



Tsunami Communications Inc.

Whitepaper Topic:

How do I Use ITIL in my Organization?

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Introduction

ITIL stands for **Information Technology Infrastructure Library** and it *is a well documented set of IT Management best practices developed for the British government in the early 1990s to optimize the management of technology*. Since the original development & publication of these standards, a world-wide independent community has formed for the purpose of maintaining, updating, and publishing these standards (the last major update was in 2000). This body is called itSMF and the Canadian chapter can be contacted via their website at www.itsmf.ca. Anyone coaching you or your organization in the use or implementation of ITIL best practices should be associated with itSMF, or should hold ITIL certifications and have relevant experience.

An important point we hope to establish is that ITIL can be for everyone – any organization that uses computer technology as a part of its business can make use of these tried and true best practices. Coaching on the use of ITIL is another way that Tsunami can help bring enterprise solutions to every business. In this whitepaper we will outline what the major areas of ITIL are, whether they apply to an organization of your size, how the applicable points can be readily adopted, and the possible pitfalls on the road to ITIL.

Starting Points

Knowledge & Support

It is important to understand exactly what ITIL is, and what it isn't, before getting too far along the ITIL path. If you don't have time to familiarize yourself with the complete details of the ITIL documentation (available for purchase through your local itSMF chapter or via the itSMF website) then seek out a certified and experienced consultant. You need someone who can explain ITIL and help shape a custom fit of the ITIL best practices to your organization. You can start learning about ITIL directly from the source at the **Office of Government Commerce for the UK public sector** (www.ogc.gov.uk/index.asp?id=2261). There are a number of other good resources from major ITIL implementation consultancies, as well as the ITIL Survival website (www.itil Survival.com) which offers a number of online resources available for purchase.

One of the best places to seek and obtain information on ITIL and related topics is through your local itSMF Chapter. You get the opportunity to attend discussions on practical topics and talk with other people working in the field. (Visit www.itsmf.ca in Canada or www.itsmfusa.org in the US.) Your local itSMF Chapter can also get you in touch with ITIL trainers and consultants in your area.



Another important point of clarification is this: regardless of what you might be told by software vendors there is no “out of the box” ITIL solution. By its very definition, ITIL is a set of best practices that are adopted and molded to your business or organizational situation in order to ensure that IT delivers optimal value to all other business units of the organization. Therefore, we don’t “do ITIL” but we learn it, adopt it, and the entire implementation of the ITIL best practices becomes an iterative process of optimizing the constantly changing landscape of IT.

Once you have the knowledge aspect under control, the next step is support – specifically the support of those impacted by the move to ITIL. A successful ITIL implementation requires patience, understanding, and education – as with any change brought to an organization. People may be resistant at first to modifying “the way things have always been done” but with diligent planning and senior management support these changes can be made successfully. Depending on the scale of your ITIL implementation, you must allow adequate time for people to learn, adjust, and accept.

Choose Your Battles Wisely

Aligning your organization's IT practices with those documented in the ITIL framework takes a great deal of time, and it is rarely considered wise to “forklift upgrade” all the current standards and practices within your company to the ITIL model in a single blow. Pick the areas that make the most sense to tackle first; an understanding of what the areas are and their potential impacts will help you make the best decisions.

As mentioned earlier, gain the support you will need; ITIL projects are most successful when they have complete executive sponsorship and grass-roots support.

It’s Also About Diligence

Once underway, it will be important that the ITIL project you undertake is managed dutifully – it will be tough going at first but the dividends will be very rewarding. Keep everyone involved or impacted by the changes well and regularly informed of the status (if your implementation is a longer-term project). Make sure that as early on as possible you start using the new processes and systems yourself – leadership by example is very valuable in any ITIL related undertaking. For smaller shops, you or a set of consultants will be the implementers and maintainers of the new process and systems. Make certain that everyone involved understands the end goals and sticks with the processes – if possible, you can work adherence to the new processes as part of the terms of the contract. This will most certainly motivate any IT consultants to want to understand and support your initiatives!



Overview of ITIL Components

The ITIL library (the authoritative list of best practices) consists of over 50 books. At the heart of the ITIL framework are two main areas; **Service Delivery** (how IT services are provided to the rest of the business) and **Service Support** (how the IT services provided are measured and then optimized). There are ten different processes and one function defined within these two areas; they break-out as follows:

Service Delivery	Service Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Desk (function)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Management for IT Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incident Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Level Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Configuration Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT Service Continuity Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change Management
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Release Management

This is not the complete picture however. There are five other major areas of the ITIL framework (for a total of seven) that include Security Management, Applications Management, ICT¹ Infrastructure Management, the Business Perspective, and Planning to Implement Service Management. Most ITIL projects focus in on the areas of Service Delivery & Service Support; as they are at the heart of the framework. This can all be pretty confusing, so we will attempt to simplify.

The standard diagram used to present the ITIL framework looks something like this:

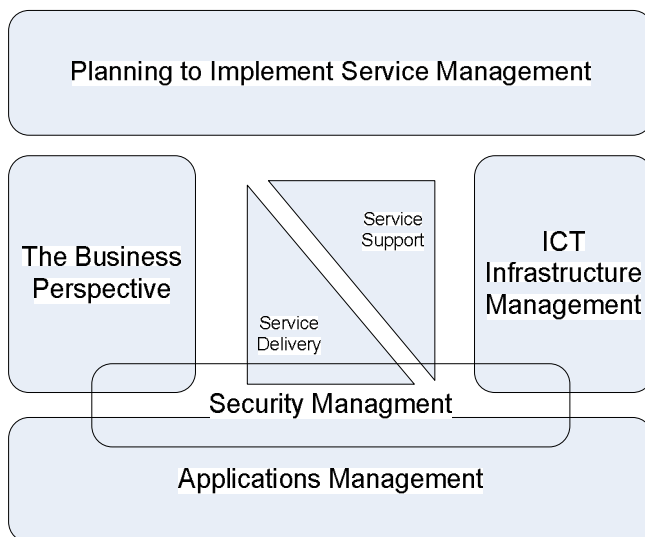


Figure 1 – The ITIL Framework

¹ Information and Communications Technology



You'll note that Service Delivery and Service Support are at the heart of the diagram, and that is for good reason. Service Delivery and Support are the most readily visible and tactile components of ITIL. Generally speaking, this is the area of ITIL that interfaces between IT and all other business units in any organization.

Many organizations will already have some processes in place around Infrastructure, Security, and Applications Management, purely out of technical necessity, but may be quite weak in Service Delivery and Support. This in no way means that the five areas outside of Service Delivery and Support should be disregarded, but that the best place to start is closest to the heart.

How Do These Apply To Us?

Of the over 50 books and seven principle areas of the ITIL framework, the ones that most frequently are focused on for ITIL business/IT alignment projects for any organization will be Service Delivery and Service Support. Infrastructure, Security, and Applications Management should not be overlooked, but are often already in hand to some degree or another.

As depicted in Figure 1, Security and Applications Management span the entirety of the model, touching on the infrastructure, IT Service Delivery and Support, as well as each other. For the purposes of this discussion, we will be focusing on the heart of the model.

It is important to bear in mind that your organization should assess its current IT model and see where the greatest benefit of ITIL adoption will be. Large organizations lacking any of these pieces (unlikely) would most benefit starting from the right of the model (Infrastructure) and moving left.

What If We're Small?

Smaller IT shops will not need the same level of formality to the processes, nor the expensive tools to support those processes. The formality with which you roll out Service Support and most likely the Service Desk function will vary depending on the size of your shop and how frequently you experience service requests & changes. The greater number of these, the greater the need to formalize the processes supporting them. Another option for smaller IT shops to consider is outsourcing their IT functions/responsibilities to a consultancy that has adopted and provides IT services using the ITIL framework.



What If We're Big?

The larger IT shops will most likely be looking at larger investments in time and capital. As well, larger shops should seriously consider all aspects of Service Delivery and Support as part of the ITIL compliance projects undertaken. The fact is that larger shops will already have some degree of “best practices” in place – a helpdesk (service desk function), change management, network or server management (ICT infrastructure management), etc. The question usually becomes: “how do we align what we already have with the ITIL model, and improve ourselves?”

How Do We Get There From Here?

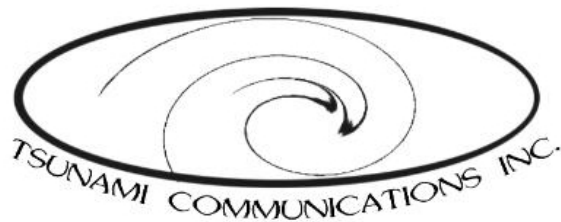
Take a Baseline

The first step is to know where you are. With an understanding of the ITIL model, and the assistance of experienced consultants, you can evaluate your current processes for managing, monitoring, maintaining, and improving your corporate IT. Look for gaps, and be wary of some of the signals. A commonly cited example focuses on companies that find themselves constantly “putting out fires” or behaving in a very reactive mode. The root problem can be in many different areas and indicate needed improvements in Incident Management, Problem Management, Change Management, or even the Service Desk function itself.

Today's initial baseline is vital in planning the goals for tomorrow. Once you've identified what best practices you have in place today, document them as they exist – not what they should be, but what they are. You don't need to write a thesis, but a clear summary document that shows the process, process owners, input, and output. Keeping this simple will enable you to keep forward momentum through this process and make it easily readable and understood by anyone else you need support from.

Get the Big Picture

With your baseline completed, get the big picture. Keeping in mind the over-all corporate goals of your organization (and not just the IT group) evaluate where the effort in ITIL alignment will be most efficiently utilized. What functions will gain the most political support? As much as we will say we don't want to be involved in the politics, they are a reality of the business and being aware of them (and factoring them into your plan) will enhance your chances of gaining executive support. Pull all of this together in addition to your baseline and start to lay out the plans for where ITIL-related projects will make the most sense, and most benefit the organization.



Rally the Troops

With your plans in hand, gain the executive and grass-roots support discussed earlier. Without support and understanding of an ITIL initiative from the top-down and the bottom-up, you are doomed from the start. You need the financial and political will of the executive level, and the heart, minds, and hands of the staff all working together to ensure success. Now you're ready to get the ITIL project moving; to improve the operational efficiency of your IT departments, and align IT more closely with business drivers.

Steer Around the Potholes

Like any major project that brings change, ITIL alignment initiatives are likely targets for the trolls that live under the bridges that projects must cross. Throughout this document we've noted many of the key issues to watch for when pulling together your ITIL project, but to summarize, here are the main potholes to steer around on your road to ITIL.

“Knowledge is Power”

Invest the time to learn what ITIL is, and what it isn't, before you kick into high gear. Consider the investment in experienced ITIL consultants, and ITIL foundations training for your own team.

“Beware the Creeper”

Identify your target projects and stick with them until they are rolled out. Don't be led astray by the temptation to become a hero and tackle the entire 50 plus books of ITIL in one go-round. Pick the areas that will provide the maximum benefit with the least effort to start with; avoid the 'forklift upgrade' mentality.

“Stay on Target”

Further to picking an attainable scope to start with, keep all aspects of the project in line as you move. Keep the communications regular, and all other aspects of good project management that will see you through to a successful conclusion of your first ITIL alignment project.

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