

ITIL for the information age

Consultant MARK O'LOUGHLIN examines ITIL in light of a new version and adoption in the Irish market and beyond



ITIL

The wait is over. The latest ITIL refresh has been publicly available since the end of May. It has been long awaited and, due to the ever changing IT landscape, greatly needed as much has changed since 2000 when version 2 became available.

What was best practice 10 years ago is actually current practice now. The entire library of best practice needed to be brought up to date and has been framed around a new Service Lifecycle model. This new lifecycle now covers the strategy, transition, operations and retirement of services. ITIL 2 focused primarily on operations and processes.

So, with a new version

you are a more mature organisation with regards to ITIL adoption, with the basics in place and working well, then you may want to look at what ITIL v3 can offer."

In the name

Previously known as the IT Infrastructure Library, ITIL is now known as ITIL Service Management Practices. The re-naming is to emphasis the change from IT centred practices to a service-centric approach aligned to the business. More noticeably, there is



entire library of best practice needed to be brought up to date and has been framed around a new Service Lifecycle model. This new lifecycle now covers the strategy, transition, operations and retirement of services. ITIL 2 focused primarily on operations and processes.

So, with a new version now available, will this cause confusion as to which version should be implemented? What if you are half way through an ITIL implementation that is based around version 2?

Liz Gallacher, a freelance ITSM consultant, ITIL trainer and examiner located in the UK, has some advice. "If you have developed ITIL best practice, or are in an implementation programme based on version 2, then keep going. Version 2 covers the foundations that are required and has been used successfully over the last number of years. If



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talk of the itSMF (see panel, ITIL & The itSMF) potentially removing "it" from its name to call it simply the Service Management Forum (SMF). This would be to promote a more service orientated forum, as opposed to an IT-centric forum.

Initially it may seem as if adopting and implementing ITIL

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practices is expensive. It is likely to cost more in the long run, however, in both time and capital, to go it alone. It is advisable to seek out vendors with a proven track record who can demonstrate results and can offer a solution specific to an organisation's needs. Gallacher maintains that "the cost of not implementing ITIL can be clearly seen in duplication of work and inefficiencies in work practices. Coupled with a service provider's inability to deliver a quality service, it can lead to problems both internal and external."

Library

The volume of books available as the "library" has been reduced. The most obvious change is that five books, each between 200 to 250 pages, will replace nine books. The new titles are: Service Strategy, Service Design, Service Transition, Service Operation and Continual Service Improvement. This should make it less expensive, and less time consuming, to obtain the information and best practices. A new certification system has also been introduced. These changes mean there are more topics available in which to achieve certification and that an ITIL diploma is available. Sharon Taylor, chief architect for the ITIL v3 refresh, has also been appointed chief examiner, and will lead the new international examiner panel.

There are a number of key questions raised by the introduction of ITIL V3. These not only cover the changes in the subject content but also the practical application of ITIL and the necessity (if any) to up-skill and recertify. These concerns are

ITIL & the itSMF

ITIL is an adaptable framework of "best practices" originally devised for IT. ITIL stands for the "IT Infrastructure Library" and is a library of best practice books. It was developed in the 1980s and aimed to provide guidelines and structures for businesses to "adopt, adapt and align" their business and IT processes to deliver true business benefits. With the new revision, ITIL v3 is now an adaptable framework of "best practices" for all businesses as opposed to just IT centric businesses.

There are many reasons to use ITIL as a framework. In short, ITIL will provide the means to develop, deliver and maintain efficient and effective IT practices aligned to the business objectives in a cost effective manner.

The IT Service Management Forum (itSMF) is a global independent, internationally recognized not-for-profit organisation dedicated to IT Service Management. itSMF is wholly owned and principally run by its membership. It consists of a growing number of national chapters, each with a large degree of autonomy but adhering to a common code of conduct. In May this year the Irish chapter, www.itSMF.ie, was officially launched. Speaking at the launch was Keith Aldis, recently appointed CEO of itSMF UK, and David Wheeldon, chief examiner and an ITILv3 author. In September the chapter held its most recent event where AIB presented a case study

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There are a number of key questions raised by the introduction of ITIL V3. These not only cover the changes in the subject content but also the practical application of ITIL and the necessity (if any) to up-skill and recertify. These concerns are being heard from CIOs down to people with foundation level skills and certifications.

The general issues being voiced are:

What is required of the business to adapt to the new version to ITIL V3?

How long will 2 versions be available at the same time?

Will there be any additional costs associated with ITIL V3?

Karl Howley, head of ITSM consultancy at IT Alliance and a founding director of the Irish chapter of the IT Service Management Forum

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(www.itSMF.ie), said "Overall, costs for an organisation to adopt ITIL should not increase with the new version. As ITIL v3 has a broader scope and a more complex framework, it will require more learning for some people. However, this is not necessarily a bad thing. Broader scope equals more value while the old principals still apply. With v3 organisations can still take what they need from the framework as they have done with the previous version. The new training roadmap is looking to provide a greater differentiation of levels of certification. While not yet available, there are plans to introduce an advanced ITIL diploma. This will require a candidate to provide a proven level of hands on experience before the certification will be awarded to the individual. This is similar to the PMI (Project Management Institute) accreditation requirements. People will retain their current v2 certifications. In addition, there are bridging >>





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courses available to allow current certification holders attain v3 certifications.”

While some statistics are available for the UK, there is yet to be a full analysis of how ITIL is placed in the Irish market. What is known is that Ireland lags behind its UK counterparts in adoption and implementation. “This, however, is not necessarily bad,” says Gallacher, “as we get to learn from the mistakes of others and how other organisations have successfully implemented ITIL.”

As Howley points out, “the itSMF in the UK planned to do an in-depth study of the UK market but found that there was not enough commercial interest to proceed.” In lieu of any hard statistics, however, there seems to be quite a stir in the Irish market, with

a number of companies having implemented ITIL best practice or currently in the process.

Clive Nightingale is lead auditor and client manager with Certification Europe. Based in Dublin, they provide assessment and certification services globally against a number of international management system standards including ISO20000. Nightingale states that “ITIL is not a standard, whatever version you use. It is a set of guidance documents or a model for applying Service Management using a framework of best practice. It also allows practitioners to achieve certification at the levels of foundation, practitioner, and manager. So the question is, ‘how does an organisation certify compliance with ITIL?’ Surprisingly for some, the answer is you can’t.

For the future ITIL adoption will be on the increase. Organisations are still just becoming aware of what it is and of the benefits it can bring to an organisation’

company with only 40 staff worldwide implemented a quality ITIL based Service Management system and achieved ISO 20000 certification due to the fact that they provide a critical service to a major client. They can now provide evidence to their customers that, not only can they provide the service, but that their delivery of that service is being continually monitored and is reviewed as part of a continuous improvement plan.”

Interestingly, Derek McCullagh, IT assurance

accelerating rapidly across Europe, with many firms claiming they are enjoying major productivity gains by following ITIL guidelines. Where IT directors are not deploying ITIL, the barriers to adoption often lie outside the IT department. According to the survey, over two-thirds of those who have yet to deploy ITIL said that increased awareness of ITIL outside the IT function, increased budget and greater board level support were needed to eliminate the barriers to adoption.”

International standard

That's where ISO 20000 comes in. ISO 20000 is the certification of a quality IT Service Management system. ISO 20000 is independent of ITIL but covers much of the same ground, so both are well suited. The ISO standard is an independent assessment of your Service Management System."

It is possible to implement quality service management systems based on the requirements of ISO 20000 without ever looking at ITIL, but it may cost more in both time and money to achieve.

Nightingale has noted that "government bodies and hosting service providers are looking closely at both ITIL and ISO 20000. Generally the uptake has been from the financial, pharmaceutical and telecoms sector. As these industries are highly regulated, there is greater need for compliance to industry standards. However, Nightingale points out that it is not just the large companies that are looking to implement ITIL or comply with ISO 20000. A

McCullagh, IT assurance manager at AIB, points out



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that "initially the main driver within AIB to implement ITIL was to put in standardised best practices and service management processes across the whole IT enterprise. Although regulation was not initially a driving factor, having ITIL practices in place does help when it comes to regulatory responsibilities. Compliance to SOX (Sarbanes Oxley) is certainly much easier if you have ITIL processes in place. It can also help staff appreciate the changes involved in the ITIL programme, especially if it facilitates their responsibilities with regards SOX compliancy."

James Murray of IT Week reported in December 2006, "The adoption of ITIL best practices for managing organisations' IT services is

Status quo

Fast forward to today and the situation does not look changed. While there is momentum in the Irish market (and Europe) of ITIL adoption, there is still a need to instil ITIL awareness outside of the IT department, regardless of the version used. This appears to be of paramount importance in successfully getting an ITIL project off the ground. Gallacher agrees, "while there has been steady growth in recent years, it remains to be seen if ITIL V3 will help this trend continue. It is hoped that the answer is yes but, with 2 versions on the market, the full library of books not yet fully available and a new syllabus and exam structure coming out, it may be a little too much in one go. However, in the long run we should see the benefits of the refresh."

Consistent prices

David Moule, manager, End User Services, AIB, found that "one of the initial barriers was in convincing people that they should adopt consistent processes. Initially people tend to see the introduction of processes as a hindrance or additional bureaucracy. It can also be difficult for people to see the benefits of ITIL at the early stages."

Howley agrees and maintains that a major barrier to date has been "not having management support from the top level. This is not IT in isolation

and needs to be understood and appreciated from the board level down. People also need to know what is happening, why this is happening and need to be engaged within a programme of change. If people are not successfully engaged it can hinder an organisations ability to adapt to ITIL and the willingness of people to change."

However, most companies may not have to break new ground in order to implement ITIL based processes. Moule believes that a "level of pragmatism is required. Look at what ISO 20000 requires, look at what ITIL recommends and out of that build a service management framework and processes to fit the organisation. Look at making things better and leverage off the things that are currently being done well."

Nightingale reckons that in the future as part of a tendering policy it may become common practice to ask service providers a standardised set of questions.

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Clive Nightingale, Certification Europe

- 1) Do they have a service management system in place?
- 2) Has it been independently assessed?
- 3) Can the service provider give evidence of 1 and 2?

Nightingale points out that "assessment does not necessarily mean certification. You can have your service management system assessed by an independent auditor to show compliance of ISO 20000 without having to go through the certification process. Also, if you have an internal auditing process in place you can include ISO 20000 in your audit schedule. This can provide cost savings especially if you are set up to do internal audits."

Howley added that "for

the future ITIL adoption will be on the increase.

Organisations are still just becoming aware of what it is and of the benefits it can bring to an organisation. Some organisations will need to implement part or all of it more than others." Moule, too, emphasises the benefits to industry as a whole, saying "If Ireland is to be promoted as a knowledge-based economy offering quality services, Irish organisations will need to implement an ITIL framework and achieve certification to a standard (ISO 20000). It is not about the technology anymore but about the ability to deliver a quality service. In particular, the need for compliance and standards in the pharma and financial services sector

is very high. ITIL v3 and the ISO 20000 standard can demonstrate compliance to an auditor and take away a lot of pain for an organisation."

Shelf life

Howley maintains that like most other frameworks, there will be a shelf life for ITIL v2. The itSMF in the UK are running an ITIL V2 cessation questionnaire and the itSMF International are seeking public input as to when the ITIL V2 body of knowledge could be decommissioned. There is no doubt that ITIL v2 will be decommissioned, it is only a matter of when. By that time ITIL 3 should be well established and in a position to build on the success and experience of the previous 2 versions. ■

