



Aligning people with your service vision - it's in the game



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February 2007

Everyone knows that implementing a best practice framework such as the IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL) unites People, Process and Technology for the greater good - right? Wrong. The biggest barrier to success when undertaking a best practice based initiative, such as implementing ITIL, aiming to achieve ISO/IEC 20000 or undergoing an IT governance program is the people.

A recent report from industry analysts Forrester suggests that in over half of organizations undergoing this type of change, internal resistance occurred - to such an extent that 52% of organizations listed it as the most significant negative element of the entire implementation.

So, how do you get the people on board?

Most organizations implement a lengthy and costly education program for best practice frameworks such as ITIL to get staff up to speed. Don't get me wrong - this will reap benefits. Training staff to ITIL Foundation level (or higher) will aid their development and provide a valuable, transferable qualification. It will also ensure that staff have a good understanding of the theory behind IT Service Management best practice. But it's a bit like learning the theory of driving then professing to be an expert driver! A theoretical expert does not make a practical expert!

Transforming an IT organization to successfully follow a best practice framework such as ITIL or achieve a standard such as ISO/IEC 20000 requires commitment and understanding at every level of the organization - from the CIO, to the Help Desk staff - all the way through to the senior business managers. The problem is - influencing the mindset of such a wide spread of staff through traditional education will be virtually impossible - due to time, budgets, availability and other common organizational constraints.

The other main problem with such traditional education programs is the retention rate. On average, 40% of the training content will be understood and absorbed on the day, with only 2% being retained 3 months later! Where's the business value if your 'qualified' staff don't remember anything they've learnt?





Experience is the best teacher

The best way to understand best practice is to experience it. Simulations, or gaming solutions as they are also known, are a high-impact, energetic way to accelerate understanding, involvement, and acceptance of ITSM best practice in your organization. Rather than focus on technology, the simulations focus on the benefits of process.

Simulations cause breakthrough understanding of ITSM best practice and transform learning into an engaging, fun and highly memorable shared experience. The best simulations are set in realistic scenarios to which participants can directly relate to and have actual experience of. Unpredictability, interaction and realism are game elements that draw on participants emotions and competitiveness to ultimately create high levels of engagement.

The top ITSM software solutions vendors have realized this, and have adopted their own unique simulations. Those who have experienced their simulations will never forget them. That's why simulations have such an impressive retention and understanding rate. On average, 89% of the training content will be absorbed on the day, with 63% of the content remembered 3 months later. This is a considerable improvement on the earlier mentioned 3 month rate of 2% retention achieved with traditional education methods.

Not only is retention superior, but the dynamic nature of simulations allow organizations to accelerate understanding of the benefits of ITSM best practice to large audiences and fast. All those involved will immediately understand the ITSM terminology and ITIL processes. So within a day - everyone is talking the same language.

Bring the silos crashing down

Transformation to IT service management (ITSM) requires staff to operate in collaborative roles which cross functional silos in order to deliver services that are meaningful to the customer. Because of this, you need to ensure that it's not just your IT staff you train. For maximum benefit, you should assemble a cross-functional business and IT group to participate in the simulations.

Make sure your cross functional group includes everyone who is touched by the ITSM program you are implementing - that include business representatives, IT managers, IT staff - and where possible - senior executives and sponsors.

Taking a cross-functional approach will help give participants an understanding of the 'bigger picture' of the goals and benefits, as well as the perspective of both the business and IT and how all the components are interrelated. This also helps break down some of the silos that are often encountered in organizations in order to create a shared vision of success.

3 is the Magic Number

Spring 2007 brings with it the long-awaited release of the latest release of the ITSM best practice framework, ITIL version 3. This third iteration of the ITIL guidelines will draw upon lessons learned from earlier ITIL efforts to help IT organizations further improve efficiency, effectiveness and business alignment. The key difference between ITIL 2 and ITIL 3 is that the former Service Support and Service Delivery processes will be integrated into a service life-cycle. The content of V3 in this regard will better reflect how service management is applied in day to day practice.

Many organizations are wondering how best to bring their staff up-to-speed in order to realize the benefits this ITIL refresh will bring. Educational courses will be made available for individuals, but this will take time to roll-out in large organizations.

Clever organizations will simulate - using gaming solutions to bring understanding of the benefits of the new ITIL guidelines to large numbers of their staff and fast. The beauty of this approach is that it will accelerate understanding of potentially complex theory such as ITIL 3 so that organizations can rapidly realize the benefits that the ITIL refresh will bring.

