

Practical IT Service Management

A Concise Guide For Busy Executives

Thejendra BS



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IT Governance Publishing

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Preface

Practical IT Service Management is a concise guide to implementing a professional technical service management structure in your organisation based on the international best practice framework, ITIL (IT Infrastructure Library). This framework is globally the most widely accepted approach to technical service management, and is developed based on input from several public and private sector organisations. This beginner's book explains the basics of ITIL Version 3 and its implementation and interpretation in an easy, self-study approach for all technical and business staff in your organisation. The entire book is written in a question and answer format for easy comprehension and speedy reading. Each chapter covers only one specific area of ITIL, and each topic is explained concisely, with very few answers extending beyond a page. Practical and real-life examples with a little bit of humour are used throughout. This self-help book is designed to be a small stepping stone to the official books on ITIL published by OGC. ITIL® is a Registered Trademark of OGC (Office of Government Commerce, British Government, UK).

Unless stated otherwise, the names of companies and people mentioned in the examples in this book are fictitious. But the names of actual companies and products mentioned are the trademarks of their respective organisations. I would like to thank Mr Alan Calder, Miss Angela Wilde and Mr Simon Kear for their immense help in preparing this book. Although this manuscript has been prepared with the utmost care, the author, publisher, editor or any other party associated with this book can accept no liability for any direct or indirect damages caused by following the advice given here. However, suggestions for improvement, errors or

mistakes observed, corrections required and any other relevant information that could be incorporated in a future edition will be gratefully received at thejendra@yahoo.com.

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January 2008

About the Author

Thejendra BS is an IT manager for a software development firm in Bangalore, India. Starting as a field engineer in the previous century he has more than 17 year's experience in a wide range of roles in IT areas. He has been involved in IT support, help desk, DRP-BCP, asset management, IT Security and implementing dozens of small to large IT projects costing several bags of gold, and has worked in India, Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Bahrain, Qatar and Australia. During his years in the IT world he has dealt with countless flavours of customers, vendors, end-users and organisations of all sizes. In addition he is also a freelance writer and writes articles and books on management, self help, technical and workplace issues, humour and related topics that are frequently syndicated around our planet through several RSS feeds. His articles have also been published on reputed websites like geekleaders.com, drj.com, ezinearticles.com, cio.com, techrepublic.com, cnbc.com, itmuseum.org, sourcingmag.com and many ezines.

Other books by this author.

- *Disaster Recovery & Business Continuity: A Quick Guide for Small Organisations and Busy Executives*
- *Corporate Wardrobe: The Cotton Business Humor Collection*
- *Corporate Wardrobe: The Woolen Business Humor Collection*
- *Life 365: A Year's Supply of Wisdom, Tips and Advice for Everyone*

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Contents

Chapter 1	Introduction to IT Service Management.	1
Chapter 2	ITIL Service Management Practices.	13
Chapter 3	Service Desk Function.	45
Chapter 4	Incident Management.	63
Chapter 5	Problem Management.	73
Chapter 6	Change Management.	81
Chapter 7	Release and Deployment Management.	91
Chapter 8	Service Asset and Configuration Management.	103
Chapter 9	Service Level Management.	119
Chapter 10	Service Catalogue Management.	133
Chapter 11	Capacity Management.	143
Chapter 12	Demand Management.	155
Chapter 13	Availability Management.	161
Chapter 14	Information Security Management.	169
Chapter 15	Access Management.	177
Chapter 16	IT Service Continuity Management.	183
Chapter 17	Financial Management.	199
Chapter 18	Supplier Management.	207
Chapter 19	Operations Management Function.	219
Chapter 20	General Tips and Advice for IT Service Management.	223
<i>Appendix 1</i>	<i>Sample SLA between IT Services and RockSolid business managers.</i>	<i>233</i>
<i>Appendix 2</i>	<i>Sample OLA between IT Department and the Electrical Department.</i>	<i>241</i>

Contents

<i>Appendix 3</i>	<i>Sample UC between RockSolid IT Services and ABC Computer Corp.</i>	<i>243</i>
<i>Appendix 4</i>	<i>A simple IT Service Management flow with interactions among different processes.</i>	<i>245</i>
<i>Appendix 5</i>	<i>The ITIL Glossary.</i>	<i>247</i>
<i>Appendix 6</i>	<i>ITSM books and other resources.</i>	<i>249</i>

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO IT SERVICE MANAGEMENT

'A business absolutely devoted to service will have only one worry about profits. They will be embarrassingly large.' *Henry Ford*

What is this book about?

The advancement and easy availability of new and useful technologies today have enabled thousands of organisations worldwide to implement and become heavily dependent on technology for running their businesses. Today, it is not possible to run any organisation, small or big, without the use of some computer- or telecom-related technology. With so much proliferation of hardware, software and networking equipment, it is necessary to have specialised and dedicated technology support departments to look after them. Today, a professional technology support department is as essential to any organisation as a qualified finance department or senior management. Though organisations are free to have their own proprietary flavours of technical support suiting their needs, it is always better to adopt some international best practices as they prevent organisations from reinventing the wheel. This concise book explains how to implement a professional technical service management department in your organisation based on the international best practice IT service management ITIL (IT Infrastructure Library) framework. This is globally the most widely accepted approach to technical IT service management (ITSM) and has been developed based on input from many public and private sector organisations. ITIL[®] is a Registered

1: Introduction to IT Service Management

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All the basics of IT service management and its implementation interpretation are explained here in an easy, self-study manner for the technical and business staff in your organisation. Each chapter covers only one specific area of IT service management, which is explained through a set of basic questions and answers in a jargon-free language. This book is written in a condensed style and you may have to slow down or re-read some parts to understand the concept. Speaking in a lighter sense, it is the number of useful ideas per hour you can extract from a book which is important and not the number of pages turned per hour. This self-help book is designed to be a small stepping stone to the official books on ITIL published by OGC. Anyone interested in learning in-depth details of this subject should also purchase the full set of the Official ITILv3 Lifecycle Publication Suite (supplier details for this are included in Appendix 6).

Important note

In the real world, business people are not unduly concerned about exact textbook definitions. They are only concerned about quick practical solutions for implementing IT, and the answers and concepts you use must make sense to them in simple, non-technical terms. The objective of this book is to educate business owners and IT departments on practical and real-world ways of implementing a professional IT service department within their organisations. This is neither a theoretical textbook nor a reproduction of the official ITIL books. However, exact ITIL definitions from the official ITIL glossary have been used in a number of places to support a standard terminology for IT service management. Unless otherwise annotated, every IT service management definition in this book comes from the Official Glossary.

1: Introduction to IT Service Management

The whole book can be viewed as a commentary and implementation interpretation on how IT service management (using the principles of ITIL) can be applied in a manner that business people can understand and be convinced about its benefits. This book also includes a generous dose of various non-ITIL-based best practices and tips.

Who should read this book?

As the title suggests, this book is written for busy IT executives in any organisation. Most busy executives do not have the time, patience, luxury or interest to read detailed, academically oriented IT books due to their never-ending workloads. They need quick, practical information on a topic or concept that will help them in their jobs. This book fills the needs of such an audience and will be of use to:

- Technical Managers.
- Technical Support Specialists.
- IT Consultants.
- Chief Technical Officers.
- Chief Information Officers.
- Business Managers.
- And even members of the Board of Directors.

What is IT?

The term 'IT' is an abbreviation of information technology, and a general dictionary defines IT as the development, installation and implementation of computer systems,

1: Introduction to IT Service Management

telecommunications and software applications. In practical terms, IT consists of:

1. Computers such as desktops, servers, laptops, mainframes, etc. and the data that they hold.
2. Software such as operating systems (Windows, Unix, Linux, Novell, specialised operating systems) and applications such as word processors, spreadsheets, databases, productivity tools, business applications, custom-built applications, etc.
3. Communication and telecom equipment such as pbx, lease lines, the Internet, telephone networks, local area and wide area networks, etc.
4. Other specialised IT equipment and software.

The exact definition of IT is:

The use of technology for the storage, communication or processing of information. The technology typically includes computers, telecommunications, applications and other software. The information may include business data, voice, images, video, etc. Information technology is often used to support business processes through IT services.

What are IT services?

The term 'IT services' refers to a set of support and maintenance functions provided by technically qualified staff (internal or outsourced) to an organisation that uses various computers, software, printers, hardware and communication facilities. An IT service may range from providing access to a simple application like a word processor for all end-users, or access into a complex network consisting of hundreds of different types of computers, operating systems, servers, e-mail systems, websites, databases, telecom systems, Internet

1: Introduction to IT Service Management

access, etc. used by hundreds of end-users inside an organisation.

The exact definition of an IT service is:

A service provided to one or more customers by an IT service provider. An IT service is based on the use of information technology and supports the customer's business processes. An IT service is made up of a combination of people, processes and technology and should be defined in a service level agreement.

What is IT service management?

The term 'IT Service Management' refers to an orderly and professional method followed by an IT department to provide reliable and efficient information systems and support to meet business requirements. Most organisations now understand the benefits of having IT throughout their internal environment, but do not understand the need for managing it properly. But unless IT equipment is managed in a proper way, your organisation can get into serious trouble. Firstly, and as mentioned earlier, no modern organisation can run its operations or survive without using one or more computers, software, telecommunications, the Internet and so on. If an important computer system stops working then businesses may have to close down if it is not possible to switch over to alternative manual processes for any length of time. Secondly, today's computer systems and networks are extremely complex and complicated for any business people to maintain or support them on their own. Hence, specialised employees are required who understand how those systems work and how to babysit them. IT services should be in alignment with your business strategy and objectives. From a simple nuts and bolts perspective, IT service management means that the 'techies' (employed or outsourced) in the

1: Introduction to IT Service Management

organisation are professionally managing and maintaining the computers, networks, telecommunications, data storage and retrieval, e-mail systems, databases, etc. owned or used by your business.

The exact definition of IT service management is:

The implementation and management of quality IT services that meet the needs of the business. IT service management is performed by IT service providers through an appropriate mix of people, process and information technology.

What issues do IT departments face in any organisation?

Running an IT department is a Herculean task. There will always be some problem or other to keep the staff perpetually busy and hassled. Some of the common hassles faced by IT departments of many small and even large organisations include the following:

- Roles and responsibilities of staff are not clearly defined or are non-existent. No structured customer support mechanism in place. No help desk or service desk facilities.
- Business managers do not understand (or try to understand) the technical department's work and constraints, and technical people do not understand (or try to understand) the business people's needs.
- A single IT person or a slave-sized IT team (i.e. too small) responsible for anything and everything related to IT. Excessive workloads and poor career growth prospects.

1: Introduction to IT Service Management

- Lack of clearly defined and simple processes. No service level agreements, vendor agreements, technical training, etc.
- Frequent dogfights between business and IT departments for service and cost expectations.
- Business and technical staff not seeing eye to eye. Poor management buy-in, inadequate funding, culture issues, resistance to change, etc.
- Businesses not understanding the essential requirements for using IT in their organisations (proper IT staffing, exponential hardware and software budgets, on-going costs, frequent and necessary upgrades, etc.).
- Technical staff concentrating only on technical matters, and unable or unwilling to understand business needs.
- No proactive IT trouble prevention methods. Only reactive support. A problem gets solved after it occurs with no prevention mechanism in place.
- IT staff using outdated tools and equipment due to various reasons resulting in the IT department out of sync with modern business demands.

... and several more.

What issues do businesses face through heavy dependence on IT?

Ten to twelve years ago, only very large organisations could afford to use computers. At that time, IT was not considered as essential to run a business. Today that thinking is no longer applicable, and IT has proved its benefits even in the smallest of organisations. Today, using information

1: Introduction to IT Service Management

technology is a Catch-22 situation, as businesses have become excessively dependent on IT. You cannot live with IT, nor can you live without IT. With so much dependence on IT there will be associated risks and issues. To fully answer this question, it is first necessary to understand how IT normally gets implemented in an organisation. Many organisations can easily buy the necessary computers, software, telecommunications, etc. for running their businesses. However, the implementation of IT is usually done without proper planning of any sort due to numerous reasons, including a lack of appropriate knowledge.

There will be several IT-related issues that will cause minor to major irritations, or even bring an organisation to an abrupt halt. The following examples show how most organisations usually implement IT and the hair-raising issues they can face.

Example: Poor IT implementation

The owner of a small business may buy a single computer, initially for general use. After seeing the benefits of using computers, he may immediately decide to buy 25 more for his staff. Within a short time his business will be computerised, and very soon IT support headaches will enter the business. Using a computer may be easy, but maintaining a computer system is a complicated task. Users may suddenly experience crippling virus attacks, equipment failures, software licensing issues, data corruption, data loss, backup issues, upgrade issues and so on. They may not be in a position to support and maintain a computer network and its associated functions. Overnight, a smart purchasing assistant may undergo a crash course in computer maintenance, or buy a book called *Computer Maintenance for Dummies*, and soon will be given responsibility for the technical support of the business along with his or her other responsibilities. This is how IT departments start in thousands of organisations. However, this sort of approach will lead to major and uncontrollable issues later.

1: Introduction to IT Service Management

Example: Hardware failure

Let us take a simple example of how a single hard disk crash can cripple your organisation. A technician who lacks business sensitivity may view a computer hard disk crash as a simple issue, whereas it may be seen as a bankruptcy or doomsday signal for the business owner since the entire business and financial data may be on the failed disk. To add to the misery, the disk was probably not being backed up regularly. On the other side of the coin, the business owner would have probably earlier refused to invest money on an essential device like a tape drive for data backup. Finally both will blame each other. A typical scary interaction between techies and the business departments in many companies can be like this:

Finance Department: 'Hello, techies. Our finance server is not working. Can you fix it immediately?'

Techie: 'Which one?'

Finance Department: 'The one that we use in our department. That black system with the green keyboard.'

Techie: 'I had a look at it, but the hard disk is dead. We will have to replace it. I will call the vendor and arrange for a replacement if possible.'

Finance Department: 'What about our data?'

Techie: 'Can't recover. The disk is dead, and we have not been backing up the data of that server, because nobody told us to. Besides, you did not approve the purchase of a tape drive for that machine. Your previous finance manager was maintaining the system because of confidential data.'

Finance Department: 'Gasp! We have all our payroll, purchasing, billing, sales and other important financial data for the entire company on that machine. Five years of data!'

Techie: 'Too bad. I have to go and attend another call.'

Finance Department: 'Help! Call the CEO! Call the Press! Call the Army!!!!'

A situation like that can cripple your organisation within hours.

1: Introduction to IT Service Management

Example: Other common IT headaches

Other IT-related frequent pinpricks and shocks can be as follows:

- Your end-users don't know who to contact when their computers and other IT equipment fail.
- Your techies attend end-user calls if they can, when they can.
- Business managers do not understand why their IT infrastructure is always having disruptions of a similar nature.
- Monday morning chaos. All computer systems down for some reason. Your techies probably performed some maintenance activities over the weekend.
- Businesses cannot commit about their products and services to their external customers. (See *next example*.)
- Your end-users do not know if all IT services will be available for them every day to complete their activities.
- Viruses, crippling and lengthy IT shutdowns, etc. are common.
- End-users always face shortage of computers, disk space, data corruption, data loss, etc.
- Business managers do not know why they need to shell out another bag of cash for some software the IT department needs.

Example: IT breakdown affecting business

New Sales Manager: 'Folks, where are you going? That sales quote must be sent to the Abacus Company today or we lose that account.'

Sales Team: 'We are going home. All computers are down. We can't prepare the sales quote without that.'

New Sales Manager: 'Home? When will the techies fix it?'

Sales Team: 'May take a couple of days or more.'

New Sales Manager: 'What? We can't wait that long.'

1: Introduction to IT Service Management

Sales Team: 'We do here. Very often some kind techie will fix it up within three days. Computer breakdowns are quite frequent here.'

New Sales Manager: 'Heavens!!! I have committed the quote to the Abacus Company. If I don't send it today, we lose a US\$50,000 order.'

So how will professional IT service management help?

These examples show what can happen to your organisation without a professional and proactive IT service department. Without such a department, your organisation can face crippling and profit-threatening situations. But if you had implemented professional IT service management practices, such harrowing situations would not have occurred. Or even if an important disk had crashed, it could have been restored in a matter of hours.

Haphazard IT support directly or indirectly impacts your main business. For example, will external customers open an account in a bank that has frequent and lengthy computer breakdowns, virus attacks and shutdowns? Or if your entire manufacturing operation is computerised, and if there are frequent IT breakdowns, think about the losses, delay and its business impact. So considering the complexity and the importance of today's computer systems, it is imperative to bring in some measurable and verifiable IT service standards so that your business managers understand the IT department's scope of work, the deliverables, the constraints, the limitations, budgetary needs and so on. And it is absolutely necessary for both IT and business departments to understand that the quality of support, its availability and the recoverability of your IT infrastructure will directly

1: Introduction to IT Service Management

influence the quality, profitability and respectability of your organisation.

This is where professional IT service management or ITIL will help, because they are industry best practices that can safeguard your organisation. Otherwise, your organisation may follow some proprietary service processes and methodologies that may or may not save you, and also not be transparent, documented, controlled, measurable, repeatable, portable and so on. By implementing IT service management, your business owners can have the satisfaction and peace of mind of knowing that the IT infrastructure necessary for running your business is in safe hands.

Implementing a best practice IT service management system does not mean discarding every current process or method used by your organisation and starting from scratch. You can gradually implement one that will be much more efficient than a method developed in-house.

CHAPTER 2: ITIL SERVICE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

'Call them rules or call them limits, good ones, I believe, have this in common: They serve reasonable purposes; they are practical and within a child's capability; they are consistent; and they are an expression of loving concern.'

Fred Rogers

This book explains IT service management based on the principles of ITIL and shows how you can implement or interpret them in a practical manner. It covers the essential processes of both ITIL Version 2 and ITIL Version 3. As an IT manager involved in practical technical aspects, this chapter may seem like a collection of dull processes raising doubts on how you can use actually use them in the real world. But as you read through this book, you will soon realise that ITIL actually contains a lot of technical and practical IT service management common sense rather than non-applicable theoretical processes. Your organisation can benefit widely from using an IT service management framework such as ITIL. But the wealth of advice given in ITIL depends on how you can interpret the given processes and apply them to you organization. This book aims to help you achieve that interpretation.

Important note

As mentioned earlier ITIL is under copyright. Hence no exact material, diagrams or content of the official ITIL books is reproduced in this book. However, there are a few exact ITIL definitions from the official ITIL glossary mentioned in some chapters just to elaborate the concept being explained.

2: ITIL Service Management Practices

What is ITIL?

The term 'ITIL' (IT Infrastructure Library) refers to a best practice framework for IT service management and consists of a series of publications giving guidance on how to provide quality IT services in your organisation, and the various processes and facilities needed to support these services. The guidance teaches the technical support staff in your organisations how to provide efficient IT services to your businesses and your end-users. As mentioned before, ITIL is the most widely accepted approach to IT service management in the world. The recommendations of ITIL can be used by small, medium and large organisations.

ITIL was first developed in the United Kingdom with the involvement and input of numerous industry and government organisations. ITIL is owned by the UK Office of Government Commerce (OGC), and is a registered trademark of OGC. This means the copyright is with OGC, and the material, diagrams, tables, etc. are all protected by copyright. So they cannot be reproduced by anyone without the written permission of OGC. But the concepts and implementation interpretation of ITIL can be commented upon and explained by others, which is how this book is organised.

How did ITIL start?

During the late 1980s, the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency (CCTA) in the UK started to work on a set of processes called the Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL). Soon, major companies and other government organisations adopted the framework, added their own best practices, and thus the ITIL

2: ITIL Service Management Practices

framework became a set of industry best practices. ITIL has now become the de facto standard in delivering IT services for all types of organisation. Both government and non-government organisations can benefit by following ITIL practices.

In 2000 Microsoft[®] started using ITIL as the basis of the Microsoft[®] Operations Framework[®] (MOF) to support the launch of their Datacentre product.

In 2001 ITIL Version 2 was released with the Service Support and Service Delivery books.

ITIL Version 3 was released in late 2007. Version 3 replaces Version 2, but it includes all the core principles and fundamentals of Version 2. Version 3 is built on top of Version 2, but is organised around the concept of the service life cycle and includes several new benefits to help businesses become world class.

Before you begin the actual journey of IT service management based on ITIL, it is necessary to understand the meaning of certain common words such as ‘business’, ‘customer’ and ‘end-user’ as used in the IT service management world. These are all the core concepts of ITIL Version 2, but also hold good for ITIL Version 3. This can be explained through an example:

Example: The RockSolid Corp

There is a modern company called RockSolid Corp, owned by Mr Johns, that manufactures and sells industrial air conditioners. This company has about a thousand employees spread among several departments (sales, finance, human resources, engineering, clerical support, technical design, support, servicing, etc.). All employees have been provided with a desktop computer, access to e-mail, telephones, the Internet, office applications and other

2: ITIL Service Management Practices

software necessary for their departments; all are connected by a local area network. There is also a separate department called the Technical Services Division consisting of several employees (or outsourced staff) responsible for maintaining those computers, e-mail systems, Internet access, software, networks, etc. for the company. The Technical Services Division in turn has several sub-departments or groups specialising in a particular IT area such as desktop support, network support, software support, service desk and so on. These departments have appropriately trained staff and also have support arrangements with external vendors who provide materials such as computer spare parts and associated support.

According to IT service management based on ITIL we have the following definitions:

- **Organisation:** means the RockSolid Corp with all its employees, equipment, etc.
- **Business:** The primary business of the RockSolid organisation is selling industrial air conditioners. Without selling air conditioners the organisation cannot exist. As a rule, every air conditioner purchase order is processed and shipped within two business days.
- **IT services:** covers all the IT facilities and access to various applications, computers, telecommunications, software, databases, e-mail systems, web servers, associated infrastructure, and the Technical Services Division (with its sub-departments) who look after that equipment in the RockSolid organisation.
- **Customer:** This term has to be used carefully. A customer in ITIL is the person (or senior management) who pays for, and owns, the IT Services or the Technical Services Division. Typically, this is someone who is responsible for absorbing the cost of having an IT service within his or her organisation. In this case, the owner of

2: ITIL Service Management Practices

RockSolid Corp, Mr Johns and his business managers, are the customers for IT services. In turn, Mr Johns will have *external* customers who have purchased air conditioners manufactured by RockSolid Corp.

- **End-users:** The various employees and departments within the RockSolid organisation who use the IT services on a day-to-day basis are called end-users. They depend on IT services for running the business smoothly. For example, the Finance Department will depend on IT services to maintain and support their payroll and accounts server. The Engineering Department will depend on IT services to maintain and support their design server. In many companies, end-user departments also pay for having regular or special services from IT services. Hence, end-users can also be treated as a flavour of *customers of IT services* from a broad perspective.

To summarise:

- Customers for IT services of RockSolid Corp are business managers (who pay for having the IT services) and end-users (of RockSolid Corp) who may directly or indirectly pay for these services. This book will deal mainly with these customers and look at how IT services provide effective internal support to the end-users, business managers and divisions inside the organisation(s).
- Customers for RockSolid Corp are the various external companies and individuals who have purchased air conditioners. In this book, we will *not* refer to these external customers.

2: ITIL Service Management Practices

What are the main benefits of using a framework like ITIL?

Many organisations believe they have already implemented excellent self-developed IT services and don't need to change, as the current framework might be acceptable to the business imperatives. But, on closer examination, these bespoke services will usually lack many necessary and essential processes that could enhance the IT department. The benefits of using professional IT service management processes such as those in ITIL are simply enormous. For example:

- ITIL is a framework that offers benefits that demonstrate value and return on investment to every business owner, service provider, CIOs, CTOs and a CEO.
- Proven and tested processes. No need for businesses to reinvent the wheel for implementing IT services in their organisations. Covers end-to-end.
- Non-proprietary practices. ITIL is owned by the Office of Government Commerce, but does not require a licence to practice and it is independent of any commercial solution or platform. Every organisation can use the official ITIL books to implement the processes.
- Improved quality of IT service for business functions. Reduced down time, improved customer and end-user satisfaction.
- Measurable, controllable, recoverable.
- ITIL is scalable. It can be adapted for any size of organisation.
- Proactive rather than reactive. Clearly defined roles, responsibilities and activities.

2: ITIL Service Management Practices

- Greater understanding of IT and its limitations. Business will understand IT better and vice versa.
- There is also a range of accredited ITIL training and education courses. This has resulted in the growth of a number of support services, training institutes, tools and consultancy services that can help your organisation's IT departments.
- Return on Investment (ROI). ITIL helps IT departments demonstrate their return on investment and measurable value to the business, and also cut IT costs. This helps establish a business case for new or continuing investment in IT.
- ITIL also helps in outsourcing. ITIL is widely practised among many industry service providers and they can easily help your organisation's IT departments.
- Continuous improvement, stability and proactive trouble prevention.
- Improved business image. Businesses will also learn what to commit, and what not to commit, to their external customers.

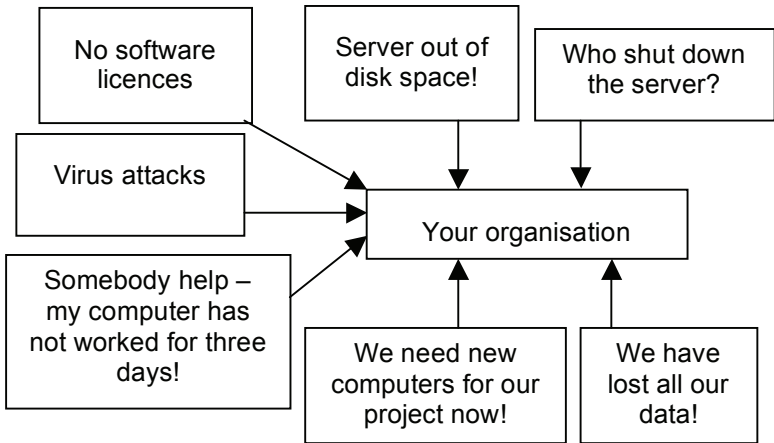
Important note

While ITIL has many benefits, it is not prescriptive. The important point is that the framework is independent of any of software vendors or their proprietary systems. As it is vendor independent, it does not recommend or criticise any vendor's products or practices. This means ITIL will not tell you to use Microsoft Windows® or buy Cisco® routers and so on. Organisations are free to choose whatever IT equipment is best suited to their businesses. ITIL does not lay down any rigid guidelines or strict rules, but focuses on IT service management best practices that can be interpreted and used in various ways, or customised to your needs. Hence you should understand what works in one

2: ITIL Service Management Practices

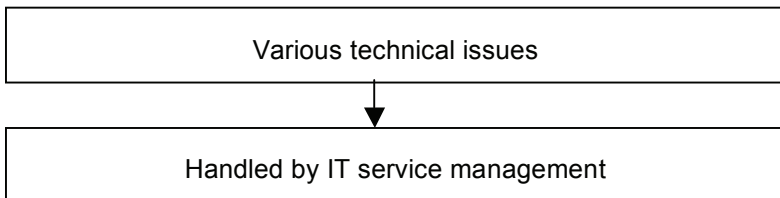
company's IT environment may not work exactly the same in another. But even if your organisation implements only part of the ITIL framework, you can put your organisation on the road to becoming world class.

Figure 1: Before IT service management implementation



End result: poor business and IT interaction

Figure 2: After IT service management implementation



End result: better business and IT interaction