

ITIL: The Doom and the Salvation of the Typical Information Technology Shop

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After years of heavy spending, IT budgets are flat or declining even in the face of escalating demands for services. Yet, technology has become a competitive differentiator as organizations launch new products and services at a furious pace. IT managers and workers are being held accountable as organizations become frustrated with anything less than 99%⁺ service availability, decreasing costs, and rapid response to changes in needs.

So, what can the typical executive, manager, or technology employee do to maximize opportunities for success? In addition, how can individual professionals take advantage of ITIL to further their own careers and provide intellectual leadership?

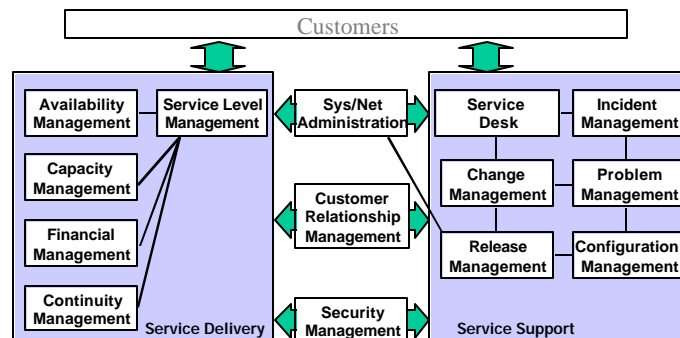
The Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL)

An important part of the answer is the widely embraced Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL). ITIL is the world's most popular non-proprietary, publicly available library of best practices for network and systems management. ITIL is based on global consensus, and is not owned or controlled by any one organization:

- Adopted by over 30,000 governments and companies worldwide such as State Farm, Microsoft, HP, Proctor and Gamble, and many government agencies
- Tightly integrated with popular technology tools
- A foundation for IT audits (government and corporate), Requests for Proposals, Service Level Agreements, and outsourcing decisions all over the world
- Complementary to frameworks such as CMM, ISO 9000, Enterprise Architecture

ITIL in Nutshell

ITIL contains an integrated set of well-documented best practices for technology operations and end user services. The specific contents have evolved for decades and represent superior techniques and processes gathered from leading organizations all over the world.



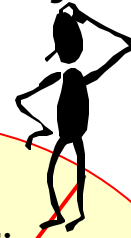
While the concepts are really not revolutionary, ITIL is valuable because the processes are consolidated, well documented, and integrated into a holistic, comprehensive, actionable framework. In addition, these best practices integrate well with the new technology offerings such as network management, monitoring, performance optimization, security management, and help desk support. ITIL reflects the need for the technology infrastructure to support the business.

New Ideas, Old Ideas, and Bad Practices

Although ITIL covers general concepts that are frequently comfortable and familiar, even high performing organizations and experienced professionals can benefit from it. Violations of the most basic best practices are surprisingly common, even within organizations whose individual employees and managers seem to understand what the organization should be doing.

Deficiencies are so common that they are sometimes accepted as “*just the way things work around here.*” However, these flaws accumulate to negatively affect customer satisfaction, Return on Investment, and the organizational mission. Millions of dollars are routinely invested to improve productivity or increase satisfaction, yet operational management deficiencies can defeat the purpose of the investments.

“If common sense is so common, why aren’t we always using it?”



Bad Practices: Examples of Common Deficiencies

- **Service Desk and Incident Management:** Calls into Help Desk are not always logged as separate incidents
- **Service Desk, Problem Management:** Problems are fixed after only verbal interaction directly between end user and developer/engineer
- **Configuration Management:** There is no accurate and complete listing of the exact contents and state of the deployed infrastructure

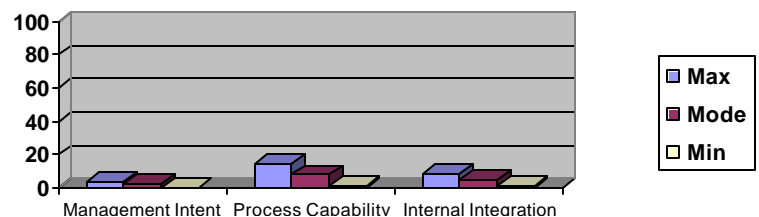
First, Measure Thyself

Most organizations are paying a significant cost by not managing their business using the best practices available. The IT Service Management Forum (itSMF), which sponsors ITIL, also offers a complete set of free self-assessment questions that enable organizations to measure their process maturity.



“If you aren’t following the Best Practices available in order to meet my needs, then what are you doing?”

Extract from Self-Assessment Scores for ITIL Change Management



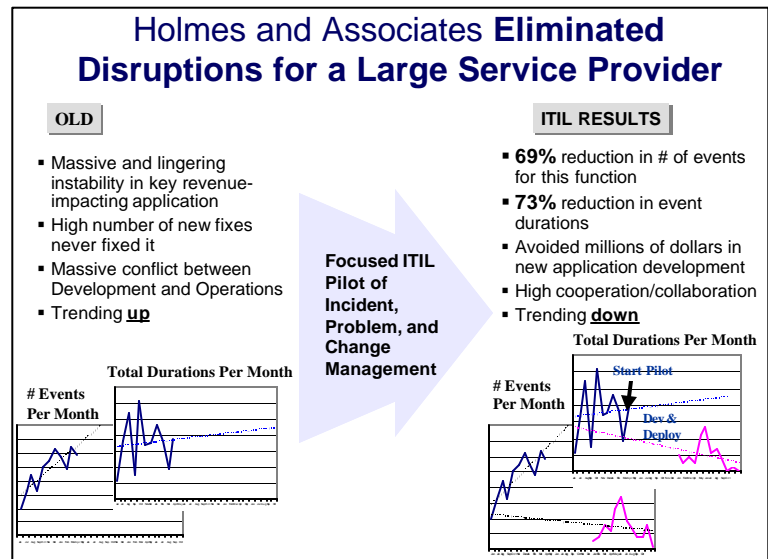
ITIL Self-Assessment Scores. From
<http://www.itsmf.com/bestpractice/selfassessmentprev.asp>

The graph to the right illustrates that most of the hundreds of organizations that have registered their self-assessment scores fall far short of ideal (100%) when measuring their maturity across all aspects of critical functions such as Change Management.

ITIL at Work

There are many examples of successful ITIL implementations that are in progress. ITIL has been proven to have a significant positive impact on bottom line finances and on the achievement of the organizational mission.

The picture to the right summarizes an ITIL implementation that was led and managed by this author. Similarly, many other organizations such as Intel, Microsoft, Proctor and Gamble, Pillsbury, U.S. Air Force, municipal governments, and even small and medium sized businesses have reported powerful results after beginning the ITIL journey. The jury is in. ITIL is an important tool in the effort to improve services.



What to Do Next?

An organization has two ways of looking at ITIL:

1. The Salvation Perspective: For many organizations and many professionals, ITIL provides an orderly path out of the darkness of organizational chaos
2. The Doom Perspective: Those organizations and individuals that violate or ignore the practices of ITIL will find themselves outsourced or replaced

More information and resources are widely available. Useful information can first be found by visiting the Information Technology Service Management Forum <http://www.itsmf.com> (itSMF international parent) and <http://www.itsmf.net> (itSMF USA). From there, it is possible to find other sources of support:

- Official ITIL literature (<http://www.itsmf.net/books/index.html>)
- ITIL certification training (foundation level and Masters training)
- IT Service Management conferences
- ITIL-based tools
- Portals and discussion boards

It can take 2-3 years for an organization to build a strong organic ITIL capability. In the meantime, take advantage of all the experience that is available through peers, vendors, and consultants. Avoid making the same mistakes and move as fast as possible. Customers deserve, and demand, nothing less.