

# ITIL® – It'll Change Your Culture

By Kristy Smith, Forsythe

Effective adoption of ITIL (Information Technology Infrastructure Library) requires not only the application of ITIL best practices, but also a focus on cultural transformation within your organization. To ensure success and encourage your organization to buy-in to the change, incorporate John Kotter's 'Eight Stages of Cultural Transformation' into a communication plan tailored to suit your organization.

## Shifting the Focus to Service Delivery

IT organizations are often technology-centric and may believe they are already service-focused. They see 'technology' as a service. Applying the ITIL process framework can dramatically alter IT's way of working, especially for individuals who thrive on saving the day when business users call them directly. ITIL's service orientation enables business outcomes versus technical capability. For this reason, it is important to understand how to leverage IT's existing 'customer-service' focus, turning it into a focus on 'customer-enablement'.

Delivery-focused IT organizations drive down costs whereas service-focused IT organizations strive to enable true business value. From the beginning, it helps to understand IT Service Management so that IT leadership can establish a sense of urgency and a vision, along with an expectation of their desired IT end state. The IT Service Management (ITSM) framework as shown in Figure 1 depicts a more holistic approach to implementing ITIL processes – taking the other aspects of the framework into consideration—thus, allowing the provision of services to the customer as a primary focus. Tools and technology enable the people of IT to follow ITIL processes which provide the foundation for delivering services.

People are a foundational aspect of ITSM and, if overlooked, the success of the implementation of ITIL processes will be in jeopardy. Many may dismiss culture change as unnecessary when implementing ITIL. Then, they risk that the IT organization will inadvertently take an 'IT Silo Management' approach—focusing on how to drive silos better—instead of taking an 'IT Service Management' approach that focuses on enabling business outcomes. The desired culture change focuses on transforming IT from a hero mentality into a champion mentality, encouraging technical silos to begin working together to deliver service.

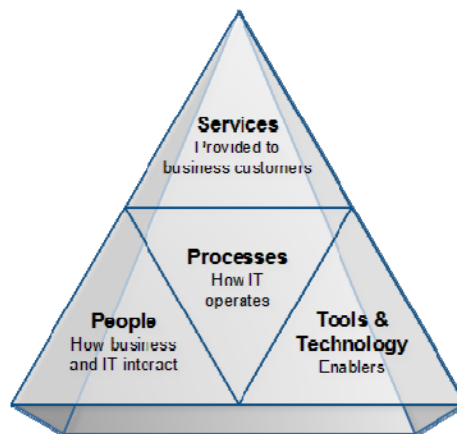


Figure 1. IT Service Management Framework

## Creating Transformation

Cultural transformation is required to anchor new behaviors in the underlying foundation of corporate culture. John Kotter's book, *Leading Change*, discusses an eight-stage process for creating major change. They are:

1. Establishing a sense of urgency
2. Creating the guiding coalition
3. Developing a vision and strategy
4. Communicating the change vision
5. Empowering broad-based action
6. Generating short-term wins
7. Consolidating gains and producing more change
8. Anchoring new approaches in the culture

Often the pressure of producing results quickly leads to the desire to skip steps or to execute them out of order. It is important that all eight of these steps are followed in order to create change. A well-designed process implementation coupled with cultural transformation will help ensure your processes are actionable, consistently applied and continually improved.

During the first stage, 'Establishing a Sense of Urgency', a compelling need for change is communicated. This can be accomplished by having the IT executives compose an email to be sent to all IT staff communicating the reasons for aligning to ITIL, highlighting major objectives, and underscoring top level commitment. Each individual leader must emphasize the need for ITIL as well as the future vision during separate meetings with their teams.

It is essential to establish a good foundation of leadership support before proceeding to introduce process and procedural change into an organization. Securing strong senior leadership support will curtail the desire of individuals to work against the impending change. In addition, culture change cannot be implemented from the bottom up without appropriate support. When it is, the organization is more likely to experience "dead salmon" syndrome: investing incredible energy to swim upstream only to die at the destination. Don't fall into this trap—obtain appropriate leadership support before going down the road of ITIL adoption or your change initiative will fail.

In the second stage, 'Creating the guiding coalition', communicate who is leading the charge and what you can expect from them by establishing the ITSM Steering Committee and instituting a regular meeting schedule. Senior leadership must actively participate as well as lead and guide the steering committee. A key responsibility of this guiding coalition is to define the ITSM vision and strategy for your organization (Stage 3: 'Developing a Vision and Strategy'). This responsibility extends to making sure that plans and measurements are in place to ensure proper execution of the strategy as well as to validate the realization of expected value.

Stage eight grounds the changes in the culture and makes them stick. This final stage couples nicely with ITIL's Continual Service Improvement phase of the Service Lifecycle. For example, a way to anchor a new approach is to employ a measurement strategy to promote continual improvement. This further engrains ITIL into the culture and solidifies the commitment of participants. After all, it is unreasonable to expect that the new ITIL processes will be followed without proper inspection for conformance and performance. Don't expect what you don't inspect.

A measurement strategy in which rationalized metrics, reports and auditing are utilized to govern process compliance, quality and performance is crucial to making ITIL actionable and to ensuring continual process improvement. Determine and baseline a set of Critical Success Factors (CSFs) with supporting Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Operating Metrics (OMs), and determine a reporting strategy and schedule. These will be utilized by the steering committee, process owners and managers to succinctly measure process adoption, conformance, quality and performance.

## The Cornerstone of Cultural Change: Your Communication Plan

The cornerstone of cultural change is a multi-faceted communication plan (Stage 4: 'Communicating the Change Vision'). It starts with a solid template that can be tweaked to support the specific cultural characteristics of your IT organization. Building your communication plan on Kotter's eight stages helps IT management lead cultural change by empowering and engaging its members with the ITIL adoption (Stage 5: 'Empowering Broad-based Action'). Your plan will also ensure that all IT, business stakeholders and users are informed of the status and direction of the ITIL initiative.

The communication plan will be designed to repeat a consistent ITIL message using various forms of creative media. It should include the following from Kotter's sixth stage, 'Generating Short-Term Wins'. A few short-term wins--such as renaming the 'help desk' to the 'service desk', establishing the service desk as the primary point of contact or implementing ITIL-aligned classification categories for use in the service desk tool-- can be identified and implemented to market and promote ITIL to stakeholders. Concepts from Kotter's seventh stage, 'Consolidating Gains and Producing More Change', can also be included in your communications—pushing for more change while acknowledging interim accomplishments.

Some people respond well to e-mails and newsletters, while others must not only read the message, but hear it in formal training sessions, awareness presentations and during departmental updates. Some prefer to use social media like Twitter, Facebook or blogs to stay informed. Considering a variety of media types when developing and executing your communication plan will help guarantee results.

Another important factor to consider is the need to "hear" the message multiple times before individuals fully comprehend it. People often do not fully absorb new information the first time it is presented to them. At Forsythe, we informally call this repetition of a consistent message the 'theory of nine hits'. We have observed that it takes an average of nine hits before most people understand the information being delivered well enough to make the associated actions a habit. Some people get the message after a few 'hits' and others require numerous hits before the information is absorbed. Plan to repeat the same message, in different ways, as many times as it takes to institutionalize the new direction.

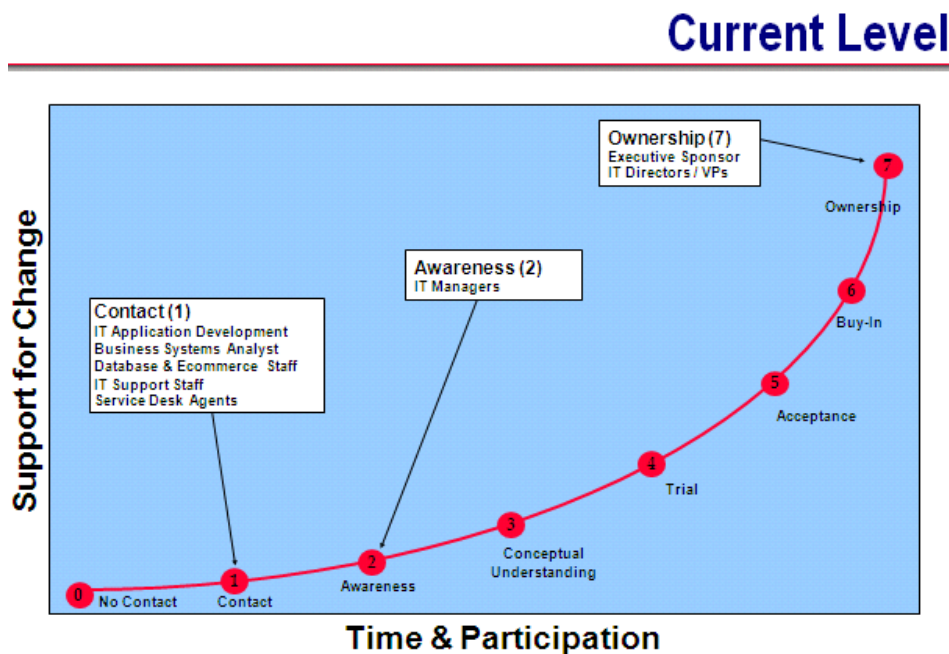


Figure 2: Sample Stakeholder Analysis

To determine where to target communications, a stakeholder analysis is performed. Stakeholder groups are analyzed to determine where they are in terms of their 'Support for Change' (e.g. Level 0 - No Contact; Level 2 - Awareness; Level 5 - Acceptance; Level 7 - Ownership). Examples of stakeholder groups include IT upper and middle management, service desk agents, infrastructure support groups, application development teams, enterprise architects, application support groups and key representatives of your business management.

Groups are questioned to assess potential impacts, attitudes, communication and training needs, project knowledge, influence level and potential risks. Next, the current change acceptance level and the minimum desired acceptance level are determined. The gap between the current level and the desired level is calculated and stakeholder analysis change curves are generated (Figure 2).

When communication requirements for each stakeholder group are clear, the communication plan is modified to ensure that each group receives the appropriate amount of communication to move them to the desired acceptance level.

### **A Formula for Success**

Avoid falling into the trap of 'IT Silo Management' by implementing IT Service Management and ITIL processes. Success of any ITIL initiative lies with cultural transformation—and one of the best ways to ensure cultural buy-in is to establish a communication plan tailored to suit your organization. Start by establishing a sound foundation of leadership support—end the process by anchoring these changes into the culture and by continuing to push for more adoption and adaptation.

Cultural transformation and measurement coupled with a sound process methodology (including policy, process, procedure, work instructions, and work flow) equals success in adopting the ITIL Service Lifecycle. Organizations that institute solid cultural transformation techniques are more likely to be successful.

At Forsythe, cultural transformation is a key element of every ITIL implementation. Our work with strategic partners makes executing the measurement strategy seamless.

Call us today to learn how we can help you design and implement an ITIL program that is tailored to your organization.

Kristy Smith is an IT Service Management consultant at Forsythe in Skokie, IL. Contact her at [ksmith@forsythe.com](mailto:ksmith@forsythe.com).