

# ITIL and Process Development

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A developing trend in the IT industry today is the adoption of the best-practices contained in the IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL). The information contained in the volumes of ITIL is beneficial for any IT department that desires to enhance the quality of its service to the business. However, adopting ITIL poses a unique challenge for many IT departments. Not so much in its interpretation, but more so in its application.

While ITIL best-practices are defined in detail, the piece that is missing is how to apply the best-practices. And yet the path to effective adoption of ITIL is not just through the use of the best-practices, but by applying sound process development techniques.

IT departments have always been required to write processes in order to provide their services to the business. The trouble with this is IT departments' skill sets are not necessarily geared toward process development. Their skills are centered on technology and the ability to keep that technology available to their customers.

Yet, ITIL is all about designing the layout of the activities in an easy to follow process. No small task considering that IT departments are busy managing the infrastructure that supports the business 24/7.

Per the Carnegie Mellon Software Engineering Institute's (SEI) capability maturity model (CMM), a good process is one in which the following criteria exist (this also equates to the process's maturity):

Level 1: Properly defined.

Level 2: Repeatable.

Level 3: Documented.

Listed above are only the first three of the five maturity levels; these are the targets for creation of a process from definition through documentation. To achieve Level 4 (Managed), organizations must institute a governance structure to manage the process to ensure it is producing the desired result.

To achieve Level 5 (Optimized), the process must be reviewed and validated by external sources to determine if it is meeting desired goals and identifying areas for

improvement. Even though CMM defines the maturity for the processes, it does not delineate the components of a good process model.

Taking process development a little further, a mature process model must contain the following:

- A defined mission statement for each of the processes, along with beneficiaries, process owners, scope and key performance indicators (KPIs).
- A communication plan to all users and stakeholders of the process. Every person that executes a procedure in the process, every recipient of an output of the process, and every initiator of an input to another process must be aware of the process flow and its components.
- Defined roles and responsibilities for each person that executes a procedure within the process.
- Clearly identified inputs and outputs for each of the processes, to allow for seamless integration and enablement.

A mature process model also contains procedures and work instructions for every process. Procedures are the activities that must be performed to enable each process. They also define the role(s) responsible for performing those activities.

Work instructions are the tasks required to perform the procedures. So, an effective model must define the processes, procedures and work instructions in order for each process to be repeatable (thus achieving a Level 2 maturity).

Pre-existing ITIL-aligned process models drill down from each process to its procedures and detailed work instructions.

Lastly, there is a definite difference between process and workflow.

Many IT departments get mired down in the detail of their workflow versus process. The process should be focused on the activities contained in ITIL and not the details for each of the tasks that IT performs for the business. For example, the Incident Management process should contain procedures for incident logging, assignment, classification, investigation, diagnosis, resolution and closure.

Each incident should follow the same process, no matter the type of request or incident being handled.

Workflow, on the other hand, is how particular types of incidents/requests are processed (i.e. password resets, new hires, email setup, network access requests, etc.).

How you handle an incident or service call does not change (process is not dynamic), whereas workflow is dynamic to accommodate the specific needs of the customer's request and the support group, or groups, responsible for fulfilling the request.

Focusing on the activities in ITIL allows IT departments to develop processes that can traverse their typical silos such as network, servers, storage and security. Creating a standard process to handle incidents and service calls ensures consistent information is gathered, necessary parties are informed, the customer is kept up-to-date on their request and a proper solution is obtained and shared with the customer.

Once the process is defined, repeatable and documented, IT departments can re-focus on the workflow tasks that must be incorporated into the process. These workflow tasks can be ever-changing as the support groups revise the tasks necessary to accomplish the desired results and meet the customer's demands.

Additionally, the process can be modified to achieve more optimized results; however, changes to the process should undergo a detailed review to ensure its application can be applied across the organization vs. changing to accommodate a particular support group.

Adopting ITIL requires sound process development techniques. But, before you attempt to adopt ITIL, layout the plan for your process development with a complete understanding of the level of detail you desire.

The best-practices contained in ITIL are valuable to your organization; however, the process design effort must receive just as much—if not more—attention in order to achieve the desired level of maturity. The journey begins with effective education and planning.

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