

Five Milestones to a Successful ITIL Implementation

Overview

Once an organization has decided to adopt ITIL best practices, the question becomes ‘What is the best way to implement ITIL, and what are the practical steps involved?’ This white paper is designed to provide insight into the most common hurdles faced by organizations when implementing ITIL best practice and includes practical steps on how to overcome them.

5 MILESTONES

1. *GET BUY-IN*
2. *BENCHMARKING*
3. *KEY METRICS*
4. *PROCESS DEFINITION*
5. *OVERCOME RESISTANCE*

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Benefits of ITIL

- Help to prevent problems before they occur in the IT environment – resulting in significant reduction in the number, resolution time and business impact of service incidents
- Provide services that meet business, customer and user demands
- Improved availability, reliability and security of IT services
- Learn from experience
- Provide demonstrable performance indicators
- Reduced Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) of IT infrastructure assets and IT applications.
- Improved resource utilization including decreased levels of rework and elimination of redundant activities.
- More effective third party relationships and contracts

1. Get Buy-In. Constantly Reinforce it.

Implementing ITIL best practice is a strategic business decision. It requires buy-in from the business in order to proceed, and then ongoing support to ensure it meets the original objectives.

You can facilitate senior management engagement and buy-in with your ITIL implementation with a sound business case. Bear in mind that not all the benefits commonly cited by the industry are tangible or directly revenue related (See benefits to the left), you'll need to measure these improvements via specifically chosen metrics (covered later). The tangible bottom line benefits can be bolstered by a cost / benefit analysis (An example of which is defined in the ITIL Service Support Book¹ in Appendix E).

As well as Management buy-in, a common stumbling block is the process owners not being given sufficient authority to enable organisational change. Similarly thought must be given to defining roles in the processes and assigning responsibilities. "Impediments to successful ITIL adoption revolve principally around management factors that are under control of CXO. CXO sponsorship is the dominant critical success factor in the adoption of ITIL. Survey participants report the major barriers to ITIL adoption are lack of awareness (61%), an ability to attain buy-in (60%) and a lack of committed process owners (59%). Technical issues are of secondary importance to adoption decisions." ²

Last, but not least, service desk administrators or agents also need to buy-in to the project and realise the benefits of ITIL adoption. An important factor in the deployment of any tool is user acceptance so engage all participants from management to analysts to end users with the assessment of the interface and usability of the system.

2. Benchmark Your Current Position

ITIL cannot be implemented overnight so it is important to plan which elements of ITIL you will adopt and in which order to ensure you derive maximum value for your efforts. A good starting point is to benchmark the maturity of your existing processes against best practice.

This can be achieved via third party consultants or using in-house skills. Both approaches have their benefits. It is often fruitful to seek the advice of an independent party who can offer a fresh pair of eyes and new perspective on your current state; especially those ITIL practitioners who have "Been there, done that" and can share their practical experience from other successful implementations.

If you take the DIY route there are some self-assessment templates on the ITSMF website. See <http://www.itsmf.com/bestpractice/selfassessment.asp> for further details.

The objective of the benchmarking exercise is to identify areas which areas should be addressed next in order to deliver the most benefit. It also means that your organization will have created a baseline against which future improvements can be measured.

¹ Best Practice for Service Support, OGC, TSO (2005)

² The adoption of ITIL in large organisations. Tech Republic 2005.

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3. Establish Key Metrics

Once you have established a baseline and identified some areas where the most benefit can be sought, its is now important to identify some metrics, called Key Performance Indicators (KPI's), which can be used to measure the success of your ITIL implementation.

There are three principal sets of KPI's.

- 1) Workflow KPI's – each process must follow a set of defined steps in order e.g. Approval must precede implementation, acceptance must follow testing. Workflow KPI's relate to the process steps and the what, who, when, how many and how long did it take (Service Level Agreements).
- 2) Dataset KPI's relate to the data captured in the process as the workflow is carried out. E.g. why is a change required? How many hours has the server been offline?
- 3) Business KPI's – these should be determined as metrics that have a measurable impact upon the business, usually financial. These could range from loss reporting to overtime hours worked on call outs.

The ITIL dashboard. When KPI's are used effectively, an organization can quickly establish whether a process is working or not, then enhance the process accordingly to improve performance. Some KPI's can be measured prior to completion of the process. This type of KPI enables action to be taken to correct an issue early on rather than after a process has failed. Other KPI's measure the outcome of the process, often as a percentage change up or down.

Begin with the end in mind. Choose KPI's that target business benefits from an end user perspective. This ensures your processes are focused and prevents wading through irrelevant data.

4. Select and Define Processes

Which Process to choose first? In a study by Forrester Research³ Incident Management "...came out as a clear winner".

In our experience Incident, Problem and Change management show the largest gap between current processes and industry best practice, and obviously represent the area likely to deliver greatest benefit. Although Configuration Management is the ideal process to obtain, this is not an overnight implementation and organizations are likely to recognize greater early success and gain momentum wth Incident, Problem and Change Management whilst planning their Configuration Management Database.

"You can't prove what you don't measure"
ITSMF

³ Not all processes are equal, Thomas Mendel Ph.D. Forrester Research. 16th March 2005. www.forrester.com

