# Do It Yourself Communications Planning

By Janet Kuhn

**C**hange is all around us. Most Users want change, but they demand to know that change is coming. That is exactly what the "Forward Schedule of Changes" and "Projected Service Availability" do. ITIL v2 specifically identified these two reports; ITIL V3, by inference, includes them in the service release package. However, no matter where the reports are, the critical point is that simple reports such as these can lead the way to gaining customer satisfaction and confidence in IT as a partner in the business' daily operations.

This DITY examines typical reports that flow from the primary ITIL operational processes and their importance to continuing to build and maintain those all-important-relationships between IT and the business and, yes, between IT and itself.

**Service Desk.** As the primary point of contact between IT and the user community, the Service Desk communicates much more than upcoming changes and availability schedules. It also communicates other items of vital interest to users, including procedures and instructions, Frequently Asked Questions, workaround information, and incident status information.

**Incident Management.** One of the prime activities of Incident Management is to monitor, track and communicate the status of an Incident. Especially during major Incidents, Users must balance the pressure to meet their business responsibilities against the uncertainty of a disruption to a supporting system. Even if there is nothing new to report, the simple act of communicating the status of an Incident reassures the User that not only is IT working to restore service, but that IT is in control of the Incident process.

**Problem Management.** Problem Management plays a communications role that belies its technical focus. Of course, it communicates with the Service Desk and Incident Management on Incidents, Problems, Known Errors and Workarounds, and with the Change Management Process on Requests for Change (RFC). It also maintains active communications with vendors and service providers to brief them on issues involving the organization. Internally, Problem Management must develop clear communications procedures to support its responsibility to coordinate resources across many technical areas to resolve multi-faceted problems.

**Configuration Management.** As a control process, Configuration Management communicates policies and procedures, both to the User, via the Service Desk, and internally to IT. It markets the Configuration Management System (CMS) as the "go to" place for information about the IT infrastructure, and it must develop sound procedures for maintaining the accuracy of the CMS.

**Change Management.** Change Management is a center of communications activity related to changes in the IT infrastructure. Life is never as simple as receiving a RFC, reviewing it and planning its implementation.

RFCs come from many directions – Users, Problem Management, Operations, to name a few. On the front-end, Change Management communicates procedures for submitting an RFC to the potential submitters. The regular Change Advisory Board (CAB) meetings are another forum for communications about newly requested changes, changes in progress, and completed changes.

And, don't forget, Change Management produces the Forward Schedule of Changes and Projected Service Availability reports to the Service Desk to communicate to the Users.

**Release Management.** Release Management's communications activities are primarily internal to IT. They focus on such issues as maintaining the Definitive Media Library (DML), naming conventions, and procedures for moving from the Development environment through Testing, Distribution and Roll-Out.

**Service Level Management.** Next to the Service Desk, Service Level Management probably has the most communications responsibilities with the User community. In many ways it is similar to a good public relations consultant as it seeks to communicate its message in the User's terms. And, very importantly, it is always necessary to communicate the existence of a Service Level Agreement (SLA) – both to the User and internally within IT.

**Availability Management.** Much of the communications within Availability Management takes place during the Service Design phase. Of particular importance is the identification and specification of Availability Requirements. Written from the User's perspective, Availability Requirements drive the Availability design of IT services. On a more granular level, Availability Management's measuring and reporting activities communicate operational detail to the technical services groups.

**Capacity Management.** The prime communications output of Capacity Management is the Capacity Plan. Produced in conjunction with the Business' planning cycle, normally during budget time or the Service Design phase, it transforms the Business' plans into a document that forecasts the capacity and the costs to meet the Business' requirements. Of course, during normal operations, Capacity Management reports on system performance and capacity levels.

**IT Service Continuity Management.** The IT Service Continuity Plan is the heart of IT Service Continuity Management. A carefully written and rehearsed plan is the foundation for maintaining and restoring IT Services during a time of disaster. In fact, the IT Service Continuity Plan may consist of a portfolio of plans covering different services and different types of continuity conditions.

**Financial Management.** Most often, Financial Management communicates not with words but with numbers. It communicates budgetary information to Change, Availability, Capacity and IT Service Continuity Management; it communicates information about actual operational financial activity; and it communicates information about charges to the business to Service Level Management and to the business.

## Summary:

**Management Reporting.** Looking farther, there is one other thing that each and every ITSM process communicates – and that is the Management Report. As an effective communications tool, Management Reporting goes far beyond the single line listing it as one of the "Activities" in a Course Provider's slides.

Management reporting provides a rich tool to communicate information of vital importance in each of the ITSM processes. Think of the possibilities! The Management Report can demonstrate IT's commitment to the Business by communicating progress and observations on Business issues. It can communicate challenges that IT is facing.

And, yes, it can communicate your successes – something that IT folks often are notoriously reticent to do!