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ITSM Service Lifecycle Consulting - A Lifecycle within A Lifecycle

By Rick Lemieux

Imagine the following scenario. You are a senior-level IT Service Management (ITSM) consultant with many successful ITIL process implementations under your belt. An enterprise IT organization recognizes the potential benefits of ITIL. It also recognizes that ITIL is not a 'plug and play' project due to the many dynamics of organizational goals, priorities, leadership, maturity, etc. Thus, it has retained you to counsel its IT leadership team as it begins its transition to the process-driven ITSM Lifecycle.

This scenario is being repeated many times as more and more enterprise IT organizations retain an IT Service Management (ITSM) "systems thinker" (internal or external) to mentor the IT leadership team on what it will take for them to transform their organization to operate as a service provider integrated into the enterprise's or mission's value net.

This trend is also very similar to existing executive consulting patterns in other areas, such as hiring experts to implement or improve the customer service capabilities of the enterprise as a whole. These trusted advisors and the programs they have created have become the cornerstones of how the enterprise does business in the markets it services.

Similar to the business consultant, the IT Service Lifecycle Consultant partners with the IT leadership team to help the enterprise extend its customer service capability throughout the IT organization and the services it delivers.

ITSM Maturity Assessment and Plan Development

In order to operate as a service provider, IT organizations must demonstrate four main characteristics – an unambiguous understanding of their customer's need; a model to help determine if services should be in-sourced, out-sourced or multi-sourced; repeatable processes to ensure consistency of execution; and the ability to innovate in a structured manner. These points structure the model for delivering business aligned-processes and technology.

1. *Understanding the Customer's Needs*

   To achieve an unambiguous understanding of the customer's needs, the Service Lifecycle Consultant applies a structured process to define and categorize the enterprise process, technology and capability requirements. Building upon that foundation, he or she compares these requirements to the existing environment to understand what it will take to achieve and manage the required capability. The consultant does this in the context of governance, based upon enterprise goals and achievement measured against expected outcomes.

2. *In-Source, Out-Source or Multi-Source*

   The consultant then helps create a model that identifies what services should be sourced internally and what services can be sourced externally. This model provides the guidance the enterprise needs to classify the services and processes that are critical to quality service delivery and differentiation in the marketplace (See Figure 1). Internally sourced services are prime candidates for investment, as they are critical to the success of the business. The business may source other activities according to the capability of the enterprise, using established sourcing policies and guidelines.
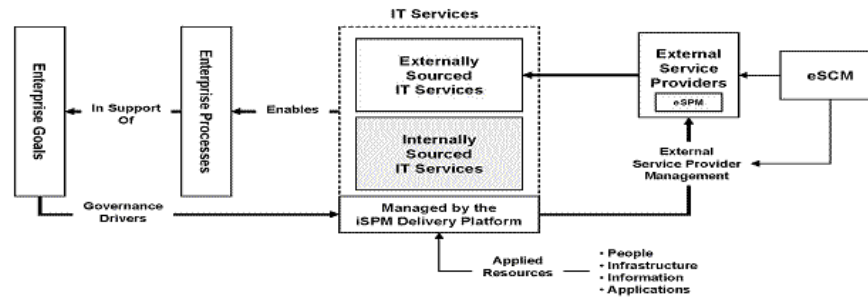
Figure 1

3. *Process Controls*

The consultant must design into the ITSM program a series of repeatable processes that will ensure consistency of execution. This is critical because day-to-day business processes rely heavily on embedded technology, and failure to execute consistently directly impacts the enterprise's ability to deliver its product or service. The five process, or practice, areas of ITIL's Service Lifecycle include:

  o ITSM Strategy – Planning your ITSM Program
  o ITSM Design – Modeling your ITSM Program
  o ITSM Transition – Implementing your ITSM Program
  o ITSM Operation – Delivering, Maintaining & Automating your ITSM Program
  o ITSM Improvement – Optimizing your ITSM program

4. *Introduction of New Services & Technologies*

The consultant must also help develop a utility-grade delivery platform and process management model that is capable of supporting emerging hardware and software architectures such as Real Time Infrastructure (RTI) and Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA).

A service provider provides the portal through which the enterprise receives its enabling business technology, and the service provider brokers those services irrespective of their source, internal or external. Therefore, the provider can deliver utility-grade, enterprise-aligned services as needed, and manage technology investments and innovation in a structured manner.

ITSM Resource Development (Training & Skills Development)

Historically IT organizations have had little difficulty mastering the technical skills required to install, operate and maintain the components of the IT infrastructure. The challenge they face today is how they will manage the transformation of IT from a "technology-focused" organization to one that is a "service provider" using IT Service Management (ITSM) best practices. Most of the issues they face involve mastering and integrating a combination of technical and soft skills to deliver IT infrastructure management and support as a set of business technology services.

Many, if not most, IT organizations retain ITSM training companies to educate (and in some cases certify) their IT organization on the principles associated with ITIL and ITSM.

Although these programs do a good job in helping IT professionals know what they should be doing in the context of ITIL and ITSM, they do very little to teach them how to go do it. Moreover, the training programs exist outside the context of the work the ITSM Lifecycle Consultant has already completed. This may, in fact, slow down or detour the ITSM implementation, as the ITSM team works to reconcile the 'theory' of ITIL with the reality of the organization's time and place in the ITIL Lifecycle.

A pragmatic way of addressing this situation is with a new breed of online training programs that enable ITSM consultants to stay in the middle of the education process while the organization completes its standardized training. These online programs (see sample) take a blended learning approach to training by incorporating a video-based curriculum with direct coaching from the enterprise ITSM consultant. This approach enables students to internalize the

concepts of ITSM and ITIL, while at the same time becoming familiar with the specifics of their enterprise ITSM program.

ITSM Technology Assessment & Plan Development

The Service Lifecycle Consultant must, in a structured repeatable manner, define and categorize the technology platforms that will help the enterprise address the automation aspects of ITSM. Although a product cannot comply with a descriptive framework like ITIL, it can provide support capabilities for one or more of the inputs, outputs and other ITIL process functional requirements by facilitating one or more tasks.

ITSM Post-Implementation Audits

Just as accountants audit the books to make sure the enterprise complies with generally accepted accounting rules, the Service Lifecycle Consultant should have a similar plan to audit the ITSM environment. A thorough ITSM audit allows enterprise executives and management personnel to determine the status of various processes and identify potential problem areas.

ITSM audits analyze four key performance indicators:

- Growth and value, which involves tracking revenue growth against investment and utilization.
- Budget adherence, which involves optimizing the use of available funds and avoiding unnecessary expenditures.
- Risk impact, which involves identifying and evaluating the consequences of risks taken or avoided.
- Communication effectiveness, which involves examining customer feedback and gauging customer satisfaction and awareness.

Summary

Just like ITIL has moved from its purely process focus to looking at things in the context of a lifecycle, the new breed of ITSM consultants are following a similar 'whole-life' approach in the way they package and deliver their ITSM service offerings to the marketplace. By joining with the leadership at the top, they are including the whole scope of IT services in their plans to create effective IT Service Management practices and outcomes.