

Benefit From IT Service Management Processes

There is a body of best practice knowledge you can exploit to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of your IT infrastructure and staff. It means fewer breakdowns, smaller mistakes and lower risks. This article introduces the discipline of *IT Service Management (ITSM)*, and the resource *IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL)*. Martin Tate shows how to benefit from both.

There are now established best practices for managing IT services – you do not need ‘home-made’ IT management processes.

These best practices promote a quality approach to achieving business effectiveness and efficiency in the use of IT.

They reduce risk of system failure, over-reliance on individual staff members, waste and management overheads.

Process improvements

Most process improvements don't involve capital. You already have the resources – people to reallocate to execute the project and then to use improved processes.

Process improvements generally improve quality and – done properly – benefit staff motivation.

IT service management & organisational politics

IT requires co-operation to deliver benefits. This is problematic to organisations where there are factional interests vying for control.

Factions can sabotage IT projects while maintaining plausible deniability.

They can innocently maintain they are unable to use a new system, coding structure or procedure, because it is not relevant to their part of the business, or they have other priorities, such as looking after a specific customer group.

The lack of co-operation can be defended, but is an excellent way of achieving the objective – *if* the objective is to damage rival departments or divisions.

Therefore, you need a convincing framework – one that is big enough and flexible enough to adapt. Often, people know ‘the system’ is not working, but don't know how to fix it.

Small successes help the will to make more comprehensive one.

ITSM is one part of this. Because best practice is proven elsewhere, you can point to other organisations and their successful use. Results are the best argument.

What ITSM means

IT service management processes mean applying a comprehensive and consistent set of best practices to the management of people and technology. Such process improvements reduce your dependence on key staff, they are not capital intensive and they improve the reliability, availability and security of existing networks, hardware and software.

IT service management as a discipline has recently come of age in the IT industry. The best-practice body of knowledge ‘IT Infrastructure Library’ (ITIL) was developed in the late 1980s but has become widespread only in the last 3-4 years. It is now heavily supported by hardware and software suppliers, consultancies, training courses and qualifications. There is extensive documentation on the body of knowledge, some of it on CDs.

Committed & professional individuals working in an uncontrolled environment can produce great results. But...

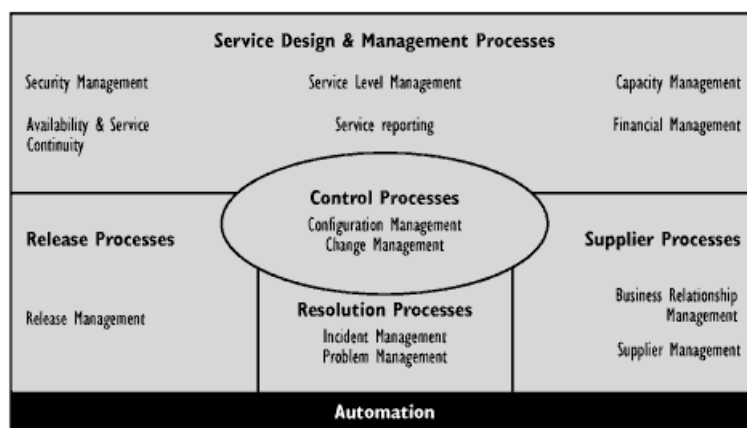


Figure A – BS15000 Service Management Processes

What difference does it make to use IT management processes?

The benefits below are partly adapted from standard ITIL material, because we are not about reinventing the wheel.

1. Safety

Formal management processes decrease over-reliance on key staff.

- Of course, committed and professional individuals working in an uncontrolled environment can produce great results. However, you rely on a few essential staff to hold things together. With a standard management framework, it is easier to swap people around, recruit people who are already qualified and engage temporary staff who share a common vocabulary.

2. Savings

ITIL allows a make/buy decision on management processes.

- Rather than develop your own management infrastructure, you can adopt best practice that is supported by books, CDs, training courses, qualifications and software. Like packaged software, the development cost of the management framework is spread over many customers.

3. Comprehensive cover

You are adopting a set of integrated processes. The best practices are mature, well thought-through and tested in real-world situations. They direct effort towards improvements in security, accuracy, speed and availability as required for the service level agreement (SLA).

- Therefore, details fit together and there is a road map showing how the parts support each other.

Figure A shows the BS15000 Service Management Processes. This shows how the various components of ITSM fit together, and is just one example of how well supported the approach is with documentation.

4. Reliability and flexibility combined with speed

You gain an improved quality of IT service, with more reliable business support.

- You have a clearer view of current IT capability, better information on current services and greater flexibility for the business through improved understanding of IT support. In a controlled environment, there is less waste, so cycle time for changes improves and the success rate is greater.

5. Better human relations

IT and business staff are more motivated.

- You improve job satisfaction through better understanding of your IT capability and better management of expectations. Customer satisfaction improves because internal and external IT service providers know and deliver what is expected of them.

The IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL)

Developed in the late 1980s, the IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL) has become the standard in IT service management. Starting as a guide for UK government, the framework has proved to be useful to organisations in all sectors. It is the basis for service management, consultancy, education and software tool support.

- ITIL is now known and used world-wide.
- It is non-proprietary – you buy the resources but do not pay a licence fee to use the method.
- It has become the de facto world standard for service management
- It moves IT staff away from a technical approach and concentrates on service quality with a more customer oriented approach.

Our approach...

...is to develop proprietary material only when essential. A taxi company would not burden itself or customers with the cost of building its own vehicles. Similarly, our approach is to understand the body of knowledge.

We navigate, interpret, apply and activate the ITSM material.

- There are so many resources you could spend years finding them. We act as your guide. We *have* created some unique resource maps, because most information on resources is fragmented and shaped by what is being sold.
- We make recommendations of resources and providers without commercial interests in your decision.
- The body of knowledge is excellent, but you cannot change people by reading a book. We help make it happen by relating the knowledge to your specific economic and human environment.
- As experienced self-starters, we can work quickly with vague terms of reference and little supervision. We respect your management structures and report by exception.
- We are especially strong with high-profile projects involving complex organisational politics and possible cynicism.

Further information

If you were passed this article, the PDF original is available on the *Resources* page at www.itevaluation.co.uk.

That page also has links to itSMF, HPO and CobIT.

It also has a CV for Martin Tate that is specific to ITSM assignments

For more information on our service to help you adopt good IT management practices, see the *IT Service Management* page at www.itevaluation.co.uk.



IT Evaluation advise blue-chip boards such as Castrol, DaimlerChrysler, LEGO & Turtle Wax. They specialise in improving IT management processes, especially service management, technology value and ICT procurement. Contact Martin Tate with queries on this article or for more information.