The Roles of the IT Practitioner

By Rick Lemieux

ITIL training and certification has become a virtual requirement for IT professionals looking differentiate their skill sets to hang on to their jobs or compete for a new one. The days of leveraging a technology certification as your ticket to employment are over. Technology professionals are now required to be certified in ITSM best practices in order to compete for jobs focused on implementing process controls designed to better align IT with the business and to deliver services that are optimized cost, quality and compliance.

Now that APMG has completed the delivery of the ITIL V3 certification syllabi, I thought it might be a good idea to provide our readers with some guidance on how to select the right ITIL training and certification programs to survive in this economic downturn or revive a career that has temporarily been put on hold. The following DITY outlines the six IT Service Management roles that will help the IT professional secure their place in the IT and enterprise leadership circle.

IT Service Management Roles & Responsibilities

ITSM Apprentice

An ITSM Apprentice does not have an active role in design, implementation and operations of an ITSM program but plays a very important role in the areas of securing funding and support for the overall program.

Historically, mid-level managers broker the introduction of ITIL within an organization, and the executive leadership team 'vets' ITIL in terms of the business value it provides and the resources required to bring it into the business.

These individuals include the executive leadership team and their direct reports along with anyone from the IT or business organizations who will play a role in the success of the program.

Successful ITIL implementation programs always require at least one such 'ITIL Champion.'

> **Recommended Training Programs:** ITSM Apprentices need the big picture of how ITIL aligns with the overall Business and IT strategy, what resources they have on hand, and what capabilities they will need to develop or acquire. They need to be conversant about the concepts of ITIL, but they are not 'hands-on' practitioners or implementation managers.
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> This team typically seeks non-certification introductory sessions to ITIL and workshops that focus on building an ITSM business plan.
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> In addition, simulation workshops provide value to this team in three ways. First, they clearly demonstrate to them the effectiveness of the ITIL processes and concepts. Second, the leadership team's participation in the workshops provides a common ground for later discussion with the implementation and practitioner teams. Finally, the participatory nature of a simulation workshop cements the leadership team's commitment to the ITIL program.

ITSM General Practitioner

ITSM General Practitioner is the first step that all IT professionals must take on their way to a higher-level position in the ITSM organization. While a general practitioner has a clear understanding of the ITIL, he or she has limited knowledge of the how-to aspects of any of the ITIL processes or functional areas.

Compare this to the two parts of a standard driver's license certification – the written rules-of-the-road test and the skills-based driving test. No matter how skillful a driver is in steering, braking and parking a vehicle, he must also understand the legal framework and common practices within which he is operating a vehicle. For most of us, our driving skill increases with experience and the rules-of-the-road become an ingrained part of our knowledge base.

ITSM General Practitioners include anyone who plays an active role in the development, implementation and operations of the ITSM program.

Recommended Training Programs: General Practitioners need to know the 'rules,' and ITIL Foundation certification courses give them the foundation-level knowledge they will build on as they continue their careers within Information Technology.

ITSM Lifecycle Specialist

ITSM Lifecycle Specialists direct and manage IT services that align with the needs of the business, specifically in one or more of the following ITSM Lifecycle areas – Service Strategy, Service Design, Service Transition, Service Operation, or Continual Service Improvement.

ITSM Lifecycle Specialists include members of the IT Engineering and Program and Project Management teams, along with anyone else who is looking to play an active role in the development of IT services that are in alignment with the needs of the business.

Often you will find members of the executive leadership team actively participating in directing and managing one of the Lifecycle areas.

Recommended Training Programs: The ITIL V3 Lifecycle certification programs directly address the issues and concerns of ITSM Lifecycle Specialists.

ITSM Capability Specialists

ITSM Capability Specialists execute the actual delivery of IT services within the frameworks of the ITSM Lifecycle domains. These are the 'hands-on' people and their managers and supervisors. Capability Specialists typically specialize in one or more of the following ITSM Capability domains:

- Operational Support & Analysis (OSA) – Service Desk and traditional operations and technical management functions;
- Release Control & Validation (RCV) – transitioning new services into operation;
- Planning, Protection & Optimization (PPO) – ensuring services will work as required to bring value to the organization;
- Service Offerings & Agreements (SOA) – ensuring the implementation of the right level of services to provide value to the organization.

Recommended Training Programs: The ITIL V3 Capability certification programs examine the capability areas in depth, as well as in the context of the organization's overall business needs and position within the ITSM Lifecycle.

ITSM Practice Manager

ITSM Practice Managers focus their studies on managing the specialists operating within the Lifecycle and Capability practice areas. Historically, these roles have been assigned to the managers currently responsible for managing the engineering, project management and technical teams operating within their respective IT silos. There are four ITSM Practice Manager roles defined within ITSM:

- Service Operations Practice Manager – responsible for managing the Lifecycle and Capability specialists responsible for ITSM Service Operations.
- Service Transition Practice Manager – responsible for managing the Lifecycle and Capability specialists responsible for IT Service Transition.

- Service Planning & Optimization Practice Manager – responsible for managing the Lifecycle and Capability specialists responsible for IT Service Planning & Optimization.
- Service Design & Agreements Practice Manager – responsible for managing the Lifecycle and Capability specialists responsible for IT Service Design & Agreements.

Recommended Training Programs: The ITSM Practice Manager certification program leads to multiple certificates in IT Service Management. The primary purpose of this role is to lead the Lifecycle and Capability Specialists responsible for the following ITSM Practice areas.

ITSM Expert

ITSM Experts lead the teams responsible for reviewing and building the organization's IT Service Lifecycle. This is typically a management or program management position, and it works within all of ITSM Lifecycle domains – Service Strategy, Service Design, Service Transition, Service Operation, and Continual Service Improvement.

ITSM Expert Lifecycle Managers include members of the IT Engineering and Project Management teams along with anyone else who leading the development of IT services within the ITIL framework.

Recommended Training Programs: Leading a team that is implementing changes to the fundamental way the IT organization works requires both a broad understanding of the business' needs and in-depth knowledge of how IT can meet those needs. These managers acquire detailed knowledge from the ITIL Service Lifecycle and Capability courses, and the broad ability to 'connect the dots' between IT and the business and between the ITSM Lifecycle domains from the ITSM Expert certification courses.

Summary

Hopefully the above information has provided some insight into the roles an IT professional could play within an IT Service Management program and the training programs that are right for each role.

Does your busy role leave limited time available for acquiring the recommended training? View the online role-based course offerings at the itSM WebSolutions website.