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ITSM Best Practices: Global Themes, Local Solutions

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Abstract
Implementing the IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL) IT service management (ITSM) best practices is an expensive and time consuming endeavour. In spite of guidance, many organisations experience failed attempts before experiencing success. A detailed analysis of 12 organisations' ITIL ITSM improvement projects shows that tangible business value is obtainable but that necessary conditions must be met. The analysis reveals that, while the organisations used a variety of strategies, approaches and practices in implementing ITIL and also experienced differing challenges in their journeys, there is a â sweet spotâ of organizational structuring and practices for necessary conditions which appear to be required for success. Change management themes found across the cases that appear to encompass the necessary set of conditions include strategy, scope, management approach, workforce planning and development, tools, vendors, outcomes, culture, customer influence, motivation and communication. Key aspects of these themes with case examples are presented.

Keywords: ITIL, IT Service Management, change, change management, ITSM

ITSM Best Practices: Global Themes, Local Solutions

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Introduction

The sweet spot on a sword is the "place on a sword's blade which will deliver the strongest blow without losing power due to vibration"[1] In ITSM, the sweet spot for a given aspects of a change project is the definition of a workable context for the organization, thus obtaining the desired outcome. A sweet spot is not a single point; rather, it defines a range of activity for some aspect of the project that improves the probability of success. Importantly, the range of activity differs across, and within, organizations, depending on corporate culture, local culture, extent and type of executive support and managerial decisions.

Why is finding these sweet spots important? Some of the outcomes of the successful projects described are

- Reduced average solution time for high priority incidents from 60 to 35 hours
- Reduced recalled or aborted changes
- Reduced costs for both hardware and staff
- Increased customer satisfaction
- Streamlined compliance with 80% of IT controls for global processes and technologies representing 30% of corporate compliance controls
- Reduced SLA penalties by 50% the first year and another 35% the second year

This paper describes several of the key aspects of ITSM projects, the sweet spots found and how the sweet spot for the same aspect differs across case organizations. Twelve organizations were evaluated: four each from Germany (DE), Australia (AU), and the USA (US). By evaluating the cases together, themes of recurring importance and the conclusions drawn from then are more likely to be global phenomena and, therefore, of greater interest than might otherwise be the case. Industries represented include one healthcare (AU), two manufacturer s (DE Manufacturer and US Chemical), three IT service providers (outsourcers) (AU, DE, and US), one government organization (DE), one energy (US), and four financial services (bank and insurance) (2 AU, 1 DE, and 1 US). Figure 1 summarizes the companies' ITIL implementation status at the time of the studies, which took place from 2005 to 2008.

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Processes & Function	Australia				Germany				USA			
	Healthcare	IT Service Provider	Insurance	Bank	Manufacturer	City Government	ITSP	Bank	IT Service Provider	Insurance	Energy	Chemical
Incident	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Problem	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Change	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Release	X	X		X		X	X		X		X	X
Configuration	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	
Service Desk	X	X	X	X		X		X	X		X	X
Availability		X	X						X			
Capacity		X							X			X
Continuity		X				X			X			
Service Level	X	X	X		X	X	X		X			X
Security		X		X		X			X			X
Financial		X				X			X			X

Figure 1. Case Companies and ITIL Processes and Functions Implemented

Over 50 common topics were identified across the projects; which were then consolidated into themes. The key themes are listed in Table 1 and are each explored in the next sections. Finally, conclusions about developing the sweet spots for any organization are developed.

ITSM strategy
Communications
Project motivation, structuring, and conduct
Organization culture
Vendors and tools
Workforce planning and development
Outcomes

Table 1. Themes

ITSM strategy

Three aspects of strategy are relevant to the 12 projects: project strategy, senior management commitment, and outcome expectations. Each of these is discussed in this section. All 12 cases had an explicitly stated ITSM strategy, but the strategies differed considerably. Three firms cited company strategy as affecting IT strategy (AU ITSP, DE bank, US chemical). In the US chemical company, a 'OneCompany' global strategy to standardize business units' processes and technologies became the precipitating event for the change project in IT. The DE bank sought to align its accounting with International Accounting Standards, comply with Basle II Agreements, and better integrate acquisitions. The IT Department's reaction to these strategic initiatives was to move from a system and platform-oriented view of IT to its first

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inclusive IT strategy for services orientation -- "Systems and technologies are not the focus, but service packets delivered to clients" (DE bank). The Australian ITSP sought to change the company's culture to one that understands that services are their business and that services must align with its customer needs. The resulting strategy sought to enable client computing through IT services, leveraging services in the commercial sector, and continuing development of information services offerings. For these companies, a change in business strategy provided the opportunity to change IT strategy to better align with the business.

Several organizations discuss IT strategy and all clearly articulate the need to not only recognize services but also ensure their delivery quality through measurement and active management. One example of this sentiment is "ICT service management is our business" (AU ITSP). The US Insurer, recognized the cultural change inherent in their strategy by understanding that "part of the management strategy of getting people to change their mindset to one of running IT like a business " (US insurer). Similarly, before consolidating IT Services, the German manufacturer had "no overall strategy existed for the individual IT departments; … they were optimized individually." The change was to "grow by being professional and customer service-oriented with delivered services … that are … the highest quality and reliability, … transparent, … efficient, … and cost-effective". In this setting, "service oriented IT management was structured to efficiently and effectively support global business processes … [using] ITIL CobiT, BS 15000, … and balanced scorecard" (DE Manufacturer).

The other organizations integrated ITSM projects as part of IT strategy. The US energy company strategy was to "hire IT leaders with deep domain expertise … partner with vendors to incubate IT solutions rather than develop in-house, ... build in-house project management, focus on vendor relationships, … maintain IT strategy in-house, … rationalize the application portfolio, improve the help desk, and standardize the IT infrastructure" (US energy).

All of these examples show that different goals and strategies can lead to success. The common thread is that, at some level of the IT organization, an ITSM strategy was specifically articulated and communicated to initiate a change project to develop services and a service orientation.

Senior management commitment is the second common requirement for successful ITSM change. Commitment is demonstrated in a number of different ways – Director level oversight (AU Insurance, US Chemicals); executive policy about expected outcomes (US Outsourcer); visibility about change support (AU ITSP, US ITSP) ; dashboards providing operational visibility (US Insurer); communication and reinforcement of the importance of the project and that it was not "the flavor of the day" (US Insurer).

Not all senior management commitment was consistent. Commitment is evident in the Australian health organization because it was required to accomplish centralization of IT services and the cultural transformation to a service-oriented focus AU Health). However, management commitment waned over time, leading to process owners who were not staffed at the right

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level and lacked appropriate authority. As a result, quality of service began to suffer. Similarly, the US ITSP added a new position to monitor and manage only daily global ITSM activities. The position incumbent was never trained in ITSM or ITIL, evidenced no interest in learning about ITSM or ITIL, and subsequently allowed a number of lapses that caused issues in the months before a company audit. The individual was eventually replaced with the original project manager who quickly brought the quality of service back to its high standard of practice.   These slips of consistency demonstrate the importance of unwavering, consistent commitment throughout the life of the activity. Since, ITIL and ITSM are permanent changes, they require a permanent change of executive attitude and behavior.

Communications

Communications was one of the most mentioned themes with some organizations highlighting the importance of communication between specific groups and others discussing communication campaigns for each life cycle stage of the change projects. Initial and continuing communications between senior and IT management and all affected parties was deemed critical to project success by several of the cases (DE ITSP; US Chemical; US Insurer; US ITSP). Often, communication was the visible indicator of executive commitment to the change project (AU health, US Insurer, US ITSP).

Communication campaigns to raise organizational awareness of the changes, provide status reporting, provide consistent information, and to publicly celebrate successes were used in all 12 case companies. The DE bank avowed that communication should come from within company and never from consultants, media, or vendors. Communications plans should include a calendar of communications required over the life of the project, the audiences, and the message topic.

All stakeholders should be identified and included in the communications plan. Stakeholders can include executives, managers, customers (internal and external), and staff. Each stakeholder group should have its own communications tailored to its needs. The importance of communicating to all constituencies is considered critical to all companies' project success. Topics covered in the communication plan include project plans, activities, priorities, policies, procedures, project calendar, project changes, and status (all), goals and costs (DE City), issue resolution (US Insurer), tangible and intangible benefits gained from the project (AU Health, US ITSP), and ways particular issues are addressed (US Energy)

Most of the organizations stress the importance of business and domain-specific language to communicate the changes to constituents (AU Health, US Chemical, US Energy). Communication content that reinforces ITIL training and tenets is viewed as critical to change effort success (AU Health, US Insurer). For instance, understanding the difference between an incident (or outage) and problem (recurring or significant incident to be prevented) is an explicit target of staff communications (US Insurer). Similarly, the US Energy company finds that its

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architecture for the help desk and its expected changes is a powerful means of communicating changes expected in their incident – problem – change – release roll-out.

Communication media also varied significantly. All companies use email and memos for formal communications. Some use 'road shows' and face to face meetings (DE ITSP, US Chemical, US Insurer, US ITSP), email (all), newsletters (US Chemical, US Insurer), 'town meetings' (US ITSP), video presentations in cafeterias (US ITSP), and blogs (Au Bank),

In summary, communicate early and often (US Insurer), provide information the recipient can affect, and use multiple media to spread the word. Having executives provide initial and periodic communication supporting the project boosts staff compliance. Include successes in communications to foster support (DE Bank). In spite of successful ITSM implementations, expect to think communications could be improved. All four US organizations cited communications as the one area they would improve and expand.

Project: Motivation, structuring, and conduct

Project Motivation

The 'motivation' theme addresses the key rationale for developing the area(s) of ITIL implemented. Advice from those who have practiced ITSM for some time is to address 'pain points' as the first projects. The motivations from this group of companies shows that pain can have short-term or long-term focus and be narrow or broad in scope. Motivation, at least initially, shapes the project and leads to definition of the expected goal. This thought is exemplified by the DE bank for which "ever increasing [organizational] complexity," lack of "comprehensive coordination and monitoring of management processes," and the need for the IT division to become more professional" all were the immediate motivations of the change project. Although the bank's mainframe area had "established and proven procedures … operations in the world of open systems was marked by inefficiency and non-transparency. The goal was to establish consistent, transparent and efficient processes, independent of systems and IT landscapes."

Other motivations included:

- IT departments desiring to improve the quality of service (Aus ITSP ,DE Manufacturer, Bank, DE City, DE ITSP, US Insure, US ITSP). For instance, the DE Manufacturer desired transformation of the "IT organization into a professional IT service provider with standardised overall processes and a professional customer-supplier relationship."

- Remedy poor performance and its outcomes as evidenced by "outages that went on for days," "inconsistent service," lack of service level definition, and perception "that we weren't doing a good job" (AU Insurance) and by overtime (US Energy).

- Rationalize, centralize, or otherwise improve their organization (AU Health, DE Manufacturer, DE City, and DE ITSP, US Insurer), consolidating from 50 to three

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separately functioning organizations (DE City). Proliferations of systems and processes results in an inability to consolidate information easily (DE Manufacturer, DE City, and DE ITSP).

- Integrate mergers and acquisitions that had result in disparate hardware, software, policies, procedures, and management to allow natural synergies between products and across geographical locations to be exploited. (DE ITSP, AU Insurer, DE Manufacturer)

- Manage business externalities to drive improvements to allow analysis of various types of budget cutbacks. Changes ranged from decentralised to central IT, non-standard to standardized IT processes, and separate management to tighter, integrated budgets and management of all IT resources (DE City)

Short term objectives can lead to long term objectives as was the situation at the AU ITSP. "Short term pain needed to be relieved … and issues around service capability and credibility had to be addressed" "The trigger was a spate of less than acceptable service delivery outcomes, … a number of service failures that reflected badly on the organization, and reflected badly on the teams involved. Some customers were not happy and there was a bit of a knee-jerk reaction to make a change. It was just a bit fortuitous that some key people were involved at that time and said: 'Well here's an opportunity here for us to make a positive impact' and long term there would be an evolving standard around IT service management that we would be able to adopt" (AU ITSP).

Project Structure

Projects can be structured using centralized, decentralized, or federated (both central and remote) staff. The most successful project of the group was the US ITSP which obtained ISO certification for seven locations and 16 processes in 12 months. The project was managed from a central site at the corporate headquarters but included about 150 other participants from all of the global locations. A matrixed approach to managing the implementation effort was used because of constraints of the low-overhead requirements. The management matrix represents the four management structures that were instrumental to the ITSP's certification success (See Figure 2).

The first structure of the project management resulted from the naming of the ISO Leadership Team. The team consisted of the Compliance Director and two full-time program managers who served as the project office. A documentation coordinator was added later. This team was the only full-time staff devoted to the initiative. The program managers served as content expert of the ISO standard and the initiative as a whole (See Figure 2). Each program manager served as the contact person for half of the sites and half of the processes, thus setting up the matrix structure. This structure ensured that both of the coordinators knew every site and every process. According to the Director, they had a low need to be liked, were goal-oriented, and did not let personalities impede work.

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The second aspect of project management was the identification of subject matter experts in each location who served as Process Owners. Process owners were responsible for defining and documenting their process. Then, they were responsible for managing consistent rollout of the process in each location. Most of these positions were filled from staff positions rather than from line operations management positions.

The third aspect of management was the assignment of local Site Process Representatives (SPRs) who were familiar with the process' functioning at their sites. In addition to participating in design and deployment of their process, SPRs also were responsible for site education on their process.

The fourth aspect of management was the assignment of Site Owners for each location. Site owners' primary responsibility was communication to their site about the project. Site owners acted as a conduit for the ISO Leadership Team to field questions, provide status, schedules expectations, and information about ISO training and documentation. A secondary set of tasks was to keep their local team of SPRs motivated and moving toward completion of changes deemed necessary to the certification effort.
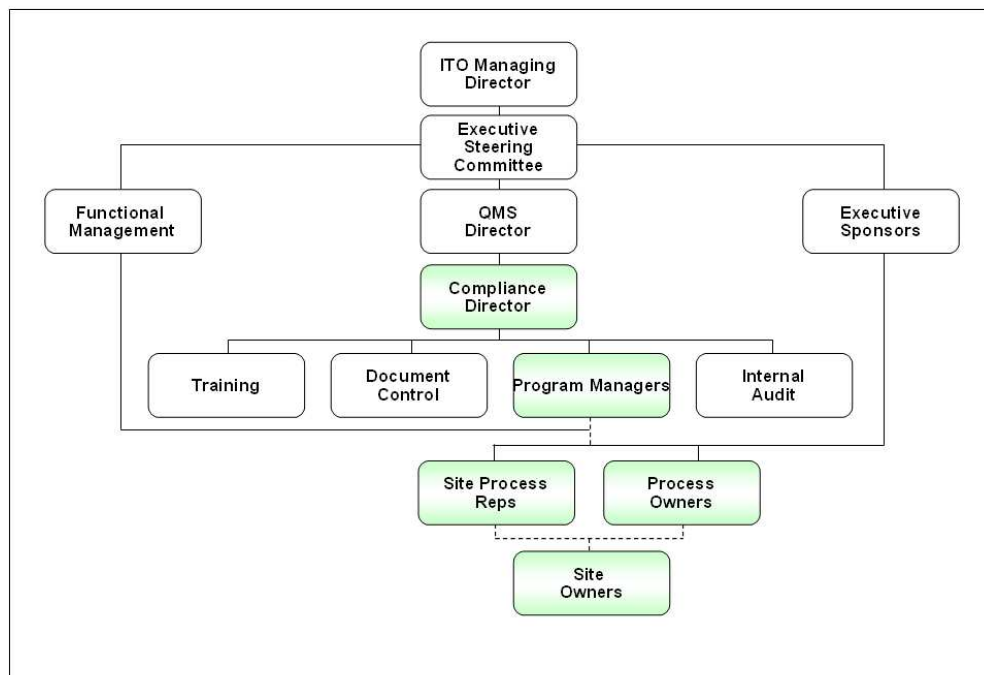

Figure 2. US ITSP Project Organization

This organization is an example of federated projects, which include executive support, centralized management and documentation, and decentralized design and implementation (AU

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Health, DE City, DE ITSP, US Chemical). Involvement of people who would be doing and managing the work on a daily basis was crucial to eventual project success. While it is inconvenient for the time the project is on-going, there are fewer "us-them" rifts, more local cooperation, and less resistance to the changes when the changes are implemented. Further, all companies agree that contextualization is key to success ; the role of the SPRs and POs is to guarantee that the process designs works in their organizations (AU Health, DE City, DE ITSP, US ITSP).

Project Conduct

Project conduct is critical to success yet difficult to articulate. The process of project conduct is fairly straightforward, including the following steps for

- marketing the initial idea for change
- training executives and managers and gaining buy-in for the changes
- defining policies and processes needed and getting policies written
- defining project goals
- defining the project team, ideally with matrixed, inclusive, part-time members and a small core of centralized, managing members
- training project team members
- analysing the current situation (s)
- analysing the gaps between the current and desired states
- developing a plan for moving from the current to the desired state
- initiating work to define processes and metrics
- initiating tests of processes (these can be local (AU Bank, DE Manufacturer), in one or more locations (AU Health, AU ITSP, DE City), or in parallel in many locations (US ITSP))
- training staff for initial overview of all changes
- revising and documenting processes, making them easily available globally
- defining service blueprints and scripts, as needed, to ensure quality of service in customer interactions
- training staff in their job changes
- implementing the changes along with managerial changes, as needed
- beginning to take measures and monitor them
- post-implementation audit to ensure that goals are met and that processes function as expected (revising them when they do not function as expected)

Each of these steps is fraught with politics, problems and difficulties. The important point is that all projects will have problems and that success requires problem management. Honest, forthright dealing with personnel issues, coaching or removing staff who cannot function as expected is expected. Politics and resistance are best managed by staff local to the problem (AU Health, AU ITSP, US ITSP). However, sometimes, the person meant to deal with problems is the one creating them. In such cases, the local management structure should be

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used to deal with behavioral modification needs. Engaging local managers includes them in the process, thus, gaining their buy-in at the same time.

Projects can be complete failures. Most companies -- three in the US, three in Australia, and two in Germany all had failed projects before they were successful. The failures all suffered from combinations of wrong people on the project, lack of organizational commitment, lack of resources, focus on technology rather than process, insufficient management support, poor or poorly executed communication plans, changes that took too long, unintegrated processes, training and change dates so far apart that people forgot, no or inadequate metrics, no post-implementation management, and no post-implementation audits. In every successful case, all of these problems were dealt with specifically by the project teams. Not all of the dealings were completely successful, but with a range of activity in the 'sweet spot' the failings in the successful projects were not fatal.

Organization culture

All research says to attend to culture first in trying to ensure lasting change in organizations. However, attending to culture and catering to it are different, and may be overrated. The US ITSP and DE ITSP both did little to manage cultural issues and were successful in their changes. For instance, the US ITSP ITIL implementation affected over 2500 people in seven geographic locations, including India, Ireland, and the US. The edict "failure is not an option" was declared by the executive sponsor when identifying the initiative as critical to the organization's success. Individuals who clearly could not comply were invited to leave the organization as their alternative; few did.

The US ITSP's approach would be considered radical compared to the other case companies. Most explicitly recognized the need to change from change the culture from a technology focus on to a focus on service and from focus on technology to business strategy (AU Health, AU Bank, AU ITSP, DE ITSP, US Chemicals, US Insurer). Simply implementing new processes, even when accompanied by software or organizational change does not guarantee cultural change. AU Health found culture change difficult to achieve during organization restructuring. However, when senior staff were appointed as process owners, trained and provided with resources, the culture began to shift. Cultural change in an on-going process that, with reinforcement, measurement, and active management can become permanent over a period of time.

The AU Bank and US Insurer took a different approach and describe their changes as empowering staff through public recognition of changed efforts. The Insurer gave a stuffed green frog to the key staff member responsible for avoiding an operational outage. The frog became a status symbol of the change and its embeddedness in the organization.   The US Insurer, recognized the cultural change inherent in their strategy by understanding that "part of the management strategy of getting people to change their mindset to one of running IT like a

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business" but that this "would have been more successful sooner if it were part of the organization's strategy" (US insurer).

All of the change efforts met with resistance and each had its guardians of the past. However, three levels of change management appear to be effective in gaining successful cultural shift. Figure 3 summarizes the actions that facilitate cultural change. The three levels of change management include regulative, executive actions, normative, supportive actions, and individual, cognitive actions. Some measure of all of these changes is required to ensure success over time. Most companies meet resistance until all compensation and job descriptions from executive to staff are explicitly tied to the ITSM effort. This is consistent with theories that 'we do what we are paid for.' The regulative column (Figure 3) shows that policy is critical to an initial demonstration of executive support. (US ITSP). The normative column relates to the

Concept	Regulative	Normative	Individual
Compliance mechanisms	Policy on business direction with non-compliance as a fireable offense	Peer pressure in units from Site Managers and Site Process Representatives; Reward change	Job description change
Change mechanisms	Management-driven behavioral standardization through policy, "No option for failure"	ITIL, ISO/IEC 20000, or other frameworks; Engineered processes	Training, Each person measured
Key Indicators	Executive support through policy with fireable non-compliance	Business improvement	Certifications; Critical success factors and other measures
Figure 3. Methods of facilitating cultural change[2]			

change project and its outcomes. Peer pressure from matrixed, inclusive project organization supports the change efforts from project initiation. Over time, the changes become normal to the project participants who then spread the norms to their peers. The individual column shows markers of individual compliance as evidenced by participation in training, changed job descriptions and compensation plans, individual certifications, and monitored measures of daily activity.

Summarizing the importance of cultural change is best said by the AU ITSP, "really changing the culture goes hand in hand with management commitment because you will not change the culture if your manager back flips in the process."

Vendors and tools

Vendors played roles ranging from advisory (DE to integrally involved (AU Health) across the companies. Vendors provide a variety of services and roles including training (AU Bank, AU Insurer, AU ITSP, US Insurer, US ITSP), integrated toolsets (AU Health, AU ITSP), SaaS hosted

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software and its accompanying process (US Energy), consultants (AU Health), core infrastructure (AU Bank), tool configuration (AU Bank, AU ITSP, US Energy). The German cases did not discuss vendors.

Nurturing partnership with vendors is very important especially in multiple vendor situations (AU Bank, AU Health, US Energy). Vendor consultants were used to "provide service quality beyond expectations" (AU Health), assist with development of definitions and processes, configure toolsets (AU Bank, AU ITSP, US Energy). All organizations using vendors stress the need for open honest relationships, ensuring knowledge and technology transfer (AU Health, US Energy) while monitoring that the vendor stays focussed on the current project and not on selling future work (AU Health).

The other purpose for vendors is as a software source. While the US ITSP ignored software in its first year of implementing process changes, it installed an integrated toolset across its organization in the third year of their ITSM implementation journey. Other case companies acquired tools as a reinforcement of the process changes (AU Bank, AU Health, DE ITSP, US Insurer, US Energy). The tools most often related to incident-problem-change-release activities (AU Bank, DE Bank, US Insurer, US Energy) with several adopting ITSM suites (AU Health, AU Insurer, DE ITSP, US ITSP). Customizing and 'ITIL compliance' were issues that every company dealt with, some more successfully than others. The more successful projects actively managed vendor activities (AU Health, Au Insurer, DE ITSP).

Thus, vendors can play a valuable knowledge transmission role as consultants to ITSM change efforts but need careful management. Vendors most often are the source of software. While all agreed with the notion that process should precede software, concurrent change was conducted by about half of the companies.

Workforce planning and development

The key activity in preparing the workforce for change is training. One characteristic of the successful implementations was the breadth and depth of training. Analysis of the twelve cases revealed four different varieties of training content: awareness for senior management, generic ITIL certificate courses, customized training in the use of the newly defined processes, and training in specific ITSM tools acquired. All organisations invested heavily in ITIL Foundation certificate courses, for example, 700 completed the ITIL certificate at the US Insurer. However, vendors do not do all training. US ITSP used vendor training for the first 25 people who then developed an in-house 'ITIL 101' course that was delivered to over 2500 people. This train-the-trainer strategy is often used when hundreds of people need training. Many organisations also invest in practitioner and advanced courses to ensure key staff developed a deeper understanding of the ITIL philosophy and guidelines.

The timing of training also appears to be critical. Most organisations undertook wide-spread ITIL training very early in the implementation, finding that it was crucial to achieve consistent language and terminology. This compulsory training was followed up with refresher

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and more targeted courses in subsequent periods. Funding for training is also tangible evidence of senior management commitment. One caveat is that training needs to be timed close enough to the work changes that it remains fresh in people's minds.

Service awareness and ITIL foundations training accompanied tool implementation in three organizations (AU ITSP, DE ITSP, DE Manufacturer). Senior managers participated in services simulation exercises to help them understand the nature of services requirements (DE ITSP, DE City). Several organizations rolled out processes that were subsequently upgraded or revised (AU Insurer, US ITSP). One organization encouraged employees to gain further advanced training on their own (US ITSP). The ITSP rewarded those who did, basing the rewards partly on the individuals' demonstrated motivation to support the changes. By training staff for each new process design, ITSM concepts and specific process steps received multiple training reinforcements. "It was only after training that employees really understood processes properly, recognized their value and experienced them as they were described" (DE City).

A second aspect of staff development was to charge them with responsibility for knowing their roles, processes, and how they contribute to overall services success. To facilitate this responsibility, most often a corporate intranet provided all of the project documentation, including all processes and daily work instructions. Figure 3 is an example of how such an intranet might be structured to present information in a simple, easy to find manner.

Figure 3. Documentation Structure for Intranet Storage[3]

The document organization in Figure 3 not only facilitates accessibility, but also facilitates auditors' access to evidence of compliance-required activities and actions in a manner that led all of the US organizations to have comment-free audits after their ITSM implementations. The structure is generic so that it should provide similar outcomes in other parts of the world as well.

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To summarize, in addition to an elementary overview of the entire set of changes, specific training in individual-related processes seems to work best. Senior managers and executives benefit from simulations and overviews as well. While certification can be a goal, it is not required and can be used to further motivate staff. Part of staff development is requiring them to become expert at their jobs. To facilitate the development of expertise, documentation about the processes and all of their related work should be accessible through an Intranet or similar capability.

Outcomes

Outcome goal definition is important because it predetermines the scope of a project. If open-ended consideration of potential changes is desired, it should be stated in advance, otherwise, project teams often work within the confines of the current organization (AU Insurer). The more specific the project goal, the more specific the outcome. For instance, the goal 'obtain ISO 20000 certification within 12 months' was successful in the certification efforts but was also deliberately 'software agnostic' and therefore, did not result in identical practices (US ITSP). Similarly, the US Insurer goal was to implement incident, problem, change, release, and configuration management. These goals were met. But, other add-on project did not have a similar, specific charge and were less successful.

In addition, by allowing 'blue ocean' analysis of ideal organization characteristics, several of the case companies experienced broader types of change. "To increase IT effectiveness and efficiency, centers of competence (CoCs) were established that aimed at across-the-board integration and standardization of IT processes" (DE ITSP). Similarly, after a current status review and transformation project, the project team recommended centrally managed and coordinated" information and IT services. (AU Health). The organization changes were eventually implemented. Another open-ended project had the IT budget cut and conducted the transformation project. A recommended outcome was a new administrative structure, change from decentralised to centralized IT management, and a shift to fully standardize IT processes (DE City).

Outcome goals also determined, to some extent, the initial project returns. The more specific the goals, the more specific and narrower the rewards. The US ITSP, for instance, developed the capability to move work across data centers, allowed their customers to learn and use a single set of processes, and overall, resulted in simpler functioning of the data centers involved. However, when management wanted to reduce missed SLA penalties, a new project was initiated to support improved SLA management and tracking. In contrast, the German ITSP reduced the overall IT budget, reduced the number of staff in IT through organizational consolidations, and improved quality of outcomes for the service desk, customer relationship management, and vendor management.

The moral of this story is to set goals carefully because that is what you will get. The more open-ended the charge to project participants, the broader the scope of improvements.

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Developing best practices

Finding the sweet spot in the areas of ITSM change projects is not difficult but does require intimate understanding of the organization, its culture, and its politics. Contextualizing means customizing whatever is done – project goals, schedule, and design, individuals involved, process designs, policies, software choices, etc. for its specific designed use. Many organizations do not need to implement all of 'ITIL' if they have working processes and are happy with them. It is important to define goals – e.g., centralization, standardization, or even reduce outages, then meet that goal using whatever processes and services are needed.

It is equally important to define the 'real' goal desired. If the company expects reduced SLA penalties that should be part of the goal. If alleviating outages or reducing outage time is expected, they need to be part of the goal. The goal defines the marching orders. If the goal is 'set up a service desk' it can be done but may not have the quality desired because quality is not a specific part of the goal. Specific goals might be 'obtain ISO 20000 certification in 12 months' or 'reduce outages by 50% and outage time by 25% within six months'. Notice that neither of these specifies areas of IT affected or the parts of ITIL or ISO 20000 that apply. Rather they are outcome oriented and it is up to the project team to define the optimal, contextualized way to reach the goals.

Contextualizing also means doing everything to ensure success, including attending to and dealing with political issues as they arise. Complete agreement with design or the way changes are implemented is unlikely, so don't bother. It is more important to consciously design and manage processes and services than to worry about doing every 'shall' in ISO 20000 or ITIL v3. At the end of the day, nothing matters if changes do not work for the company or the people involved. That is part of the contextualizing. A study published through McKinsey & Co[4] clearly identifies bigger payoffs from intense process management over technology management. Process must precede technology and technology needs to be molded to fit the process in the ideal world. Therefore, being practical and realistic about what will work in an organization at that point in time is a key concept.

Finally, contextualizing does not require a huge core team with an ever-growing bureaucracy for monitoring and improvement. There is a tension to be managed between getting the change projects completed and building a bureaucracy. To the extent that the core team is small and ad hoc, part-time participants can be leveraged, this tension can become moot.

The following list summarizes the key points for hitting the sweet spot in your organization's change efforts.

Ø   Be careful how you define your goal because that is what you will get.

Ø   Develop a mantra to rally cooperation and option' forces attention to the changes. i.e., 'Failure is not an

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Ø　Require an executive team to provide policies, oversight, regular communications, and a kick in the rear when needed.

Ø　Keep the central change group small and ensure diverse skills (i.e., coordination, process design, and change implementation).

Ø　Use participative projects with representatives for the project, each process, and staff who do the process from every affected location. Process owners from affected locations should be responsible for guaranteeing the workability of the process for their location and for ensuring implementation success.

Ø　Communicate often about status and expectations.

Ø　Worry less about culture and more about making the changes fit the work context.

Ø　Require every staff member to be trained, be responsible for knowing his/her job and how it fits within the ITSM scheme.

Ø　Change the executive and management compensation schemes to include compliance with ITSM changes as part of any compensation and/or bonus schemes.

Ø　Change all job descriptions to use ITSM language (that fits the organization) and institutionalize the changes by rapid movement from 'my job' and 'my ITIL job' to just 'my job.'

Ø　Continuous monitoring and improvement are critical to avoid entropy and regression to the earlier state.

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[1] : www.albion-swords.com/swords/sword-terms.htm

[2] Adapted from Conger, Sue (2009) "Three Theories and One Case Study of Top-down, Middle-out, and Bottom-up Service Innovation," 2nd Annual Conf-IRM Conference, Al-Ain, UAE, May.

[3] From Conger, Sue and Picus, Beki (2009) "Sustainable Certification using ISO/IEC 20000," *American Society for Quality's Quality Management Forum*, Spring, 2009, pp 14-19.

[4] Dorgan, S. J., & Dowdy, J. J. (2004, November). When IT lifts productivity. The McKinsey Quarterly, 4, pp. 13-5.