a business enabler.

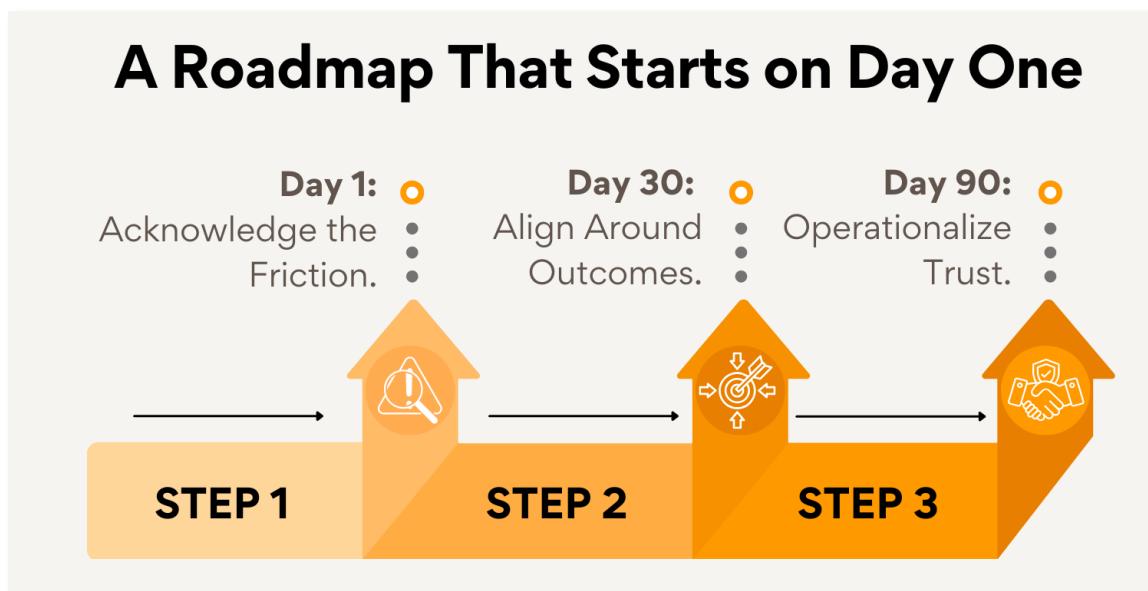


Figure 4: The Grove Roadmap – A high-level path to shift from reactive IT to trusted partner in 90 days. Start small, stay strategic, and build alignment one step at a time.

This Is Where It Starts

I didn't write Grove to add another acronym to your stack. I wrote it because I was tired of watching great IT teams get dismissed, underfunded, and misjudged.

I wrote it for the team leads stuck translating strategy into triage.

For the CIOs who've earned their seat at the table—and still have to prove they belong.

For anyone who's ever walked into a room full of green lights on dashboards and still heard:

"Why does it feel like nothing's working?"

The Grove Method isn't just a system. It's a signal. That you're not alone. That there's a better way. That it's okay to lead with clarity—even when the noise says otherwise.

If any part of this white paper sounded like your story, it's because it is.

And if you're ready to shift from firefighting to forward motion—

The Grove Series for ITSM Excellence Series was written for you.

Because leadership isn't just what you know. It's how you carry it—when everything's on fire.

Let's build something better.

Together

If it worked for my teams, it can work for yours—and Grove is the system to get you there.

Executive Snapshot: What the Grove Method Offers in One Page

If you only have five minutes—start here. This is what Grove helps IT leaders do when the stakes are high and the trust is low.

The Grove Method isn't just another IT framework—it's a practical playbook for rebuilding trust, alignment, and measurable value inside fractured IT organizations.

This executive summary outlines the business case, the shift IT must make, and what leaders can do—starting today.

The Grove Method for ITSM Excellence is built on three pillars:

- **Alignment** – Unite frontend and backend IT under shared goals, metrics, and trust.
- **Execution** – Replace chaos with clarity using Grove's tools, templates, and reporting cadence.
- **Human-Centered Metrics** – Track what actually matters: trust earned, tickets prevented, value delivered.

Leaders use Grove to:

- Realign fractured teams
- Restore business trust
- Measure what matters
- Lead with clarity from Day One

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Grove Method isn't about more work—**it's about better direction.**

What Is the Grove Method?

A field-tested framework for ITSM leaders to turn reactive teams into high-output, business-aligned powerhouses—without waiting for permission, budget, or re-orgs.

Why It's Needed

Traditional ITSM tools chase SLAs, not outcomes. The Grove Method fixes that by focusing on trust, business alignment, and results—not ticket counts.

The Grove Mindset

Forget frameworks-first. Grove leaders think in outcomes, not outputs:

- 📍 Lead from where you are
- 🛡️ Build trust before tools
- 📊 Measure what matters (hint: not SLA %)

The Grove Metrics

Replace vanity metrics with those that drive business alignment:

- ✅ Tickets Prevented
- ⌚ Time Saved
- 🕒 Hours Returned to the Business
- 🤝 Trust Gained

The Grove Tools

Practical templates to shift from chaos to clarity:

- 🎯 Strategic Inflection Point Radar
- ✍️ Blameless Review Framework
- 🔍 Pre-Mortem Planning Template
- 📊 Grove Metrics Dashboard
- ➡️ Role Clarity Matrix

Strategic Approach

01. Grove Mindset

Lead from where you are. Focus on outcomes, not outputs.

02. Grove Metrics

Track Tickets Prevented, Time Saved, and Trust Gained.

03. Grove Tools

Actionable templates like Pre-Mortems, Role Clarity, and Grove Dashboards.

Implementation Plan

Quick Wins

Use Grove Metrics to highlight invisible wins.

Team Alignment

Clarify roles, reset expectations, and lead blameless reviews.

Strategic Reporting

Translate IT outputs into business-relevant results.

Impact & ROI

Reduce friction, cut wasted hours, and improve service perception—without adding headcount. Prove IT's value through measurable outcomes.

What Success Looks Like

A trusted, high-output ITSM organization that leads with clarity, empowers frontline teams, and delivers outcomes the business actually cares about.



Scan to connect with Bob Roark, VP ITSM
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**Turn Chaos into Clarity.
Lead with Purpose.**

The Grove Method shows you how.



The Next Step Isn't More Tools. It's More Alignment.

If this paper struck a nerve, you're not alone. You're part of a growing movement of IT leaders who are done duct-taping dysfunction.

Done treating symptoms while ignoring the source. Now's the time to turn that clarity into action.

Get the Tools: Including to spot—and start fixing—what's misaligned in your environment. Unlock the **Grove Series:**

- **The Grove Method** – Actionable 90-day playbook to lead high-output ITSM teams including access free templates, Strategic Inflection Radar, Grove-Style Task Matrix, Weekly Output Review Templates, Micro-Certification Planning Grid, Bonus: Pitch Deck to Sell the Method to Leadership.
- **The Grove Principles** – Mindset and strategy to transform reactive IT into trusted business alignment including: The 8 Grove Principles for building high-trust, high-output teams, How to identify inflection points and lead your org through them, Why most ITSM efforts stall and how to fix them with structure, Strategic frameworks to shift from reactive support to proactive leadership, and Real-world lessons from ITSM leaders who've lived the change.

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Because better alignment doesn't start with new tech. **It starts with you.**

Acknowledgments

This white paper was shaped not just by research, but by real-world experience and the countless service leaders who continue to push IT forward—often without credit or support.

Gratitude goes to the frontline teams, ITSM leaders, and educators whose stories, challenges, and quiet innovations influenced every chapter of the Grove Method. Their resilience and creativity are at the heart of this work.

The structure and flow of this document were also influenced by the narrative principles outlined in Andy Raskin's *The Greatest Sales Deck I've Ever Seen* (2018). While not a sales pitch, this paper borrows from his emphasis on tension, clarity, and transformation to frame the inflection points that matter most in IT leadership.

I also acknowledge Charles Joseph Minard's 1869 map, whose powerful visualization of Napoleon's Russian campaign remains one of the most compelling examples of data storytelling ever created. His work continues to inspire clarity and precision in how we communicate complex journeys—whether military or ITSM.

I first encountered Charles Minard's legendary 1869 infographic through a post by Ian Pruden on LinkedIn which led me down a path of deeper exploration into visual storytelling in IT leadership.

Finally, thank you to the readers—many of whom are fighting the same battles described in these pages. You're the reason this work exists.

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About the Author



Bob Roark is an executive IT Service Management strategist, leadership advisor, and founder of DayOneReadyLabs. With over 30 years of experience leading IT service and operations teams in enterprise, education, and government sectors, Bob has developed a reputation for transforming chaos into clarity and translating strategy into sustained results.

Bob's practical frameworks have helped organizations move from reactive service models to performance-driven cultures. His signature approach, *The Grove Method for ITSM Excellence*, draws on the operational philosophy of Intel's legendary CEO Andy Grove and has been adopted by IT leaders seeking faster wins, stronger teams, and lasting value.

A frequent mentor to new managers and a trusted voice in the ITSM community, Bob is known for making complex leadership problems simple, actionable, and human. His tools, workbooks, and coaching systems are designed not for theory, but for leaders who are ready to move.

He lives in Colorado, where he continues to teach, build, and help leaders lead better from day one.

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