

Driving Business Success with ITIL v3

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The IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL) has long recognized the need to align IT with the business and deliver the services most needed for business success. With version 3, ITIL adopters have more opportunity than ever before to drive business success. ITIL v3 has not only increased the emphasis on improving business performance through IT and IT services, it has gone on to embrace Business Service Management (BSM). While ITIL provides the world's leading IT service management process framework, BSM – with its inherent emphasis on tools and technologies from vendors – is useful for implementing ITIL, particularly when the objective is improved business performance.

In order to get the most out of ITIL v3, including business benefits, both training and tools are mandatory. Continue reading to understand how your organization can leverage ITIL v3 to drive business success.

The Case for ITIL v3

Where ITIL v2 is about ITSM processes and improving the operations of IT, v3 is now fundamentally about using IT to improve the performance of the business. For example, ITIL v3 talks about *integrating* with the business instead of just *aligning* with it. On the surface this may seem like a subtle distinction. However, it is really a fundamental theme carried throughout all five of OGC's new ITIL books – Service Strategy, Service Design, Service Transition, Service Operation and Continual Service Improvement.

In Service Strategy, ITIL v3 recognizes services as assets that can be managed together as a portfolio of investments. The financial theme continues with additional concepts including the time value of money and some basic financial approaches like calculating return on investment (ROI) for IT projects. Moving beyond the basics, Service Strategy introduces the key concept of Service Oriented Accounting which uses financial management to understand services in terms of resource consumption, costs throughout the lifecycle, and to provide connections with the corporate financial systems.

ITIL v3 also recognizes BSM and discusses it as the ongoing practice of governing, monitoring, and reporting on IT and the business service it impacts. Of course that is relatively few words to capture the many BSM-supporting components and processes defined with ITIL v3. Yet understanding and capturing the business value of ITIL is arguably the most important aspect of adopting ITIL.

IT organizations that are most serious about driving business success with ITIL v3 will embrace it rather holistically by applying both appropriate training and tools across the organization.

Training

It is important for the majority of IT personnel to have a common understanding of the broad philosophies and supporting processes used across their IT organization. Even without ITIL, organizations must ensure a broad understanding and buy-in to things like purpose, mission, and goals. The idea is to develop a culture built around the most important and fundamental objectives so that the individuals and teams begin to act as one and adapt to problems while staying true to their purpose.

Mission statements and the like are best developed through broad participation and may include aspects that are unique

to a given organization. A generic example of a purpose statement for an IT organization focused on driving business success is: “Ensure that our business customers, including individual employees and the business groups they service, have the IT services they need in order to optimize the success of the overall business.” Some additional discussion is usually included to ensure that success is properly defined. For businesses, it usually includes profit or related metrics such as revenue growth, cost reduction, or market share.

So, what about the ITIL training? Importantly, both training and tools – as well as implementation of ITIL processes themselves – need to be aligned with organizational purpose. If your IT organization is going to receive the business benefits of ITIL v3, it must have a business-oriented purpose in place. After that, ITIL training can be approached in terms of what is necessary to meet your business objectives. In fact, the company chosen to deliver the ITIL training should be screened to verify it can help your organization to define and deliver the levels and types of training that best support that purpose.

Tools

With an organizational culture and purpose tuned to driving business success, and with a common process framework and terminology derived from v3 training, an IT organization is well positioned to choose the right supporting tools. Vendors offering BSM portfolios are a great place to start. Yet care must be taken to validate that the tools are best suited to meet the objectives and support the purpose of a given IT organization.

BSM is sometimes used when discussing technologies like the Configuration Management Database (CMDB) and the larger Configuration Management System (CMS) in ITIL v3. The CMS is essentially a federated system of CMDBs working together to maintain a single, unified view of IT services and their underlying configuration items (CI). But the CMS alone is not what delivers BSM. The CMS is instead a key enabler of BSM. And like any enabler (whether an enabling technology, an enabling process, or an enabling organization), the CMS needs to be aligned with and help deliver to a higher purpose in order to provide value. To realize the business value of ITIL v3, make sure your CMS federates business data as well as IT infrastructure data.

BSM is also used to describe technologies like the Service Portfolio or Service Catalog which drive business success more directly than enabling technologies like the CMS. The Service Portfolio, for example, makes use of the portfolio concept associated with financial investments to ensure that an optimized mix of services, with the right set of capabilities, along with well chosen service levels, and an appropriate amount of risk are delivered by IT. To capitalize on the business benefits of ITIL v3, be sure to include BSM solutions that provide direct business value like the Service Portfolio.

Summary

ITIL v3 has taken a major step forward in helping IT organizations drive business success. Just don't forget to start with the basics, including the organizational, political and cultural aspects of the IT organization. Then, based on a clear organizational purpose that includes improving business performance, establish a common foundation of process knowledge and terminology. Finally, with proper selection of BSM solutions and enabling technologies, you can realize the true business benefits of ITIL v3.