

# The Hidden Costs of ServiceNow Accelerators

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If you're exploring a ServiceNow implementation, you've probably come across accelerators—those pre-packaged solutions that promise faster deployments and lower costs. Sounds like a no-brainer, right? Well... not so fast.

ServiceNow doesn't just promote accelerators—they actively encourage their entire partner community to build and sell them. Why? Because they help close deals faster. Vendors love them because they create the illusion of a quick implementation, and customers are drawn in by what seems like a cost-effective shortcut. But here's the catch: what looks like a fast track to success often leads straight into a mess of hidden costs, technical debt, and maintenance nightmares.

Many ServiceNow partners take a "configure once, deploy everywhere" approach, assuming they can build an accelerator based on their first "master" implementation and roll it out to multiple customers with minimal effort. While that might sound efficient from the vendor's perspective, it's a recipe for long-term trouble. I can't tell you how many times I've seen companies stuck with CMDB structures, Incident Categories, or Subcategories that were clearly copied from an entirely different organization—bearing no relevance to their actual business. These mismatched configurations don't just make things frustrating; they create unnecessary complexity, force teams into workarounds, and ultimately make the system harder to use and maintain.

The reality? Accelerators rarely align with your organization's specific needs. They introduce rigid, unnecessary configurations that make future changes a nightmare. Sure, they might get you live quickly—but at what cost? Excessive maintenance, workarounds, and expensive rework down the line.

Before jumping on the accelerator bandwagon, take a step back. In this guide, we'll break down the real impact of accelerators and highlight ten key reasons why they might not be the "fast track" you were hoping for.

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## 1. Accelerators Create Technical Debt

ServiceNow modules like IT Service Management (ITSM) and IT Operations Management (ITOM) are already built to be flexible. But when you add an accelerator, you're also adding pre-configured elements that might not align with your existing processes. Over time, tweaking these elements to fit your needs creates extra complexity and maintenance headaches.

**Real-world Example:** A financial services firm used an ITSM accelerator that came with a rigid approval process. As their business needs evolved, they had to rework the entire setup, which made upgrades difficult and costly.

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## 2. You Get Stuck with Unnecessary Configurations

When you implement an accelerator, you're almost guaranteed to end up with configurations that have nothing to do with your business. Think CMDB classes for assets you don't track, incident categories that don't match your service model, or business rules that enforce workflows no one asked for. You might even find fields meant for another industry entirely—like healthcare-specific tracking in a financial services instance. These unnecessary configurations don't just add clutter; they create confusion, slow down performance, and make future customization a headache. Instead of a system designed around *your* needs, you get a generic setup that forces your team to adapt to someone else's assumptions.

**Real-world Example:** An HR team adopted a pre-built HR Service Delivery accelerator, only to find that its case types and approval flows didn't align with their internal structure. Instead of saving time, they had to spend weeks modifying or removing these elements.

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## 3. Ongoing Maintenance Can Get Expensive

ServiceNow rolls out two major upgrades per year, and each one requires thorough testing. If an accelerator comes with custom scripts and automations that don't follow best practices, your team will need to make adjustments every time there's an update—driving up long-term costs.

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## 4. Limited Flexibility

One of the biggest downsides of accelerators is how much they limit your flexibility. Because they come with predefined configurations, you're often locked into someone else's vision of how your system *should* work—even if it doesn't fit your business. Need to tweak workflows to match your internal processes? That might mean undoing complex, hardcoded logic. Want to restructure forms or categories to align with your operations? You'll likely be fighting against rigid field dependencies. Even small adjustments, like modifying approval flows, altering CMDB relationships, or integrating with third-party tools, can turn into major headaches because the accelerator wasn't built with *your* unique needs in mind. Instead of giving you a strong foundation to build on, it boxes you in, making future changes more complicated, time-consuming, and expensive.

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Rev. February 8, 2025

## 5. Potential Performance Issues

Extra scripts and automation rules from accelerators can slow things down.

- Bloated and Unnecessary Configurations**  
 ServiceNow itself takes a modular approach, keeping add-ons optional until there's a clear business case for them. In contrast, accelerators take the opposite approach—bundling in configurations whether you need them or not. That means you're stuck with extra tables, fields, scripts, and workflows that may have no relevance to your business. Instead of a streamlined, purpose-built solution, you get a bloated system weighed down by unnecessary complexity. This excess not only clutters your instance but also increases database size, slows down queries, and drags down overall performance over time.
- Too Many Scripts and Business Rules**  
 Pre-packaged solutions often include a ton of scripted business rules, UI policies, and automation logic that aren't optimized for your specific needs. When these scripts start stacking up, they can increase processing time, slow down transactions, and cause frustrating delays—especially when dealing with large amounts of data.
- Inefficient Workflows That Don't Fit Your Business**  
 Most accelerators come with preconfigured workflows that are supposed to streamline processes. The problem? They weren't designed for *your* organization. This often forces teams to create workarounds—extra approvals, redundant conditions, or unnecessary API calls—which just add more strain on system resources and slow everything down.
- Slow CMDB and Reporting Queries**  
 Some accelerators preconfigure CMDB relationships and reports that may not match your actual IT environment. The result? CMDB queries become unnecessarily complex, leading to longer load times, slower impact analysis, and frustrating delays when generating reports. In extreme cases, users may experience system timeouts.
- Poor Data Structure and Indexing**  
 When accelerators introduce new fields, tables, and relationships without proper indexing, your system struggles to retrieve data efficiently. This leads to slower searches, longer report generation times, and lagging background jobs—all of which make the system feel sluggish for end users.
- Sluggish API and Integration Performance**  
 Many accelerators come with built-in integrations that may not align with your existing architecture. If these integrations generate too many API calls or process data inefficiently, they can slow down response times, impact external system performance, and even trigger ServiceNow API rate limits—causing even more disruptions.
- Struggles with Scaling as Your Business Grows**  
 What works on day one might not hold up six months or a year later. Because accelerators are built with generic structures, they often lack the flexibility to scale with your organization. As more users and data get added, you may start running into performance bottlenecks, forcing costly rework just to keep things running smoothly.

**Real-world Example:** A company using a Customer Service Management (CSM) accelerator found that redundant notifications and workflow triggers were making incident resolution times longer. They had to strip out unnecessary automations to get their system running smoothly again.

# The Hidden Costs of ServiceNow Accelerators

Prerequisite (knowledge) level: Advanced

Rev. February 8, 2025

## 6. Upgrade Compatibility Risks

ServiceNow is always evolving, but accelerators don't always keep up. That can lead to compatibility issues when it's time to upgrade.

**Real-world Example:** An IT Asset Management (ITAM) accelerator relied on outdated data models that clashed with new ServiceNow features, requiring a costly redevelopment.

## 7. Overcomplicated Workflows

Accelerators often add extra layers of approvals and tracking mechanisms that aren't necessary. Instead of streamlining processes, they can make them more complicated than they need to be.

## 8. You Could Get Locked Into a Vendor

Many accelerators are created by third-party vendors who maintain ownership of key configurations and scripts. That means you're dependent on them for updates, fixes, and support. If they stop supporting the accelerator, you could be left with an outdated system.

## 9. The Hidden Costs Add Up

Accelerators might promise a quick start, but they often come with unexpected expenses in customization, training, and support.

### Estimated Costs Over 3 Years:

Cost Factor	Estimated Cost
Initial Accelerator License	\$100,000
Customization & Fixes	\$50,000
Upgrade Compatibility Fixes	\$75,000
Performance Optimization	\$25,000
Additional Training & Support	\$30,000
<b>Total Hidden Costs</b>	<b>\$280,000</b>

By the time these costs add up, many organizations find they would have been better off with a custom-built solution.

# The Hidden Costs of ServiceNow Accelerators

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Rev. February 8, 2025

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## 10. You Lose Out on Best Practices

ServiceNow is built with best-practice workflows for ITSM, ITOM, and SecOps, ensuring compliance with industry standards like ITIL and NIST. Accelerators often introduce custom workflows that don't align with these best practices, which can lead to compliance issues.

**Real-world Example:** A healthcare provider used an accelerator that modified ITSM workflows. When they underwent an internal audit, they discovered compliance gaps with HIPAA regulations, forcing them to do an expensive rework.

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## Short-Term vs. Long-Term Value of Accelerators

Accelerators may provide a quick fix, but in the long run, they often create more work than they save.

### Short-Term Benefits (For Implementers):

- Fast deployment for consultants and system integrators.
- Reduces initial configuration effort.
- Can be reused across multiple clients.

### Long-Term Drawbacks (For Organizations):

- Requires heavy customization to fit your actual needs.
- Ongoing support and maintenance costs keep rising.
- Limits your ability to optimize workflows over time.

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## Summary

At first glance, accelerators might seem like an easy way to get up and running on ServiceNow. But in reality, they often introduce technical debt, unnecessary complexity, and long-term costs. Organizations that take the time to leverage ServiceNow's built-in capabilities and create tailored solutions tend to achieve greater scalability, flexibility, and cost savings in the long run. Investing in a well-planned, custom approach will always pay off over time.

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Prerequisite (knowledge) level: Advanced

Rev. February 8, 2025

## Case Study: The Hidden Costs of ServiceNow Accelerators

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### Introduction

A Fortune 500 healthcare company thought they were making a smart move by using a ServiceNow accelerator to speed up their IT Service Management (ITSM) implementation. At first, it seemed like a win—faster deployment, lower upfront costs, and pre-built workflows ready to go. But it didn't take long for the hidden costs to pile up, creating major headaches for the organization.

This case study breaks down what went wrong, how the company ended up spending way more than expected, and what lessons they learned the hard way.

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### The Implementation

The company went with an ITSM accelerator because it promised:

- **A rapid deployment**—getting them up and running in three months instead of six.
- **Pre-configured workflows and reports**—so they wouldn't have to build everything from scratch.
- **Lower initial costs**—since the accelerator was supposed to cut down on development time.

But once the system was live, they quickly realized they'd inherited a mess.

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### The Problems They Faced

#### 1. The True Cost of Ownership Was Much Higher

That “cost-saving” accelerator ended up being anything but. Over time, the company racked up extra costs from:

- **Customization Overload:** The pre-built workflows didn't fit their needs, so they had to spend time and money modifying them.
- **Performance Issues:** Redundant automation bogged down the system, requiring expensive fixes.
- **User Confusion:** Employees found the workflows clunky and unintuitive, so they needed extra training just to get things done.

After three years, the total cost of ownership had ballooned to **45% more** than if they had just built a custom solution from the start.

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#### 2. Technical Debt Kept Piling Up

# The Hidden Costs of ServiceNow Accelerators

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Rev. February 8, 2025

The accelerator came loaded with unnecessary configurations and scripts that didn't align with ServiceNow's best practices. This created:

- **Messy workflows** that slowed things down instead of streamlining operations.
- **Scalability issues**, making it hard to adjust processes as the company grew.
- **Compliance headaches**, since audit trails weren't properly structured.

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## 3. Upgrades Became a Nightmare

ServiceNow rolls out major platform upgrades twice a year, but every update turned into a major project because:

- **Deprecated features** in the accelerator caused conflicts with new ServiceNow updates.
- **Automated workflows broke**, leading to downtime and frustrated employees.
- **Testing and rework took months**, delaying the adoption of new features and benefits.

Instead of benefiting from the latest ServiceNow innovations, the company spent most of its time patching things up just to keep the lights on.

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## Lessons Learned

### 1. Skip the One-Size-Fits-All Approach

Accelerators might look good on paper, but pre-built configurations rarely fit an organization's unique needs. Investing in a solution tailored to your business from the start saves time, money, and frustration down the road.

### 2. Think About Long-Term Maintenance

Technical debt doesn't just slow you down—it costs real money. Keeping your system simple and aligned with ServiceNow best practices makes upgrades and scaling way easier.

### 3. Stick to ServiceNow's Native Features

Using out-of-the-box capabilities means smoother updates, better performance, and fewer nasty surprises when new releases roll out.

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## Summary

What started as a cost-saving measure turned into a costly mistake. This case study is a cautionary tale for any company considering accelerators. If you want a sustainable, efficient ITSM deployment, the best approach is to invest in a well-planned, personalized -built solution rather than taking shortcuts that could cost you more in the long run.

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## About Mana'o Pili ↘

Mana'o Pili is a Hawai'i based technology consulting firm specializing in business automation through ServiceNow. Mana'o Pili provides its customers with individualized solutions. We reject the notion of one-size-fits-all solutions. Instead, we partner with you to craft a tailored plan that aligns with your unique needs, budget, and objectives. Our approach focuses on optimizing your existing platform while minimizing customization and reducing technical debt.

Here at Mana'o Pili, we treat our customers as 'ohana (family), listen closely to your challenges and deliver tailored attention with exceptional service.