



ITIL version 3: What It Means and How IBM Can Help

Coming to Grips with Enterprise IT



How do you maximize the business value of your technology?

For a small business, the answer is often fairly clear, because its technology and business processes are both relatively confined in nature. Straightforward products and services suggest straightforward IT. As that business succeeds and grows, however, so will its underlying IT infrastructure. And so will its need for an

adaptable approach to management. And in an enterprise that may employ thousands of people in support of a wide range of products and services, the IT division is often required to manage enormous operational and development complexity.

Furthermore, the technological solutions and services available to large businesses today are themselves far more comprehensive and feature-rich than ever before. Integrating them on an enterprise scale in the pursuit of improved service management—essentially aligning IT processes and resources with business goals to achieve desired results for customers—is no simple undertaking. It requires significant expertise in many disciplines to provide the collaboration required to really add value to customers.

The increasing complexity and dependence on information technology has made IT best practices become more and more important.

ITIL®: Best Practices for Best Results

Because of the increasing complexity and dependence on information technology, the concept of IT best practices has become more and more important. Various frameworks have been created to help today's IT professionals optimize their use of technology in managing IT processes. Of these, ITIL (Information Technology Infrastructure Library®) has become an increasingly accepted library of books on service management practices.

Originally created by the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency (CCTA) of the United Kingdom in the early 1990s, ITIL is a library of books that represent the collected insights of many industry leaders on the subject of how to organize and orchestrate a complex IT infrastructure to achieve best business results. The copyright on the library is owned by the UK Office of Government Commerce, and the library is a revenue generator for the UK Treasury. Over time, ITIL has undergone several revisions in order to incorporate new ideas and respond to new business circumstances.

One important consideration is that ITIL is not intended to be a formal standard. Since ITIL is not a standard, there is no such thing as a business process or vendor solution which is ITIL compliant (or ITIL noncompliant). While the information presented in ITIL originates from many sources, including IBM, it may not always be applicable for a given customer situation. IBM supports ITIL best practices and helps businesses evaluate and leverage ITIL, as well as other models, while maintaining a focus on real business objectives.

ITIL is a valuable set of guides that serve as a very good starting point for any service management improvement effort.

“Best practices” itself is a bit of a misnomer, given that what is considered "best practice" changes over time. Other frameworks also provide sound guidance, such as COBIT (Control Objectives for Information Technology) and enhanced Telecom Operations Map (eTOM). In some cases, frameworks other than ITIL may well be better suited to a given business's needs. In most cases, businesses are best served by considering all of the available models and frameworks, and then adopting and adapting the appropriate model based on their current business objectives.

The Release of ITIL v3

This year, version three of ITIL has been released. It is a significant update designed to update the library to reflect leading practices as described by the 10 authors and the ITIL Advisory group of 23 industry experts. ITIL version 3 has a new focus on the service management lifecycle concept and highlights the importance of more accepted practices. One area that ITIL version 3 addresses is the erroneous belief that service management was made up of “10+1” practices described in a typical ITIL Foundation Class.

How important is ITIL version 3? That depends on the enterprise. Specific business goals and challenges should be the primary considerations. Then consideration should be given to ITIL, as well as other frameworks, to determine the best approach to achieve the immediate business objectives.

The ITIL library as a whole enjoys considerable respect in the enterprise market and is certainly among the best-regarded, best-known and most widely deployed frameworks available for companies interested in optimizing service management. It's also worth noting that ITIL is a for-profit source of revenue for the British government, as opposed to a freely available, open collection of best practices owned and controlled by no one. It is not "open source", but it is a widely accepted set of practices. ITIL is a valuable set of guides that serve as a very good starting point for any service management improvement effort. In addition to having a library of books on best practices, many businesses find that additional help is needed. For instance, many organizations have appreciated practical guidance on where to begin, along with business-object-oriented approaches to assessment, planning, design and implementation.

IBM Can Help Translate ITIL Version 3 and Other Frameworks into an Operational Reality

In this capacity, IBM is ideally positioned to help.

IBM has a long and rich history of both contributing to and implementing service management best practices. IBM employees participated in the ITIL Advisory Group, and in the lengthy process of evaluating and refining ITIL version 3 prior to its official release. IBM also briefed ITIL authors on various approaches to service management in the modern enterprise, with specific reference to IBM business and process models, such as the IBM Component Business Model™ for the Business of IT; the IBM Process Reference Model for IT; the freely downloadable IBM Tivoli Unified Process tool; and additional leading service management practices.

Best practices evolve as leading practitioners drive new innovation to solve newer, more complex problems.

Many of the ideas and practices described in the library are already a part of IBM models, such as the IBM Component Business Model™ for the Business of IT, the IBM Process Reference Model for IT, and the IBM Tivoli Unified Process tool. IBM was in a position to contribute new ideas and practices to ITIL, specifically because IBM had already developed them and proved their validity in the course of many thousands of customer engagements over dozens of years. This is the essence of best practice. Best practices evolve as leading practitioners drive new innovation to solve newer, more complex problems. What has been done successfully in a variety of contexts can now be viewed as a standard approach that others would benefit from.

IBM's solution portfolio—perhaps the most comprehensive in the industry for the enterprise market—has been developed and refined to incorporate ideas that are only now being integrated into ITIL.

One such idea, for instance, is Service Oriented Architecture (SOA), which describes an approach to software development that emphasizes abstraction and reuse. In this way, the enterprise can optimize technology for multiple purposes, delivered through multiple services, conceivably across multiple divisions. This helps enterprises make the most out of any given technology, rather than expensively reinventing the wheel every time a new variation on a given class of solution is required.

IBM's SOA perspective, manifested in various products and services, helps businesses ensure that the road to service-centric management is successful. Our portfolio has been specifically tuned to support service management goals and is created using open standards whenever possible to maximize interoperability and simplify management complexity. All of these advantages translate into easier implementation of service management best practices.

Your Partner for Service Management Success

In this sense, IBM's global services have helped to inform our product development approach. Because our services are continually aware of emerging real-world issues like new refinements, new features and new problems, we can continually improve the real-world value delivered through our software products. The result is that our services, and our solution portfolio, inform and improve each other, and collectively help our customers achieve their business goals.

For these reasons, IBM is an excellent partner for companies who need help making the abstract ideas in ITIL and other frameworks a practical reality. Businesses need to evaluate ITIL version 3, COBIT, ISO and other frameworks, and also evaluate which concepts are relevant for them, and which aren't. Then, the difficult part begins – how to go about implementing them, and what pitfalls and outcomes might be expected so you can plan with a realistic expectation of success. IBM can help. IBM delivers academic mastery of the subject matter, real-world deployment expertise and leading-edge solutions designed to take you from a book on best practices to an improved operational environment. IBM's advanced service management software solutions, our experience with our own global complex challenges, our intellectual capital, methods and skilled resources are available to help.

IBM can help you implement your service management vision more quickly.

Additional Information

IBM Service Management

<http://www.ibm.com/itsm>

IT Service Management self-assessment tool

<http://www-306.ibm.com/software/tivoli/governance/servicemanagement/resources/self-assessment-tool.html>

IBM Tivoli Unified Process tool

<http://www-306.ibm.com/software/tivoli/governance/servicemanagement/itup/tool.html>

White paper - IBM Service Management: Practical solutions for today based on 25 years of continuous thought leadership:

<http://www-935.ibm.com/services/us/its/pdf/wp-itsm-gtw00861-usen.pdf>

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