ITIL V3: Where To Start & How To Achieve Quick Wins

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For all sizes of businesses, private and public organizations, educational institutions, consumers and the individuals working within these organizations, IT services have become an integral means for conducting business. Without IT services many organizations would not be able to deliver their products and services in today's market. As reliance on these IT services increase, so do the expectations for availability, reliability and stability.

To meet these expectations, IT departments have been using the IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL), originally developed by the UK government and eventually becoming popular worldwide. With great anticipation the third version of ITIL (V3) was published on May 30, 2007. Commencing in 2004, the ITIL V3 refresh project involved extensive consultations, surveys and focus groups with thousands of global ITSM practitioners from across the industry.

Since V3's release, and even with previous versions of ITIL, organizations have been asking themselves where they should start and how to achieve the biggest gains. It's helpful to look at the new structure of ITIL before answering the question of where to start.

1.1   What's New In V3?

ITII V3 has a much stronger focus on business results and thinking in terms of services and not just processes. Because of this major shift from a process-centric view to a Service Lifecycle view, the refresh became more of a rewrite.

ITIL is no longer an "IT only" reference – the business will need to understand the Service Lifecycle and be actively involved in setting service strategy for successful business-IT integration and creation of business value.

The core of ITIL V3 comprises five books that sequentially cover each stage of the lifecycle:

Service Strategy
This core book looks at the overall business aims and expectations, ensuring that the IT strategy maps to these.

Service Design
Service Design begins with a set of new or changed business requirements and ends with a solution designed to meet the documented needs of the business.

Service Transition
This book looks at managing change, risk and quality assurance during the deployment of service designs so that service operations can manage the services and supporting infrastructure in a controlled manner.

Service Operation
Service Operation is concerned with business-as-usual activities of keeping services going once they transition into the production environment.

Continual Service Improvement
Continual Service Improvement (CSI) provides an overall view of all the elements from the other books and looks for ways to improve the overall process and service provision.

There is a significant amount of new content in V3, with an additional 14 processes and three functions to consider. The V2 processes were all kept, but were enhanced to reflect up-to-date best practices and activities; therefore, existing investments in ITIL training and process improvement are preserved.
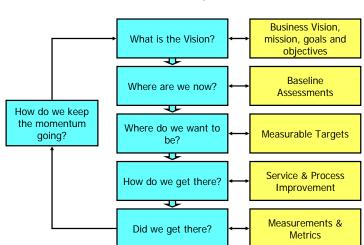
The Big Question – Where Do I Start?

The answer to this question is not much different than the answer for V2.

Just because ITIL V3 is based on a Service Lifecycle approach does not mean that you have to start your ITIL journey by implementing a Service Strategy. It is necessary first to examine the pain points, challenges and opportunities that your organization is encountering regularly.

Conducting an initial baseline assessment will enable you to define where to start, identify ROI opportunities, as well as have something to measure improvements against. V3's *Continual Service Improvement* book provides the following model illustrating the recommended path for continual improvement.

Continual Service Improvement Model

Most organizations are capturing data in some format or another; however, processing and analyzing the data is rarely done. It is never too early to begin collecting data once you develop your measurement framework. Even if you find that you have bad data, this should lead to key questions around why this is so, and this could become the first improvement opportunity.

Pink Elephant recommends starting with what are called with 'Customer Facing' processes such as Incident, Service Level and Change Management, which have daily interaction and visibility with the Business. Here are brief descriptions of some of these processes:

Incident Management & Service Desk
Incident Management is responsible for restoring service and is considered a data gathering process that is critical to support other ITIL processes. The Service Desk is a functional group that plays a major role in Incident and Knowledge Management. As well, the Service Desk is a single point of contact for multiple process activities and for communication to the end user community and Business.

Change Management
Change Management, considered a control process, is important to gain a single view of all changes impacting an organization daily. The process is also responsible for properly assessing and authorizing changes based on change type criteria. Implementing a strong Change Management process will also help strengthen the Release and Deployment processes, as it will define certain requirements (including planning and testing) as a change moves through the lifecycle.

Service Catalog Management
One of the cornerstones of V3 is the importance of understanding the business and how IT services and processes need to support the business. In order to see this integration, one of the first activities Service Level Management needs to undertake is to define IT services in the form of a Service Catalog. Service Catalog Management provides detailed guidance on this activity.

Problem Management
One of the easier processes to implement that can have some quick wins is Problem Management. Simply compiling a 'top 10' incident list on a monthly basis will provide opportunities to identify recurring incidents that are costing the organization in downtime, effort to restore service, as well as customer satisfaction. Problem Management is responsible for conducting root cause analysis and, working with Change Management, finds a permanent solution to remove the recurring incidents.

Service Asset & Configuration Management (SACM)
SACM is essential for supporting and improving the efficiency of the other ITIL processes, but it is also one of the more challenging processes to implement. One of the keys is to properly define the level of Configuration Item (CI) detail. Implementing Incident, Problem and Change Management will help define the level of detail required for these key processes. It is important to have Change Management in place before Configuration Management, as Change Management is the control process for updating and modifying the Configuration Management Database (CMDB). SACM can therefore start fairly soon, as long as the scope is limited and managed. One of the biggest issues with SACM is when organizations initially want to have a large scope.

While most of the above processes can be found in *Service Transition* and *Service Operation*, you will also find opportunities to use the guidance from *Service Strategy* and *Continual Service Improvement* as you go through your ITIL journey.

Identifying Quick Wins

Implementing ITIL does not happen overnight, and can sometimes run into several years or longer; therefore it is important to identify and plan for some quick wins. In 2006, the State of North Carolina's IT department (ITS) made some improvements with ITIL in less than three months and started with Incident and Change Management. These are the results of tactical quick-win efforts targeted in tandem with the training program and the state's awareness campaign:

- ITS improved its ability to resolve incidents within their target timeframe by 32%

- ITS improved its ability to resolve Service Requests within its target timeframe by 20%

- Change Management process compliance increased more than twofold, resulting in fewer incidents and reduced downtime

As with most organizations, a change and incident process already existed, but ITS started showing immediate improvement before any formal improvement program was implemented simply by identifying and communicating the key metrics. Staff began following their existing process because they knew reporting against certain performance measures had started, and that these measures were discussed among senior managers. Not only were these discussions held, but there was also clear evidence that the performance measures had to improve.

Initiating a more formal improvement program, ITS continued in 2006 with Problem and Service Level Management, which together with Incident and Change comprised Phase One. Since the implementation of Phase One, ITS' incident resolution within Service Levels has improved by over 69% and the ratio of planned changes has increased by 226%. Phase Two, currently in progress, includes Release and Configuration Management. Phase Three will begin in early 2008 and will cover Availability and Capacity Management.

The following are other examples of ITIL quick wins:

Incident Management

- Begin logging all incidents and service requests

- Service Desk retains ownership of incidents throughout the entire Incident Management Lifecycle

- Define escalation and assignment procedures

Change Management

- Create a Change Advisory Board (CAB) and begin holding meetings to assess changes

- Develop a change type model that provides for an authority model for authorizing changes based on the change type.

Service Catalog Management

- Begin developing an IT Service Catalog

- Begin conducting internal service review meetings – this would be with internal IT functional groups

- Begin conducting external review meetings with the Business

Problem Management

- Perform trend analysis on most recurring incidents

General

- Create a priority model that is shared and used by Incident, Problem and Change Management

- Move towards a single tool

- Begin capturing and sharing metrics and measurements

Moving Forward

Implementing ITIL will be a journey over many months and years depending on how many processes an organization wishes to implement. ITIL V3 is still a framework and organizations need to adopt and adapt the most appropriate parts of the framework that are fit for purpose.

Never overlook the importance of the organizational change that will be required – this is considered one of the biggest implementation challenges. ITIL will require employees' behaviors, values and beliefs to change. Developing and implementing a communication strategy and plan along with adequate ITIL training is a must for a successful implementation.