Is ITIL the Explosive Formula That Will Make EMC^2 = 1 EMC

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Introduction

IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL) is the explosive *de facto* standard for IT Service Management that will transform the way IT Services are provided to the business over the next decade. ITIL as a service is the gateway to true Infrastructure Lifecycle Management. So, how does it all fit together, how does it affect you, and how do you arm yourself with the tools to become a capable participant in the coming evolution?

ITIL facilitates consultative infrastructure solutions with a logical flow from error to resolution. The ITIL philosophy has evolved from a purely process driven approach to a more services-centric focus, and considers Service Management to consist of a number of closely related and highly integrated processes. To realize the key objectives of Service Management these processes must use people, processes, and products effectively, efficiently and economically to deliver high quality, innovative IT services that align to business needs.

This brings us to the point of aligning the infrastructure to business needs. ITIL only states that you should, yet does not provide the prescriptive remedy to implement thus falling short of some expectations. ITIL eliminates "Silos of Power" and provides the glue by which the infrastructure/EMC^2 can now act as one. EMC^2 has changed the "why" to the "why not". Where most ITIL consultants fall short, right after the assessment stage, EMC^2 has blossomed and developed such a finite roadmap for success that I wish to share my extended version with you.

EMC's Contribution

EMC^2 assumes the Assess stage and includes it as part of the Plan stage.

Here, I have emphasized the assessment phase by establishing an additional stage dedicated to the assessment of the organizations' infrastructure. A solid, accurate baseline is critical to future success. Configuration Management should be one of the first processes any organization establishes on the ITIL journey. This framework will deliver results and help you to accelerate Information Lifecycle Management and achieve the benefits of a business-centric information infrastructure. This framework, when combined with the ITIL framework for Service Management, creates a repeatable formula for success that will change the way we deliver IT services to the business. ITIL is about embracing change, it is about continuous service improvement, it is about creating a workable and repeatable model.

Assessing an infrastructure is akin to triage on a battlefield. We must first stabilize the patient, and determine the symptoms prior to prescribing a remedy. They say that doctors are the best salesmen, and the reason is simply that the patient knows themselves better than anyone. A doctor listens to what the patient has to say about their deviation from the baseline or their position relative to what they know to be healthy. The doctors' job is to get the patient back to optimal performance, and this can only be achieved after the initial assessment.

"We have to live in a world of mistakes and defective products as if they were necessary to life. It is time to adopt a new philosophy." (W. Edwards Deming, 1900 – 1993)

Baseline

Performing a Baseline of all configuration items is the cornerstone to any assessment. However, without Change Management to make a Request for Change (RFC), the baseline quickly becomes outdated. What is the answer to this dilemma? EMC^2 provides infrastructure mapping through automated tools, and ITIL provides the necessary framework by which to maintain and improve the current and proposed future state of the infrastructure through a combination of processes such as Configuration Management, Incident Management, Problem Management, Change Management, and Release Management.

Why do we baseline? A current state assessment answers the question, "Where are we now"? Implementing Service Management explains that we must first understand where we are with a clear vision of where we want to be. This is commonly called a gap analysis without clear understanding of where it fits into the ITIL framework. EMC^2 provides a service catalog offering through its Infrastructure Consulting Services. This is significant because now we are providing the answer to the other two questions within the Process Improvement Model which are, "How do we get where we want to be?", and, "How do we know we have arrived?"

Therefore, implementing IT Service Management is actually an activity of process improvement that re-engineers the architecture and aligns existing hardware and applications based on the Service Level Agreements and service offerings defined in the service catalog. Much like a menu in a restaurant, clients can now order what they need. The best part is that if the restaurant is not serving what you want, simply submit a change request.

The EMC^2 edge as an information infrastructure solutions provider is the ability to deliver state of the art tools and technology as well as the repeatable methodology to deliver based on best practice. So, now that we have been introduced to the explosive formula that will transform IT service delivery, I will share the mechanics behind the myths to deliver a world class IT environment to any business.

System Development Lifecycle

First, we must consider the lifecycle as it relates to all things in the information infrastructure. For example, if ILM and tiered services are the desired end state, then we must reverse - engineer the process. To achieve this end state, we will need a "Roadmap." To draft an accurate roadmap, we first need to understand the gap between current and desired future state, as well as referenced architectures derived from Service Catalogs based on Service Level Agreements that ultimately culminated from the Baseline and Enterprise Maturity Model, sometimes called an assessment. So you see, it is all a system development lifecycle utilizing best practices from ITIL, Six Sigma, and ILM. Six Sigma can be replaced with the desired process improvement methodology, but ITIL and ILM are the main ingredients that are common to any successful IT Infrastructure.

Here is an illustration of a service lifecycle implementation roadmap. Each step in the service lifecycle below can and should be mapped back to its respective ITIL process. In performing this activity it becomes clear that without ILM, ITIL has no substance, and without ITIL, ILM has no framework.

Customer expectations must be communicated clearly and remain the focal point when designing the infrastructure as they directly translate into business needs.

Implementation Timeline

The implementation timeline will vary greatly depending on your organizations' ITIL maturity level. For example, if you want to perform a Baseline it would go much more smoothly if there is an established Configuration Management Process already implemented. This time factor differential will be exponential if supported with other processes such as Problem Management, Change Management, and Release Management.

Alternately, organizations that cannot or do not to see the benefit of Configuration Management from a top-down approach may never achieve a true Baseline. Therefore, these organizations will not achieve true optimization; they will continue to be IT firefighting shops and they will not evolve into the Service Management organizations that are needed to align IT resources with the needs of the business. IT Service Management is a journey of continual service improvement. It is important to understand that you cannot improve what you cannot measure, you cannot measure what you cannot control, and you cannot control what you cannot define.

One key consideration is the need to have support mechanisms driven by business needs – that is, to have the value stream come first – with processes, problem solving, data gathering, tools, and compliance/governance mechanisms aligned to support the business. If you do not start from this perspective, you run the risk of making business processes fit tools and frameworks – instead of the business itself. In other words, pick the tools after you define the business requirements. Processes should make business information flow.

People: Your Best Resource

Consider input from the most valuable resource any organization has… people. Tools and frameworks exist to improve their results. Smart change management is gradual, and it is best to leverage the good in people, to engage them by soliciting their input, to communicate openly, to solicit their ideas. Control is an illusion, and external control will not take good people much farther; however, reaching out to them and creating a culture of excellence with mutual respect, and presenting them with the challenge of world class achievement will provide a strong foundation for profitability and a strong sense of corporate culture.

Checklist of Best Practices

I have established a checklist of best practice methodologies to guide you on your journey from ITIL through ILM.

(5 Step) Six Sigma approach:

1. Define: What is important to the customer and the business? How does the project support this?

2. Measure: How are we doing? Define the current process and assess performance. (This is in alignment with ITIL best practice which I will elaborate on in a minute.) Establish a baseline.

3. Analyze: What needs improvement? Identify the root cause of the problem. Establish current pain.

4. Improve: What is the cost of doing nothing? Make the changes needed to improve the process.

5. Control: Measure success! Plan for sustaining the gains, and celebrate and communicate.

(4 Step) ITIL - Process Improvement Model (Plan, Do, Check, Act)

1. Where do we want to be? (Vision and business objectives)

2. Where are we now? (Assessments)

3. How do we get where we want to be? (Process Improvement)

4. How do we know we have arrived? (Metrics and Measurements {sign off – close out milestone/project completion})

(5 Step) Service Definition Process

1. Define major business functions and processes.

2. Define facilitating IT services.

3. Map IT systems to IT services. (i.e. MS Exchange to email)

4. Develop service offerings. (Service catalog)

5. Map IT components to IT systems (Configuration Management Database {Server to MS Exchange})

What is a Service?

A service is one or more IT systems that enable a business process. A service is a means of delivering value to customers by facilitating outcomes that customers want to achieve without the ownership of specific costs and risks.

Author's Biography

Bartley Corbin has 15 years of experience in the Federal/DoD regulatory and compliance arena. He has served in the U.S. Army as well as the U.S. Air Force and holds certifications in ITIL, Logistics, and Budget Analytics, and has a wide array of knowledge in the IT field to include: Mainframe, Data Center Management, extensive COOP and BC/DR, implementation, engineering, virtualization, and Certification and Accreditation.   Bartley is an EMC Proven Professional certified in Storage Technology Foundations.