

Changing Organisation Structure to Deliver IT services.

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Journal of the IT Service Management Forum October 2002

IT organisation structure is difficult to get right. Good organisational structure is clearly a prerequisite to good ITIL implementation. Effective ITIL needs to be integrated at the core of the IT organisation. Service management needs to be everybody's concern, whether on the helpdesk, managing IT procurement, or debugging Java applets.

So why do so many organisations separate IT service management and IT development management and create organisational structures that are technology-focused rather than business-focused?

Take a look at a typical ITIL supporting IT governance structure. The IT service manager is in charge of service support and service delivery. Problem management, service desk, computer operations, configuration management, and desktop and network support are managed by the service support manager. Service continuity, availability management and service level management are part of the service delivery manager's responsibility. This structure matches ITIL needs well, but operates separately from IT development. The IT development manager directs the development and programming teams. System development, system maintenance and IT procurement sit at a considerable distance from the help desk and user support. And never do the twain meet.

Such a split structure may match ITIL, but may not meet the needs of the business. An IT department organised around the technology may not reflect the organisational structure of the business. Such organisational misalignment may increase the distance between the IT and the organisation it serves. An IT structure that separates IT service management and IT development management creates a Berlin Wall with all too common outcomes:

- IT services and IT development evolve different cultures. Attitudes to each other range from ignorance to distain and hate;
- Communication between services and development is minimal;
- IT services don't trust IT development and won't let them near configuration management systems;
- IT developers frequently drop new system releases on IT services without considering the service requirements or even telling them that a release is imminent.;
- IT developers think service personnel are technically ignorant, IT service staff see developers as geeks;

- IT developers think that as soon as the programs are written, they cease to be anything to do with them and IT service staff think new programs can be produced instantly.

This split between services and development can only serve to reduce the effectiveness of IT, to set in concrete divisions and difference which are of no interest to the business and to encourage in-fighting and arguments about whether IT services or IT development is responsible for an IT failure. The services/ development division just creates confusion for the customer. The business wants a coherent interface, a seamless service provision which delivers the right services to the right place at the right time. A technology-based IT infrastructure is unlikely to achieve that goal.

IT developers can't operate without IT services. They depend on IT services to get users on the system, to keep the systems going and provide the feedback. Similarly, when problems occur and availability is lost, IT developers and software maintainers are required to mend the system. And how can it make sense to have a configuration administration, release control and change control that is remote from the IT developers who are building the releases?

The managerial, organisational, cultural and technical separation between IT development and IT services is not good for anyone. But how can it be overcome?

I would suggest that what is needed is a service-oriented approach to structuring the entire IT organisation, not just those elements that are within the domain of ITIL.

A service-oriented approach seeks to divide the IT infrastructure into service teams that support the service provided by the organisation. Each team provides the information and system needs of a particular service element. A service-focused IT infrastructure then directs the attention of IT staff outwards to the organisations' services and customers and away from a notion of the primacy of the IT.

The service team would be driven by defined service level contracts and measurables. How the service is delivered would be up to the team. For example, the team would make decisions as to whether to meet the service need by tweaking an existing computer system, buying or building. Also the team would decide when to retire an existing computer system. The delivery of the service to the organisational service area or business unit should continue without the service customer needing to get involved with implementation of a new system and without having to organise their activities according to an IT agenda.

Consider an organisation with a large sales team. Within the IT department is an IT sales service team, which provides all the information and computer needs of the sales team. It supports the hardware, procures, develops and maintains the sales system and provides training and updates of sales systems. Sales systems developers and service support personnel work in the same team. There is no business divide between service and development. Development of the information systems is a continuous process. Updates,

new software and hardware platform changes are delivered without disrupting the sales effort. The provision of new laptops and technical support of laptops, and the technical support of the network hardware are outsourced.

The IT service team for sales concentrates on supporting the information and transactional needs of the sales team. The IT sales service team is managed by a senior sales expert, who understands all the business functions and strategy around sales. This person reports to the IT director and the sales manager and manages a team including a help desk operator, a trainer, a service engineer, two developers and a contract and procurement manager.

The service team develops its own IT service strategy which defines what services it delivers to sales and how these IT services are to be delivered. Priorities are agreed with the sales manager and SLAs defined specific to sales. Where some SLAs cover generic services such as network support, these are discussed with other business service support teams within IT.

In a service-oriented IT infrastructure, business services are supported by IT services which draw on applications, training, and information resources to deliver a holistic service which meets the service needs for information and does not just focus on technology. This contrasts with a traditional model which a computer application is built for the business and IT services support the computer application. It also moves us away from the divisive separation of IT services and IT development.

Based on a paper, [Developing a Service-Based Information Systems Strategy](#), given at the UK Academy of Information Systems Conference, Leeds, April 10-12 2002.

Available on the Centre for It service Management Research website at:
http://www.cse.dmu.ac.uk/cism/service_management.html