



HAVING SERVICES TO HAND

The following article was published in ServiceTALK by [itSMFUK](#) co-written by myself and Beth Sherlock.

This article talks mainly about the actionable service catalogue type or self-service ordering type of service catalogue.

The concept of the Service Catalogue has been around for some time, but not every organisation seems to have understood its meaning or use. Mark O'Loughlin offers clarity on the subject and details why the effort required to create a Service Catalogue is well worth it.

The concept of a Service Catalogue was discussed in ITIL V2, with the glossary defining the concept as a: "Written statement of IT services, default levels and options". But there has been confusion as organisations attempt to understand the concept of a Service Catalogue.

Even if they grasp the ideas fully, there has been a lack of templates and guidance available, so many have struggled to actually produce a useable Service Catalogue.

To understand the relevance and importance of the Service Catalogue, first we must understand what it should look like:



- It is likened to the familiar shopping websites with the ability to use a shopping cart
- It should be presented in everyday language that the user understands
- It needs to be easy to navigate the Service Catalogue and for the user to find what it is that they are looking for
- It presents a list of the services available e.g. a new laptop request, the ability for a user to release a blocked e-mail themselves etc.
- Different users can have different levels of access dependant on their entitlement to a particular service
- Allows the user to see the status of their interaction and any history associated with it. Is it pending, approved or declined etc.
- Provides management with a view of the services being used, who ordered the services and the number of people using particular services

Building Blocks

These are the building blocks you need to address before attempting to build a Service Catalogue:

- 1. Identify, understand and document what services are being provided by IT
- 2. Identify, understand and document what services enable users to perform business activities.



- 3. Identify and understand the relationships between the services and the Configuration Items (CIs) that make up the services.

In effect all of these will become part of the service portfolio, which will provide the capability of what the Service Catalogue offers.

Benefits Of The Service Catalogue

The benefits introduced by the Service Catalogue are numerous. Cost reduction is the first thing to note, as it will make users self-sufficient, reducing the number of calls to the service desk. It will also help align IT to the business by bringing together and linking business, user and IT services into one place.

It will also aid understanding by presenting business and user services in non-IT language. order and that there is confidence (based on evidence) in the department's ability to deliver the goods.

In essence this means that, at a minimum, incident management must be well established and mature - a three or above on the CMM (Capability Maturity Model) is a good guide. Ideally all tactical processes should be in place and stable.

Service Level Management (SLM) is another foundation process for delivering your Service Catalogue implementation. While Service Level Agreements (SLAs) won't be based on services until after the catalogue has been designed, the presence of SLM, even at the configuration item or system level, is important.



SLM is certainly not a process to introduce for the first time at the release of the catalogue as this is inherently a vulnerable stage. The service desk needs some prior experience of the impact of, at the least, rudimentary SLAs on IT operations.

The IT team should also have worked on developing positive relations with the business in the past. If this is the first attempt at cordial relations, the business may be understandably circumspect. Gentler, less intrusive and smaller initiatives are the best way to prepare the ground for the advent of the Service Catalogue.

Is the business ready?

The Service Catalogue model maps top tier business services directly to business functions, in turn providing a guide for service development and enabling the IT department to visibly align itself with the business.

However, where the business itself has not identified its key processes, then such mapping will prove impossible. It is rarely productive for the IT department to try and drive the business to define these processes if they do not already exist. Business process definitions are in themselves complex and are generally undertaken during quality initiatives such as ISO 9001.

Where the organisation does indeed have the necessary foundations to build on, and in general fits into the model provided by ITIL, a one step at a time approach is often the best route to Service Catalogue success



Tips for getting a Service Catalogue on the road.

- In general, there are no easy shortcuts to success - design the Service Catalogue to meet clear priorities within your organisation rather than follow a generic blueprint.
- Don't expect the business to 'get it' right away. Articulating the value to the business is key so allow plenty of time for discussion and negotiation.
- Identifying service 'owners' and clear responsibilities is vital.
- Knowing your Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will enable you to report against meaningful goals.
- Complex user groups means a more complex Service Catalogue – pre-plan and map services clearly. Pilot one area initially; learn the lessons and only then, move on.
- Be confident that your IT service management tool is up to the job. Integrated call logging and service request management are pre-requisite and the supporting architecture should be scalable to future needs.
- Don't underestimate the power of a web portal – easy user access to the Service Catalogue can be a real vote winner.
- Keep the lines of communication open: Design review stages into your catalogue management process to ensure that users can locate the right service quickly and easily.



Further details are available in my book "[The Service Catalog](#)" which is published by Van Haren Publishing and is available through online bookstores.

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