

Enhancing Your Service Quality With ITIL and SupportSoft

A SupportSoft White Paper

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SupportSoft[®]



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Introduction

The IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL®), now at Version 3 and presented in five main volumes, documents accepted 'best practice' for delivering IT services in support of customers' business processes and functions. The excellent advice is comprehensive and there is no aspect of IT management that is not included. Every suggestion made within the library is founded on the practical advantages achieved by followers of this advice world-wide since ITIL's original introduction into IT management thinking in the late 1980s.

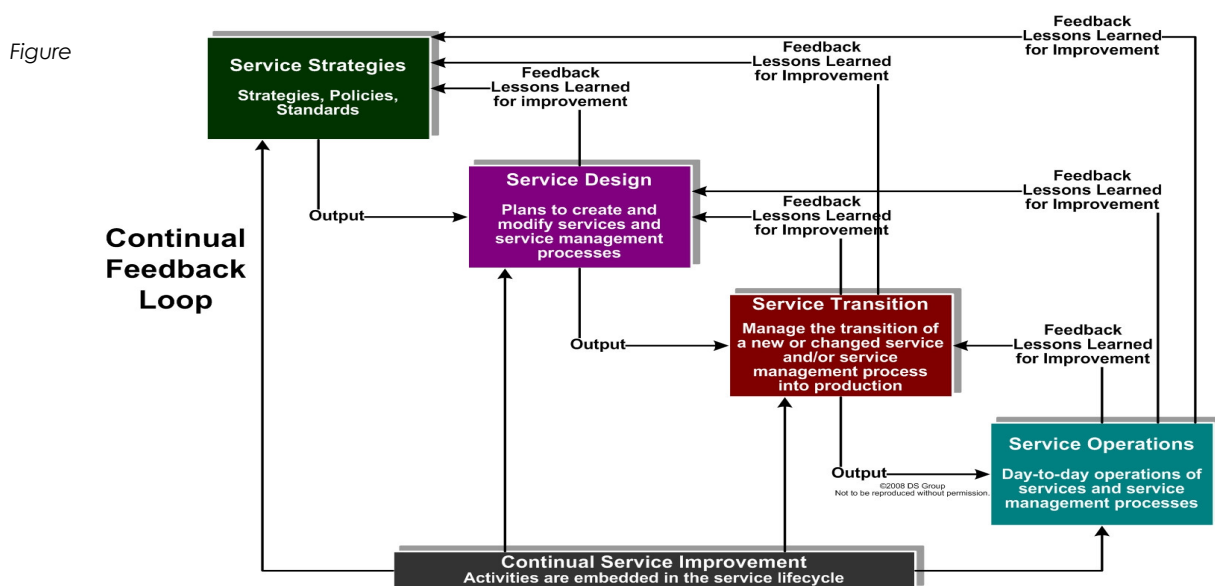
ITIL V3 was published in 2007 and heralded a significant expansion of the industry's maturity of thinking about IT Service Management (ITSM). As with the journey from ITIL V1 to ITIL V2 during 2000/2001, very little of what already existed has fundamentally changed; it is rather that the context in which the advice can successfully be applied has been updated. On this latest occasion, more consideration has been given to multi-sourcing, the role of the customer in determining service quality and the development of new technological opportunities, thus keeping this unique advice wholly relevant and up-to-date.

This White Paper, which focuses upon the value enhancing properties of SupportSoft's product range, discusses in subsequent sections:


- The structure of ITIL
- Significant changes between ITIL V2 and V3
- Common problems met during the Transition and Operation of Services
- How SupportSoft's products enhance the value of ITIL practices

The Structure of ITIL

Figure 1 below represents the lifecycle approach of ITIL V3.



1 – The ITIL V3 Lifecycle Approach to IT Service Management



Service Strategy – The service provider’s service strategy defines, in a given market, what services should be delivered to which customers and to what quality criteria. It is concerned with Service Value – a combination of Service Utility (fitness for purpose) and Service Warranty (fitness for use) – and includes the key processes of:


- Financial Management
- Service Portfolio Management (services under development as well as those in live production)
- Demand Management

Service Design – This stage of the service lifecycle is concerned with designing and developing innovative IT solutions to changing business requirements. The individual aspects of Service Design may cover:

- New or changed service solutions
- IT Service management systems and tools
- Technology architectures and management systems
- Processes, roles and capabilities, including the seven tightly connected ITSM process of:
 - Service Catalog Management
 - Service Level Management
 - Capacity Management
 - Availability Management
 - IT Service Continuity Management
 - Information Security Management
 - Supplier Management

Service Transition – The third stage of the service lifecycle is concerned with the building, testing and deployment of a Release into production and encompasses:

- Planning and preparation for all phases of transition
- Building, testing and piloting
- Deployment and transition
- Pre- and post-implementation review
- Processes, roles and capabilities, including:
 - Transition Planning and Support
 - Change Management
 - Service Asset and Configuration Management
 - Release and Deployment Management
 - Service Validation and Testing
 - Evaluation
 - Service Knowledge Management



Service Operation – The fourth stage of the service lifecycle relates to the day-to-day operation of the service and represents the point in time when customer benefits are actually delivered rather than promised or planned. Excellence in Service Operations is fundamental to service quality because this is where the behavior of the service and all its components is systematically monitored and measured. It is the beginning of the data / information / knowledge / wisdom chain that, firstly, allows us to understand and plan and then drive the service improvement cycle. The processes within Service Operation are:

- Event Management
- Incident Management
- Problem Management
- Request Fulfillment
- Access Management

Continual Service Improvement (CSI) – The main objectives of CSI are, within Deming's¹ step-by-step cycle of Plan-Do-Check-Act, for each or each group of service and management process improvement initiatives to:

- Plan their introduction
- Implement the improvement initiatives
- Monitor, check and evaluate the results of implementation
- Determine what else (if anything) needs to be done to maintain or further improve quality

¹ "Dr. W. Edwards Deming taught that by adopting appropriate principles of management, organizations can increase quality and simultaneously reduce costs (by reducing waste, rework, staff attrition and litigation while increasing customer loyalty). The key is to practice continual improvement and think of manufacturing as a system, not as bits and pieces."



Significant changes between ITIL V2 and V3

The most significant change between the latest version of ITIL and the preceding ITIL Version 2 is the structuring of ITIL V3 around a Service Lifecycle model. This addresses the common problems of 'process management silos' being built by IT staff and the views of many strategists and developers that ITIL is only of 'operational' concern. However, ITIL V3 still suffers from a natural difficulty. This is that no simplistic model can truly represent the complexities of the real world, and in adopting the Service Lifecycle approach, which, in ITIL V3 has to represent customer IT services as well as the development of the governing processes, IT staff (and even customers) may still fail to see the wood for the trees; the service above and beyond the technical components.

Of course, whatever is written, there will be advocates for and against and it is not the intent of this White Paper to challenge anyone's views; rather to return to the basic issues of IT Service Management – the reasons why many organizations have failed over the years to generate real quality from their ITSM investments – and to show how simple the underlying problems really are – a back-to-basic approach that SupportSoft's tools are admirably designed to support.

The greatest changes in ITIL V3, then, are not that ITIL has suddenly become customer-centric – because it always was (Service Level Management and customer relations were always supposed to drive the definition of and response to service quality); nor is it to do with the apparent expansion of the number of processes and functions covered – because they have been part of ITIL for nearly ten years (though they did not feature strongly in the

most popular two Library books *Service Support* and *Service Delivery*). The significant change is that there is no longer any pretence that there is a single IT management activity that lies outside the realms of IT Service Management. 'Development' is concerned with designing, building and testing changes; 'Operations' manage the point of service delivery to customer staff; 'Networks' are simply elements of the overall IT infrastructure and strategists and planners are named functions helping to create an economic, efficient, effective and risk-aware structure for the delivery of services of predictable and acceptable quality.

Thus, though not perfect still, in clarifying the holistic nature of ITSM, ITIL V3 has hopefully found a means of overcoming some of the most difficult service improvement barriers – people! ITIL V3 has undoubtedly also re-emphasized the need to manage all aspects of a service throughout its entire life. The expansion of the live Service Catalog into a complete through-life Service Portfolio by keeping information about of future Service Requirements in an 'under consideration' Service Pipeline and retaining details of retired services – is an important example. The emphasis now given to customer and supplier management is another, as is the need for a professional approach to communications.

Additionally, the contributions to service quality that can be made by other management disciplines such as CobiT, Six Sigma, Balanced Scorecard and, particularly, ISO 20000 is openly recognized and encouraged and these well-known management tools are seen as additive rather than competitive.



Common problems met during the Transition and Operation of Services

When reviewing IT organizations for their relative management and process maturity, it is common to uncover a set of fundamental difficulties that can be addressed by improving the manner in which the organization:

- Handles service failures
- Seeks to understand and remove the common causes of service failure
- Approaches its management of corrective and innovative change
- Gathers and maintains information about service components and their behavior

These stumbling blocks to effective and efficient IT Service Management typically arise because:

- The completeness and accuracy of service event and failure data is poor, too frequently driven by the availability of input data rather than the need for output information.
- There is little real understanding of the Problem Management process with problems not being followed through

beyond the first couple of 'why's – often the result of a 'quiet life' philosophy.

- There is little or no connection between service failures and the changes that cause those failures to occur, usually exacerbated by the 'management silo' nature of IT organizations

Some of this is due to lack of management awareness or simply (rather than 'simple') cultural barriers within the organization in question. However, the underlying difficulty is not to do with leadership or management maturity but the lack of reliable information about the behavior of all aspects of the services in question.


In every IT management environment, there is commonly a huge amount of 'data' produced but the lack of useful 'information' is chronic. It is by careful process design and the use of suitable tools that this can be overcome.

How SupportSoft's products enhance the value of ITIL practices

The four fundamental difficulties commonly experienced by IT service organizations have been identified and are outlined above. In a variety of ways, SupportSoft's products help achieve substantially improved service availability and perceived quality by an intense focus on the driving need to understand, diagnose and repair service failures. These are described in the following paragraphs but it is also worth noting that all SupportSoft products are compatible with the latest version of ITIL and promote a customer-centric view of the world.

Handling service failures efficiently is clearly a pre-requisite for excellence in IT Service Management. Not all failures can be prevented but the speedy restoration of service reduces the pain felt by users and, managed effectively, much can be learned by the service organization, which in turn will help prevent similar occurrences.

From a specific service perspective, infrastructure components form chains that lead to and from the users and, close to the users, are their desktop workstations. However well other components



behave, if events in that desktop environment, which represents the means of final collection and delivery of service information, are not monitored and responded to, service quality will suffer.

SupportSoft solutions are particularly adept at recognizing and managing detectable occurrences that affect the IT infrastructure and the delivery of services. The tools listed below not only have strong operational significance but contribute to building the essential Knowledge Management System.

Self Service Suite, including **SmartIssue™**, provides flexible and personalized end-user support solutions. One size doesn't necessarily fit all and a good deal of call time and resources for both client and supplier can be saved with these tools.

Intelligence Assistance Suite™ – is used to improve resolution time, the first contact resolution rate and overall user satisfaction.

RequestAssist™ – collects the right data for faster incident routing, reduces overall resolution time and automatically gathers information for more effective problem analysis.

RemoteAssist™ – prevents need for desk-side visits, thus saving costs, speeding resolution time and improving user satisfaction.

LiveAssist™ – This multi-session web-based chat facility provides for interactive incident resolution, improving Service Desk throughput and customer satisfaction. Up to four sessions at one time can be handled by experienced analysts, speeding resolution and reducing the costs of failure.

SupportActions™ – provides a set of one-click fixes that address and resolve common failures quickly, made available to end users and service desk analysts


Seeking to understand and remove the causes of service failure will not be successful without close monitoring of the infrastructure and determined data gathering. Such data represents the beginning of the Data / Information / Knowledge / Wisdom trail and lies at the heart of successful process management. Following the old adage 'Knowledge is King', these SupportSoft solutions make substantial contributions to achieving this goal:

Self Healing – uses the knowledge gained for automated repair of components and for furthering a cardinal aim of ITIL –achieving Continual Service Improvement.

Repair Manager™ – provides the means for continually monitoring and improving – with links to Self Healing and helps avoid expensive Service Desk calls through automated issue recognition and repair.

AnalystAssist™ – The combined use of real-time incident information and diagnostic data speeds incident resolution time and the subsequent successful management of the underlying problems.

Innovative or corrective change is recognized by all authoritative research as the most common cause of service failure, when it is poorly managed. The reasons are many but there is an underlying theme and that is lack of knowledge of the wider service infrastructure and of the relationships between service components (Configuration Items). Any changes that are not rigorously controlled during their transition into the live state have the potential to cause consequential failure. The real-time status reporting maintained by SupportSoft's **Repair Manager™** ensures a sound basis for infrastructure planning and development; for verifying that changes to Configuration Items have



been released and deployed successfully and in the expected manner; and for re-verification should a subsequent failure occur.

However, **Repair Manager™** is only one of many SupportSoft tools designed to keep the infrastructure under control and in a known state.

Gathering and maintaining information about services and their behavior, as part of an overall Service Knowledge Management System is the focus of a number of SupportSoft tools supporting the Service Asset and Configuration Management process.

Knowledge Center™ *With SmartIssue dynamic personalization and resolution automation* – is the heart of SupportSoft’s Knowledge Management System (KMS); empowering end-users and everyone else involved in service restoration and long-term service quality improvement to obtain the right answers quickly, simply and automatically. The KMS prevents knowledge being buried in organizational silos while maintaining strict controls over authoring rights.

Additional capabilities enhanced by SupportSoft’s products include:

- Service Level Management, where, for a positive customer-provider relationship, the true behavior of the services must be unequivocally recorded.
- Availability and Capacity Management, where detailed infrastructure knowledge is paramount
- Request Fulfillment (and its automation) – where a non-cohesive approach causes bureaucratic nightmares and additional costs.
- Service Asset and Configuration Management – in which component status accounting and verification are vital features in support of corporate asset accounting and all other ITSM processes and functions.

As every successful business manager knows, there are many aspects to achieving quality and success in service provision but the ability to handle the occasional failure, and to prevent recurrence is prime; also to innovate without diminishing current service levels. Just as in IT service provision, at the end of the day, the customer is king, and those who neither remember this nor prepare themselves and their staff to respond in a thoroughly professional manner are doomed to long-term failure. But of course, well-supported by people, processes and excellent management tools, that needn’t be so.

SupportSoft understands the difficulties of managing a modern, technically complex IT infrastructure. The amount of **data** generated can be overwhelming. But if that data can, in a sophisticated learning environment such as that provided by SupportSoft, be consistently transformed into qualitative **information** that people can combine with their experience to form usable **knowledge**, then many of the most intractable problems of poor IT service quality can be solved. SupportSoft’s tools enables people to use their knowledge in the most effective way in all forms of service – self-service, assisted service or proactive service - and can help to ensure that all the available knowledge about the infrastructure is relevant, complete and up-to-date. The combination of this knowledge and SupportSoft’s ITIL compatible resolutions tools enables an organization to maintain uninterrupted service operation. That is their contribution.



About SupportSoft

SupportSoft (NASDAQ: SPRT) is a leading provider of software and services for technology problem resolution. For more than 10 years we've ensured that technology critical to businesses — and their customers—works as planned. Our best-in-class, scalable solutions enable both end users and analysts to detect, diagnose and correct problems at home, in the office or anywhere in between. The Company's solutions reduce technology support costs, improve customer satisfaction and enable new revenue streams for companies reaching 50 million users worldwide.

SupportSoft has built a solid reputation for providing the most advanced IT automation support infrastructure in the world. So it's no wonder that more and more Global 2000 companies turn to us for their support needs, including ADP, Bank of America, BT, Kimberly-Clark, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, Sony Electronics, Symantec, Thomson Financial and Trend Micro.

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