Service Transition: Leveraging Three New "Key" ITIL® V3 Concepts – But Are They Really New?

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For years organizations have struggled with the concept of Change. We know that we need to Change. We just do not do a good job of planning and managing Change within the IT Organization. With the introduction of ITIL V3, three new concepts have been brought to light that will help your organization to manage Transition more successfully. But are these concepts really new?

Transition Planning and Support Makes Practical Sense

In the ITIL framework there is a new process that ensures that a Service Transition is planned and follows the policies established within the IT organization. Its objective is defined as "plan and coordinate the resources to ensure that the requirements of Service Strategy encoded in Service Design are effectively realized in Service Operations." What this means is that we take the business requirements that are captured in Service Strategy and turned into a detailed design for a new service in Service Design – are successfully transitioned into the live environment so that the business receives the value and Service Operations can deliver and support the new service. This is no minor task. Within Service Transition we have Change Management, Release and Deployment Management, Service Asset and Configuration Management, Knowledge Management, Evaluation, and Service Testing and Validation. The activities of all of these processes must be coordinated to ensure that what is designed is then built, tested and implemented successfully. Many organizations struggle with just the adoption of a Change Management process. Imagine what it is like to coordinate the efforts of so many resources across many different processes and objectives.

Transition Planning and Support is vital to the success of IT. Even if we design the perfect service, the value is not received until the service is in the live environment. To successfully do this requires knowledge of not just how to manage complex projects, but how to manage complex IT projects with many different types of risks and challenges across the Business and IT. The guidance provided by ITIL largely looks at the unique challenges faced between the phases of the build, test

and implementation of the service. In the end, to be successful in these large programs, ITIL recommends to adopt project management best practices.

Project Management Office – Its Already There Why Not Use It?

One of the advantages of ITIL V3 is how much more aligned it is with other frameworks and standards. Within Service Transition, there is a focus on leveraging project management techniques to ensure that what is transitioned is documented, planned and managed to a successful result. Many organizations have been doing this for years. In fact, eight out of the last ten organizations I have worked with have had some formal Project Management Office that is leveraged within IT to help manage projects. Clearly this is not a bleeding-edge idea, it is something that has been around for a long time.

Why the PMO? With transition comes risk and everyone knows that risk must be managed. The risks associated with projects are about allocating the right skilled resources, securing sufficient funds, creating a detailed plan of orchestrated events and ensuring that the project finishes on time and within budget and that the objective is achieved to the satisfaction of the stakeholders (I know I am over simplifying this, please do not take offense to it, I bow down to the certified project managers). When you look at the magnitude of Change involved in rolling out a new service into the business, many RFCs or Requests for Change are required for this type of proposal. The more successfully managed the more likely the business will be happy with the results. In walks the project management certified professional with the Six Sigma Black Belt tagging along and out comes a more successful service that meets the needs of the business. IT has needed project management for years and it is great that it is not just advised but suggested that successful Service Transition is done through the use of established project management methodologies. If you haven't taken the leap yet, I highly recommend a project management certification in addition to the ITIL certification. Not only can you say I speak ITIL, but you can also say I speak results.

Early Life Support Might Actually Be New

Okay I lied. Early Life Support is a really cool idea that has been preached for many years by organizations such as HDI. I have even seen the concepts implemented within organizations over nine years ago. The only thing is, we just did not call it Early Life Support.

ELS is an important part of Service Transition during the time that the Service goes live and until it is stabilized in the environment. No longer will the Service Desk Manager find out about the change in the cafeteria three days after it has been implemented. The Service Desk staff will actually be trained and knowledge will be transferred prior to its release. On top of that, we may even get some help after the release when the call volumes spike because the organization will allocate the appropriate resources to ensure that any Incidents that result from Change will be tracked and monitored. The ultimate goal is to ensure that if action is needed (like an RFC) the teams involved in the build, test and implementation will be able to identify the issues quickly and take swift action. This enables the operation and use of the new service by the business and ensures that the entire IT organization is ready for its release. ELS is necessary to ensure that the Service is stabilized in the environment but also because it forces the IT Functional silos out of their comfort zone to focus on answering the question, "How can WE successfully deliver the service together?" It is an IT focus on value – not on individual ownership.

ITIL is Just Common Sense

ITIL is really a collection of good practices that many organizations have implemented successfully. No one organization will probably implement ITIL soup to nuts. But one thing is for sure, there are nuggets of good information that can be leveraged to stand out as a service provider and make Service Transition successful.

IT organizations must standardize the phase of Service Transition. We need to define what it will look like, what the policies will be and then establish the roles and responsibilities to make it happen. Throw in a little project management magic and pay attention to Service Operations BEFORE you transition and Change will not seem so difficult.

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