

## **Four Emerging (And Still Misunderstood) "Centers" Within IT and Why They are Critical to Your Future**

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While the IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL) offers a great many things, it does not try to represent a clear political or sociological assessment of IT organizations as they mature. This is probably a good thing as IT organizations in different business models often have different roots, with different cultures and differing leadership skills.

Still, the notion of cross-domain collaboration that ITIL supports so strongly both by its process definitions and by its role as a "lexicon" for coherent dialog across skill groups has been a real catalyst for political and organizational change within IT.

This column looks at four emerging groups and or roles within IT that directly reflect ITIL values, even if they have varying or sometimes no direct linkage with the ITIL canon. The four are:

- "Service Management," as a separately defined organization often combined with other terms in IT organizations, such as "Service Automation" or "Service Configuration and Change."
- "Consolidated Operations," which is fairly proximate to ITIL's notion of an "Operations Bridge."
- "Infrastructure Management," which includes the increasingly game-changing role of the "infrastructure architect."
- "User Experience Management," which is a group made up of business as well as IT professionals focused on monitoring and assessing end-user experience for critical business impact and values.

By understanding these organizational and role changes in context with your technologies, you can begin to probe your maturity levels and baseline your "as-is" versus your "Desired-State" objectives for ITSM initiatives more effectively.

In other words, these are windows through which to see beyond pure play ITIL texts in trying to capture the broader landscape in which IT truly functions, and must evolve.

### **Recommendations**

The four groups indicated above all represent positive roles in helping IT organizations to transform toward improved efficiencies and business alignment. Looking more closely at what's making them tick, why they are growing in importance, and how they are related to ITIL's vision at a high level is worth a few additional paragraphs.

**Service Management:** The term itself seems anything but new, and possibly even old hat, until you ask yourself – Who really makes up this group and what is their role within IT? EMA research and consulting reveals that typically in most organizations where this group exists – and again the names are various (and sometimes do not even use the term "service" in them) – the following consistent patterns emerge.

- They all have clear cross-domain responsibilities across operations and include the Service Desk and sometimes Application Development.
- They work with stakeholders to help define and understand existing processes and help to promote more effective, holistic ways of working.
- They combine executive presence with architectural, process-aware and communications skills.
- They are typically linked to initiatives surrounding a Configuration Management Database (CMDB) or Configuration Management System (CMS), but often may evolve out of other initiatives such as a more holistic approach to Asset Management, or more effective service assurance (to use a non-ITIL term) including Problem, Incident, Event and sometimes Service Level Management.

- They are not the same as the "Service Desk" and certainly not the same as the "Help Desk," and based on some data, they are becoming the fastest growing group within IT in terms of role and responsibility, if not sheer size.

I should add that this group is often made up of "pieces" of professionals and managers who may have a "day job" in some other part of IT.

**Looking to the Future:** *If such a group exists in your organization and is demonstrating credible levels of performance, you should nurture it, water it, invest in it, and provide it with the technologies it needs to succeed.*

Perhaps more than anything else, it IS your future.

**Consolidated Operations** is closely related to what ITILv3 terms the "Operations Bridge" – "a physical location where IT services and IT infrastructure are monitored and managed." This group has been around for a long time in various guises, most prototypically the "network war room."

But in the more distributed universe of 2009, Consolidated Operations is less about a place than it is a way of working – in which common technologies and processes can be brought to bear to support triage, diagnostics and remediation, including proactive attention to service performance before end users are impacted.

This group typically has grass roots foundations that are not in any way linked to ITIL initiatives. However, as, for instance, triage teams emerge, often coming out of the Network Operations Center (NOC), in response to Service Desk or user complaints, it strongly resembles Problem Management.

**Looking to the Future:** *This is another transformative group and deserves far more leadership attention and executive support than it gets in most IT shops—even if its issues are fairly technical.*

**Infrastructure Management** relates most directly to ITIL V2's Infrastructure, Communications and Technology (ICT) Infrastructure Management. "Infrastructure Management" is not a new term, but if you think about it, it represents a clearly progressive idea. The "infrastructure" is by definition cross-domain and embraces network, systems, firewalls and other elements that support software applications and other services. EMA research shows that the role of "infrastructure management" is growing and that the all-important role of "infrastructure architect" can be vital in proactive planning, optimization and utilization of increasingly dynamic infrastructure investments.

**Looking to the Future:** *This is another group and skill set to nourish as IT becomes increasingly dependent on less siloed approaches to infrastructure optimization and resiliency.*

**User Experience Management** is another very fast-growing group with significant implications in aligning IT to the business more effectively, as well as getting down to doing the basics of service assurance with more precision. User Experience Management groups are often driven outside of IT, by groups such as on-line operations or by business executives and professionals who have come to recognize the critical value of IT services in establishing their business success.

They tap virtually all the touchstones of the service lifecycle, but are especially important to the Service Lifecycle phases of *Service Strategy, Service Operation, and Continual Service Improvement.*

**Looking to the Future:** *They will be your most valuable window on the relevance of your Service Level Management (SLM) metrics to actual customer concerns and business priorities.*

**A word about the importance of technology:** The emergence of these groups has in part been dependent on technological innovations in the management industry that have allowed them to function more effectively and grow in value and scope.

A list of the top five technologies might include *CMDB/CMS solution suites, the consolidated Service Desk, consolidated Event Management, new technologies for process automation, and a whole family of technologies aimed at capturing and monitoring true end-user experience for user experience management.*

Notably, ITIL V3's Event Management, which is critical to all four of these "emerging groups" is evolving, albeit quietly, to become one of the more compelling game changers in itself.

