serviceTALK

THE JOURNAL OF THE IT SERVICE MANAGEMENT FORUM



TWENTY YEARS OF ITIL

LOOKING BACK AND MOVING FORWARDS

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ITIL at 20: looking back and moving forwards





FEW PEOPLE IN IT SERVICE MANAGEMENT WILL HAVE FAILED TO NOTICE THAT ITIL REACHED ITS 20TH BIRTHDAY THIS YEAR. FROM ITS HUMBLE BEGINNINGS AS A UK GOVERNMENT PROJECT TO RATIONALISE IT SPENDING, THE FRAMEWORK HAS GROWN INTO ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL SOURCES OF GUIDANCE ON BEST PRACTICE AND IT/BUSINESS ALIGNMENT WORLDWIDE. AND IT KEEPS ON GROWING…

THIS CELEBRATION COMES AT A VERY SIGNIFICANT STAGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITIL, AS VERSION 2 BEGINS TO WIND DOWN AND THE OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT COMMERCE (OGC) TURNS ITS ATTENTION TO THE FIRST UPDATE OF VERSION 3 CORE GUIDANCE. OGC'S HEAD OF BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICE, FRANCES SCARFF, RECENTLY SPOKE TO SERVICETALK ABOUT THE LESSONS OF THE PAST AND THE NEXT STEPS FOR ITIL.

SERVICETALK: Twenty years of ITIL guidance is quite an achievement. How did it all start?

FRANCES SCARFF: That's a very good question. If you talk to John Stewart from OGC or to itSMF members Ivor Macfarlane, Brian Johnson and Dave Wheeldon who were all there at the beginning, they will have a slightly different view of exactly how ITIL started, but they will agree on the fundamentals. (I was working on SSADM Version 4 at the time, so I wasn't directly involved in the ITIL story until a little later.)

Basically, in the mid-1980s it was decided that UK government departments were not managing their IT (mainly mainframe-based systems) consistently or efficiently. John Stewart and Pete Skinner at CCTA (Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency, a precursor to the OGC) were tasked with developing a common approach to operational guidance, and they created GITMM (the Government IT Infrastructure Management Method). It was soon realised, though, that the problem was not specific to government and was equally applicable to systems in the commercial sector. So the 'G' was dropped. Up to this time the guidance had mostly been in the form of research papers, but John Stewart's team put together a plan for a series of around 25 books, grouped into five or six subject areas which resembled the shelves of a library. So the IT Infrastructure Library was born.

When it came to sourcing the content for these new publications, some of the input came from existing IBM architectures, but what was really needed was some practical experience from the user community. So CCTA drew together a team of about a dozen people made up of systems and service managers, capacity planners and particularly operations management specialists. They developed some initial titles in areas that were relatively well understood, such as change and configuration management and also help desk roles and functions; and they also started to think in terms of processes and to put together some practical information around service level management. With these initial titles the team built the first steps towards a common source of practical advice, and they set out a common language that helped government, technical IT operations, and suppliers of services and equipment to communicate more effectively.

ST: When did the qualifications come into the picture?

FS: It took about four years to complete the initial library of books, but CCTA knew that shelfware on its own would not change behaviour. Practical training was also needed, so when the government was approached by EXIN and ISEB with a view to developing training and qualifications, the response was very positive. An initial project was put together to produce a core training package that could be re-used within user organisations (basically to 'get the message out') and in 1991/92 ISEB and EXIN came out with two very different exams, the ISEB one for service managers and the EXIN one for Foundation, which were appropriate to their respective markets.

At about the same time in 1991, the itIMF (later renamed itSMF) was created to support and encourage the take-up of the guidance. Initial events focused on the activities of a very small number of early adopters, such as Customs & Excise and the Ministry of Defence. The rest, as they say, is history…

ST: Then on to Version 2?

FS: Well, the original library continued to expand to more than forty books, but there was a big gap during which nothing was produced for the business, and commercial organisations were feeling excluded from the ITIL world. So in 1994 the BITE (Business in an IT Environment) series was published – three books which described how technology was moving forward as a business enabler, and which argued that IT needed to become a core part of the business rather than remaining cocooned in the data centre. These were really the last of the individual books in the original library, and took the total to around 46 titles.

ST: That's a phenomenal number of books. How did it all get condensed down for ITIL Version 2?

FS: A lot of consolidation took place. For example, the content that became Service Delivery in Version 2 started off as a whole shelf



ITIL MILESTONES

1986: The UK Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency (CCTA) authorises a programme to develop a common approach to operational guidance with the objective of increasing efficiencies in government IT.

1988: Government Infrastructure Management Method (GITMM) is formalized and issued as guidelines for government IT operations in the UK. The team, led by John Stewart and Pete Skinner, is expanded to include IT operations and service management professionals.

1989: GITMM is renamed ITIL.

1989-1994: More than forty ITIL V1 books published.

1991: itIMF (later itSMF) formed.

1991/92: ISEB and EXIN produce first ITIL qualifications.

1999: ITIL V2 announced.

2000: Service Support and Service Delivery published.

2001: CCTA became a part of the Office of Government Commerce (OGC)

2002-06: ITIL V2 complementary titles and itSMF pocket guides published.

2004: Sharon Taylor appointed as Chief Architect for Version 3, and start of the consultation process.

2006: ITIL Glossary V2 published.

2007: ITIL V3 Lifecycle Suite published and qualifications scheme agreed.

2008: ITIL V3 Key Element Guides and Foundation Handbook published.

2009: Mandate for Change: call for authors and reviewers for new edition of ITIL V3.

30 June 2010: V2 Foundation to cease

31 August 2010: V2 Manager to cease

31 December 2010: V2 Practitioner and Foundation Bridge to cease

30 June 2011: Manager's Bridge and SS/SD publication to cease.

2011?: Publication of ITIL V3 Lifecycle Suite, second edition

NEW MENTORS FOR ITIL UPDATE

TSO has appointed four mentors – David Wheeldon, Colin Rudd, Shirley Lacy and Ashley Hanna – to coach, advise and review the work of the authors updating the five core ITIL publications and the 'Introduction to the ITIL Service Lifecycle'. The mentors, all experienced co-authors of ITIL publications, will have specific areas of responsibility. Wheeldon will focus on Service Strategy and Continual Service Improvement, Rudd will concentrate on Service Transition, Service Design, and Service Operation, Lacy takes on the role of project mentor to ensure consistency across the core and Introduction, and Hanna will be technical continuity editor, responsible for ensuring the correctness and consistency of diagrams and definitions throughout ITIL.

of books in the original series, similarly with Service Support. In shoehorning ten books into one, we were aiming to make it more accessible to readers. The content had become over-detailed and bureaucratic, and obscured the high-level meaning. So we set about consolidating what had gone before but we also wanted to lift the content up a level, so that readers wouldn't get bogged down in technical detail but could concentrate of the latest best practices in support of business processes.

We didn't pull Version 1 from the market, though, and many users referred back to those books for the underlying detail. On the other hand, things had moved on during the intervening ten years and some of the V1 content – on topics such as cabling standards – simply wasn't relevant any more.

At the same time, in the late 1990s, EXIN and ISEB came to an agreement about their differing approaches to ITIL training, and we were able to form one over-arching high-level syllabus that both were prepared to work to (with some small variations!). This helped us greatly to promote and support ITIL on an international basis.

Service Support and Service Delivery were published in 2000, followed by the complementary titles (the last of which was Business Perspective part 2 in 2006).

ST: Which brings us on to Version 3…

FS: Yes, in 2004 we made a call for a Chief Architect to scope Version 3, and Sharon Taylor was appointed later that year. Technology had moved on so far and in many ways Version 2 did not reflect this and didn't support the business integration processes that would allow IT to act as a real business enabler. Hence the need for the Lifecycle.

Once Sharon and her team were in place, we started a huge consultation process – the scale really was massive. In some ways it could be argued that we didn't go far enough, but I think we went as far as we could at the time. ITIL reflects current and emerging thinking in service management best practice – rather than setting the agenda – so there will inevitably be new developments and technologies that are not explicitly supported in the current version. You have to look to leading-edge players and find multiple examples of adoption of a practice before you can say for sure that it works and that it can be classified as 'best practice'. And as with science, you have to validate the approach and be aware of all the influencing factors, to ensure that a practice will be widely applicable.

One problem we often see is that ITIL users think they have to 'do the whole lot', rather then implementing the practices and processes they need to achieve improvements in their particular situation. That's why CSI (Continual Service Improvement) is so important: that's about 'where are we now? where do we want to get to? and how do we find the quick wins?

Looking to the future, OGC will be applying CSI for ourselves, and we will continue to ask where we are now and where we are headed. Maintaining ITIL is a service to the community and needs to be viewed in that light. We have to be clear where we are going and how to articulate that message.

If we apply CSI we can spot where the current weaknesses are. The new update of the core materials, for example, is all about addressing the weaknesses in the current books rather than looking to the future or changing the basic model.

ST: What kind of weaknesses are we talking about in the core books as they stand?

FS: There are inconsistencies across the five core titles which we need to rectify first of all – differences in the way things are described and explained. Then there are new topics such as Green IT, which are discussed in some places but not in others, and the hooks are missing. So we have to put the hooks in to make sure that the topic is referenced consistently. We're not planning to add new technical material, just to make the content and meaning consistent.

We need to check that terms are used in the same way in each book. We have some terms that are defined in the glossary, but are used in a different way in one or more of the books. Similarly, there are subtle differences between diagrams used in multiple books. This is confusing enough if you are cross-referencing between books, but it's even worse if you are taking an exam and come across a different version of an illustration from the one you have studied. It's that kind of thing we need to check.

ST: Where have these requests for change originated? Do they come from the official Change Log?

FS: Yes, from the Change Log. There have also been a lot of concerns about the language used in Service Strategy, and we are going to look at this. Again, it's not a case of changing the content but of 'defogging' it so that the material is more accessible to a wide audience. The Service Strategy book did go through a full review process but didn't quite make it in terms of accessibility for the core ITIL community. It is popular with the business world, and analysts such as Gartner and Forrester have asked us not to change it as it works for them. But it's not working for the IT guys and we have to bear that in mind and bridge the gap.

As I said, we certainly don't want to change the basic content, just to make what's there more accessible and meaningful to service managers. Those are the main issues.

ST: How long will all this take?

FS: We recognise that any new edition will take at

least 12 months. This is because of the number of reviews that we conduct, and the time it takes to make sure that the qualifications are updated and aligned with the books. Until we have appointed the authors and reviewers we won't be publishing a formal timetable, but we're looking at some time in 2011.

ST: What should we expect to see in 2011? Significantly different versions of all the core books, or a heavily revised Service Strategy and more superficial changes to the rest of the Suite?

FS: It's effectively an impression change across the whole piece. It's more than just 'wordsmithing', as we need to protect the technical content, but it's definitely Version 3.1 rather than Version 4.0.

It will be a complex operation because we have to maintain the relationship between the Suite and the qualifications scheme. The qualifications scheme is not the driver, and if changes have to be made to the books then qualifications will have to catch up to reflect those changes. But the two sides have to remain in synch; everything will be carefully documented so that we can identify where changes to the syllabus are necessary.

ST: What happens now with V2 qualifications?

FS: All ITIL qualifications remain valid going forward; it's just that for those aspiring to the higher levels of the ITIL scheme, Version 2 qualifications don't give you as many credits as Version 3, and you have to mix and match.

We have now issued a timetable for the withdrawal of Version 2, of course, and that has caused a lot of comment as you might expect. Some people think the withdrawal is too early and others that V2 should be supported forever. I have some sympathy with both views, but the official OGC stance is that there is only ever one version of our products in the market at one time. We made an exception with Version 2 for a while, mainly because the Version 2 syllabus covered a very restricted subset of the guidance and this suited many users who felt that it met their needs. But Service Delivery and Service Support will not deliver the business benefits of going end to end on the Lifecycle, and we do have to move the community forward.

This need for an end-to-end view of the business is why we wanted the Version 3 Foundation exam in particular to touch the whole Lifecycle. It's a much lighter touch than Version 2 offers in some areas, but we felt that the training community could pick up on this and provide more detailed training where appropriate. And when you get to the Intermediate level you can certainly do this.

It was very difficult to decide how to address the transition from Version 2 to Version 3, and we looked at a wide number of options. But we are happy that the current scheme is focused on giving people a real career path: it helps to validate their capabilities and offers a better reflection of their level of competency, particularly at the Intermediate level. Students get an end-to-end high-level view of the Lifecycle and can drill down as needed.

Like the ITIL book content, qualifications have to reflect current thinking. Using current terminology is essential from a career point of view, and validation against the various Bloom's levels is a good way of achieving this. Qualifications must be constantly reviewed, but not changed so often that it becomes a burden to the ITIL community.

ST: With the core materials and qualifications being revised, how will translations be affected?

FS: This is a very difficult issue. Managing translations of both the books and examination materials is very complex. This is a much bigger issue that in the past, when most of the content was translated into no more than six languages. Now the glossary and Foundation exams are available in over 20 languages, which involves an enormous amount of work from the itSMF chapters, qualification bodies etc.

ST: What advice is being given about future translations? Are they being put on hold until the new edition arrives?

FS: Well, it varies from case to case. In most cases the local itSMF chapters are deciding on the needs of their local market. Those that are translating, say, just the Introduction and glossary will not be heavily affected by the new edition. For languages where the whole Suite has been translated there will be more work to do.

In the case of the problematic terminology in Service Strategy, I know that a lot of work went into interpreting the text during translation – this was certainly the case with Japanese, where there was no exact translation for many new terms. There might even be an argument for translating the text back into English for the new update! Certainly we would hope and expect to involve individuals from a wide range of nationalities in the review process – or potentially with the authoring if they choose to bid.

ST: With the benefit of hindsight, is there anything that you feel should have been included in ITIL Version 3 which was missed?

FS: I have a personal view that, when they were scoping Version 3, they might have looked more closely at other service industries, such as facilities management and leisure. I think that over the next year or so we should explore (maybe through white papers) what these emerging service industries have to offer and what they can teach us in the ITIL world. They are generally technology-independent, whereas we have a tendency to get bogged down in the technical details. They might even be able to help us to strip the IT specifics out of ITIL, which can be an advantage in some cases. We do tend to go through cycles in IT and to forget the lessons of the past. Best practice needs to help us to stop repeating our mistakes, and allow us to see through the technical fog that often obscures our vision.

Of course, going forward we also need to make sure that we remain broadly aligned with other frameworks and standards (such as CobiT and ISO/IEC 20,000) where appropriate. These other standards are evolving and changing at the same time – for example, ISO/IEC 20,000 is currently being extensively revised. So in most cases alignment is a moving target, but we can reflect differences and areas of consistency through white papers. ITIL should never evolve in isolation as users want to mix and match various sources of guidance to suit their specific needs.

ST: Frances Scarff, thank you. ■

WHAT'S YOUR VIEW ON THE MANDATE FOR CHANGE AND THE FUTURE OF ITIL? EMAIL mark.lillycrop@itsmf.co.uk WITH YOUR THOUGHTS.



"WE DON'T WANT TO CHANGE THE BASIC CONTENT, JUST TO MAKE WHAT'S THERE MORE ACCESSIBLE AND MEANINGFUL TO SERVICE MANAGERS."

Frances Scarff

ITIL VERSION 3 MANDATE FOR CHANGE: AIMS OF THE PROJECT

(from the OGC Mandate for Change – www.best-management-practice.com/gempdf/ITIL_Mandate_for_Change_0909.pdf)

To update the publications in line with a number of issues raised in the Change Control Log. Not everything will be addressed – some technical changes are seen as too much for this evolutionary change

To remedy the inconsistencies that exist between the content and layout of the publications

To answer some of the criticisms that have been levelled at the core publications by the training community

To simplify the Service Strategy publication to ensure that the concepts are readily understood and that the content is accessible to a greater number of users.