

ITIL Primer

[ITIL understanding and implementing - A guide]

ITIL - The Framework

ITIL is the IT Infrastructure Library, a set of publications providing descriptive (i.e., what to do, for what purpose and how to do it) guidance on IT service management. ITIL has become the international de facto standard guidance for IT service management. ITIL was created in the late 1980s by and for the Office of Government Commerce, United Kingdom and later expanded for use in all organizations.

ITIL has been founded on two key premises:

1. Create comprehensive, consistent and coherent standards of best practice for quality IT Service Management promoting business effectiveness in the use of IT, and
2. Encourage the private sector to develop ITIL-related services and products (training, consultancy and tools).

The ITIL philosophy is to “adopt and adapt”.

ITIL has steadily evolved into a comprehensive and consistent IT best practices framework in itself. Rather than providing isolated advice, ITIL describes every key process in IT Service Management, and provides comprehensive definitions and applicability across each process.

Key Benefits of ITIL as a Framework

- ITIL is a best practices framework. ITIL is a synthesis of ideas drawn from international practitioners - not academic theory of how things should be or a vendor's view of how to operate its products.
- It describes a proven practical framework for the planning and delivery of operational IT services, based on actual experience rather than a purely theoretical approach.
- It provides non-proprietary and impartial guidance that is applicable to both public and private sector organizations and is independent of the hardware and software being used.
- It is public domain and can be used without payment of any license fees.
- Its guidance is consistent with British Standard BS 15000:2000 Specification for IT Service Management.
- It has a global network of user groups, providing peer support
- It's approach and customer focus are strongly aligned to the ISO 9001:2000 quality standard and will support an organization's quality management system

“Enterprises will realize valuable process improvements and better measurement and reporting of process outcomes through the adoption of ITIL processes and guidelines. ITIL Brings Clarity to Complex IT Processes”

- Gartner Report

“Enterprises should use ITIL as the baseline definition of service management best practice, and particularly use it to validate the integration between their own operational processes. ITIL’s Service-Level Management strength is in Integration “

- Gartner Report

Worldwide ITIL Adoption

Over 15,000 companies across the globe have adopted ITIL, including Procter & Gamble, the Internal Revenue Service and Boeing. There are about 80,000 certified ITIL professionals, with about 7,500 more added annually. Europe has been big on ITIL since its inception while ITIL adopters are springing up across the United States since the adoption of ITIL by Microsoft, Hewlett-Packard, and IBM.

Much credit for the ITIL domain growth also goes to IT Service Management Forum (itSMF), which is the IT users group. This independent forum for ITIL users, formed in 1991, promotes the exchange of information and experience to help IT service providers manage IT service delivery and supports chapters worldwide. Its recent study reported 97 percent of organizations using ITIL had derived benefits from ITIL. Procter & Gamble claims to have saved over 6% in operating costs in one department as a result of its ITIL initiative.

Today, the ITIL domain has become much more than a set of publications; it is an entire full-fledged industry consisting of adopters, a user group, tool and service providers, and training and certification.

Why Should You Adopt ITIL?

Improved Service Quality - The introduction of a consistent set of processes highlights potential weaknesses in the earlier operations and enables pro-active improvements. Shortened resolution times, better management control, more reliable IT services and the implementation of permanent solutions to common process pitfalls are just some of the many ways ITIL revolutionizes your IT services.

Cost Advantage - By applying ITIL Best Practice to your IT operations you can take advantage of many ways of better cost control and cost reduction. A lower Total Cost of IT Ownership (TCO) is achieved through increased efficiency and productivity, lower incident volumes, faster incident resolution and less business disruption due to service failures.

Pro-active IT Management - It is no longer enough to simply maintain the IT infrastructure. Today, IT managers are expected to support the success of the entire business by planning ahead and efficiently shaping the business IT environment. Since ITIL best practices are an outcome of combined industry knowledge experience you can rest assured that you are implementing proven best-of-breed standards.

ITIL Competence Maturity Levels

Unlike many other frameworks, that address only the very large organizations with significant operations maturity level, the ITIL framework can be effectively adopted by enterprises of any size. In fact, implementation of ITIL by small and mid sized IT organizations is a sure step towards gaining early IT process streamlining and maturity leading to faster growth.

The ITIL hierarchy offers a 4-level ITIL competence maturity approach.

1. ITIL Awareness Level

As the first step towards implementing ITIL the ITIL Awareness Level lays down the foundation for comprehensive understanding that complements enterprise-wide decision making.

This level introduces the basic ITIL best practices framework and service management processes to provide an overview of the key concepts of ITIL. The Awareness Level specifically addresses the staff who might not require an ITIL Foundation level exposure but need a critical understanding of ITIL such as IT Support staff, IT developers, Key business users, IT leadership etc.

At the end of this level, stakeholders are able to:

- Identify the need for IT Service Management for their IT organization
- Recognize the benefits of ITIL and ITSM for their organization
- Identify the ways in which ITIL can be applied within their organization
- Understand the key processes covered in the ITIL Best Practices
- Define the role/purpose of each of the key ITIL processes

2. ITIL Foundation Level

The ITIL Foundation Level introduces the concepts of IT Service Management (ITSM) and how to apply the industry standard IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL) Service Support and Service Delivery principles within an IT organization.

This level once again addresses the staff who might not actually practice ITIL process competence but need a thorough understanding of ITIL such as IT Support staff, IT developers, Key business users, IT leadership etc.

At the end of this level, stakeholders will be able to:

- Identify the various ITIL processes that can be implemented in an organization.
- Identify the benefits of implementing each ITIL process in an organization

- Identify the basic concepts related to each ITIL process
- Identify the activities and roles involved in each process
- Identify the relationship of each ITIL process with other processes
- Identify the factors that affect the effectiveness of each ITIL process

3. ITIL Practitioner Level

The Practitioner Level focuses on individual ITIL processes to offer in-depth detailed analysis of the process implementation, practical aspects of how to improve the process implementation, how to do an assessment of process maturity and embark upon an improvement plan for the specific process.

This level is aimed at equipping the ITIL Process Practitioners and ITIL Process Owners with specialized expertise across individual ITIL Service Support and Service Delivery processes.

4. ITIL Service Managers Level

As the highest ITIL competence maturity level, ITIL Service Managers Level focuses on detailed process descriptions, practical implementation and improvement issues, organizational challenges in smooth IT Service Management and Delivery in a practical and case study oriented setting. This intensive level enables IT Service Managers to gain a deeper and more practical understanding of ITIL processes, and the key implementation issues – both process oriented and organizational issues.

The level is aimed at offering ITIL framework expertise to IT Service Managers, ITIL Process Owners, ITIL Practitioners, and ITIL Implementation Consultants.

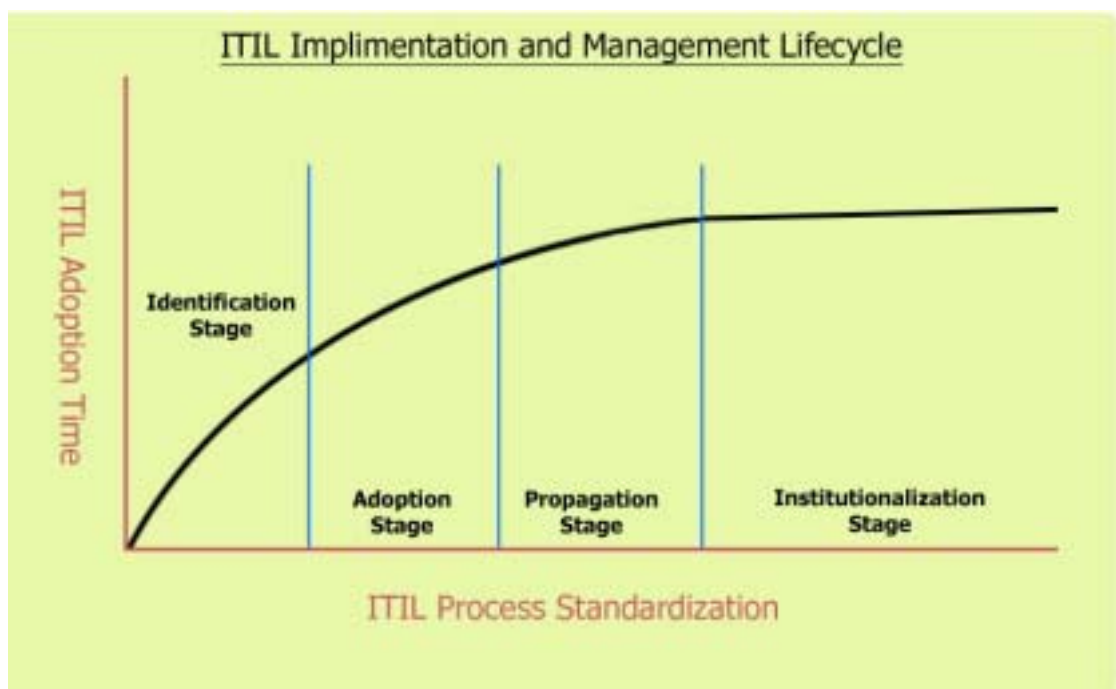
At the end of this level, Service Managers and ITIL Practitioners will be able to:

- Analyze IT Service Management processes within an organization

- Design the organizational structure for implementing processes
- Describe the IT Service Management processes
- Assess and audit IT Service Management processes
- Implement change processes
- Perform proper written (reports, memos, project plans) and verbal communication
- Identify important Management skills required to be a good Service Manager

ITIL Implementation

Building competence in ITIL based IT Service Management is a multi-level process. To effectively use the ITIL framework for providing IT services it is essential that key business users, stakeholders and IT service providers have a clear understanding of the best practices and their meaning. This requires an organization-wide skill matrix mapping.



Developing the Organizational Skill Matrix

This is perhaps one of the most critical stages during where an organization gets down to serious considerations about the ITIL implementation process. What makes this stage so critical is identification of the stakeholders and mapping their skill sets vis-à-vis ITIL competence building needs.

The most rewarding approach to accomplishing this task is through defining the ITIL training objectives, competence-building needs, key stakeholders and their current competence position on the skill matrix, key stakeholders and their desired competence position on the skill matrix and the training methodology/ learning environment best suited to an organization.

The ITIL Implementation Roadmap

ITIL implementation represents itself as an upward curve on adoption time-process standardization matrix that flattens out as the processes get implemented and standardized and the organization matures its ITIL understanding and applicability.

The roadmap primarily comprises of 4 stages.

Identification Stage – ITIL pre-implementation lifecycle begins as an informed understanding about ITIL and its potential benefits to the organization. This understanding is gradually passed on from the one level of hierarchy (the first-line contacts) to the next level (the idea evaluators) and finally on to the decision makers.

At this stage, it is essential for the organization to possess an open-minded approach and strive towards maximum knowledge assimilation from the initial dialogues with their ITIL implementation partner. The idea is to effectively consider and evaluate several implementation aspects unique to an organization such as: feasibility, learning environment, training methodology, roll out timelines and methodologies. With enough coherence on these issues, an organization can start to test ITIL out with a Pilot Training session organized with clear and specific objectives. The Pilot Training session will also help in turning up several other realistic aspects that will need to be considered during implementation.

Finally, following the post-pilot evaluation by both, the organization to get a bind on the training impact and the objectives achieved as well as the ITIL partner to ascertain the implementation milestones, the organization is deemed ready for ITIL implementation.

- ITIL Consultant Conferences
- Initialize Pilot Course
- Assess Pilot group learning
- Post-Pilot Consultancy
- Evaluate organization readiness for ITIL

2 Adoption Stage – Post-pilot evaluation the implementation objective becomes more concrete and real, and its broader value is established through a process of blueprinting the competency architecture. At this stage, the key IT performers are in a positioned on a skill matrix to codify - to a large extent - the tacit knowledge they possess and the level of ITIL process competencies they require. The organization then faces the challenging task of developing internal orientation programs to facilitate a smooth transition of these key IT performers into the process-training mode. This can further get complicated in cases where there are larger groups of key IT performers, diffused across multi-geographic locations, to be considered.

These programs are best developed in consultation with an ITIL partner, who draws from within his knowledge and domain experience resource, the most optimal solution.

Simultaneous to this are the management considerations to initiate the onset of allocation and baselining of budgets, resources and infrastructure. Once again, this can be quite a challenge in cases where the IT leadership is either slow in adopting a change of this magnitude or unable to assimilate the entire scope of competency advantage that ITIL offers. Being entirely internal, this invariably falls in the realms of an effective orientation program.

- Developing ITIL Business Case
- Internal Project Definitions
- Winning over IT Leadership
- Budget Allocation
- Baselining the implementation resource allocations

Propagation Stage – With the implementation objectives charted out, a pilot session evaluated for ascertaining the business case, the key IT performers mapped on the organizational skill matrix, the IT leadership oriented for progressive adoption and the resources allocated, ITIL implementation transcends from being a conceptual framework to a tangible competency. In the propagation stage, the knowledge and competence factors in question start to become fairly widely understood across the organization.

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This stage also marks the beginning of a structured internalization of the organizational knowledge resources, content repositories and standard induction programs to effectively integrate within and complement the ITIL competence-building endeavour. As ITIL processes implementations move through their lifecycle, the speed of progress, adoption and process effectiveness varies from case to case. There are 4 factors that can accelerate the ITIL knowledge competence and applicability within an organization.

The first being intended internal diffusion of ITIL understanding – This is an important pre-implementation organization-wide effort to permeate ITIL understanding and objectives at the macro and micro levels.

The second is IT Process reverse engineering – As a pre-implementation consideration this factor encompasses identifying and redefining critical internal IT processes.

The third factor is Internalizing and standardizing ITIL knowledge competence – This should occur during and post-implementation and entails building and maintaining strategic ITIL knowledge competence pockets at critical positions within an organization.

And finally the fourth factor is Reaching and sustaining ITIL maturity threshold – This is primarily an outcome of the effectiveness and successful adoption of ITIL and organizational efforts to standardize and diffuse ITIL competence.

- Internal process definitions
- Developing Implementation Approach
- Customization of ITIL processes to organization needs
- Organization-wide ITIL Process Training rollouts
- Process-support Tools implementation
- Organization-wide Process-support Tools Training rollouts

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Institutionalization Stage – Finally, in the Institutionalization stage, ITIL knowledge learning turns into standardized organization-wide process competence. At the macro level, the organization is able to effectively align ITIL competence with its service delivery processes for better quality, efficiency and cost-effectiveness. At the micro level, ITIL enables skill transition for enhanced performance and productivity. The subsequent stabilization of ITIL practices and applicability functions occurs with increased adaptability of ITIL leading to an ITIL competent organization.

The maturity gained as the curve flattens out to a straight line during the ITIL lifecycle helps attain tangible competence quantifiers through well established and standardized Re-training programs both, for orientation of new key IT performers as well as for sustaining ITIL competence.

- Process and Tools stabilization
- Well-defined process compliance measures
- Established re-training program process
- Efficient ITIL knowledge and content management system
- Consolidation of process improvements
- Standardizing ITIL Training as part of organizational training programs