

Better ITIL Implementations with Business Service Management

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What can ITIL-driven organizations gain from studying a business-driven practice?

By now, most IT organizations recognize the IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL) as the world's leading IT service management process framework. Those following ITIL more closely may also know that ITIL, in version 3, addresses the concept of Business Service Management (BSM), the ongoing practice of governing, monitoring, and reporting on IT and the business service it impacts.

By applying BSM concepts, IT organizations gain in at least two ways. First of all, they can improve their ITIL implementations by leveraging the BSM foundation concept of IT and Business alignment. Also, they can utilize products designed to deliver the benefits of BSM, which turn out to reinforce and support many of the benefits of ITIL.

Read onward to learn how your organization can benefit from BSM.

Relative to BSM, ITIL is quite well defined. ITIL v3 is documented in five books including Service Strategy, Service Design, Service Transition, Service Operation and Continual Service Improvement. ITIL adopters also have access to training and certifications to ensure they best understand the complete ITIL picture and make proper use of ITIL concepts and processes. With an appropriate level of time, commitment and training, IT staff can easily understand and begin to implement ITIL processes.

Unfortunately, BSM is much less clearly defined. There is certainly an array of IT management tools and products available to support BSM. And there is no shortage of vendors using BSM terminology to characterize their wares. Yet it remains challenging for IT organizations to capture the information needed to really understand the BSM concept. One outstanding resource for BSM has been provided via a website (www.dougmcclure.net) by Doug McClure, an industry-recognized thought leader and subject matter expert in the area of BSM.

Along with less written material and fewer supporting resources, there has also been a relative lack of formal research addressing BSM. To better understand how BSM is helping IT organizations, ENTERPRISE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATES® (EMATM) completed a new primary research study of the BSM segment in the first half of 2009. Shared here are some BSM insights that should be helpful to IT organizations that are adopting ITIL.

Defining BSM

One of the most talked about objectives for IT organizations – alignment between business and IT – remains elusive. This is where Business Service Management (BSM) comes into play.

BSM is a strategic approach to managing IT that aligns business and IT goals by helping business and IT managers understand how the performance and availability of IT resources, including both infrastructure and services, affect and power their business processes. BSM includes the processes for managing IT services from the business perspective. BSM may also refer to products and enabling technologies used to manage IT services from the business perspective.

ITIL is absolutely clear that business and IT alignment is critical. In fact, the idea that IT exists to support the business permeates ITIL. Since ITIL and BSM are lined up so well in this dimension, BSM serves to reinforce and provide

additional emphasis on business and IT alignment.

Business and IT Benefits

Beyond clarifying the definition of BSM, the research took a closer look at the benefits that are actually achieved from BSM definitions. The benefits were broken out into both business and IT benefits. The top three business benefits were:

- Visibility to IT's impact on the business
- Increased customer / user satisfaction
- Ability to prioritize IT activities based on business priority

These business benefits should be welcome additions to any ITIL initiative. Further, the top three IT benefits (actually four since there was a tie) were:

- Better quality or consistency of IT services
- Increased level of maturity in IT management processes
- Reduction of IT costs / more automation / higher productivity
- Greater responsiveness or agility of IT organization

Once again, these are desirable benefits for ITIL initiatives. BSM should not be viewed as competing, but rather as complementary.

Making Use of BSM

BSM itself is often implemented as a combination of best practices and process, multiple layers of management technologies, and a top layer that presents the status and results of business service quality to IT and non-IT executives. BSM offers streamlined solutions for complex management issues by leveraging the power of technology to process large amounts of data, and transforms that data into information that is meaningful to business and IT managers.

While IT management products alone do not define BSM, there are parts of BSM that can be expressed via a toolset. BSM vendors even use BSM terminology to describe and convey the value of their solutions, whether focused on products, services or some combination.

Interestingly, ITIL stays away from prescribing technology, architectures and tools. Of course this does not prevent vendors from positioning or marketing their solutions in the context of ITIL. There are commercial tools corresponding to and supporting all the various ITIL processes. Some BSM products go beyond their ITIL counterparts with an extra emphasis on connecting business processes and data with their underlying IT infrastructure and services. Here BSM maintains its clear focus on ensuring IT serves the business.

Summary

ITIL is and will remain the world's leading IT service management process framework for the foreseeable future. Yet IT organizations can improve their ITIL implementations by leveraging the BSM foundation concept of IT and Business alignment. They can also utilize products designed to deliver the benefits of BSM, which reinforce and support many of the benefits IT organizations seek through ITIL.

BSM fuses the goals of IT and business, providing real-time monitoring of business service health and status, using a set of tools designed to help organizations meet their corporate objectives and business goals. It is clear that BSM is not just a toolset that can be purchased, but rather an approach to managing IT within the business framework. BSM should not be viewed as a competitor to ITIL, but something that – when properly understood – can strengthen ITIL implementations.