

ITSM's Virtual Mentoring Community

By [Rick Lemieux](#)



Imagine the following scenario. You are a senior-level IT Manager who has been assigned the responsibility of organizing IT around IT Service Management (ITSM) best practices.

A quick Google on ITSM helps you quickly realize that ITSM is not a 'plug and play' project due to its many frameworks, methods and standards, along with the dynamics associated with organizational goals, priorities, leadership, maturity, etc.

Thus, you need to retain counsel to not only understand the why, what and how of ITSM but also to understand what organizational realignments are required to support this new model. The question is where do you go to get advice in today's belt-tightening climate?

The answer is ITSM's Virtual Mentoring Community.

This scenario is being repeated many times as more and more enterprise IT organizations move toward integrating ITSM best practices into their day-to-day IT operational environment. Most IT departments are full of really smart people who have done a really good job of educating themselves about ITSM.

However, it has always been productive to "knock around" these new ideas with someone from outside the organization or someone who has done exactly the same thing before. In the past, IT organizations would spend thousands of dollars on consultants and trade shows to obtain the knowledge – and fundamental wisdom – required to successfully kick off an ITSM program.

With the economic downturn in full swing, and consulting and travel budgets being slashed, IT executives are looking for new ways to obtain the knowledge and skills required to Plan, Design, Implement, Operate and Optimize an ITSM program. Virtual communities like LinkedIn and Facebook may provide some (if not all) of the answers they are looking for.

The following DITY provides guidance on how IT executives can take advantage of these new online ITSM mentoring communities to help fill in some of these consulting gaps during these tough economic times.

Public Mentoring Communities

The successful adoption of any new method, standard or best practice in any industry can be directly attributed to many factors, including the vision and drive of its creators, as well as clients and service providers willing to share their secrets for success. In the past, connecting with industry peers was very difficult and was often limited to training classes, trade shows and in some cases clunky custom-built web sites.

Social networks like LinkedIn, Facebook and others have changed all that by providing an underlying navigation system that not only enables you to easily connect and collaborate with peers from across the world but also learn a lot more their professional credentials before doing so.

These next generation social networking systems enable the creation of independent, thought leadership communities that can be organized by industry, ITSM domain or a specific process area. These thought leadership communities provide the perfect vehicle for IT to optimize its consulting expenditures, while acquiring valuable information from ITSM Practitioners willing to share their secrets of success.

These mentoring communities can also address one of the biggest problems coming out of the ITSM certification training

market today....understanding how to apply ITSM best practices in a real-world environment. These ITSM mentoring communities can help students fill in any practical knowledge gaps that may exist after they complete the required curricula and examinations of the intermediate and advanced ITIL certification programs.

In most cases these online communities already have in place the framework to support individual-to-mentor or peer-to-peer interaction along with places to post content that others in the community might find valuable as they go through their quest to launch an ITSM program.

Indeed, one of the most powerful things to come out of such mentoring communities is their scope of coverage. The question topics can range from an inquiry about the benefits of reading the OGC book prior to taking a Lifecycle course (it is always a benefit) to a detailed technical question about handling a specific relationship in a Configuration Management Database (CMDB) to a question by IT management on what has been successful in other organizations in making the benefits of ITSM visible to the business.

Sample LinkedIn Mastermind Groups Include:

- The ITIL Practitioner Alliance
- ITSM (ITIL) Professionals
- ITSMF
- ITIL According to ISO/IEC 20000
- IT Governance
- Project Manager Networking Group

Private Mentoring Community

Some organizations, of course, have very real security and proprietary concerns. In this case, IT executives should consider establishing a private mentoring community to facilitate communications between ITSM team members, outsourcing partners and executive management. These communities could be managed and led by internal (process owners) or external (mentors, outsource partners etc.) partners.

These forums can provide a common place for questions to be asked and ideas to be shared thereby eliminating the nightmare of trying to do this via email or other methods of communications.

Summary

Today's online social networks (i.e., LinkedIn etc) provide the perfect environment to connect with experienced mentors and peers and collect the information required to begin and expand an ITSM program. These new community-based forums provide a trouble-free, easy-to-navigate environment for posting questions, sharing ideas and communicating with ITSM mentors and peers from all over the world.

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