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1 Introduction

This publication is intended to provide a synopsis of the basic concepts and practice elements of Continual Service Improvement (CSI), which forms part of the core ITIL Service Management Practices. These practices form the ITIL Service Lifecycle on which the concepts of these and all other ITIL Service Management publications are based.

This publication is not intended to replace the ITIL core publications and should not be used in place of the full practice guidance publications. The content in this publication is depicted at a high level and will not be practical as a substitute for the full guidance publication; rather it should serve as a handy quick reference that is portable and helps direct the reader to the full guidance information when needed.

1.1 THE ITIL FRAMEWORK

ITIL Service Management has been practised successfully around the world for more than 20 years. Over this time, the framework has evolved from a specialized set of service management topics with a focus on function to a process-based framework and now to a broader, holistic service lifecycle. The evolution and transformation of ITIL Service Management Practices is the result of the evolution of the IT service management (ITSM) industry itself, through knowledge, experience, technical innovation and thought leadership. The ITIL Service Lifecycle is both a reflection of the industry practice in use today, and concepts that will move us forward in the future of service management philosophies and practices.


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






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ITIL Service Management Practices offer best-practice guidance applicable to all types of organizations that 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 the ITIL framework 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, in much the same way as 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.



1.2 THE ITIL CORE PRACTICE PUBLICATIONS

The ITIL Service Management Practices comprise three main sets of products and services:

- Core guidance
- Complementary guidance
- Web support services.

1.2.1 ITIL Service Management Practices – core guidance

The core set consists of six publications:

- *The Official Introduction to the ITIL Service Lifecycle*
- *Service Strategy*
- *Service Design*
- *Service Transition*
- *Service Operation*
- *Continual Service Improvement.*

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

1.2.2 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 Service Management core. Publications in this category will be continually added to the complementary guidance library and will contain contributions from the expert and user ITSM community. In this way, ITIL Service Management Practices are illustrated in real-life situations and in a variety of contexts that add value and knowledge to your own ITIL practice.

1.2.3 ITIL Service Management Practices – web support services

These products are online, interactive services, which will develop over time and include elements such as the glossary of terms and definitions, the interactive service model, online subscriber services, case studies, templates and ITIL Live® – an interactive expert knowledge centre where users can access time with ITSM experts to discuss questions and issues, and seek advice.



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Readers of this key element guide are encouraged to explore the entire portfolio of ITIL Service Management publications and services.

1.3 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.



Definition of a service

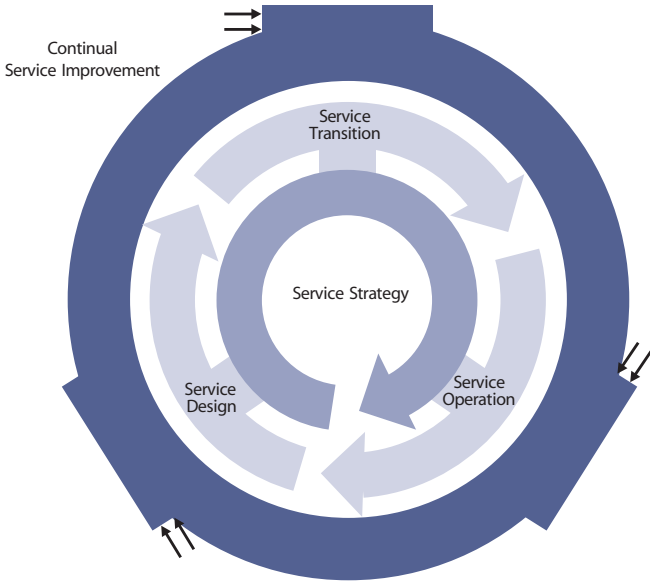


A service is a means of delivering value to customers by facilitating outcomes customers want to achieve without the ownership of specific costs and risks.

1.4 WHAT IS A LIFECYCLE?

The service lifecycle contains five elements, each of which relies on service principles, processes, roles and performance measures. The ITIL Service Lifecycle uses a hub and spoke design, with Service Strategy at the hub, and Service Design, Transition and Operation as the revolving lifecycle stages, anchored by Continual Service Improvement (Figure 1.1). Each part of the lifecycle exerts influence on the others and relies on the others for inputs and feedback. In this way, a constant set of checks and balances throughout the service lifecycle ensures that as business demand changes with business need, the services can adapt and respond effectively to them.

Figure 1.1 The ITIL Service Lifecycle



At the heart of the service lifecycle is the key principle – all services must provide measurable value to business objectives and outcomes. ITIL Service Management focuses on business value as its prime objective. Each practice revolves around ensuring that everything a service provider does to manage IT services for the business customer can be measured and quantified in terms of business value. This has become extremely important of late as IT organizations are required to operate as businesses in order to demonstrate a clear return on investment, equating service performance with business value to the customer.