Crawl, Walk Run Approach to ITIL

Avoid common pitfalls by implementing ITIL concepts in smart, easily digestible pieces.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It can make your organization's use of IT more dynamic – boosting its availability and reliability, while ensuring top-shelf security positioning. It also increases the performance value of technology, leading to a dramatic reduction in cost of ownership.

All of these advantages are made possible when organizations and government agencies commit to best practices based upon the concepts of Information Technology Infrastructure Library or ITIL. ITIL enables a systemic approach to the business of technology. It takes a unified view of a company's IT offerings and finds ways to best match services/support to business-benefitting goals.

Along the way to widespread adoption of ITIL, organizations have hit a number of bumps in the road. They have sometimes taken a "deep dive" when they ought to be dipping their toes. Organizations want ITIL in a huge way, and they want it now.

This paper will detail how to proceed with ITIL adoption in a measured, effective way. Yes, it's true that ITIL is transformative. But where do you begin? To optimize performance and ensure your endeavor into ITIL succeeds, you need to crawl before you can walk, and walk before you
can run.

3

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Typically, one of the first questions an organization asks before investing time and money on ITIL is, "What's in it for us? What are the tangible benefits?"

- **Industry research indicates multiple benefits can be acquired:**

- **Improved Availability, Reliability & Security of IT Services**

- **Increased IT Project Delivery Efficiencies**

- **Reduced TCO of IT Infrastructure Assets and IT Applications**

- **Provisioning of Services that meet Business, Customer and User Demands, with Justifiable Costs of Service Quality**

- **Improved Overall Quality of Service**

- **Improved Consistency of Service**

- **Improved Service Alignment**

- **Improved IT Governance**

As indicated above, the benefits can be wide-ranging. But, how about some facts from actual Emtec projects to sweeten the deal a bit?

- **Improved IT Resource Utilization - a 20% Productivity Gain from decreased rework & elimination of redundant activities**

- **Reduced Average Cost - 60% decrease in average cost to resolve incidents**

- **Better Customer Service - 50% reduction in days that incident tickets remain open**

- **Increase in Successful Changes - 50% more successful changes with change management**

- **More Effective Third-Party Relationships & Contracts through elimination of extra tools & non-useful systems**

IT managers, as well as employees/end-users, gain greater access, command and security assurance of IT as incident management, access control and other tasks are streamlined. ITIL is a guide that facilitates the improvement process.

Note of Caution Here: Don't expect these outcomes right away. In our experience, we've found that measurable, significant cost savings typically surface 10 to 12 months after ITIL implementation. Once this threshold is established, the "payoff factor" is immense.

4

WHEN CRAWLING BEATS RUNNING

Why crawl before you can run? Because your current IT operations most likely do not exist as a "clean slate" or "wide-open green field," in which entirely new processes can be implemented with no impact on existing operations/infrastructure. You have current systems and procedures that are already in place. You can't leap out of the gate with a completely overhauled strategy. At first, you have to evaluate what's going on today, analyze how it will effect current operations and identify apparent holes.

For example - document your end-user service experiences, pinpointing loose ends to tackle those inefficiencies. Then you can consider streamlining and/or updating systems, with new controls to implement change. If you produce measurable success from these efforts, then come up with a wider-ranging strategy to target other demands/goals.

This approach is a classic example of a continual improvement model, such as that which Deming championed. Baseline assessments are taken to understand not only technology practices, but the people and business areas affected. Get a sense of corporate vision and single out perhaps only one objective – maybe gaining 10 percent greater market share and establish a clear "How do we get there?" path. This path requires an action plan, complete with ETA timelines of essential steps to be taken.

Then comes the time to measure results, revealing answers to the "Did we get there?" question. Only after improvement is measured do you expand into broader areas, such as strategies for keeping this momentum going and even expanding it. This leads to an "improvement culture" that allows Crawl, Walk, Run to take flight.

STUMBLING AS YOU CRAWL

In the crawl stage, an IT team is just starting to take on an ITIL initiative, or has struggled for a while to launch one without success.

Here's why they fail:

Mistake #1—No Communication

As with any project that falls short of expectations, it all begins with people. We have seen problems with overall consistency of communications, such as clients not clearly identifying or publishing their ITIL efforts to their end users.

Beyond the lack of uniform clarity, we have also seen shortcomings in attempting to determine the "what?" and the "why?" behind ITIL. Companies end up not really knowing what they are setting out to achieve, and how to do it. They fail to identify what technology processes can be made cleaner, or come up with a strategy to produce these gains while IT support continues as usual. This is a critical step. Team members should outline how to transition into the initial stages of ITIL while still continuing at present levels of operations/production. Without effective communications in advance about how early deployment may affect this, the complaints start rolling in. Change-resisters declare an early failure and beg for a return to "business as usual." The potential for buy-in from the user ranks is lost.

Mistake #2—Going for the Big Bang

Team members can also be guilty of attempting to cram "big bang" objectives onto the crawling stages of ITIL. They figure, "Why not? We're getting an amazing tool that's going to solve all of our problems right now." As analysts from Gartner and Forrester will attest, this isn't the way to go. We've seen false starts repeated over and over because of this approach. You'll inevitably push your people to chase a huge target and, on the day when the calendar is circled for completion, you'll press the magic button and watch it all fall apart. Because, as discussed, there is no "wide open green field," you must look at existing practices and resources and be realistic about what aspects of ITIL can be easily transitioned within. Focus on quickly implementing efficiencies instead of tackling the "big beast." After you address and resolve specific issues – with clear cost recoveries demonstrated – you can seek to secure buy-in for expansion of ITIL.

Mistake #3—The Problem Solver

Many organizations have a pre-conceived notion that a tool that will solve all of their problems. Simply stated: "A tool is PART of the solution. It is not THE solution". You need to start with people (assigning roles and responsibilities) and the development of processes - then as you move along your ITIL path, you can bring in a tool that facilitates with illustrating return on investment (ROI) of your ITIL deployment.

CONSTRUCTIVE CRAWLING 101

For the purposes of our "best practices" as summarized in the crawl, walk, run stages provided, we break these down into the three categories of "strategic," "tactical" and "operational". These categories provide milestones and possible course of actions for an organization move from one stage to another, and help avoid some pitfalls.

For the crawl stage, those categories should play out as follows:

Strategic – Communication and Transparency

Organizations should clearly define the "what" and "why" of ITIL initiatives to the IT staff as well as employees/end-users. A well-conceived communications plan will provide these explanations, with focus on clarity. Don't attempt an ITIL initiative with monthly meetings that only involve the IT department. Schedule weekly meetings instead, and invite leaders from all departments to allow inquiries and complete transparency of what is to come – from developing to testing to perfecting.

Don't speak in esoteric terminology that your audience doesn't understand. Try to view this challenge not necessarily as someone in IT, but with the perspective of the affected end users. Use terms that everyone understands, such as "cutting costs" and "improving efficiencies." Deliver these messages during presentations, one-on-ones and published summary reports. The key to achieving success in communications is understanding what end-users (your customers) would define as a major upgrade in their user experience. Our experience shows that if you improve the user experience, you've improved your organization.

Tactical – Focus on "Quick-Wins"

Establish a baseline and initially focus on operational issues, services & processes that affect your end-users. Focusing on these incident problems and/or service-level management will enable "quick wins" (wins as perceived by your employees/end-users). Timeline, deliverables, project management, key performance indicators (KPIs) and critical success factors (CSF) are key to success. KPIs are the quantitative factors that define the impact of a project or effort. CSFs are the elements in place that set the table for desired KPI performance. Moving forward through the crawl, walk, run steps, you must have a firm vision of "How will you define and measure targeted outcomes?" and "What resources exist or are available to help us get there?"
(See Figure 1-1)

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Critical Success Factors (CSF)

	CSF	KPI
Crawl	•Define CSF and KPIs •Roles assigned •Documented baseline •Project charter defined	•1 KPIs defined for every CSF •Increase in # of roles assigned •Increase in # of process assigned •Project charger approved by Management
Walk	•Documented processes •Documented procedures •Documented IT Services •Published dashboard •Improving ITIL organizational knowledge	•Increase in # of processes documented •Increase in # of procedures documented •Increase in # of services defined and documented •Monthly dashboard published •Increase in # of people trained on ITIL
Run	•Deployed ITIL processes based on their business needs •Improving control over TCO •Reducing IT cost	•Reduced TCO per IT services •10% reduction in the cost of handling printer incidents (for ex)

Figure 1-1: Defining and measuring targeted outcomes is essential to tracking your success in ITIL implementation.

Operational – Some Training Please 8

Your ITIL team will need all the internal resources and training required to make a successful launch. Your whole IT department doesn't have to be certified, but it helps to have team workshops with an outside authority on ITIL implementation. With your "problem" areas identified, your KPI/CSF vision clear and a highly clarified plan communicated organization-wide, you're ready to start crawling.

WALKING MISSTEPS

OK, so now you know the basic framework of ITIL and you've designated a team of internal staff to this. You have one or two processes implemented, with roles assigned. You may have collected some metrics and come up with some kind of measured progress. But you're not exactly comfortable with the entire course of action. Here's why:

Mistake 1—Misaligned Roles

We find that companies in the walking stage are off to a decent start. But adjustments have to be made before a larger-scale "lift off." These adjustments likely require evaluating the roles assigned to team members. We've seen the function of a change manager, for example, given to someone who wasn't a senior staffer. A junior-level employee should not be in a position to approve or reject a manager's requests (i.e. change requests, etc). This person doesn't have the in-house clout or work experience to leverage effective decisions. The role is meant for someone who can sufficiently enforce these decisions, and take on the function of a big-picture coordinator.

On the other hand, we've also seen these roles assigned to senior managers who oversee many other areas of IT. This results in ITIL being downshifted as a priority, something to devote time to only when all other, "more urgent" fires have been tended to. The top ITIL manager should devote most or all of their time to ITIL and this should be detailed in their performance plan. (If budget allows, a coordinator can be relied upon to get the day-to-day tasks accomplished.)

9

Mistake 2—Process Missteps

We have also seen processes not documented properly. Documentation is absolutely essential at this level. It ensures that people will be able to reap rewards from the new "way" because it will help them recognize, understand and make actionable plans based upon it. You don't need a 50-page report with extensive flow charts and laborious summary either. It will gather dust! A concise, 15-page document with short, punchy procedures and graphics is much preferred. We've seen clients order huge stacks of reports and they're usually only read (and forgotten) by the executive who requested it.

Mistake 3—An Expensive CMDB

A third shortcoming involves a heavy investment in configuration management database (CMDB) tools. We're not against CMDB as it is a highly useful asset, but it takes a great deal of investment and that may not be the wise course at this still early stage of ITIL. We feel that a great deal can be accomplished/ captured here with a spread sheet tool that depicts a view of documented assets first that is linked with IT services and performance after. Save that CMDB investment for a stage in which ITIL adoption has grown more mature.

WALKING THE WALK

## Strategic—A Service Catalog

Name a service manager and build a service catalog. Again, streamlining this effort is recommended. You don't have to boil the ocean to produce a useful one. We've seen thick service catalogs with page upon page of SLAs and OLAs. But what you really want to do here – if you're attempting to present a document that is genuinely considered highly useful among internal customers – is simply state what the existing capabilities are and what service levels they address. To ensure the success of your IT improvement program, assign the role of an IT Service Manager. This individual will be responsible to oversee and coordinate the entire IT improvement program. He or she will ensure that the improvement efforts are constantly aligned with both internal customers and organizational needs.

Tactical—Measurement

Develop a dashboard-level view of the state of ITIL. (See Figure 1-2) This is where you will get a tactical perspective of your KPI/CSF picture. It allows you to examine, measure and discuss progress on these two points with your team, and demonstrate to management the current status of ITIL operational levels- further creating an "improvement culture" within the organization. A winning dashboard design can track "impact points" for finance, HR, marketing, sales and other users, as well as vendors and clients. With senior managers and VP-level execs on board, you can establish momentum for the project and gain buy-in for additional investment. Again, an expensive tool is not necessary here. What you want is visibility and the ability to measure what you're doing, and you can get that with Excel.

Dashboard Processes
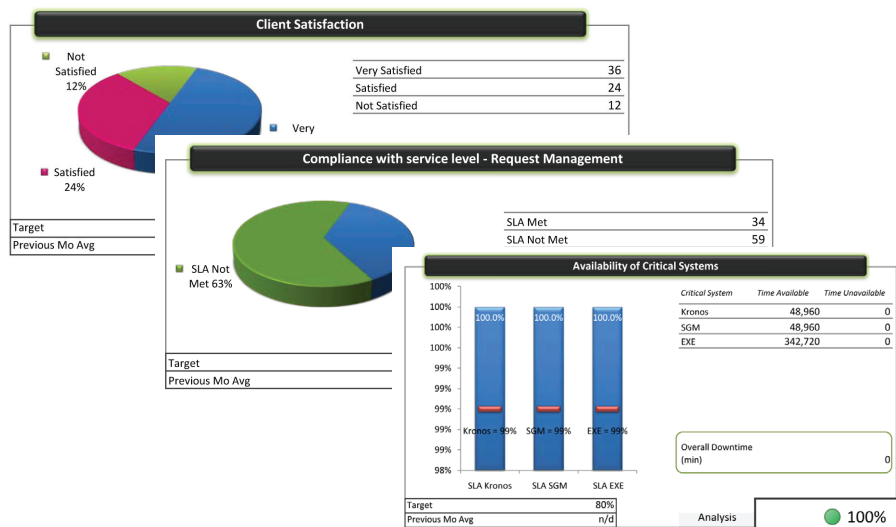
Figure 1-2: Dashboards can be simple and easy to use. Combinations of Excel and ITSM tools can provide graphical indicators measuring whether or not objectives are being met.

Operational—Define Service Targets in Tool

Setting targets, measuring performance and reporting on gaps between targets and your accomplishment is the order of the day. You should operationalize the services levels defined in your service catalog within your current IT service management tool. This will allow you to measure and follow the efficiency of your continual improvement program. Furthermore, you will have the proper data and performance metrics to meet with your internal customers and review their service level agreements (SLAs) on a regular basis. Plan ahead to capture basic information that will allow you to draw out total cost of ownership (TCO) and ROI values.

Involve your functional team members in the production of KPIs and in the implementation of any corrective actions. This is a great strategy to free-up the service manager's time for decision making and strategic or tactical activities. Also, involving IT staff can also reduce resistance to change. If they are actively involved, they will become positive change agents and great promoters of your continual improvement program.

11

RUNNING INTO TROUBLE

You are now in the run stage with ITIL, and you attend a trade show in which vendors dazzle you with visions of where you can take all of this. You get back to the office pumped up with a briefcase full of million-dollar ideas and you want to get it all started now.

Mistake 1—People with "Stars in Your Eyes" Syndrome

The influence of vendors and conference/tradeshow propaganda can create some problems. We have seen clients absolutely "have" to have a specific functionality or tool after coming back from a conference with no realistic idea about how to make it happen. Note of caution—if you move forward and implement this grand idea it may be to the detriment of your existing operations. This is why we urge you – even in the running stage – to get a realistic perspective about what you're trying to achieve. If the concept appears readily within reach, you still have to get a sense of whether it will negatively affect the progress you've already made. That's because it is common at this stage for ITIL teams to overlook the review of already deployed processes, but they shouldn't. To avoid this, make sure that the IT Service Manager regularly reviews and ensures metrics are being met. If they aren't, he or she needs to determine corrective action.

Mistake 2—Failure to Review Processes

Empower process owners/coordinators to review processes deployed on a regular basis to ensure they meet your organizational or business needs. One client had a great implementation plan, yet it never took hold organization-wide. We investigated the situation and concluded that the approach, for lack of a better phrase, had to be "dumbed down" to be universally embraced. In this specific case, there were too many categories and subcategories of various help-desk incidents—so IT team members just abandoned the system. Instead, they dumped incidents into an "other" classification to avoid dealing with the whole thing. We helped them simplify the incident codification to make it easier to use, allowing for some very valuable reporting to emerge. Time in review could reduce these instances from occurring.

Mistake 3—Service Levels are not Service-Level Management

It's common at this stage to assume service levels are the same as service-level management, but they're not. Service-level management requires a step back, to develop a service view. This is a view that benefits the entire ITIL framework – it's no longer about simply finding a better, quicker way to fix the printer. It's about a broader perspective – with proven best practices that are highly adaptable/ transferable within IT and service-expectation time frames and other broader "improvement culture" factors. This is a broad, "big picture" depiction of what you really want to accomplish organization-wide, to help construct a continual service improvement (CSI) model that will create lasting value.

12

RUNNING, CLIMBING, REACHING

Strategic—Create a Service Portfolio

A service portfolio is not to be confused with your service catalog. The service catalog is a breakout of what you can offer to internal customers/users. The portfolio is a larger view of what these services mean to your internal customers/end-users and C-suiters - addressing impacts on operations, TCO, ROI and other key points. This will emerge as an important part of your IT service management (ITSM) plan, which bodes well for company-wide acceptance because ITSM is primarily concerned with end-user's interpretation of IT's contribution to the business.

Tactical—Consider Service Strategy and Service Design processes

This is when you can demonstrate just how useful ITIL has been. One of our clients was able to show how it integrated its entire help-desk structure. They used to have one desk for plant operations, another for engineering, and another for the environmental-management group, and so on. When they consolidated all of these functions into one desk, there was a dramatic savings in cost of operations.

Operational—Continuous Improvement

Now that you have your service catalog and service portfolio started or even well-defined, you will need to remind your team to stay focused on the delivery of those services. The continual service improvement model will force your organization to constantly seek ways to do better. Deployment of strategic processes will bring together IT resources in the planning of IT services. Operation, tactical and strategic teams will now work towards the delivery of service levels rather than being focused on technology pieces.

What you want here is to convey the impression that someone is definitely watching – and steering – the boat. That ITIL isn't some arcane concept that has required too much planning time, with little or nothing to show for it. Then, you use the success story of, say, a help-desk consolidation to build a bridge to future initiatives that, ultimately, pay for themselves because they save so much.

13

CONCLUSION

The final take-away from this paper: ITIL implementation is evolutionary, not revolutionary. You may have the big boss stroll into your office and question why you can't drive this vehicle from zero to 120 mph in a month. You can now explain that you have to walk before you can run, and crawl before you walk. Here are the key obtainables for each of these steps:

Crawl

Help non-IT managers understand that it's time to zero in on "What we do" and "What we deliver." Roles are to be assigned and CSF and KPIs defined. Baseline assessments match tech services to organizational strategies/day-to-day tasks.

Walk

Time to turn attention to performance management, using dashboard/ metrics tools. Cost management also crucial here, so everyone realizes the expense of deploying, supporting and maintaining services.

Run

It's all about business impact now, using performance, cost and risk evaluation for decisions and planning. IT tools are tied to the ITSM plan – remember that IT has no value if you cannot define its value for business. Then, the CSI model sets the blueprint for what should be years of payoff in increased user/customer-centric efficiencies and ROI.

Success, as they say, is seldom obtained by accident. With this kind of careful execution, it won't be.

Value Maturity Roadmap
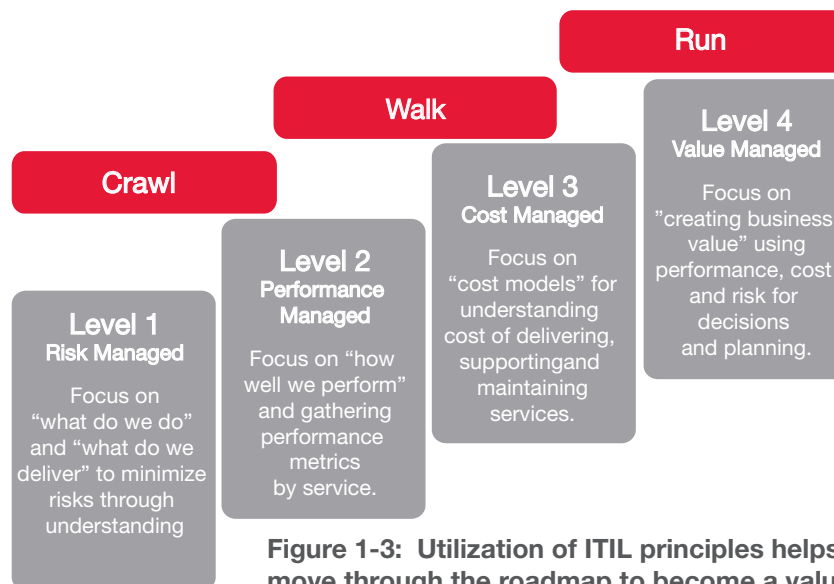
Figure 1-3: Utilization of ITIL principles helps you move through the roadmap to become a value driven IT organization- providing real business value and improved service delivery.

BIOS

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RESOURCE LINKS

Industry Links:

- **www.isaca.org (COBIT, VAL-IT, Risk-IT)**

- **www.pmi.org (PM-BOK)**

- **www.sei.cmi.edu (CMMI)**

- **www.iso.org (ISO20000, 27000)**

Emtec Links:

- **Emtec ITSM Blog**

- **Emtec Event Archive**

- **Emtec Whitepapers**

- **Emtec Website**

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16