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Availability Management is an ITIL process not many are familiar with, but with virtually no added costs, IT can realize improvements in availability in as little as a few weeks!

Here’s the secret -- to “stay up”, you have to know why you “went down”. Put another way, to improve availability, you have to measure, identify and address un-availability.

Following is a 6-step plan to examine infrastructure (products) and organization (people and process) for un-availability; identify the #1 issue; and develop a solution to increase availability:

1. **Start with the “Incident Lifecycle”**. Examine the time spent on Incident detection, diagnosis, repair, recovery and restoration. Document where un-availability comes from using metrics for Recoverability (Mean Time To Repair), Reliability (Mean Time Between Failures) and Serviceability (agreed uptime - downtime) for external providers. This is a baseline to document improvement.

2. **Perform a Service Outage Analysis (SOA)**. Working with Problem Management and Customers, examine past outages and identify responsible IT assets (products, people or process). Create a Pareto chart; graph paper will do nicely. A majority of un-availability usually results from a minority of assets. [See ‘Service Outage Analysis in 7 Steps’ DITY Vol. 1 #7 for more on SOA]

3. **Create Component Failure Impact Assessment (CFIA) tables**. Driven by the SOA, CFIA shows the scope of impact and locates Single Points of Failure and other flaws. All it takes is a spreadsheet, or paper and pen. CFIA works for all IT assets – people and processes (organization) as well as products (infrastructure). [See ‘3 Steps to Success with CFIA’ DITY Vol. 1 #4 for more on CFIA]

4. **Develop Fault Tree Analysis (FTA) diagrams**. Both CFIA and FTA clarify potential flaws. FTA uses a logical model that shows how a failure can snowball into a major outage. Like CFIA, FTA may also be done with paper and pen. [See ‘Fault Tree Analysis Made Easy’ DITY Vol. 1 #5 for more on FTA]
5. **Prioritize using CRAMM.** CRAMM classifies the risk faced by an asset (threats) due to vulnerabilities in infrastructure and organization, identified in this case by CFIA and FTA. A paper or spreadsheet-based solution works just fine. [See ‘10 Steps to Do It Yourself CRAMM’ DITY Vol. 2 #8 for more on CRAMM]

6. **Establish a Technical Observation Post (TOP).** A TOP is a team of Subject Matter Experts, Customers and suppliers assembled to brainstorm on the issues identified by as responsible for unavailability and classified as most severe -- the #1 issue. The result is a Request for Change (RFC) to improve availability. [See ‘7 Steps to the TOP’ DITY Vol. 2 #10 for more on the TOP]

These six steps in the order presented deliver an understanding of un-availability in a matter of days -- at low to no additional cost. Benefits of the Changes proposed by the TOP should appear in “Incident Lifecycle” metrics within days or weeks.

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