

ITIL That Fits Your Business

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Introduction

In the last several years, ITIL has become a buzzword in management circles. CEO's and CIO's anxious to stay at the forefront of business trends have felt some pressure to adopt "the most widely accepted approach to IT service management in the world."¹ ITIL has been portrayed by some as a panacea that will suddenly make IT a profit center, while improving services, reliability, infrastructure, and accountability.

However, jumping into "implementing ITIL" without a clear understanding of how best to go about it and what potential benefits and pitfalls you may encounter is tantamount to jumping out of a plane with your company's resources on your back instead of a parachute.

A significant percentage of ITIL implementations are simply never completed, after months of training, certification tests, and effort, while it is also common to find that an ITIL implementation has actually increased the workload of IT staff members without improving service or reliability.

Both of these outcomes may be avoided by doing some homework and approaching ITIL with a clear sense of priorities. This paper offers some practical suggestions for how to get the greatest benefits ITIL has to offer without getting lost along the way.

What is ITIL?

The Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) is a set of "best practice" guidelines on managing IT processes that were originally developed for government agencies in the United Kingdom in 1989. The guidelines were created by an organization called the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency (CCTA) in response to what was perceived as the inefficiencies and failings of IT in the British government.

The purpose of the guidelines was to increase efficiency and cost-effectiveness, reduce failure, and improve the customer service provided by IT organizations. The agency that created the ITIL books investigated the actual practices of corporations as well as government agencies in the UK and abroad, looking for the process elements that led to effective IT service delivery, and they then codified those elements. The ITIL books therefore documented practices already being followed to some extent in many successful organizations.

Adoption of ITIL

ITIL quickly became a well-known standard in Europe and much of the world soon after its introduction, thanks in part to the IT Service Management Forum (itSMF), an international organization founded in the early 1990s to spread the word about ITIL. The UK and the Netherlands each created their own ITIL user certification programs in 2000 and hundreds of thousands of individuals have been certified.

ITIL has been slower to gain ground in the United States. Only in the last 5 years has it made real inroads among American corporations. The lag in American adoption has been blamed by some on cultural differences. Ken Hamilton, past president of itSMF in the USA, explains, "Europe tends to be a qualitative environment. Process improvement in terms of the quality of service delivered, these sorts of metrics were more popular in Europe—whereas in the United States, cost savings, return on investment, hard-dollar savings were the primary drivers."²

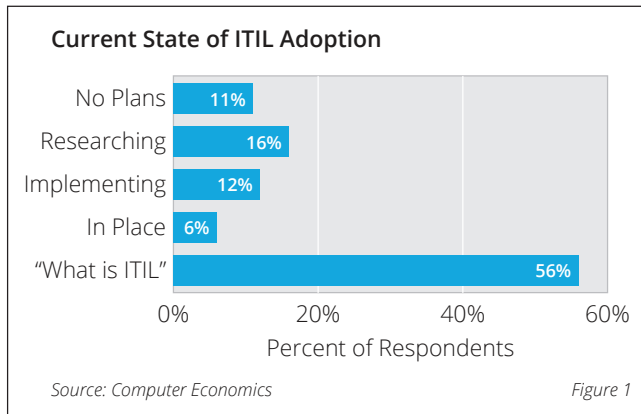
The interest in ITIL adoption in the U.S. has been growing, however, as indicated by changing survey results. In October 2005, a U.S. survey on the Computer Economics website showed that 56%

¹ <http://www.best-management-practice.com/Knowledge-Centre/Best-Practice-Guidance/ITIL/>

² Chad Vander Veen, "American ITIL", Jul 27, 2005 Government Technology, (http://www.govtech.com/gt/articles/95672?id=95672&full=1&story_pg=2).



of respondents weren't even familiar with ITIL and another 11% had no plans to implement it:³



By February of 2008, a survey of 370 CIO's worldwide (100 of them American) by Dimension Data found that almost 59% of American CIO's said they had "engaged with" ITIL, but only 8% of them "deemed themselves aligned to the ITIL framework).⁴ Contrast that with 66% of organizations outside the U.S. engaging with and 17% considering themselves to be true practitioners of ITIL.

The main barriers to adoption cited by the survey were the costs associated with training, certification, and implementation. 31% of U.S. CIO's reported that the framework should be more actionable, while 25% complained that it should be more flexible. 40% of American CIO's believed that ITIL would facilitate innovation by freeing IT departments from routine tasks.

Most U.S. companies implementing ITIL have been large corporations. This is not surprising,

³ "ITIL Adoption: 2006 Could be Watershed Year in U.S."; October, 2005, Computer Economics Metrics for IT Management, <http://www.computereconomics.com/article.cfm?id=1068>

⁴ "Dimension Data Survey Shows More than Half of U.S. Organizations Have Engaged with ITIL", Feb. 28, 2008, (<http://www.dimensiondata.com/NR/rdonlyres/57846421-71F8-4A8D-827E-C86C45B48898/8894/DimensionDataSurveyShowsMoreThanHalfOfUSOrganizati.pdf>)

since ITIL was originally developed to address the problems of large organizations, and many of these problems may not even exist for small to midsized organizations. For instance, a process aimed at improving communication between large departments will make little sense in a business with fewer than twenty employees. Moving to a tightly structured, standards-based approach is most likely to pay off for companies juggling a variety of independent systems in separate departments that don't talk to each other.

However, many small and medium-sized businesses can benefit from implementing the parts of ITIL that apply to them. The key is to find an approach that takes into account an organization's individual needs and goals. For example, in a small business with only a few hundred computers, one or two people may be responsible for all computer support issues. They may have little time to focus on higher-order issues like service strategy when they spend the workday managing incidents on a case-by-case basis.

Implementing certain ITIL practices such as incident management in the early stages of a business can prepare the IT department for its eventual growth. Additional processes, such as change management, can be added as the business need arises.

A moving target – The evolving 'best practices' of ITIL

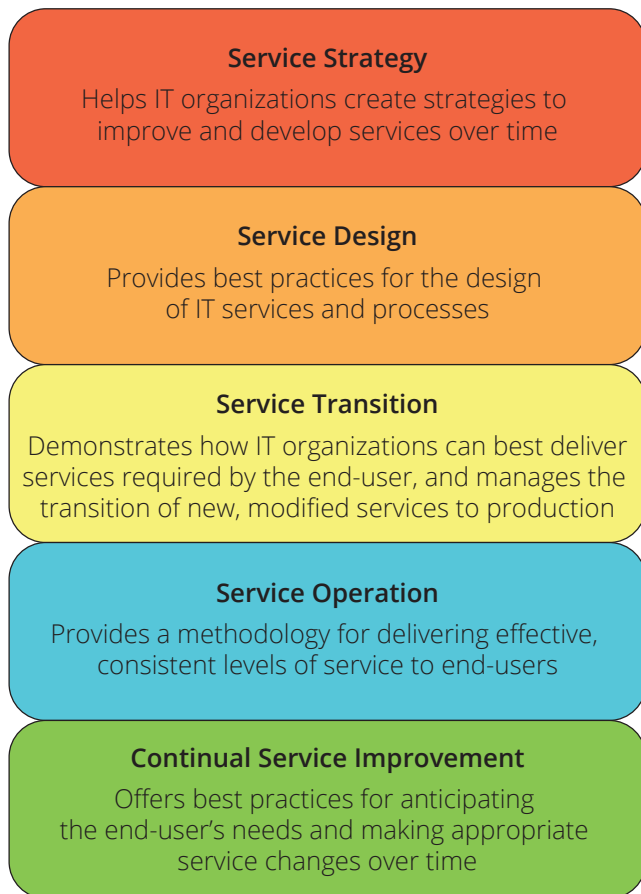
First published in several hefty volumes, the initial ITIL library has continued to evolve as real world experience suggested some changes of emphasis. ITIL V2, published in 2000, is the foundation used by most companies who have implemented ITIL to date. Of the 8 main books, the two most widely used were those on Service Support and Service Delivery.⁵

⁵ Paula Klein, "ITIL V3 – The Reality Check," Smart Enterprise: Insights and Perspectives for the CIO, (<http://www.smartenterprisemag.com/articles/2008winter/bestpractices.jhtml>)



The latest revision, known as ITIL V3, was intended to remedy the “one-size-fits-all” approach of V2, and to provide more practical advice. It was an international effort, with input from vendors, government agencies, and industry stakeholders. Published in May 2007, V3 was intended to be more flexible and adaptable to different business models. While V2 focused on processes, V3 emphasizes the way in which services are delivered to the business.

The five core titles of ITIL V3 outline a theoretical approach to effective IT practice using the concept of a service lifecycle:



For those who have already begun the certification or implementation process under V2, it is helpful to see how the services described in V2 map into ITIL V3:⁶

⁶ Paula Klein, “ITIL V3 – The Reality Check,” Smart Enterprise: Insights and Perspectives for the CIO, (<http://www.smartenterprisemag.com/articles/2008winter/bestpractices.jhtml>)

Old and New: How ITIL V2 Service Support Maps to V3	
ITIL V2 Process	Where To Find It in V3
Change Management	Service Transition
Configuration Management	Service Transition
Incident Management	Service Operation
Problem Management	Service Operation
Release Management	Service Transition
Service Desk	Service Operation
Service Asset and Configuration Management, including the CMDB	Service Transition CMDB is part of the Configuration Management System (CMS)
Fault Management (ICT Volume)	Service Operation
Knowledge Management (NEW)	Service Transition
Financial Management	Service Strategies
Availability Management	Service Design
Capacity Management	Service Design
IT Service Continuity Management	Service Design Referenced in Service Transition, Service Operation and Continual Service Improvement
Service Level Management	Service Design
Service Catalog Management	Service Design

Implementing ITIL

Where to begin

One of the challenges with implementing ITIL is that the processes described in the ITIL volumes are descriptions of strategies for system effectiveness, rather than prescriptions for how to implement them. As a result, even after sending people to expensive ITIL certification and foundation training courses, your organization may still not have a clear idea of exactly how to implement ITIL.

It is a mistake for most companies to try to implement all the ITIL components at once. This is likely to result in endless process debates and deadlocks, a lengthy and costly implementation project, and an unfinished or unsatisfactory result. While it is certainly beneficial to plan a long term ITIL roadmap, it is essential to prioritize the implementation, and then proceed to design and implement process improvement in manageable chunks.



Basic questions to ask

We recommend that you start by looking at your current IT service picture and asking the following questions:

1. Where are the greatest points of pain for IT employees?
2. Where are the greatest points of pain for IT customers?
3. Are IT staff too busy putting out fires to provide good service?
4. Are we gathering enough data to know what different services are costing us and where our employees are spending most of their time?
5. If so, where is the majority of time going?
6. Which areas of process improvement would give us the greatest boost in productivity, customer satisfaction, and/or value to our organization?

Start with the most urgent processes

Once you have analyzed your current situation, you should be ready to make some decisions about where to start. If your answers to the questions above are typical, starting with incident management, service request management, and change management will often give the biggest bang for the buck.

All companies need some way to manage these basic issues, and unless you already have an effective system in place, improving these processes should have immediate benefits that will justify the budget necessary for the implementation and provide a rapid ROI once implemented.

Let's suppose that you choose to start with this portion of ITIL. Should you also include Problem Management, Release Management, and a CMDB (Configuration Management Database)? That may depend on the size of your organization, the asset data you are already maintaining, and an analysis of what real value including these elements

might add. For instance, for many companies, the cost of maintaining a CMDB is higher than the value delivered.⁷

The point here is that you should not feel compelled to implement everything in the first round. The lack of prescription of the ITIL guidelines has a silver lining, which is the flexibility to implement the elements of ITIL that will most benefit your company.

Software tools – flexibility is the key

ITIL guidelines are sufficiently broad to allow the largest enterprises to handle the most complex IT operations. But they can also be used in a buffet-style implementation. Most organizations won't implement all of ITIL (nor will they need to). Therefore, when choosing a software tool to use for ITIL, flexibility is essential.

ITIL software solutions should be able to accommodate a variety of approaches which may change as a business and its goals evolve. Companies looking for a software solution should ask themselves the following questions:

- * Can the software be customized to reflect the structure of our processes?
- * Can we use the software to add new processes as we become more comfortable with ITIL?
- * Can processes and tables be easily linked to each other to reflect relationships?
- * Can we use the software to manage just the processes we choose to use?
- * How much of the setup is already done for us, and how easy is it to modify?

In selecting the appropriate software for your implementation, look for a flexible solution that allows you to start small and add as you go and that

⁷ Rob England, "ITIL's Dead Elephant: CMDB Can't be Done", IT Skeptic, 6/26/2006 (<http://www.itskeptic.org/itil-cmdb-skeptic>)



is easy to modify—since your way of doing ITIL may differ from other companies' methods. There is no “right” way to implement, so any solution that claims to do it all for you and give it to you complete out-of-the-box may not be flexible enough to do what you want.

Watch out for products that claim to be “ITIL-certified.” True ITIL certification applies only to individuals, not software, so such claims are misleading at best. Many applications also claim to be ITIL compliant. What does this mean? Again, there is no clear “standard” for ITIL compliance in a software product. In broad terms, a “compliant” product should be one that has all the functionality necessary to support ITIL-based processes. It should be able to map the complex relationships between assets (configuration items), people, and the various kinds of requests (Problems, Changes, Incidents, Service Requests, etc.). It should also automate a variety of processes, ensuring the correct procedures are followed, notifying about deadlines and service delivery failures, and so on. However, this may not be enough.

Since the ITIL documentation does not tell you how to construct a service catalogue or how you should implement the process of converting a service request into a problem or change request, “ITIL-compliant” software vendors have designed their systems to implement ITIL the way *they* think it should work.

But your company may have different needs than the company next door, and many pre-configured ITIL products are not flexible enough to let you implement ITIL the way that is best for your company. You need to ensure that you can easily customize your ITIL software to reflect the way you want to manage your IT services. An ITIL-compliant product that does not allow you to change it to meet your needs will not serve you well. When looking for a product, then, it is critical to find one that has the flexibility to map just the processes you want to use and to support the data model that is right for you.

Agiloft has the flexibility you need

Agiloft was designed with this flexibility in mind. Because of Agiloft's unique adaptive technology, it took us just a few weeks to develop our entire out-of-the-box ITIL structure. And it takes even less time to make any changes to fit the precise needs and preferences of your business.

This is only possible because we planned from the start to design a product with the full range of functionality needed to automate *any* complex business process, from ITIL to SOX, and from government compliance applications to CRM. The ideas that shape ITIL's best practices are fundamentally interwoven into the product.

Implementation consultants can save you time and money

Implementing any part of the ITIL guidelines involves making many decisions. Most people who have attended ITIL training classes and become certified still do not have the tools and experience necessary to actually design an ITIL based implementation.

Software vendors are ideally positioned to be able to assist in an ITIL implementation. If a vendor's professional services team is knowledgeable and conversant with ITIL guidelines as well as expert in customizing their own software, using their services can save you time and money and help ensure a successful implementation.

Agiloft's professional service team has over a decade of experience in designing best practice support and helpdesk solutions, all of which fold well into ITIL. Our customers have repeatedly told us that one of the greatest benefits of choosing our product was the quality of advice and guidance provided by our professional services team.

Our ITIL certified team members can help you find a sure path through the ITIL jungle so that you don't miss the forest for the trees.



Conclusion

Implementing ITIL, if done right, can improve your IT service operations and improve your relationships with your customers. However, ITIL is not a panacea for your business. Remember, the guidelines suggest what to do, not how to do it. You must make the decisions. Therefore, your entire organization must get behind ITIL so the decisions will align with the rest of the organization.

It's surprising how many organizations go into an ITIL implementation without fully understanding what they're trying to achieve. It is important to build consensus about the goal of implementing ITIL.

Without fully considering what is best for your company and how to tailor ITIL to your business needs, you won't get an implementation that people want to use, and you may end up with processes that only a massive government bureaucracy could love.

Start small by choosing to work on the most troublesome elements for your organization, so you get the greatest benefit. And be sure when choosing a software vendor to find a solution that will easily adapt to your needs and that can provide the extensibility you need for the future.

About Agiloft

Over 3 million users at organizations ranging from small enterprises to U.S government agencies and Fortune 100 companies depend on Agiloft's top rated product suites for [Contract Management](#), [Service Desk](#), [Custom Workflow](#), and more. Agiloft specializes in automating processes that are too complex for competing vendors. Our best practice templates and adaptable technology ensure rapid deployment and a fully extensible system. For more information, visit <https://www.agiloft.com>.