

Who Owns Your Service Catalog?

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Since the Office of Government Commerce's (OGC) issuance of the IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL) Version 3 in 2007, the Service Catalog has grown in both its scope and use. The ITIL Service Lifecycle places greater emphasis on services, including distinguishing between infrastructure, IT, and business services. Unfortunately, many IT organizations continue to struggle with the concept of Service and, even more so, with the development and utilization of a meaningful Service Catalog.

Many IT organizations pursue developing a Service Catalog acknowledging the need to improve their organization's communications and integration with the business only to later question the value of what they have developed. Some IT organizations find themselves asking, "Now what?" Other IT organizations limit themselves to developing a menu of "service requests," facilitating user-self service, but doing little to enhance their understanding of the services they provide or integrating them with the business.

These scenarios can be avoided by addressing key factors related to your organization's understanding and management of services and the ITIL Service Lifecycle and by establishing a vision and executing a plan for using and maintaining your Service Catalog.

Senior Management Ownership

A key factor in establishing a meaningful, valued Service Catalog is the ownership of the Service Catalog at an Executive Management level. Notice, we didn't say Executive Management "sponsorship", "support" or "approval". When properly developed and utilized, the Service Catalog becomes a key instrument for guiding IT strategy and design as well as transitional and operational support. The Service Catalog is a key instrument for *all phases* of the ITIL Service Lifecycle. As such, proactive Executive IT Management *ownership* is a pre-requisite for designing, developing, utilizing, maturing and maintaining your organization's Service Catalog.

The Executive Owner's Service Catalog responsibilities are broad in scope. While he or she may find the need to delegate specific assignments, the Executive Owner must remain accountable for the execution and fulfillment of these responsibilities. The Executive Owner's knowledge and practical understanding of services, the ITIL Service Lifecycle and the role and value of the Service Catalog throughout all phases of this lifecycle is key to success.

The Executive Owner should:

- Align the organization around a common definition and understanding of service.
- Obtain senior management focus and securing proper resource(s).
- Create awareness and a sense of urgency around the value and need of a Service Catalog.
- Ensure the use and maintenance of the Service Catalog.

Creating an Organizational Understanding of Services and the Service Catalog

Aligning your organization around a common definition and understanding of the term "service" may be more challenging than many organizations realize. The challenge is complicated by the fact that many IT disciplines, including Application Developers and Enterprise Architects, use the term "service" differently. Your organization's understanding of these differences and approach in addressing these differences and in categorizing your services is essential for establishing a Service Catalog vision and plan.

The ITIL definition of Service is "the means of delivering value to customers by facilitating outcomes customers want to achieve without the ownership of specific costs and risks." This definition should not be interpreted to mean the customer isn't willing to pay for the service; rather, they expect the service provider to manage the cost so they pay a reasonable price.

ITIL definition further distinguishes between "business services", "IT services", and "infrastructure services". A business service is directly related to a business process, such as "Order to Cash" or "Claims Payment". A key consideration with identifying and describing your business service is that it needs to be defined in the business context and semantics. It needs to resonate with the business. A business service is often enabled by an

organized collection of IT services and infrastructure services. When identifying business services, maintain your focus on the desired business outcome.

ITIL acknowledges that the distinction between an IT service and a Business Service is blurred. Both enable business processes; yet, an IT Service is defined only as a service provided by IT and used directly by the business. Often, IT organizations will identify the applications they support as its IT services. Examples of IT services may include Messaging and Collaboration services.

Infrastructure services are those services used by IT in the delivery and support of the business and IT services. These services are not used directly by the business and, in most cases, the general business population has no need to be aware or informed of these services.

The Service Catalog Executive Owner must determine how to define and categorize its services. This decision will influence all phases of the service lifecycle, from Service Strategy through Continual Service Improvement. In addition, it may also impact the organization's methods of communicating and distributing its Service Catalog. The Executive Owner will need to ensure the entire IT organization understands and aligns with the organization's Service structure and categorization. This organizational understanding and alignment is an essential requirement for executing the Service Catalog vision and plan enterprise-wide.

Defining Senior Management's Focus

The Service Catalog Executive Owner should not design, develop or deploy the Service Catalog in a vacuum. To be successful, we recommend treating the Service Catalog effort, at least initially, as a project. By managing the initial effort as a project, the Service Catalog is more likely to have the proper management attention necessary to ensure Senior Management alignment and support. In addition, a project approach helps ensure the scope, objectives and boundaries of the Service Catalog are well defined and understood. Moreover, the resources are more likely to be firmly secured when the Service Catalog efforts are managed openly as a project.

An effective Service Catalog is one that is constantly being maintained and is frequently used. As a result, the Service Catalog requires dedicated attention and governance to ensure the data is relevant, accurate, and current as well as to facilitate its proper use. Many organizations identify the role of a Service Catalog Manager to assist the Executive Owner in fulfilling these responsibilities. In addition, we recommend establishing an IT Service Management (ITSM) Steering/Governance committee to help provide organizational support for the Service Catalog Manager role.

The Service Catalog Manager and the ITSM Steering committee are well positioned to aid the Executive Owner in identifying Service Catalog successes and benefits. Identifying and promoting this information is essential to maintaining the momentum and support for the Service Catalog vision and plan.

Creating a Sense of Urgency

As with any investment, understanding the value of your Service Catalog is essential to creating an organizational sense of urgency for needing a Service Catalog. Applying the ITIL concept of the Service Knowledge Management System (SKMS), you can easily depict how your Service Catalog becomes the glue that integrates your Configuration Management System (CMS) with your services. As ITIL depicts, this integration enables you to apply the knowledge enabled by your CMS to make informed Service-based decisions.

How you identify the value of your Service Catalog is dependent on your ability to envision its use in the various phases of the Service Lifecycle and to execute this vision in a practical manner. Some examples of the value a well-developed Service Catalog provides to each phase include:

- **Service strategy** to facilitate structured discussions regarding the integration of IT strategy with business strategy and lifecycle planning of each service by working with the business to understand current demand and future demand; understand the business's competitive position in relation to these capabilities; and enhance IT's ability to associate business value with technology costs.
- **Service design** to provide the foundational focus for assessing current service warranty (fit for use) and utility (fit for purpose) criteria in business terms. This will ensure proper design of newly chartered services for both utility and warranty and facilitate gap identification between existing service capabilities and business requirements. In addition, it can strengthen the relevance and completeness of the Business

Impact Analysis and provide the foundation for evaluating and planning the sourcing required for each service.

- **Service transition** to enhance the IT organization's ability to properly assess the business risk associated with a pending change, enabling proper coordination and enhancing the Release Management planning and testing.
- **Service operation** to help associate individual requests with business capabilities, enhancing the ability to establish meaningful service level objectives for each request type. In addition, the service catalog facilitates IT's ability to prioritize problems for root-cause analysis and provides the foundation for assessing risk and establishing and aligning access requirements in accordance with risk.

Ensuring Service Catalog Use and Maintenance

As noted in the aforementioned examples, when properly designed, the Service Catalog will facilitate IT's strategies, designs, delivery and operations. It will enhance IT's integration with the business. However, this ability doesn't occur magically or overnight. It requires a defined vision and a plan. Because of its role throughout the Service Lifecycle, the Service Catalog can be seen as overwhelming. As such, the Service Catalog vision needs to provide clarity of the end state while the plan needs to identify what part of the vision will be executed first. In addition, to ensure enterprise adoption, the Service Catalog plan should consider input from core IT disciplines such as Application Development and Enterprise Architecture.

One way to ensure your Service Catalog enables practical use is to focus on reactive, proactive and value-added ITSM capabilities. It's good to start with what you already know and build the foundation to enable the core ITSM processes – Incident, Request Fulfillment, Problem, Change, and Service Asset and Configuration Management. Establishing a strong, foundational use of the Service Catalog with these core process disciplines will help the IT organization align the definition and organization of Services, facilitate timely improvement opportunities, demonstrate commitment to your customers and provide opportunities for a few quick wins. In this way, the Service Catalog becomes a tool to help improve the organization's visibility into their transitional and operational support processes.

As the organization matures from the reactive stage to a proactive stage, the Service Catalog is integrated with the organization's Service Strategy and Service Design processes, including service level, demand, capacity, availability and service continuity management. During this proactive stage, we encourage organizations to extend their Service Catalog efforts to other core disciplines including project management and enterprise architecture. The integration and utilization of the Service Catalog with these processes and disciplines aids the IT Organization by aligning them with current and anticipated business needs.

During the value-added stage, the Service Catalog is applied to ensure the services offered enable the business capabilities in accordance with the business strategies, including the competitive position with select business capabilities. The processes that we consider essential to enable value-added include IT financial management, strategy generation, and supplier management. In addition, maturing your service measurement capabilities to integrate with your business critical success factors and key performance indicators further enhances the IT organization's ability to demonstrate service value. Incorporating these business measures into your Service Catalog further enhances its value.

Let Forsythe help you get your service catalog started cost optimization through ITIL—tailored specifically to your organization. It all begins with a conversation. Call Forsythe today.

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