

## ***ITIL – What does it strive to achieve?***

Much work has been put into developing Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) and many vendors want to be ITIL compatible, but does it really deliver and what value does it really provide the end user?

Since ITIL was introduced there has been much debate on the value that it adds to organisations and why they would opt to consider ITIL-based processes at all. In this era of ever more complex mandates, regulations and legislation, is ITIL simply another management buzzword; an extra layer of bureaucracy that adds a further burden to already over-stretched IT departments, or can it add real value to an organisation's operations and help to achieve the all-important operational efficiencies that it was originally intended to deliver? Here we consider the pros and cons of the ITIL disciplines and framework, the approaches needed to make it work and the value that process automation can play in leveraging existing technology investments to drive greater efficiency, whilst ensuring that the quality and cost of service are the very best that can be achieved.

### *What is ITIL striving to achieve?*

Principally, ITIL was borne from the need to develop standard procedures and best practice and is based on those used across a wide range of public and private sector organisations. The ITIL framework brings together people, processes and technology with a common terminology and accepted, global standards which can aid communication between suppliers and clients and improve understanding of what needs to be done to align with the needs of the business.

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ITIL is a non prescriptive framework; there are no mandates enforcing its adoption, nor is there a rigid set of rules, in fact many organisations prefer to take a more selective approach to ITIL, only using those aspects which most suit specific operational functions such as configuration management or incident management. The framework sets out to drive greater alignment with the business and IT operations, so that IT supports the businesses needs, rather than providing an additional cost. The latest version of ITIL v3 sets out a lifecycle approach to continual service improvement which organisations can appraise at each stage, to ensure IT continually realigns to the needs of the business. This framework:

- Describes strategies to align service management with the business strategy
- Explains how to use the strategy to create designs for service
- Details how to these can be used in a real business environment
- Sets out how to support the day to day running of the service

This approach can, and does, add real value to businesses but those embarking on the process of ITIL adoption need to carefully consider what they're trying to achieve to ensure that the benefit outweighs the cost of implementation. Take incident management as an example, perhaps the most 'customer-facing' of all ITIL processes. ITIL incident management provides a framework for organisations to improve their methodology and therefore reduce the effect on an organisation, The ITIL objective is to restore service levels in the fastest time with the least possible impact for the business and end user, and at the lowest possible cost to the organisation. Incident management is one of the disciplines where established processes and terms can ensure issues are resolved quickly, minimising the impact on the end user and enabling an organisation to shrink the time between steps so that a service can be restored more quickly, for example dealing with routine 'Known Errors' in a consistent, timely manner.

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Of equal importance, these processes can more readily help in Problem Management, by establishing a means to carry out root cause analysis. Undertaking this type of analysis enables organisations to eliminate known errors and reduce or prevent incidents from occurring, resulting in streamlined operations. However, this kind of analysis, while valuable in the long-term, can create a heavy administrative burden to analyse and resolve the issue. Identifying trends or common issues and their impact is essential in focusing limited resources, saving costs and making service improvements over time.

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