

How to Define IT Services

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ITIL Portfolio Management is all the rage now. It seems everyone wants to define their IT services, create service catalogs and start the process of business IT alignment. Of course, ITIL itself does not offer much guidance on exactly how to do these things, nor should it. But something the ITIL does not mention is exactly what you need...

One of the main reasons so many organizations stall at the IT service definition phase is because ITIL is insufficient in defining services, and it offers no help in developing an IT service definition model.

To find the best IT service definition framework. I started by asking myself who has been thinking about how to offer standard IT service offerings based on shared support and delivery models longer than anyone else?

I believe that in my quest I have discovered the most elegant, easy to understand, logical and powerful IT service definition model in the world. You can use this model to define your IT services and create a service portfolio hierarchy in a day or less.

Following I introduce the de facto global standard for IT service definition you have probably never heard about.

The Service Information and Data Model

Telephone companies have been selling services for over 100 years. The Telemanagement Forum (TMF) is an international group of telecommunications carriers and service providers, and the TMF New Generation Operations Systems and Software (NGOSS) Service Information Data model (SID) is de facto standard for IT service definition.

SID concepts include products, services and resources, and SID combines very nicely with ITIL to offer a layered construct for IT service provisioning based on unambiguous service definitions. SID defines a product as what the enterprise sells or delivers; services as those things that create deliver or support a product; and resources as what comprises a service.

SID defines two types of services -- Customer Facing and Resource Facing. Customer Facing Services (CFS) are used and acquired by a customer. CFS are directly opposite to Resource Facing Services (RFS). RFS support CFS but are not visible to or acquired by a customer. RFS are used only to build CFS. We can now easily define any service as Customer or Resource facing.

For example, imagine your enterprise was in the building products industry, and your core product was concrete. Your customers use CFS to carry out the business of the enterprise -- making, delivering and selling concrete. Thinking about the product and business processes leads you to realize a CFS is, for example, telephone service -- which your customers use to receive orders and dispatch trucks.

Such a service could include other CFS as well, perhaps a voice mail CFS option. Consider a voice mail Customer Facing Service. It may not operate without routing and storage services, relying perhaps upon a Resource Facing Service (RFS) of "Domain Name Services" (DNS.) Customers are usually unaware of RFS, and RFS are usually shared by many CFS. CFS consist of RFS, and RFS may not be acquired by a customer except as part of a CFS.

A Resource Facing Service, for example DNS consists of IT resources like individual (classic) ITIL Configuration Items of hardware, software, data, etc. IT resources underpin RFS, and most IT resources are shared across several and in many cases all Resource Facing Services.

In summary:

- Define a product your enterprise creates, supports or delivers
- Identify those IT services that create or support the product -- these are Customer Facing Services (CFS)
- Everything else that is “back to back” with, and create, these services are Resource Facing Services (RFS)
- Technology bits like routers, switches, computers, etc. are resources and combine to create RFS

Summary

SID is the simplest, easiest to understand and most logical taxonomy for IT service definition I have every seen or used. Using this methodology you should be able to define and agree IT services in hours instead of weeks.

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