

## 9 Challenges, critical success factors and risks

### 9.1 CHALLENGES

The complexity of services across the supply chain is increasing and this leads to challenges for any service provider that implements new services or changes existing services. IT within e-business not only supports the primary business processes, but is part of the primary business processes.

This prime position brings a wide range of challenges to successful Service Transition, such as:

- Enabling almost every business process and service in IT, resulting in a large customer and stakeholder group that is involved and impacted by Service Transition
- Managing many contacts, interfaces and relationships through Service Transition, including a variety of different customers, users, programmes, projects, suppliers and partners
- There being little harmonization and integration of the processes and disciplines that impact Service Transition, e.g. finance, engineering, human resource management
- There being inherent differences among the legacy systems, new technology and human elements that result in unknown dependencies and are risky to change
- Achieving a balance between maintaining a stable production environment and being responsive to the business needs for changing the services
- Achieving a balance between pragmatism and bureaucracy
- Creating an environment that fosters standardization, simplification and knowledge sharing
- Being an enabler of business change and, therefore, an integral component of the business change programmes
- Establishing leaders to champion the changes and improvements
- Establishing 'who is doing what, when and where' and 'who should be doing what, when and where'
- Developing a culture that encourages people to collaborate and work effectively together and an atmosphere that fosters the cultural shifts necessary to get buy-in from people
- Developing standard performance measures and measurement methods across projects and suppliers
- Ensuring that the quality of delivery and support matches the business use of new technology
- Ensuring that the Service Transition time and budget is not impacted by events earlier in the service lifecycle (e.g. budget cuts)
- Understanding the different stakeholder perspectives that underpin effective risk management within an organization
- Understanding, and being able to assess, the balance between managing risk and taking risks as it affects the overall strategy of the organization and potential mismatch between project risks and business risk
- Evaluating the effectiveness of reporting in relation to risk management and corporate governance.

### 9.2 CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

Service provision, in all organizations, needs to be matched to current and rapidly changing business demands. The objective is to improve continually the quality of service, aligned to the business requirements, cost-effectively. To meet this objective, the following critical success factors need to be considered for Service Transition:

- Understanding and managing the different stakeholder perspectives that underpin effective risk management within an organization and establishing and maintaining stakeholder 'buy-in' and commitment
- Maintaining the contacts and managing all the relationships during Service Transition
- Integrating with the other service lifecycle stages, processes and disciplines that impact Service Transition
- Understanding the inherent dependencies among the legacy systems, new technology and human elements that result in unknown dependencies and are risky to change
- Automating processes to eliminate errors and reduce the cycle time
- Creating and maintaining new and updated knowledge in a form that people can find and use
- Developing good-quality systems, tools, processes and procedures required to manage a Service Transition practice
- Good Service Management and IT infrastructure tools and technology

- Being able to appreciate and exploit the cultural and political environment
- Being able to understand the service and technical configurations and their dependencies
- Developing a thorough grasp of the hard factors (processes and procedures) and soft (skills and competencies) factors required to manage a Service Transition practice
- Developing a workforce with the right knowledge and skills, appropriate training and the right service culture
- Defining clear accountabilities, roles and responsibilities
- Establishing a culture that enables knowledge to be shared freely and willingly
- Demonstrating improved cycle time to deliver change and less variation in time, cost and quality predictions during and after transition
- Demonstrating improved customer and user satisfaction ratings during Service Transition
- Demonstrating that the benefits of establishing and improving the Service Transition practice and processes outweigh the costs (across the organization and services)
- Being able to communicate the organization's attitude to risk and approach to risk management more effectively during Service Transition activities
- Building a thorough understanding of risks that have impacted or may impact successful Service Transition of services in the Service Portfolio.

### 9.3 RISKS

Implementing the Service Transition practice should not be made without recognizing the potential risk to services currently in transition and those releases that are planned. A baseline assessment of current Service Transitions and planned projects will help Service Transition to identify implementation risks.

These risks might include:

- Change in accountabilities, responsibilities and practices of existing projects that de-motivate the workforce
- Alienation of some key support and operations staff
- Additional unplanned costs to services in transition
- Resistance to change and circumvention of the processes due to perceived bureaucracy.

Other implementation risks include:

- Excessive costs to the business due to overly risk-averse Service Transition practices and plans
- Knowledge sharing (as the wrong people may have access to information)
- Lack of maturity and integration of systems and tools resulting in people 'blaming' technology for other shortcomings
- Poor integration between the processes – causing process isolation and a silo approach to delivering ITSM
- Loss of productive hours, higher costs, loss of revenue or perhaps even business failure as a result of poor Service Transition processes.

### 9.4 SERVICE TRANSITION UNDER DIFFICULT CONDITIONS

In some circumstances, Service Transitions will be required under atypical or difficult conditions, such as:

- Short timescale
- Restricted finances
- Restricted resource availability – not enough people or lack of test environments, inadequate tools etc.
- Absence of anticipated skills sets
- Internal political difficulty, staff disincentives, such as:
  - Redundancy/outourcing or similar threats
  - Difficult corporate culture of confrontational management style
  - Internal rivalries and competitiveness
- External difficulties such as weather, political instability, post-disaster, legislation.

Clearly, some of these circumstances overlap with continuity planning, and many of the approaches set out in the Service Design publication will be relevant to successful transition in difficult circumstances.

If the difficulties are anticipated, then alleviating measures will be identified and form part of the service package, planning the route through transition within the transition model, as would any foreseen factors likely to influence transition.

It is quite possible, however, that the difficulties will be unanticipated, perhaps due to changed circumstances, and will require 'on the fly' adaptation. This section sets out some of the constraining circumstances that might require adaptation, modification or compromise, and elements of approach that would aid success. A key element common to most (if not all) of these situations is

having a clear understanding of what will constitute success. When circumstances are difficult priorities are often focused on specific aspects of service, customer base etc. – then to deliver accepted priorities in the constrained circumstances will often require compromises in other areas.

#### 9.4.1 When speed is more important than accuracy or smoothness

In time critical situations, implementation of a new or changed service may be more important than a degree of disruption. This is effectively a risk management decision, and general risk management principles apply. Some of the key factors that assist with delivering success in this context are:

- Empowerment – with staff given the authority to take appropriate levels of risk. In volatile industries Service Transition must act in a way that reflects the corporate risk culture and not suppress or undermine business risk decisions.
- A need to know the absolute cut off date/time that Service Transition must deliver by – too often either ‘safety margins’ are built in meaning a product is delivered early that could have been improved, or people assume there is some leeway and there isn’t – meaning critical deadlines are missed. It is often better to be totally open and trust key staff.
- Deciding which components of the transitioned service must be available at the cut-off date, and which could be added later.
- How separable are the components and what are the dependencies? What elements might be required although not initially on the ‘essentials’ list?
- Which users/customers/locations etc. must be in place at the cut-off date?
- What actually happens if you fail? Again, honesty is often the best policy here. Consider:
  - Business impact
  - Money
  - Lives
  - Political embarrassment
  - Reputation.

Understanding crisis management can be very helpful in coping and especially understanding that the rules for crisis management are different from those for everyday management. Just being aware of the first two laws of crisis management (after Larry Niven) can help to reassure people that the situation is survivable:

Rule 1: Don’t panic.

Rule 2: A good crisis manager makes decisions instantly and acts on them. If they later turn out to have been correct, so much the better, but speed is often more important than efficiency in a crisis situation.

Success in these circumstances depends on:

- Empowerment and subsequent support, and a belief in that support. Staff must be aware of their empowerment levels and actually believe that the organization will support their choices – not be in fear of a ‘court martial’ approach.
- Authorization channels and those channels being open and rapid. There must be agreed actions if the channels don’t function – e.g. increased delegated authority, escalation, alternative support channels.
- Following the procedures, realizing there is risk, and no blame afterwards – if not the required flexibility and speed of response is constrained.

#### 9.4.2 Restricted resources

When resources are in short supply, a key aspect here is deciding what to measure and sticking to that decision and the framework for delivery, e.g.:

- What is the important parameter – speed, or low cost or whatever? And knowing that will be the measure of importance afterwards, e.g. no blame for it being expensive when the understanding was ‘get it in by 3 p.m. whatever the cost’.
- Establish an applicable hierarchy of measures – speed – money – full functionality etc. with some subordinate ones having absolute limits, e.g. as quickly as possible, but not more than £12,500; or as cheaply as possible but must be in by 30 September. This requires involving budget holders, business decision makers etc. to ensure the correct parameters are built in.
- Awareness and documentation. All actually and potentially aware staff need to be aware of requirements, and a mechanism for keeping staff informed quickly about changes to those requirements is essential.

### 9.4.3 Safety critical services and high risk environments

Ever-increasingly, IT services directly support or actually deliver services on which lives depend, such as hospital services, emergency services call-taking, flood control and aircraft 'fly-by-wire'. Extra security and foolproof approaches are required, with features such as:

- Appropriate documentation, which is essential and often includes counter-signatures and extra checks on stage approval; however, excessive documentation can be counter-productive; high risk can often be found in conjunction with time-restricted situations (e.g. emergency services coordination) meaning careful balancing of safety and speed is required; in such circumstances skill and experience and/or extensive training is a major factor
- Accuracy typically taking priority over speed
- More rigorous testing, longer time periods and more detailed data collected and maintained within the CMS
- Measures of safety accurately assessed by an accepted authority, e.g. what constitutes acceptable levels, such as safe radiation doses within X-ray or radioactive environments
- Setting the sign-off authority, and ensuring those responsible are not overly influenced by inappropriate pressures, such as concern about company profit or staff bonuses as opposed to risking human lives
- In extreme circumstances ensuring more than one individual must be involved for certain actions to be taken (e.g. typically the procedures for launching nuclear weapons require simultaneous confirmation by two trained officers)
- Consider 'veto' rights for sub-groupings whereby those controlling any key component of the service can stop implementation – as a 'no-go' from one of a dozen teams can stop a launch of a the space shuttle.

- Do not make staff and resources available to facilitate effective Service Transition, for example providing data and staff to assess the transitioned service, or to effect user testing.

These kinds of situation can often be improved by awareness and education of:

- Customers
- Users
- Transition staff (e.g. patience and diplomacy skills)
- Account management working with the customers to reassure customers and ascertain their requirements
- Careful budgetary control, so that customers can see the value returning for their investment of staff time and other resources.

### 9.4.4 Working with difficult customers

Of course there is no such thing as a bad customer, really, but often there are customers who are unclear of their role as a customer and so act in a way that prevents rather than supports successful implementation. Examples include customers who:

- Feel the need to get too involved in the detail of how things are done, instead of judging by the service delivered
- Are not able to deliver the decisions and choose options to suit their business needs