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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF IT SERVICE MANAGEMENT AND ITIL

IT service management (ITSM) evolved naturally as services became underpinned in time by the developing technology. In its early years, IT was mainly focused on application development – all the new possibilities seeming to be ends in themselves. Harnessing the apparent benefits of these new technologies meant concentrating on delivering the created applications as a part of a larger service offering, supporting the business itself.

During the 1980s, as the practice of service management grew, so too did the dependency of the business. Meeting the business need called for a more radical refocus for an IT service approach and the ‘IT help desk’ emerged to deal with the frequency of issues suffered by those trying to use IT services in delivery of their business.

At the same time, the UK government, fuelled by a need for finding efficiencies, set out to document how the best and most successful organizations approached service management. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, they had produced a series of books documenting an approach to the IT service management needed to support business users. This library of practice was entitled the IT Infrastructure Library – ITIL to its friends.

The original Library grew to over 40 books, and started a chain reaction of interest in the UK IT service community. The term ‘IT service management’ had not been coined at this point, but became a common term around the mid 1990s as the popularity of ITIL grew. In 1991, a user forum, the IT Information Management Forum (ITIMF), was created to bring ITIL users together to exchange ideas and learn from each other, and would eventually change its name to the IT Service Management Forum (itSMF). Today,

the itSMF has members worldwide as ITIL’s popularity continues to grow.

A formal standard for ITSM, The British Standard 15000, largely based on ITIL practices, was established and followed by various national standards in numerous countries. Since then the ISO 20000:2005 Standard was introduced and gained rapid recognition globally.

ITIL’s next revision began in the mid 1990s, until 2004. Version 2 of ITIL, as it is commonly referred to, was a more targeted product – with nine books – explicitly bridging the gap between technology and business, and with guidance focused strongly on the processes required to deliver effective services to the business customer.

## 1.2 ITIL TODAY

In 2004, the OGC began the second major refresh initiative of ITIL, in recognition of the massive advancements in technology and emerging challenges for IT service providers. New technology architectures, virtualization and outsourcing became a mainstay of IT and the process-based approach of ITIL needed to be revamped to address service management challenges.

After twenty years ITIL remains the most recognized framework for ITSM in the world. While it has evolved and changed its breadth and depth, it preserves the fundamental concepts of leading practice.

### 1.2.1 Why is ITIL so successful?

ITIL is intentionally composed of a common sense approach to service management – do what works. And what works is adapting a common framework of practices that unite all areas of IT service provision toward a single aim – delivering value to the business. The following list

defines the key characteristics of ITIL that contribute to its global success:

- **Non-proprietary** – ITIL service management practices are applicable in any IT organization because they are not based on any particular technology platform, or industry type. ITIL is owned by the UK government and not tied to any commercial proprietary practice or solution
- **Non-prescriptive** – ITIL offers robust, mature and time-tested practices that have applicability to all types of service organizations. It continues to be useful and relevant in public and private sectors, internal and external service providers, small, medium and large enterprise, and within any technical environment
- **Best practice** – ITIL service management practices represent the learning experiences and thought leadership of the world's best in class service providers
- **Good practice** – Not every practice in ITIL can be considered 'best practice', and for good reason. For many, a blend of common, good and best practices are what give meaning and achievability to ITSM. In some respects, best practices are the flavour of the day. All best practices become common practices over time, being replaced by new best practices.

### 1.3 THE ITIL VALUE PROPOSITION

All high-performing service providers share similar characteristics. This is not coincidence. There are specific capabilities inherent in their success that they demonstrate consistently. A core capability is their strategy. If you were to ask a high-achieving service provider what makes them distinctive from their competitors, they would tell you that it is their intrinsic understanding of how they provide value to their customers. They understand the customer's business objectives and the role they play in enabling those objectives to be met. A closer look would reveal that their ability to do this does not come from reacting to

customer needs, but from predicting them through preparation, analysis and examining customer usage patterns.

The next significant characteristic is the systematic use of service management practices that are responsive, consistent and measurable, and define the provider's quality in the eyes of their customers. These practices provide stability and predictability, and permeate the service provider's culture.

The final characteristic is the provider's ability to continuously analyse and fine tune service provision to maintain stable, reliable yet adaptive and responsive services that allow the customer to focus on their business without concern for IT service reliability.

In these situations you see a trusted partnership between the customer and the service provider. They share risk and reward and evolve together. Each knows they play a role in the success of the other.

As a service provider, this is what you want to achieve. As a customer, this is what you want in a service provider.

Take a moment look around at the industry high-performing service providers. You'll see that most use ITIL Service Management practices. This isn't coincidence at all.

### 1.4 THE ITIL SERVICE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

When we turn on a water tap, we expect to see water flow from it. When we press down a light switch, we expect to see light fill the room. Not so many years ago these very basic things were not as reliable as they are today. We know instinctively that the advances in technology have made them reliable enough to be considered a utility. But it isn't just the technology that makes the services reliable. It is how they are managed. *This* is service management!

The use of IT today has become the utility of business. Simply having the best technology will not ensure it provides utility-like reliability. Professional, responsive, value-driven service management is what brings this quality of service to the business.

The objective of the ITIL Service Management practice framework is to provide services to business customers that are fit for purpose, stable and that are so reliable, the business views them as a trusted utility.

ITIL offers best practice guidance applicable to all types of organizations who provide services to a business. Each publication addresses capabilities having direct impact on a service provider's performance. The structure of the core practice takes form in a Service Lifecycle. It is iterative and multidimensional. It ensures organizations are set up to leverage capabilities in one area for learning and improvements in others. The core is expected to provide structure, stability and strength to service management capabilities with durable principles, methods and tools. This serves to protect investments and provide the necessary basis for measurement, learning and improvement.

The guidance in ITIL can be adapted for use in various business environments and organizational strategies. The complementary guidance provides flexibility to implement the core in a diverse range of environments. Practitioners can select complementary guidance as needed to provide traction for the core in a given business context, much like tyres are selected based on the type of automobile, purpose and road conditions. This is to increase the durability and portability of knowledge assets and to protect investments in service management capabilities.

## 1.5 WHAT IS A SERVICE?

Service management is more than just a set of capabilities. It is also a professional practice supported by an extensive body of knowledge, experience and skills. A global

community of individuals and organizations in the public and private sectors fosters its growth and maturity. Formal schemes exist for the education, training and certification of practising organizations, and individuals influence its quality. Industry best practices, academic research and formal standards contribute to its intellectual capital and draw from it.

The origins of service management are in traditional service businesses such as airlines, banks, hotels and phone companies. Its practice has grown with the adoption by IT organizations of a service-oriented approach to managing IT applications, infrastructure and processes. Solutions to business problems and support for business models, strategies and operations are increasingly in the form of services. The popularity of shared services and outsourcing has contributed to the increase in the number of organizations who are service providers, including internal organizational units. This in turn has strengthened the practice of service management and at the same time imposed greater challenges upon it.

### Definition of a service

A 'service' is a means of delivering value to customers by facilitating outcomes customers want to achieve without the ownership of specific costs and risks.

There are a variety of contexts in which the definition of a service can be expanded upon, but as a basic concept, service is the means of delivering value, and no matter how your organization chooses to define a service, this must be at the heart of what defines a service.

## 1.6 NAVIGATING THE ITIL SERVICE MANAGEMENT LIFECYCLE

Before discussing the principles of ITIL service management practices, it is helpful to understand the overall content structure and how topics areas are

organized within each of the books that together comprise the practices.

The ITIL service management practices are comprised of three main sets of products and services:

- ITIL service management practices – core guidance
- ITIL service management practices – complementary guidance
- ITIL web support services.

### 1.6.1 ITIL service management practices – core guidance

The core set consists of six publications:

- *Introduction to ITIL Service Management Practices* (this publication)
- *Service Strategy*
- *Service Design*
- *Service Transition*
- *Service Operation*
- *Continual Service Improvement*.

A common structure across all the core guidance publications helps to easily find references between volumes and where to look for similar guidance topics within each stage of the lifecycle:

#### ***Practice fundamentals***

This section of each core publication sets out the business case argument of the need for viewing service management in a lifecycle context and an overview of the practices in that stage of the lifecycle that contributes to it. It briefly outlines the context for the practices that follow and how they contribute to business value.

#### ***Practice principles***

Practice principles are the policies and governance aspects of that lifecycle stage that anchor the tactical processes and activities to achieving their objectives.

#### ***Lifecycle processes and activities***

The Service Lifecycle stages rely on processes to execute each element of the practice in a consistent, measurable, repeatable way. Each core publication identifies the processes it makes use of, how they integrate with the other stages of the lifecycle, and the activities needed to carry them out.

#### ***Supporting organization structures and roles***

Each publication identifies the organizational roles and responsibilities that should be considered to manage the Service Lifecycle. These roles are provided as a guideline and can be combined to fit into a variety of organization structures. Suggestions for optimal organization structures are also provided.

#### ***Technology considerations***

ITIL service management practices gain momentum when the right type of technical automation is applied. Each lifecycle publication makes recommendations on the areas to focus technology automation on, and the basic requirements a service provider will want to consider when choosing service management tools.

#### ***Practice implementation***

For organizations new to ITIL, or those wishing to improve their practice maturity and service capability, each publication outlines the best ways to implement the ITIL Service Lifecycle stage.

#### ***Challenges, risks and critical success factors***

These are always present in any organization. Each publication highlights the common challenges, risks and success factors that most organizations experience and how to overcome them.

### ***Complementary guidance***

There are many external methods, practices and frameworks that align well to ITIL practices. Each publication provides a list of these and how they integrate into the ITIL Service Lifecycle, when they are useful and how.

### ***Examples and templates***

Each publication provides working templates and examples of how the practices can be applied. They are provided to help you capitalize on the industry experience and expertise already in use. Each can be adapted within your particular organizational context.

## **1.6.2 ITIL service management practices – complementary guidance**

This is a living library of publications with guidance specific to industry sectors, organization types, operating models and technology architectures. Each publication supports and enhances the guidance in the ITIL core. Publications in this category will be continually added to the complementary library of practice and will contain contributions from the expert and user ITSM community. In this way, ITIL practices are illustrated in real-life situations and in a variety of contexts that add value and knowledge to your own ITIL practice.

## **1.6.3 ITIL web support services**

These products are online, interactive services including a Glossary of Terms and Definitions, Interactive Service Management Model, online subscriber services, case studies, templates and ITIL Live® ([www.ital-live-portal.com](http://www.ital-live-portal.com)), an interactive expert knowledge centre where users can access time with ITSM experts to discuss questions and issues, and seek advice.