

Office of Technology Strategies (TS), Architecture, Strategy & Design (ASD)

A VA Executive's Guide to IT Service Management

Introduction

A previous TS note (Vol. 2, Issue 8) introduced the topic of Configuration Management, which is an important part of the larger concept of Information Technology (IT) Service Management (ITSM). [ITSM](#) is a strategic approach to designing, delivering, and managing IT to ensure that business goals are met within an organization. ITSM helps organizations define processes that generate a set of consistent, timely responses that ensure a high level of customer service. And while the process concerns technology, the focus of ITSM is on the customer. [Gartner](#), a firm that specializes in IT research, tells us that 80% of technology outages are not due to the failure of technology; rather, they originate from people and process issues. This is why the documentation of well-defined processes is crucial to ITSM. In addition to a basic overview, this report provides you with examples of how ITSM is or can be implemented at VA.

The ITIL Framework and the IT Service Life Cycle

ITSM is often implemented through a set of frameworks, including the de facto framework that is most associated with it, the IT Infrastructure Library or [ITIL](#). ITIL incorporates five IT service life cycle steps: Service Strategy, Design, Transition, Operations, and Continual Service Improvement. Each step in the cycle consists of a set of regular and repeated actions and influences that are used to align IT with the business needs of an organization. The term "cycle" is Greek for "circle;" it implies that within the ITIL framework that is used to structure, plan, and control IT service management, the cycle will begin again.

ITSM and ITIL, upon which ITSM is based, are both an integrated, process

based, set of best practices to manage IT services. ITIL defines and documents the best practices, while ITSM employs them to meet unique customer requirements and priorities.

The First Step and Prime Focus of ITIL: Service Strategy

The start of the IT service life cycle, Service Strategy, is often the area that needs the most attention. In most organizations, however, attention is most often on the Transition and Operations steps because they serve to sustain the delivery of goods and services (that is, "keep the lights on"). Ironically, Transition and Operations usually involve well understood processes that describe how things should be done. Service Strategy, on the other hand, often requires a paradigm shift in culture or mindset, with a focus on why things should be done. Why would a customer be interested in a particular product or service? The question elicits a customer-centric focus that adds value to business results. Service strategies that are used to align IT to business outcomes include establishing priorities, identifying risks, and analyzing resource allocations.

TRM as a Service Strategy

A notable service strategy is the development of IT software and service portfolios that contain information about prices, contact points, and processes. Such a strategy is implemented at the VA Office of Information Technology (OI&T) as the One VA Technical Reference Model (TRM). It is one component within the overall Enterprise Architecture (EA) that establishes a common vocabulary and structure for describing the information technology that is used to develop, operate, and maintain enterprise applications. It includes the

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The TS office within OI&T's Architecture, Strategy & Design (ASD) interacts not only with the ASD pillar offices, but also with multiple stakeholders within OI&T and with strategic offices across the enterprise. TS works closely with IT and business owners to capture business rules and provide technical guidance as it relates to Data Sharing across the enterprise, specifically for interagency operability.

Standards Profile and Product List that enables users to search for technologies, generate reports, review forecasts, and access software release history.

VA stakeholders must use TRM to determine the technical alignment of projects and programs when tracking them through VA's Project Management Accountability System (PMAS). PMAS is utilized by all OI&T qualifying projects that deliver new functionality or enhance existing systems.

Driving the Review of IT Service: Continual Service Improvement

While value creation starts with Service Strategy, another prime focus of ITIL is Continual Service Improvement (CSI). Although this step appears in many diagrams as the last step in the IT service life cycle, CSI drives the organization to review every aspect of IT service with a non-stop process of review, alignment, and renewal, throughout the life cycle.

CSI is demonstrated through a variety of implementations, such as the review of management data and trends, in order to ensure that services are meeting performance levels; helping to prioritize improvement opportunities; and conducting internal audits to verify compliance, to name a few.

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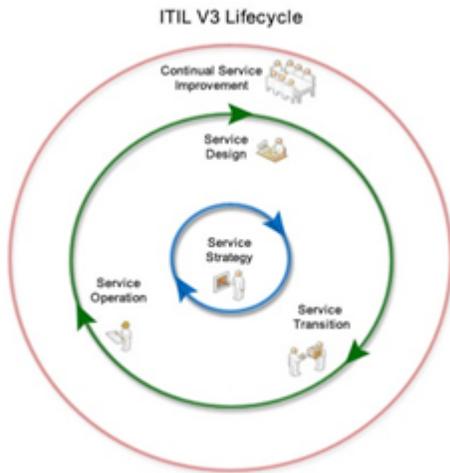


Figure 1: ITIL V3 Lifecycle

Enterprise Design Patterns as Continual Service Improvement

VA's Office of Technology Strategies (TS) implemented CSI by developing a set of ITSM Enterprise Design Patterns (EDP). EDPs are formalized best practices that the technologist can use to solve common problems when designing an application or system. The EDPs were designed to address weaknesses that were identified through enterprise-wide audits that were completed by the Continuous Readiness in Information Security Program (CRISP). [CRISP](#) is the VA information security program that is used as a framework to develop plans and implement activities to protect VA and Veteran information. The EDP documents provide standard approaches and guidance on security vulnerability scanning and the removal of unauthorized software from VA networks.

The EDP documents also provide guidance on consistent IT service configuration management. Configuration refers to the way a system is set up, or the assortment of components that make up the system. Configuration can refer to either hardware or software, or the combination of both. The management of IT service configuration uses a federated (centralized data sharing) Configuration Management System ([CMS](#)). So when a system appears to require hardware or software upgrades, an IT specialist can make a more informed decision about the upgrade needed by accessing the CMS to see what is currently installed.

Stakeholder Management as Continual Service Improvement

Another significant demonstration of CSI is the goal of building effective relationships with business and IT [stakeholders](#). At VA OI&T, this effort will be implemented through the use of a structured approach to stakeholder management by TS. The TS Implementation Support (IS) team will guide each workstream through the use of a stakeholder management plan they recently developed to maintain a stakeholder resource database. The goal of the plan is to help determine the most effective approach to stakeholder communication, risk mitigation, and tactical decisions for engagement. The database will identify stakeholders and their competing objectives, classify them in terms of their ability to disrupt change, and their required and current understanding, commitment, and support. It will use data input from task teams and employ formulas to provide results that will be used to shape strategies, anticipate expectations, ensure support, and improve the quality of products and services.

Conclusion: The Paradigm Shift

Now that you have learned about specific examples of ITSM implementation at VA, a review of the transformation of a traditional IT paradigm to an [ITSM](#) model, as illustrated by the attributes in the table below, can serve to validate your understanding.

Your effective implementation of ITSM will enable your customers to better utilize a business aligned, IT environment, which is adaptive, agile, and service-oriented.

If you have any questions about IT Service Management, don't hesitate to ask TS (askTS@va.gov) for assistance or more information.

Traditional I/T	becomes	ITSM Process
Technology focus	→	Process focus
"Fire-fighting"	→	Preventative
Reactive	→	Proactive
Users	→	Customers
Centralized, done in-house	→	Distributed, sourced
Isolated, silos	→	Integrated, enterprise-wide
"One off", adhoc	→	Repeatable, accountable
Informal processes	→	Formal best practices
IT internal perspective	→	Business perspective
Operational specific	→	Service orientation

Table 1: Transformation of Traditional IT paradigm to ITSM