

ITIL v3 - What You Need to Know about the New Version of ITIL

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The Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) v3 was released in June 2007, seven years after the last significant ITIL update. With this new version has come a renewed interest in ITIL for businesses that rely heavily on IT for their business, as well as concerns about what this means for those who were using v2.

Before a discussion of the revised ITIL framework can begin, it is important to understand some basic concepts of ITIL, including its benefits.

What is ITIL?

ITIL was conceived in the 1980s by the United Kingdom's Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency (CCTA), when the organization realized that a more systematic approach to managing the IT infrastructure on which it had become dependent was required. The CCTA has since changed its name to the OGC (Office of Government Commerce), and in addition to creating the ITIL framework, has continued to champion additional products and services that have become standard in both the private and public sectors.

According to the official website, "ITIL is best practice in IT Service Management, developed by OGC and supported by publications, qualifications and an international user group."¹ The library "consists of a series of books giving guidance on the provision of quality IT services, and on the accommodation and environmental facilities needed to support IT."²

How Does Use of the ITIL Framework Benefit Businesses Overall?

Over the past 20 years in which the average person has been using computers in the workplace, the nature of end-user complaints has not changed much. Many users feel that technology is confusing, systems are sluggish and inefficient, and response time from support personnel is inconsistent and slow. Typically, IT managers solve these problems by purchasing more tools and hiring more support people, which doesn't always address the root cause.

The ITIL response to these challenges is different. Instead of a solution that involves further financial investments in tools and personnel --which ultimately will give the IT department more issues to manage and juggle-- ITIL divides the work into repeatable processes and activities. With this approach, process results are measured and then improvement targets are set for efficiency and effectiveness for those activities. Essentially, the ITIL framework provides the structure to work smarter, not harder.

ITIL also represents a solid investment for businesses because it is completely scaleable and entirely platform independent. Therefore, the ITIL framework can be applicable to both global businesses running the latest and greatest technology as well as to smaller institutions that may be running older systems on a smaller scale.

How Does ITIL v3 Differ from ITIL v2?

The previous version of the ITIL, Version 2, was released in 2000, but the sweeping and fast-paced changes to the way businesses leverage technology (Internet applications, e-business, distributed systems, etc.) since that time meant that it was in critical need of an update. In June 2007, the newest version (v3) of the ITIL framework was released. ITIL v3 takes advantage of the dynamic nature of the web and, in addition to its five core print books, it also provides web-only components and tools called "ITIL Live." The hope is that by leveraging the web future revisions will be less cumbersome, as the material on the web can grow more organically than it would be able to if it were only in print form.

At its core, version 3 of the ITIL framework covers a much broader angle than v2, and it adds service strategy and a service lifecycle approach to better fit more mature IT organizations. Where the previous ITIL framework focused primarily on operational and tactical processes, v3 now revolves around whole services and emphasizes strategy and operations management. As a result, *Service Support* and *Service Delivery* processes are now divided over the four lifecycles of *Service Strategy*, *Service Design*, *Service Transition* and *Service Operation*. These processes are measured and improved with the all-encompassing phase of the lifecycle, *Continual Service Improvement*.

What Does the ITIL Version 3 Bring to the Table?

Essentially, v3 is much more strategic and aims to reach a broader audience than earlier ITIL versions. In v2, the ten processes of the *Service Support* and *Service Delivery* books had more of

a "bottom up" focus; organizations implemented the modules which offered the most immediate relief, typically starting with support processes and gradually adding delivery processes. But the new ITIL methodology focuses much more heavily on the alignment between IT and business, with a "top down" perspective. A, B, and C level executives will find great value in this new version of ITIL.

In addition, previous versions of ITIL did not have as broad a focus as v3 does. V2 covered processes and the supporting activities for those processes, but it did not offer quite the extended view of how IT fits in with the business, and more specifically, why it needed to. The release of v3 acknowledges that for businesses to get to the next level, they need to partner with IT to design and continually improve services.

ITIL Version 2 is still viable and will continue to provide usefulness; and some organizations will choose to "not fix it if it ain't broken." However, v3 adds a new, emphatic layer of strategic insight, which mature organizations will find exceedingly valuable.

Are There Any Inherent Challenges with Version 3 of the ITIL Framework?

It is important to note that there is some consensus among industry leaders that the newest ITIL methodology has been found to be more challenging to implement in smaller environments. For this reason, retaining knowledgeable consultants with experience in implementation of the ITIL framework is always a good idea for any organization seeking to improve its IT Service Management capabilities. While ITIL v2 certifications will continue to be considered valid, it is highly recommended that v2-certified individuals enroll in update or bridge courses offered by qualified providers in order to ensure that their knowledge remains up to date.

Conclusion

The release of ITIL v3 begins an exciting period for executives and IT professionals to explore ITIL or to update their existing certifications. Because ITIL v3 focuses on different areas than v2, the new information can be of great benefit to IT organizations and the businesses they support. Ensuring that those in the IT industry have a solid understanding of the latest ITIL framework will lay the groundwork for a speedy adoption of future releases.

¹ <http://www.itil.co.uk/faqs.htm#11>

² <http://www.itil.co.uk/about.htm>

About the Author



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Jill's IT career spans the Big 5 Consulting, Medical, Legal, Financial, Pharmaceutical, dot.com, Fortune 500, Entertainment, Publishing and Retail industries, with consulting expertise in Service Desk implementations, process redesign, outsourcing and technical writing. When she's not traveling for work, Knapp is traveling with her big band, The Industrial Jazz Group. For more information about ITIL training courses offered by Knapp I.T., Inc., please visit <http://www.knapp-it.com> .