

ISG & 4me white paper

# Taking your multi-Vendor Ecosystem to the Next Generation

Easy-to-use approach to orchestrate complex,  
dynamic multi-vendor environments

A joint paper by ISG Research and 4me

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**\*ISG** Provider Lens™

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## Management Summary

While screening the market for ITSM/SIAM software solutions to be included into ISG's ITSM/SIAM Provider Lens™ report, we came across 4me's specialized offering in this area. In contrast to many other SIAM/ITSM software vendors that see SIAM as an extension to ITSM, 4me's product architects, from the very beginning, acknowledged that IT and other shared services need to be and will be delivered in a multi-vendor approach. As a result, the company is solely dedicated to offer service management products for such multi-vendor environments.

## Market observation

Constant digitization efforts result in the rapid extension of the IT supply chain – within enterprises and beyond the boundaries of companies. This requires IT organizations to engage with new service providers and technology vendors more frequently than ever. Acquiring and nurturing enterprise customers is the utmost business goal, but IT supply also has to be ensured. Therefore, a strong focus is on managing the constant availability of the IT supply most efficiently and on the performance of the suppliers delivering the products and services.

In preparation for our ISG Provider Lens™ reports, we have researched the ITSM/SIAM market both in the U.S. and Germany over the past 24 months. During numerous discussions with both enterprise users and vendor organizations, we were able to clearly identify three trends for both regions:

ITSM automation has reached phenomenal maturity using modern technologies. In 2019 automation through artificial intelligence, machine learning and mass data analysis has shown high variances between vendors, but today automation by utilizing emerging technologies has become the norm in all solutions we evaluated.

Enterprise service management (ESM) is generating tremendous interest as clients realize that lots of business processes show strong similarities with IT processes and often are integrated with IT service management. HR is a good example, as it involves case management services, such as IT request management, allowing for high automation using the same principles as ITSM. Clients are looking for solutions that expand from ITSM to ESM easily.

SIAM process automation requirements are growing as digitization is maturing. To cope with the business demand, enterprises are utilizing more and more external suppliers. With this dramatic growth, the integration and management of the supplier network becomes crucial. To allow vendors to play their pivotal role in service delivery, instant, seamless and secure data exchange is necessary to guarantee service availability and quality.

While the two regions, U.S. and Germany, show similar trends, the way enterprise clients tackle the arising problems are different. U.S. clients are more open to adopting emerging technologies more quickly while, by contrast, German enterprises are first building robust process frameworks and utilizing technologies for process automation in a subsequent step. Regardless of which approach is taken, both markets have reached a high maturity when it comes to ITSM automation. At the moment, SIAM is gaining a bit more traction in Germany, while in the U.S., the public sector is adopting service integration and management more rapidly.

## Company overview

When founding 4me in 2010, it is amazing how precise Cor Winkler Prins and his colleagues estimated the developments in this market. Using their long-standing, practical experience in the range of the IT management market, it was clear from the beginning that addressing the future challenges will require an approach that architecturally combines ITSM/ESM and SIAM. It took the company more than two years of designing databases, architecting data management principles and developing software to come up with the first version of its offering. Located in Palo Alto, the company today is serving the broader U.S. and the European market, including the U.K., Ireland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Switzerland and Austria.

Due to the location of the headquarters, access to latest technology developments and Silicon Valley funding is guaranteed. Today, 4me delivers more than 120 functional releases of its solutions every year.

## 4me product overview

4me's architects have designed a "service-oriented data structure" right from the start. Classical ITSM systems concentrate on a configuration management database (CMDB) approach that deal with configuration items (CI) and conflate or flag them as part of a service. Due to the dynamic nature of the services as a result of changing business demand, in most cases, this flagging limits the flexibility or ease in managing supplier performance across multiple services and in a multi-vendor environment. 4me, from the start, developed a well-defined, service-oriented data structure for a service management application that includes specific record types such as service, service instance, service offering and service level agreement. These record types deliver dedicated SIAM information such as SLA adherence or service quality instantly, while other approaches require complex calculations that need to be built on a per-customer basis.

Multi-vendor environments always require data exchange in a B2B fashion. Data access and data privacy, paired with information sharing principles, became the guidelines for 4me for architecting a database structure that can share information securely and be compliant with data privacy rules. The firm's offering allows for data and process segregation to allow for vendors to execute tasks within their own management environment as needed. In contrast, most other offerings in the market require static segregation resulting in an unmanageable number of information routes.

By adding a strong and easy to configure workflow engine to the well-defined data structure, and using advanced modern technologies such as bots or virtual agents, the product offering from 4me today offers all necessary functionality to manage the design, development and delivery of IT services by automating the ITIL-based IT processes involved.

As mentioned earlier, ESM is an extension to IT process management. As such, the 4me solution adds HR, customer service and other shared services as template solutions using the same service-oriented data structure, data privacy principles,

virtual-agent technology and workflow engine. Its products integrate all employee-related tasks, technical and organizational, into cross-functional processes, allowing the solution to serve as a true enterprise-wide, service management system.

### ***ITSM offering***

The core of 4me's offering is the set of functionalities required to perform "classical" IT service management (ITSM) with minimal human intervention. Mainly, this is the automation and user-friendly execution of the ITIL® process set extensively supported through modern technologies. It encompasses all service desk-related processes such as problem, change and release management, as well as service request and incident management, supplemented by service level, service continuity and configuration and asset management. For excellent user experience, a self-service portal and a virtual agent are included in the offering.

Most events require change management activities. Depending on the complexity, a change can easily become a project involving several resources inside and outside the enterprise. With this in mind, 4me has added portfolio and project management functionality, including all financial and tracking functionalities required.

4me's inherent account structure is controlling data access and data segregation to allow for multi-user environments. With this approach, every support organization, being an internal department, an external service provider or any other vendor, will have its own 4me account that controls the data access and collaboration possibilities within the different processes.

My colleague Stanton Jones has written about some of the technical details in his briefing note called "4me Continues ITSM & SIAM Growth by Keeping Things Simple" ([Link](#)).

### ***ESM approach***

Allowing employees to obtain support for all the enterprise services relevant for them is a key aspect of enterprise service management. With this approach, enterprises face several challenges:

- Hiding process complexity from the employee;
- Providing business entities the flexibility to design and manage their own service management environment;
- Ensuring data security and data privacy.

4me's self-service portal, including virtual agent and workflow capabilities, is the easy-to-use interface allowing employees to access their services. With this interface, support can be requested from all delivery organizations in an enterprise such as IT, HR, facilities, security or customer service.

4me's already mentioned architecture is able to support the automation of enterprise processes spanning multiple delivery constituencies. As such 4me's offering is a "system-of-engagement" rather than a "system-of-records," as it is able to fully automate complete end-to-end processes. For example, the commissioning of a new service or a product based on a catalog application via a portal does not end with the creation of an order, but aims to automatically create this order, supplement it with quality parameters, and make it available to the respective supplier for processing while keeping the user informed and ensure correct financial accounting of the ordered item.

This offering combines various individual enterprise shared services into a seamlessly connected support framework of "system-of-engagement."

### ***SIAM solution***

A real, dynamic SIAM environment has three constituencies: the customer, the service provider and the service integrator. While customer and service providers are obvious, the service integrator is the new challenge for IT organizations. The integrator ensures the seamless collaboration between all participating parties.



4me's integrator approach is first based on the account structure. As mentioned earlier, every supplier (internal or external) will have his own secure account. Depending on the service the individual accounts will be linked through a so called "trust." With this trust, the account's service relationship is defined and the various rights within the service execution are set. SLAs will be established to define and manage the service delivery quality.

Because many IT vendors and MSPs today run their own management systems, 4me offers a separate integration service to connect to the most prominent ITSM solutions.

## Multi-vendor strategy approach

4me recognized early on that a single product, no matter how functional, is not sufficient in the SIAM environment. In order to be able to manage different suppliers in a uniform service management approach, business integration is required in addition to the rather simple process integration. Since even the strongest company is unable to tell its suppliers which system to use to support its own operating processes, 4me tackles this problem with two different approaches.

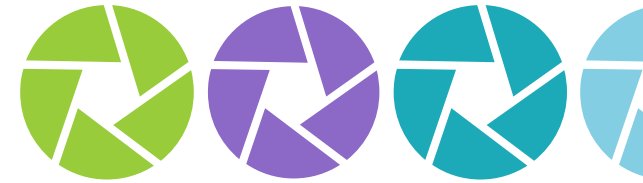
On the one hand the company approaches IT suppliers in the market and tries to convince such companies, primarily managed service providers, of the performance of its solution in the classic sales approach and thus to establish a connection between two identical systems in a multi-supplier environment.

On the other hand, as of May 2020, 4me offers providers a free account that they can integrate with their ITSM solution. This single integration point allows the provider to link up with any enterprise organization that uses 4me, which makes it easier for these enterprises to outsource more services, more quickly, to the provider. The resulting tangible and intangible benefits for the provider and its customers can currently only be guessed.

## Conclusion

4me has been and is recognized as a key player in the market in both editions (2019 and 2020) of ISG's SIAM/ITSM reports. When positioning the offering, ISG did not consider a lot of its broad functionality and design principles because they were out of scope for the current reports.

Enterprises that look for a feature-rich, easy-to-use, and affordable solutions need to consider 4me's offering. Due to the three distinct functional offerings and the integrative approach the solutions is ideal for both main types of users: companies that start in automating a multi-vendor management environment and need to grow into broader ESM over time, as well as enterprises that look for full-fledged ESM systems able to substitute existing solutions. The dedication and focus on these topics guarantee additional success for the company.



# Authors



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With more than 40 years of IT industry experience, Mr. Peichert has profound knowledge, in particular, in areas such as outsourcing, IT operations, organizational design and IT/Business alignment. In his ISG role as an independent consultant, he supports customers to help them make strategic and tactical decisions and set up and optimize organizations and processes to enable them to leverage IT and service solutions.

Lutz joined ISG in 2017 when ISG acquired Experton Group. From 2014 on Lutz served as a COO at Experton Group responsible for all research and consulting activities. Until mid-2014 Lutz worked as Vice President and Principal Analyst for Forrester Research, where he was responsible for the “Sourcing and Vendor Management” practice and also published Forrester’s “SVM Practice Playbook”. Prior to that he worked 10 years for META Group as a Principal Director within the CIO Consulting Division.

Lutz is an experienced speaker on national and international conferences, such as the National Dutch Outsourcing Conference, the German Computerwoche Forum, the Slovak CIO Conference and other events.

Lutz started his career in the late 1970ies as a system manager at the German Navy. He has a vocational diploma and has completed training as radio and TV technician.

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