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IT SERVICE CATALOGS IN 5 STEPS

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By *Hank Marquis*

With tight budgets and Customers all wanting the newest gadgets IT has to work smarter, not harder. The *IT Infrastructure Library* (ITIL®) says to improve IT efficiency and effectiveness you need *Service Level Management* (SLM).

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However, the relationships between *Service Level Agreements* (SLAs), Requirements, Targets, Catalogs, Operating Level Agreements and Underpinning Contracts can be confusing and hard to figure out. Where do you even begin?

Think about where service begins. How can an operator at the Service Desk support a User or Customer without knowing who does what, when and under what circumstances? You could treat every call as an emergency, and some do! But we all agree this is neither efficient nor effective.

A better approach is to consider the services you provide today. Even if you have no SLAs you are still delivering services. The best starting point is to create a service catalog. Following I describe a service catalog and how to create one in just 5 easy steps.

Implementing SLM optimizes IT operations and delivers higher quality of service to Customers at the same time – the very definition doing more for more with less!

Briefly, the Service Catalog underpins the SLM process. A Service Level Agreement refers to an IT Service. The Service Level Manager documents the services IT provides in the Service Catalog. (If you do not have formal SLM in place, and do not have someone assigned to the role of Service Level Manager, then pick an IT manager or supervisor who knows all the services you provide and have them follow this process.) The Service Desk uses the Service Catalog to advertise IT services, and to assist in day-to-day operations.

Without documenting the services IT provides, you cannot negotiate SLAs with Customers and it is very difficult to establish *Operating Level Agreements* (OLA's) and drive Underpinning Contracts (UCs). So the logical starting point is indeed the initial Service Catalog.

It is almost impossible to develop a service catalog that lists everything that IT does for every customer. However, by focusing on the things IT does for most customers an initial catalog can come together very quickly. Of course, over time, the goal is to expand and improve upon the initial catalog, but you have to start somewhere!

Following are the 5 basic steps required to develop an initial service catalog.

1. **Obtain Management Support** This is not only authorization from IT. It is imperative to involve Customers in the process as well. Working with management, choose a person to build the initial catalog. Identify the Customer or Business Unit you wish to involve in the process. Product a formal presentation about

the benefits of the Service Catalog, how you plan to use it and why you need Business participation. *[See '[How to Sell ITIL to the Top](#)' DITY Vol. 2 #7 for more on gaining management and business commitment.]*

2. **Establish A Service Catalog Team** The initial service catalog team should represent various viewpoints from within IT and from the business. Choose members from IT at all levels and functions; invite members from the business unit as well. Often, the business perceives things very differently from IT. As an initial move toward *Business/IT Alignment* (BITA) the service catalog should reflect the words and perceptions of the business and users. *[See the free [IT Service Catalog template](#) for more details on what the catalog should contain.]*

3. **Define IT Services** The team should examine IT and Business activities in an effort to document the major IT services in production. For example, "email", "SAP", "Internet", etc. Be aware that Business and IT will probably have different names for the same service. Using the inventory of services, the team must work to achieve consensus on the services and their names. Once the names are clear, document what the Users of the service perceive as their needs.

4. **The Dry Run** After the completion of the initial catalog, review it to ensure that it is clear, easy to understand. The catalog will cause a change for some – old service names, for example "email" that IT uses may be different than the new name, for example "Exchange". It is important to handle these changes through engagement and not through edict. *[See '[Smoothing the Way to IT SM](#)' DITY Vol. 1 #6 for more on gaining consensus.]*

5. **Publish** Once IT understands the new service names, publish the Service Catalog to the Business. Post it to your intranet, solicit Business input about its contents. Use this as an initial method for engaging the Business and

demonstrating your commitment to meet their needs.

There you have it, your initial IT Service Catalog! An initial Service Catalog does not have to be complex or very large. As time goes on you will refine it, expand it, and change it meet the new needs of the Business.

Right away you will find the service catalog improves communications with Users, Customers and within IT. This is the starting point to think about IT services, versus technology, an important step toward improving maturity. *[See '[A Prescription for ITIL](#)' DITY Vol. 2 #11 for more on process and organizational maturity.]*

You will also be able to use your Service Catalog as the starting point for internal OLA's, as well as SLAs with Customers. As your SLM implementation matures, you can also use your SLAs to drive vendor agreements and UCs.

Implementing a Service Catalog has many benefits including:

- Sets the stage for formal SLM
- Improves communications between IT and the Business and within IT
- Increases Customer satisfaction
- Allows Users and Customers to choose the correct IT service for their needs
- Elevates the perception of the IT organization to that of a Service Provider
- Moves IT closer to a service-orientation, versus a technology orientation

Today's mandates for IT to "do-more for-more with-less" can put IT in a tough spot. The Service Catalog helps balance these requirements and sets the stage for more improvements by underpinning formal Service Level Management.

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