Chapter XIX

Implementing IT Service Management:
Lessons Learned from a University IT Department

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents and analyzes a real life ITIL project, and it is based on a longitudinal case study. The purpose is to illustrate how the ITIL process reference model for some processes may be used almost as a blueprint, while ITIL for other processes may be profoundly adapted to suit the context and the needs of the implementer. Furthermore, the success factors and the impediments for successful implementation are discussed. As this case shows, although processes are being well defined and the ITIL project is being regarded by management as a success, employees may after all decide not to follow the adapted processes. The study finds that ITIL implementation will not be effective unless the organizational and cultural aspects of process change are being taken care of. This chapter will especially inform practitioners about how ITIL may be utilized and how an implementation project might be organized.

INTRODUCTION

The IT service management perspective is becoming more and more popular in the IT community. IT Service Management is an approach to operations that emphasizes IT services, customers, service levels agreements (SLAs) and best practice pro-cesses for handling the day-to-day activities in the IT department (OGC, 2005; Palmer, 2005). Several frameworks exist, such as Control Objectives for Information and related Technology (COBIT), Microsoft Operations Framework (MOF), IBM SMSL, HP ITSM, and IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL). Among them, ITIL seems to be especially

well accepted. ITIL is primarily a collection of best practices implemented in the industry, and is administered by the UK Office of Government Commerce (OGC). It gives a detailed description of how to organize and handle central IT operations tasks such as incidents, problems, changes, configuration, availability, capacity and so on. ITIL is a process reference model, and views operations as a collection of processes. Process orientation means focusing on the cross-functional, organization-wide sets of activities that transform an input into an output that represents value for the customer, and does so by utilising a variety of organizational resources. Implementing ITIL means process change.

As a process reference model, ITIL seeks to capture characteristics common to many companies within the IT sector. A reference model may be defined as "an abstracted depiction of reality that serves as a standardized or suggestive conceptual basis for the design of enterprisSe specific models, usually within a like domain" (Taylor & Sedera, 2003, p.1). Misic and Zhao (2000) describe reference models as being "standard decomposition of a known problem domain" (p.484). Brocke and Thomas (2006) discuss the use of reference models and argue that a user will acknowledge a reference model when the effort needed for the construction of his own specific model is considerable reduced using the reference model. In addition, they argue, "the more specific a reference model is, the fewer the enterprises are for which it can be applied" (p. 681).

Although IT departments all over the world are improving their operations and processes based on the ITIL process reference model, there is, to date, little academic literature examining the characteristics of ITIL, how ITIL is implemented in industry, and the effects and the consequences of following such a process reference model. A notable exception is Aileen Cater-Steel and colleagues (Cater-Steel & Tan, 2005; Cater-Steel, Tan & Toleman, 2006a; Cater-Steel, Toleman & Tan, 2006b). Cater-Steel and Tan (2005) report

from a survey about the uptake of ITIL in the Australian IT community, that ITIL's service support processes Service Desk and Incident Management were at the most advanced stage of implementation. Further, survey respondents perceived "commitment from senior management," "champion to advocate and promote ITIL," and the "ability of staff to adopt to change" as the top three ranked factors for success. Noteworthy, 56% of respondents reported that ITIL had met or exceeded their expectations.

The purpose of this chapter is to present and analyze a real life ITIL project, through the lens of a case study approach, in order to provide insight into the nature, challenges and benefits of ITIL implementation. The chapter will especially focus on methodological- and project-related factors. In addition, exploring how a real-life industry implementation utilize the reference processes presented in the ITIL is a main goal.

Among the issues addressed in this research are:

- How are ITIL reference processes being adopted by the IT department?
- What are the success factors and the impediments for successful implementation?
- How is information technology being used to enable ITIL-processes?
- Does ITIL implementation affect organizational culture?

The research presented here has been organized as a longitudinal research project combining different research methods such as action research, interviews, surveys, and document studies.

BACKGROUND

This section gives a short introduction to *IT Service Management*, *ITIL* and *process change* for readers unfamiliar with these topics. Further, it presents the case organization and the reasons why

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