

Practical Tips for New ITIL Process Implementers

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We are implementing ITIL, but how do we start, and which process is first?

One of the more common questions asked is how to get started with implementing ITIL and of course, which ITIL process do we start with? Even for those who are fully familiar with the ITIL process they are going to implement, there is the inevitable question of “how to” develop and implement the particular ITIL process.

While this DITY is not meant to be the ultimate or definitive how-to, these are some ideas and tips that had they been available, I know they would have helped me get started.

Lay the groundwork.

Using ITIL v3 Continual Service Improvement guidance, project management best practices, or college “Management 101” training, analyze the current status of your IT processes and perform a basic gap analysis. Coupled with the IT strategies you will develop using the ITIL v3 Service Strategy guidance, these can help guide you to what IT processes will garner the greatest value by being aligned with the ITIL.

Or, if you prefer the unscientific approach, choose the biggest pain point and improve or build upon that process first.

ITSM implementation tip #1: Train and mentor your ITIL process leaders.

To best achieve IT Service Management (ITSM) success, your IT leadership should have ITIL v3 Foundations training (and ideally certification), and having an ITIL “Expert” to help develop, drive and deliver ITSM is a must.

The ITIL Service Lifecycle is framed in such a way that the essential IT processes are integrated and support one another. The challenge as most IT Service Manager practitioners know is that trying to do all of the ITIL Lifecycle processes at the same time in most budget- and staff-starved companies just is not possible.

Therefore, the Service Manager must build a roadmap for implementing the planned ITSM processes, and he or she should approach the implementation by taking on one process at a time. To accomplish this, the Service Manager will want and need the absolute support from corporate and IT leadership for both the ITSM effort and governance related to the subject ITIL processes.

Be clear that without top down support, the chances of the ITIL implementation succeeding (or sustaining) is low or nil.

ITSM Implementation tip #2: Don't just implement ITIL, 'adopt' ITIL!

Depending on the level of ITIL knowledge when the initial gap analysis was performed, you may have words and process names different from the ITIL. To reduce confusion and for effective use of your ITIL-framed processes, you will absolutely want to adopt the ITIL taxonomy and process terminology.

We now hopefully have a solid understanding of ITIL, and we have decided upon what part of the ITIL we need to put in place.

We finally have reached the point that I have been in many times and others have expressed to me they get stuck at: how do I take the framework and ITIL guidance from the book and make it a reality? I always like to put this into a context of the simple question “What should that process look like?”

ITSM Implementation tip #3: Documentation is your friend.

The ITIL is not going to give you the detailed policy, procedures, SOP's and 'test plans' that should be part of a well-organized and mature IT Operations department.

The Service Manager and/or IT leadership will want to get help with the templates, file formats, policy requirements and other corporate nuances as an underlying aspect of the ITSM implementation project. Having a consistent documentation process and documentation control process (not part of the ITIL) will further the long-term success of your Continual Service Improvement (CSI) processes.

Implementing an ITIL process is best accomplished as a project. There is an enormous amount of available information on IT Project Management, so we are not going to outline the steps to managing an IT project in this DITY.

Every project and IT endeavor has a better chance when the leader(s) defines what successful completion of the project will look like. The ITIL v3 documentation for each process provides performance factors and indicators that should be used during the process development and to indicate what the final process must be able to accomplish and report on.

You will find a number of excellent non-OGC references that complement the official ITIL books in many ITIL bookstores.

ITSM Implementation tip #4: Allow your project to be delivered in phases.

There's an old adage that says "Don't try to eat an elephant in one bite." Roughly translated for IT operations, and from conventional wisdom, this means that your ITIL process can be approached in small bites and does not have to be polished off and done in 'one bite.'

Oh, and it cannot be recommended strongly enough to not even consider the "big bang" of attempting to implement all ITIL processes at the same time.

Summary.

For experienced and inexperienced process leaders alike, the phenomenon known to us as "resistance to change" is a reality that you will face and need to reckon with. For this discussion, this means that IT teams that have been operating absent of process and especially those who have become corporate heroes for their amazing 'fire fighting' (aka: incident management) skills will not take kindly to your changing the way they operate.

You can handle the resistance better by anticipating the resistance and confronting it head on. Training, awareness of what is coming, inclusion and patience are all valuable.

Just be prepared with and be willing to invoke firm governance from the top, as this often is the only way the process will actually be used and over time accepted. For more and very helpful reading, check out the ITIL v3 on organizational change and the Kotter 8-Step Change Model.

What's next in the Practical Tips for New ITIL Process Implementers?

In Part2 of this DITY I will give what I hope are useful tips on how to pull from the CobiT (Control Objects for Information Technology) methodology and ISO/IEC20000 standard. These can help focus your ITIL implementation project on those "must have" areas and help to fill other 'holes' in your understanding of what the minimal factors for success in implementing your ITIL process should be.

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