



The 'How' Of ITIL[®]

White Paper

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Executive Summary

Your organization has begun its ITIL journey. You have invested in education so people understand what this thing called ITIL is all about, and perhaps some have gone beyond the Foundation level to dig deeper into this framework of processes. There seems to be some really good stuff here, but the question everyone has is: *“Just how do we go about implementing this in your organization?”*

This is the same question that has been asked over and over again. For as long as ITIL has been around, it has been promoted as a framework for *what* you need to do, but the guidance for *how* to do it wasn't really there. At least, that was the case until the release of the ITIL Practitioner Guidance book in 2016.

Successfully implementing the ITIL processes requires more than simply designing or redesigning processes according to the ITIL guidance. There must also be a clear understanding of additional aspects of the initiative such as; the implications for the organization; a structured approach for the implementation and the measurements needed; a plan for managing the people side of the changes; and the 'what', 'when' and 'how' of appropriate communication with the stakeholders.

Adopt & Adapt With The Guiding Principles

The ITIL framework, as outlined in the five core books, describes the Service Lifecycle encompassing 26 processes and four functions and is recognized as a best practice for IT Service Management (ITSM). It is important to keep in mind that the implementation of part or all of the guidance is unique within each organization.

The intent behind the ITIL guidance has never been for an organization to implement the practices as documented in the books, but rather that it should be adopted and then adapted to fit the needs of the organization.

First, an organization must adopt and embrace a *service* mindset and culture, one that is customer-oriented and focused on value delivery to its customers rather than the traditional technology-focused organization of the past.

Second, it is imperative that the organization not view the ITIL books as instruction manuals but rather as best practice guidance that has underpinned the success of many IT organizations around the world. These organizations have adapted the guidance to fit their day-to-day practices for the delivery of IT services to their customers. Adapting these practices means choosing the elements that will help to improve their ability to deliver value through services that facilitate the desired business



outcomes, modifying those elements as needed, and perhaps even ignoring some of the elements that don't apply. Choose what works for you!

The successful adoption of a service-oriented mindset and implementation of ITIL practices suited to an organization's needs can be facilitated by embracing the nine guiding principles outlined in the Practitioner book. These principles should be applied whether you are undertaking a strategic service management initiative such as; the implementation of ITIL practices across the organization; or looking for some operational improvements, and whether you are a large or a small organization, and regardless of the industry sector in which you operate.

Focus On Value

This principle embodies the core of service delivery – its value as defined by the customer of the service. So what does this mean for your IT organization? It means that everything you do must in some way contribute to the value expected by your customers. This includes the processes you utilize, the infrastructure that supports the services, improvements to those processes and services, as well as the implementation of ITIL practices.

Dialog with customers is essential if you are going to truly understand what they value in their IT services. This goes beyond the specific functional requirements and should include questions to clarify the business outcomes the customer is seeking, what's most important to them, and their preferences and perceptions regarding the services and the processes that support those services.

Getting to know your customers at a deeper level, beyond simply their technology needs, will help ensure your service management improvement initiatives are focused on value.

Design For Experience

In addition to focusing on the value of your services and processes, you must also consider the end-to-end experience of both the customers and the end users as this is the basis of their overall satisfaction. As a provider organization, you must be able to step into the shoes of your customers and users in order to understand their experience with your services. Look for the touchpoints with your customers and users and the experiences that establish their 'moments of truth'.

It isn't simply about a specific piece of hardware or software; but the combination of technology, processes and people that ultimately delivers the end-to-end experience. Look holistically at what happens and identify where the impact is negative or represents a pain point. What are your customers saying to you about the services? What are the end users expressing in terms of things that frustrate them? These should be at the top of your list of improvements or your service management initiative.



Start Where You Are

Rarely is it necessary to scratch everything you are currently doing in favor of a complete overhaul. There are likely to be some practices that may only need minor improvement to achieve a higher value proposition. Look objectively at your current practices to see what can be leveraged as a starting point or foundation for improvement in order to reduce the amount of effort to reach a desired future state.

Also, consider other initiatives that are underway in which specific improvements might be included. This will help ensure similar work streams remain complementary to each other.

Leveraging what works today – what is currently fit for purpose and fit for use – can facilitate the adoption of new or modified practices. Success will ultimately depend upon effective organizational change management that addresses the people side of change, as noted later in this paper.

Work Holistically

Whether you are planning the implementation of ITIL practices or smaller improvement initiatives, keep in mind that you need to consider the entire value chain, not simply the individual parts. The delivery of IT services requires many different elements that span different areas of the IT organization and an improvement in one area is likely to touch others.

Working holistically requires not only recognition of the different parts – the people, processes, products and partners – but also an understanding of their relationships, dependencies and interfaces. A holistic approach to improvement will also be dependent upon good collaboration – another guiding principle – across the entire IT organization.

Progress Iteratively

Not only will you want to remember to start where you are, but also keep in mind that you need not tackle everything at once. Plan the initiative in smaller, more manageable efforts for more timely execution and the realization of value sooner than might be possible with one large initiative.

Smaller improvements can be easier to implement and easier for staff to adopt. There will likely be less resistance to smaller incremental changes which can help to build a sense of accomplishment and confidence. When scoping these initiatives remember to focus on the value proposition – whatever you plan must in some way deliver greater value to your customers.



Progressing iteratively mirrors the principles of Lean IT, the Agile methodology and DevOps. All of which advocate an approach of smaller, incremental efforts in order to deliver value sooner and faster.

Observe Directly

While measurements based on data will certainly be essential for your initiatives, data is not a substitute for first-hand observation. Whenever possible, you should observe what is happening and combine this with the data. Data will not necessarily present the entire picture, thus the need for direct observation.

This is another key principle of Lean methodologies; you must go to where the work is done, referred to as a 'Gemba walk', talk with the people who do the work; ask 'why' to uncover the reasoning behind the work being done. They can give you not only the most accurate understanding of the current state, but recommendations for improvements as well.

Be respectful of people's time while observing, and practice active listening to clarify understanding. Engaging with staff in this way can help to create a sense of trust which will foster greater cooperation as the initiatives proceed.

Be Transparent

Share information as early and as often as possible to make people aware of what is happening, why it's happening, and how. This will help prevent speculation, assumptions and rumors, and can help lower resistance to the changes. It will also help to create a sense of urgency as noted by John Kotter in his eight steps for managing change.

Utilize ITIL's concept of the CSI register to make people aware of the improvements by making it visible to everyone. Plan to address the needs of staff and management with appropriate, timely communications, and remember to also communicate accomplishments along the way.

Collaborate

Collaboration – getting the right people involved in the right way at the right time – will result in better buy-in for your initiatives and improve the likelihood of success. Cooperation and collaboration with a focus on shared goals can ensure different perspectives and insights are considered and addressed.

Identify the different stakeholder groups that span not only the IT organization but also customers, users and even suppliers. Recognize that not all stakeholders will need to be engaged at the same level of detail, so scoping the collaboration based upon the interest in or impact of the initiative should be taken into account.



Effective collaboration will help to ensure support among the stakeholder groups, ultimately leading to higher chances of adoption and success.

Keep It Simple

Strive to keep things as simple as possible. If activities provide no real value, then eliminate them. If they are necessary, for example to ensure compliancy with legal or regulatory requirements, then look for ways to streamline by removing or simplifying steps. Eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy and create simple procedures or work instructions.

Collaboration with others, creative thinking and challenging the 'old ways' of doing things can often result in simpler ways of carrying out the work. In the end, everyone benefits.

Use The Continual Service Improvement (CSI) Approach

The six-stage CSI Approach as documented in the ITIL CSI publication provides a structured approach for managing the implementation of ITIL practices or any other type of improvement initiative. By embracing the concepts of the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle, this approach ensures improvements are aligned to the strategic vision of the organization and the value proposition for your customers.

What Is The Vision?

Before beginning any type of initiative, it's critical to ensure it aligns to the overall vision, goals and objectives of the IT organization and subsequently to those of the business. Creating a vision for the initiative will help in communicating its direction and purpose to the stakeholders and the value that is expected from it.

Where Are We Now?

While it may be tempting to move forward with improvements, the current state must first be established as a starting point. Performing an assessment of the current practices will enable the provider to more clearly define the desired future state and will establish the baseline for later comparison following the implementation of the improvements.

Where Do We Want To Be?

Establishing future measurable targets after assessing the current situation allows for a gap analysis to identify the appropriate objectives and specific improvements that will move the organization toward the future state. This will facilitate the identification of appropriate critical success factors and key performance indicators (KPIs) aligned to the



overall vision, goals and objectives for the initiative, and will aid in the prioritization of the improvements.

How Do We Get There?

A plan for implementing the improvements identified in the previous stage can now be defined and executed. Remember to consider the guiding principles as you begin the planning and if appropriate, incorporate project management approaches for managing larger initiatives. Also, keep in mind that breaking larger initiatives into smaller ones can help lower resistance, increase adoption and lead to more successful change.

Effective communication and ongoing stakeholder management are critical prior to and throughout the implementation of the improvements. Measurements defined for the future state should be used during the implementation to ensure progress in the right direction is being made and to enable corrective actions if needed.

Did We Get There?

Using the measurements defined previously along with input from the stakeholders, you can now determine if the defined future state was achieved. A benefits realization review can be carried out to confirm achievement of or at least progress toward the new state. Present the results to the stakeholders and confirm that the expected value has actually been realized.

How Do We Keep The Momentum Going?

As noted earlier, the PDCA cycle is the basis for continual improvement and the CSI approach means you keep going. What comes next? If you didn't reach the desired future state then perhaps a second iteration is needed, or perhaps you are ready to move on to a different initiative.

You must also ensure the benefits received as a result of this initiative are not lost over time. It is common for people to slip back into the old way of working, thus negating the effort put into the improvement initiative. Embed the new practices into your culture by continuing to reinforce their use, measuring the results and including the new practices in training for new staff.

Measurement Is Essential

While most IT organizations are familiar with establishing critical success factors (CSFs) and KPIs for day-to-day delivery of IT services, these are equally important for service management improvement initiatives. Creating effective measurements requires thoughtful planning.



Cascades & Hierarchies

The creation of appropriate metrics for your ITIL implementation depends upon aligning the metrics with higher level requirements, goals and strategies. This can be accomplished through the use of a cascading or hierarchical approach.

The *ITIL-to-Vision Measurement Trail* is a hierarchical approach for defining appropriate measurements by starting at the top with the vision and mission of the organization, followed with specific goals and objectives to support the vision and mission. A small number of CSFs can be identified for each goal or objective, with a few KPIs identified for each CSF. The KPIs then help to determine the correct metrics and measurements. Define top-down and measure bottom-up. This approach is particularly effective when implementing ITIL processes.

Additional approaches to consider are as follows:

- The *IT Component-to-Scorecard Hierarchy* which focuses on rolling component measurements up into service measurements representing the customer/user experience of the IT services. These service results then become part of an IT dashboard or balanced scorecard.
- The *Balanced Scorecard* approach, developed by Robert Kaplan and David Norton for businesses, can also be used for IT organizations to drive the right measurements. Measurements in the four perspectives – customers, financial, internal, innovation – are essential in achieving the organization's goals, mission and vision.
- The *COBIT® 5 Goals Cascade*, a framework for the governance and management of enterprise IT, creates a goals cascade that is driven by the needs of the stakeholders in the organization. Enterprise goals cascade to IT goals which in turn cascade to enabler goals for services, processes, technology, people and more.

Metric Categories

Guidance for establishing the correct metrics must also include a balanced set that represents different perspectives. In addition to the common set of metrics focused on measuring the technology, processes and end-to-end services, providers need to consider metrics from the perspective of progress, compliance, effectiveness and efficiency appropriate for the current maturity or status of the processes.

Additional perspectives include a balance of leading and trailing metrics representing what has already been achieved, predictions of what might be achieved in the future, and inside-out metrics representing the internal IT view and outside-in metrics representing the customers' view of IT.



Assessments & Reporting

Assessing your organization's existing processes will establish the current state, serving as baselines at the start of your initiative. The baselines can then be compared to the desired future state in order to perform a gap analysis to identify specific process improvements.

When planning an assessment it is critical that the scope is clearly established to include only what is needed to achieve the intended purpose. The assessment criteria, in other words the right questions and data, must also align with the assessment's scope and purpose.

When reporting the results of an assessment, an improvement initiative or even the ongoing measurement of processes and services, strive for reports that deliver value for the intended recipients.

Ensure there is an agreed upon and understood purpose for the report. What is the reason for its creation and what is expected to happen once the report is read? Is the purpose to intervene, validate a previous decision, direct activities to reach a target, or justify a course of action?

Reports must also have a clearly identified target audience and be formatted to meet the needs of the audience. Consider whether the audience prefers data presented in charts and graphs, or whether more detailed information is needed. Reports presenting the correct data in the desired format will deliver greater value to their intended audience.

Don't Forget The People Side

Failure to properly manage the people side of your initiatives will have a significant impact on your ability to succeed. In fact, ignoring the organizational change management aspect is often cited as the primary reason for failed service management initiatives. We are all creatures of habit and would prefer the status quo over change, so keep the following in mind as essential elements to be addressed.

Clear & Relevant Objectives

These must link directly back to the vision established in the first stage of the CSI Approach. Objectives must focus on customer value and be tied to the overall vision for the initiative and of the IT organization. Plan to communicate the vision and the objectives early and often.

Strong Committed Leadership

Sponsors who will advocate for the initiative and maintain an active presence throughout the initiative are absolutely essential; this sends a clear message that the



initiative is viewed as important by those in the higher levels of the organization. Day-to-day leadership is another important element for success, so identify those people who can help to drive the improvements you are seeking.

Willing & Prepared Participants

Changing old habits is hard and not everyone will be ready and willing to get on board. Resistance is to be expected, but can be countered effectively with planning that includes addressing the fear of the unknown with effective communication, recognition that everyone changes at their own pace, creating a sense of urgency, and ensuring teams and individuals understand what's in it for them.

Prepare people for the change by establishing clear roles and responsibilities, conducting required training using methods that address different learning styles, delivering the training at the right time, and providing support as people transition from the old way of working to the new.

Sustained Improvements

Once the improvements have been implemented, reinforcement will be essential to ensure they are sustained over the long term. Plan to solicit feedback from the stakeholders impacted by the initiative in order to determine the most appropriate reinforcement techniques.

Commonly used reinforcement techniques often include reward and recognition for those that embrace the change; continued communication regarding the percentage of staff that have adopted the change; and techniques like storytelling to continue sharing the benefits of the improvements.

Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

In John Kotter's book *Leading Change*, he stresses the need for repetition in order to effectively transfer information that will stick with the recipients. Given the vast amount of communication delivered by e-mail, phone, chat messages, during meetings, and personal conversations on a weekly basis, your messages regarding your change initiative have a lot of competition.

Communication of the initiative's vision and plans is essential for success, but it must be delivered in the right format for the right audience at the right time, and it must be delivered repeatedly. Put together a communication plan that will clearly identify the different audiences; what messages each needs to receive and their purpose; when the messages need to be delivered, their frequency and by whom.



Timing & Frequency Matter

The timing of the communication needs to be appropriate for the target audience, not too soon and not too late. The frequency may need to increase as you near the implementation of your improvements.

Two-Way Communication

While there may be some messages that can be effectively communicated using a one-way approach, two-way communication allows for interaction between the sender and the recipients and an opportunity to ensure understanding by those receiving the messages. Incorporate face-to-face interaction during meetings and workshops, and decide on feedback mechanisms for less personal forms of communication.

Different Methods

E-mail is the least effective means of communication in use today, simply because everyone is inundated daily, so don't rely upon it as the only method. Get creative! Take advantage of different methods for communicating your messages. You may find some methods work best for certain audiences while others do not. Engage your stakeholder groups to identify preferred communication methods.

Consider your organization's intranet site or company newsletter; create posters as announcements and reminders; put together a fun video that tells a story; use social media when appropriate. Look for ways that will resonate with the recipients, and create messages that will touch both their hearts and their minds. After all, getting people to form an emotional connection to the change is one of the best ways to get them on board.

Actions Speak Louder Than Words

Communication occurs not only through words but also through deeds. Leaders, managers and others involved in the change must continually demonstrate their support through their actions and their behaviors.



Bringing It All Together

An organization seeking to implement ITIL practices as part of their service management journey will be well served by considering the Practitioner guidance as part of its planning. Remember that the five core books of ITIL offer best practice guidance for '*what*' you need to do, while the Practitioner book offers a path for the '*how*' aspect of your initiative. Greater success is possible when you remember the following:

- Adopt and adapt the guidance to fit your needs
- Incorporate the nine guiding principles in all you do
- Follow the CSI Approach to manage your improvements
- Identify appropriate metrics and measurements
- Manage the people side of your initiatives
- Communicate the right information at the right time to the right people

About Pink Elephant

We Lead The Way!

A premier global training, consulting and conference service provider, Pink Elephant has an undisputed reputation for leading the way. We're proud of our pioneering and innovative spirit, which has enabled us to introduce and spearhead many revolutionary concepts and programs since our inception forty years ago.

About The Author

Beverly currently delivers standard and tailored consulting and educational services to Pink Elephant clients to assist them in their ITSM programs, focusing primarily on the implementation and improvement of processes aimed at delivering value to customers. She combines her passion for training with the highest regard for customer service and relationship management when engaging with Pink Elephant's clients.

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