

In from the Shadows: Citizen Development in Regulated Industries

Navigating governance and innovation in Citizen Development within regulated Industries



In technology organisations there is a huge buzz about Citizen Development. The common vision of a citizen developer is a domain expert creating or adapting processes on low or no-code platform. For an HR Professional enhancing a workflow for employee onboarding, this looks like a fantastic solution. The IT department don't need to spend time working to understand what the domain experts want, designing a solution, developing it, and getting it on the release train. But what about for processes that support customers or large sums of money in highly regulated industries, is Citizen Development just too risky?

To some extent, it's a rhetorical question. Citizen Development is here to stay, and it's already been around for a long time. Plenty of IT Service Managers will have worked with homemade dashboards powered by multiple macros and bits of Visual Basic Application prior to the advent of more malleable business intelligence tools like Tableau or PowerBI and many finance professionals will recognise some key financial models that once started as simple Excel spreadsheets and are now complex applications that underpin critical business

processes. The real question is 'How do we make sure that Citizen Development doesn't end up as 'shadow IT?'

To answer the question, we first need to understand what is Shadow IT and when does it become a problem? Gartner defines Shadow IT as 'IT devices, software and services outside the ownership or control of IT organisations.' Such devices, software and services only become a problem when they compromise the security, operational robustness and financial health of an organisation. So, the key to managing Citizen Development is first being able to see it, then working out what needs to be controlled and what doesn't.

Our recommendation

Whether starting off on a citizen development journey or looking to embrace existing citizen development our recommendation starts with making citizen development visible and then creating a governance approach that enables innovation rather than constraining it.

Making Citizen Development Visible

Governance is critical in highly regulated industries,

and you can only govern what you can see. The problem arises when organisations start to look under the rock of citizen development, they find out how pervasive it is within the organisation and struggle where to draw the line. Citizen Development often starts with simple applications or changes but grows organically to build business developed applications (BDApps) that underpin critical business processes.

Our recommendation is to start with the services that business developed applications underpin to determine how to prioritise the more critical applications and include them in formal governance.

Make Governance an Enabler of Safe Citizen Development

To maintain an effective governance of citizen development, we recommend developing a governance process that supports citizen development as well as making it safe.

Our recommendation is to create a safe zone for citizen development, where citizen developers can access the data and development resources they need in a safe

environment. Similarly, it is important to include support with the necessary IT stage gates within a citizen developer procedure. This could be including solution design support upfront in a stage gate that assesses if citizen developers can continue with the activity or using stage gates to identify learning needs for citizen

developers rather than constraining them.

Citizen development isn't just unavoidable, it's also a good thing, make it visible by encouraging citizen developers to engage in your processes rather than putting barriers in front of them.

If you would like to speak to one of our experienced consultants regarding this insight, you can make an enquiry from any page on our website, email us at contact@masonadvisory.com or call us on +44 (0)333 301 0093.



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About Mason Advisory

Mason Advisory has offices in Manchester and London and employs over 100 staff, with plans to continue its expansion. We enable organisations to deliver value through digital & technology transformation, solving complex business challenges, and helping clients set strategy through the intelligent use of IT resources including architecture, cyber, data, digital, operating model and organisational design, service management, and sourcing. We operate in sectors such as financial services and insurance, legal and law, government, health and social care, emergency services, retail, FMCG, transport, and not-for-profit.

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