

# What is ITIL and why you should be interested in it

## The IT Infrastructure Library explained

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### Introduction

Most organisations that use Information Technology do so to support their business processes. They may use application systems, running on servers and connections via networks to allow their personnel to communicate internally and with customers; to achieve sales; to fulfill orders for goods and services; and to allow the billing cycle to be completed, thus bringing in the revenue.

Even not for profit organisations, may use technology for voice communications; a presence on the web; or internal email upon which work processes can be built.

The IT Infrastructure Library (or ITIL) is a set of books which describe some very sensible processes, used by a growing number of organisations to better manage their IT Infrastructure assets and services.

ITIL is the published body of knowledge about processes for IT Service Delivery and IT Service Support, which in total make up an IT Service Management Framework (ITSM).

This white paper will provide a brief introduction to ITIL, and will explain why an increasing number of organisations, including customers and vendors are now researching, undergoing training and implementing ITIL.

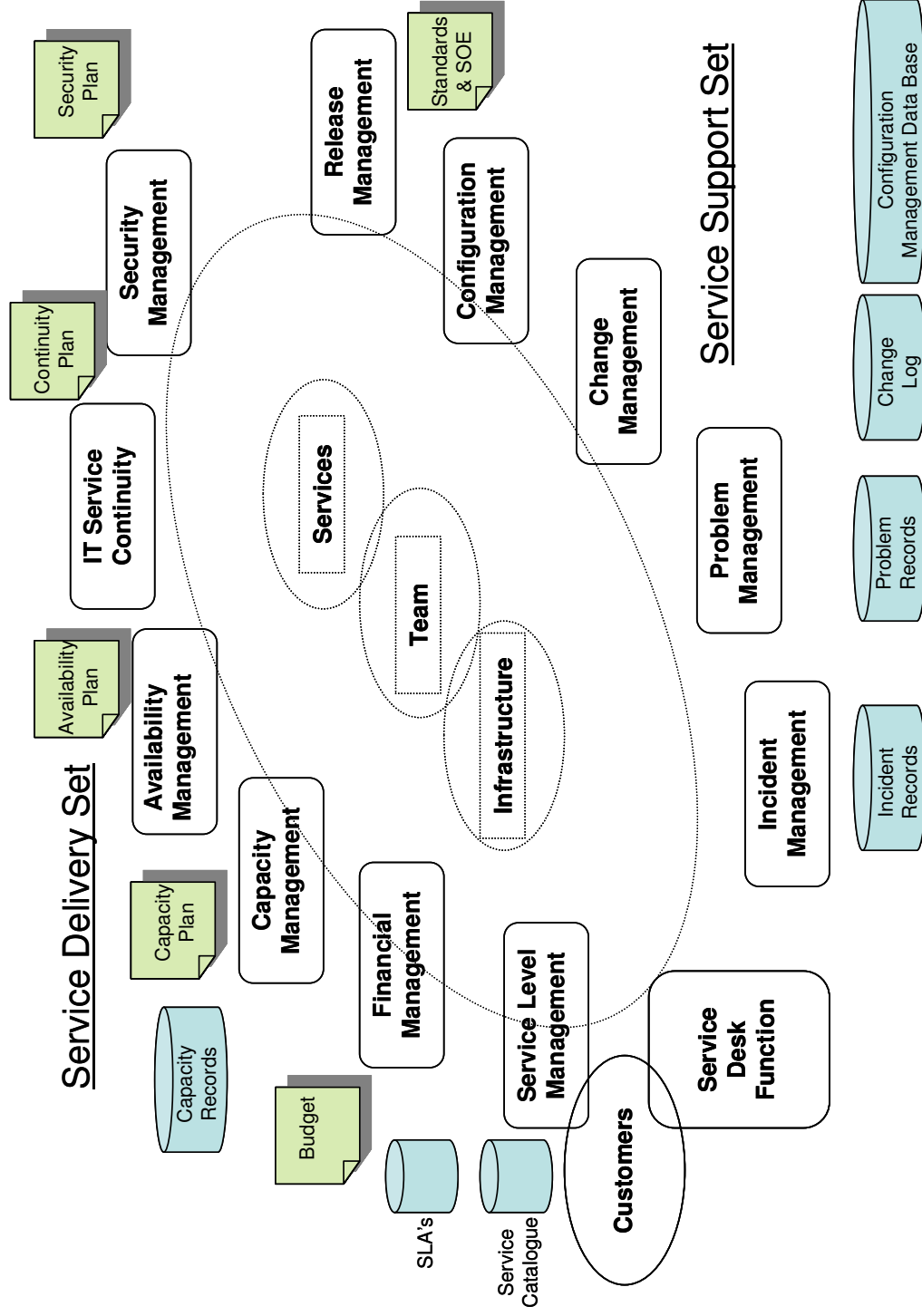
### Background

The origins of ITSM and ITIL are in the UK in the early 1990's, when the British Government recognized a need for a consistent approach to manage services from outsourced providers. Following an extensive search which showed that no complete set of processes was available, they undertook to create a series of guidelines and the IT Infrastructure Library was born.

In the following years, interest in ITIL grew with widespread usage including many countries in Europe and around the globe.

### ITIL - the Processes

The processes described in the ITIL reference books are grouped into two sets. The Service Delivery Set describes the Tactical processes, whilst the Service Support Set describes the Operational processes. The processes within the sets are as follows:



<b>Service Delivery Set</b>	
Service Level Management	The process of interaction between IT teams the business units, and external providers, regarding services. This involves discussing, agreeing and recording the desired services.
Financial Management	The process of soundly managing the costs of IT, through Budgeting, IT Accounting and possibly Charging.
IT Service Continuity Management	The process of assessing and planning the IT infrastructure, so that it provides an agreed level of service in the event of a serious outage.
Capacity Management	The process of planning, monitoring and managing the available capacity, so that service levels are met economically and in the required timeframe.
Availability Management	The process of designing the ICT infrastructure so that availability levels are maintained to agreed routine levels.
Security Management	The process of planning, auditing and reviewing activities relating to security provisions, precautions and possible threats.

<b>Service Support Set</b>	
Service Desk function	The function of providing the prime point of operational contact between the IT team and the users. (Note Service Desk is a function, not a process)
Incident Management	The process of restoring normal working service(s) as soon as possible.
Problem Management	The process of resolving and correcting any underlying faults and defects in the ICT infrastructure and services.
Change Management	The process of ensuring changes are consistently processed, recorded, assessed and approved so that any potential risk to the business from changes is minimized.
Configuration Management	The process of defining and administering ICT asset and service records, accurately, thus providing information to underpin service provision and decision making.
Release Management	The process of specifying release versions, standards and methods so that assets and service are consistently deployed.

### **What is ITIL used for?**

The ITIL processes can be used by organisation as a guide when they review their own IT practices and design new processes. To illustrate the use of the ITIL processes, the following examples are given:

**Case A** – A business unit within an organisation seeks to introduce a new system and begins to talk with the IT team about the costs and time it will take. IT is able to assess this as an early request for change and can check the existing capacity plan to see if the required capacity is available on the servers and network.

IT can advise the business that capacity is available, and also the likely costs for future data storage. The IT Team will need to incorporate the change in the IT Service Continuity and Availability plans. Additionally the timing for the project will need to be considered amongst other already approved changes.

*The processes involved are Service Level Management, Change Management, Capacity Management, Financial Management, IT Service Continuity Management and Availability Management.*

**Case B** – Some recently introduced laptop computers are proving to be unreliable. The IT team is able to examine the issue reports from users, who have sought assistance from the service desk, since all calls are logged and categorized. IT can see that a large number of incidents have been resolved quickly when the service desk team have advised users of a preferred setting for the screensaver and power management parameters.

However there is still a trend for some of the computers to occasionally lock up, and IT are able to cross-check the service records with the hardware and software asset records in the configuration management database. By doing this they can see a much higher incidence rate amongst a second batch of computers, which are slightly different.

This can then be raised with the vendor to find out what can be done to resolve the issue.

*The processes involved are Incident Management, Problem Management, Configuration Management, Service Level Management and Release Management. The Service Desk Function plays a key role in this case.*

**Case C** – The major upgrade of a desktop operating system is planned to enable the use of browser based computing. IT is planning to establish a standard operating environment for the desktop computers.

The IT team uses data in the configuration management database to ascertain user quantities in various locations and the speed of data network links. From this information they can work out the logistics of how to set up, deliver and automate the upgrade software package for each desktop. The package of software is released as a controlled version during trials, to a pilot group, so that the procedure can be proven ahead of the main deployment.

*The processes involved are Release Management, Configuration Management and Capacity Management.*

**Note:** As can be seen through these examples, the ITIL processes allow for interaction and the sharing of data between processes. They operate as a set of processes.

## Benefits

The ITIL processes may provide the following benefits:

- More consistent IT Services for an organisation;
- A means of interacting with customers on operational and tactical levels;
- A means of maintaining information about services, assets and users; from which services can be measured and managed;
- A common set of processes and language amongst the IT Team;
- The ability to introduce processes independent of the organisation structure;
- Public domain methodology, which is available without license fees;
- Economic access to training and reference books;
- A up to date method, maintained by the parent organisation and the increasing base of users, as a recognized best practice resource;
- Opportunities for staff to be trained in skills, which enhance their career paths; and
- A methodology which is supported by network management tools and products from industry.

## Costs and Issues

The costs associated with implementing ITIL may include:

- People to manage the processes, as well as the effort for the implementation;
- Assets such as network management tools;
- Software such as those for records systems;
- Hardware such as those for processing and storage capacity for databases;
- Education of people through training and familiarization; and
- Processes, including the time to implement and continuously improve them.

Organisations will gain the most benefits when ITIL is implemented as a collective set of processes. Clearly this is also the most complex and cost incurring option and some organisations may not have the resources to implement the complete set, as well as conduct their normal business activities.

Some organisations choose to implement ITIL partially with only some processes, or gradually over time according to their needs and capabilities.

It may also be prudent to establish measures as part of any implementation to demonstrate the benefits gained and thereby validate the business case and the management support that has been provided.

## Steps

The IT Service Management Framework also recommends an approach for the Implementation of the ITIL. The steps for this are as follows:

1. Feasibility Study – to understand the maturity of current practices, the business requirements and to gauge the required resources;
2. Awareness Campaign – the provision and communication of information, and the opportunity to discover potential issues and concerns;
3. Plan – the implementation plan, including the design of the processes;
4. Implementation – the introduction of the selected processes; and
5. Ongoing Management – the ongoing operation, using a service improvement philosophy, where needed.

## Challenges

In most organisations the IT teams are service oriented, which means that there is a high reliance on people, to achieve the delivery of service to customers. The skills, culture and attitude of the people within the IT Team can affect the services experienced by customers. Consequently the human aspects of any change are important to maintain a positive spirit.

IT Teams are recommended to treat this as an organisational change management exercise, requiring management participation, commitment and support for training, staff participation and reinforcement of early wins.

IT Service Management itself is based upon processes, process change and service improvement. The organisation should be mindful of the culture and patience of the IT team and the broader parent organisation, regarding the support for the introduction of processes.

The effort required to introduce processes, varies significantly between organisations and a degree of customization of ITIL, to suit the organisation, may be required.

## Support

Fortunately, support is available to assist organisations in the ITIL journey.

There are a number of organisations which offer services such as training, education, consulting assistance and documentation.

Additionally, a number of the mainstream vendors now offer ITIL compliant tools, such as Help Desk systems, Configuration Management databases, and Network Management tools.

Some hardware and software product suppliers have also begun to incorporate ITIL into their service delivery and support processes, thus allowing ITIL to be used for end-to-end support, between organisations.

## Conclusion

ITIL is now established and used worldwide as an accepted set of processes for achieving IT Service Management, and providing more consistent IT services.

IT teams are often required to inter-work with other organisations, vendors and project teams. The IT Infrastructure Library provides a practical, common language through processes by which organisations can dialogue and conduct formal business, regardless of the organisation structures and technology investments.

The outlook for ITIL is for its wider usage – if you aren't using it already, perhaps you should be.

## References

Useful references links include:

The ITIL parent site	<a href="http://www.itil.co.uk">www.itil.co.uk</a>
The owning body for ITIL and ITSM	<a href="http://www.ogc.gov.uk">www.ogc.gov.uk</a>
The IT Service Management Foundation in Australia	<a href="http://www.itsmf.org.au">www.itsmf.org.au</a>
The UK examinations body	<a href="http://www.iseb.org.uk">www.iseb.org.uk</a>
The Netherlands examinations body	<a href="http://www.exin.nl">www.exin.nl</a>
The Stationery Office in the UK	<a href="http://www.tso.co.uk">www.tso.co.uk</a>

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Alan offers 20 years experience in the management and implementation of technology and technology based services. He holds tertiary qualifications in Communications Engineering and additionally has pursued post graduate studies in Business and Marketing. He also holds the Service Manager certification in IT Service Management.

His experience is gained from time in the Telecommunications industry, IT Services Management, Project Management and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Consulting.

His professional interests include change via the introduction of technology; and the marketing and delivery of ICT services within and between organisations.

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