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A New COBIT Is in Town and I Really Like How It Looks

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COBIT Focus | 10 December 2018

ISACA® released the latest version of the COBIT® framework this month and I can tell you without hesitation that this latest structure is one of the best governance and management frameworks to date for the governance and management of enterprise IT (GEIT). The first 2 books of COBIT® 2019 have been released, with additional publications to follow later this year. If you have not yet taken a look, now is the time.

There will be 4 key publications in this release and, so far, there are 2 available:

- *COBIT® 2019 Framework: Introduction and Methodology*, which lays out the structure of the overall framework
- *COBIT® 2019 Framework: Governance and Management Objectives*, which contains a detailed description of the COBIT Core Model and its 40 governance and management objectives

The last 2 publications, scheduled to be released in December 2018, include the *COBIT® 2019 Design Guide*, which will offer guidance on how to put COBIT to practical use, and the *COBIT® 2019 Implementation Guide*, which will be an updated and more relevant version of the *COBIT® 5 Implementation* guide.

One of the things I like about ISACA's approach is that the first 2 are free to ISACA members. Members can download them on the COBIT 2019 web page.

Many of you know that I am a big fan of frameworks, and this new release of COBIT is a good one—a more comprehensive information and technology (I&T) governance and management framework. COBIT continues to establish itself as not only a generally accepted framework for I&T governance, but a framework that is aimed at the whole enterprise—which is to say, all of the technology and information processing an enterprise uses to achieve its goals. It is important to note that COBIT is not a framework that organizes business process, nor is it a framework for governing and managing all specific technologies. It focuses on the I&T components required to govern and manage the information that an enterprise receives, processes, stores and disseminates.

What Is New in COBIT 2019?

From my reading in these new publications, there are some major differences between COBIT 2019 and its predecessor, COBIT® 5. These include modified principles; new focus areas; new design factors; an updated goals cascade; modified processes (from 37 to 40); updated performance management; the term "governance components," which replaces the COBIT 5 enablers; and my personal favorite, new detailed governance and management objectives. There are so many positive changes that it is difficult to capture all of them here, so I am going to focus on how the new components and governance and management objectives interrelate. You may be wondering how processes fit into this. I will walk you through this.

Governance Components

In order to achieve governance and management objectives, enterprises should establish a governance system built from a number of components. "Components are factors that, individually and collectively, contribute to the good operations of the enterprise's governance system over I&T."[1] These components include:

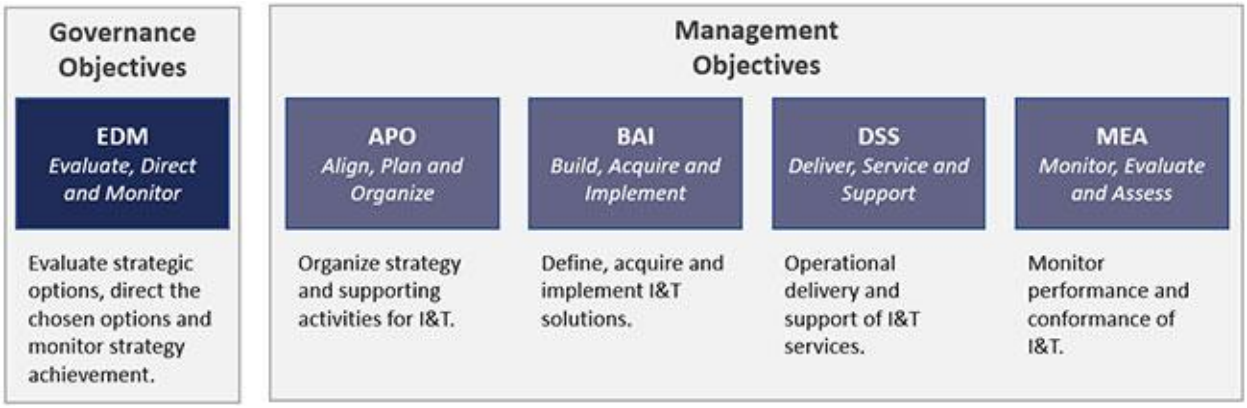
- Processes
- Organizational structures
- Information flows and items
- People, skills and competencies
- Culture, ethics and behavior
- Policies and procedures
- Services, infrastructure and applications

You may remember these as enablers in COBIT 5. I loved the concept of enablers in COBIT 5, but it was very difficult to link them to practical uses in an enterprise. These components are now a key part of the COBIT 2019 framework based on how they are linked to the governance and management objectives.

Governance and Management Objectives

One of the key areas of delivering I&T value is to contribute to the achievement of enterprise goals (identified in the modified goals cascade). These objectives are organized in the same domains we have seen before (**figure 1**):

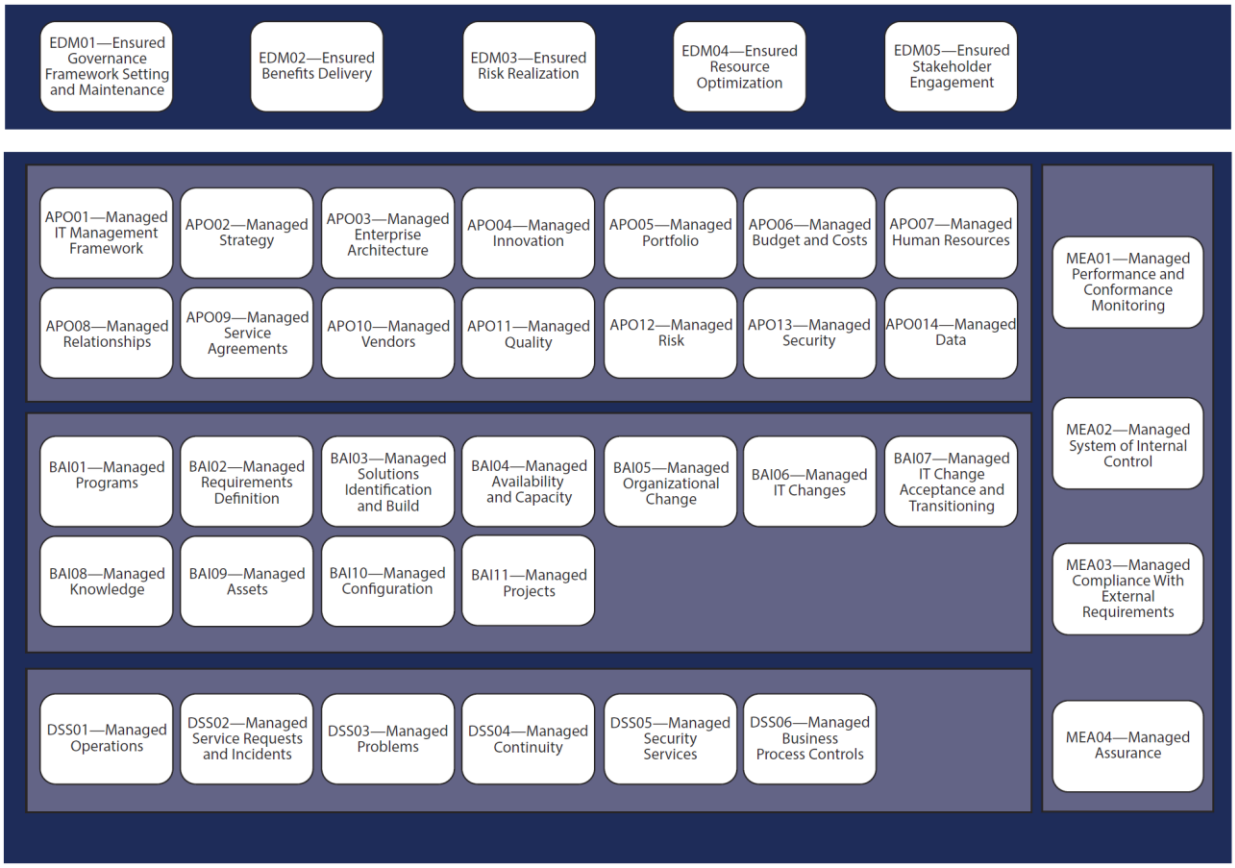
Figure 1—COBIT 2019 Domains



Each domain has a set of governance and management objectives. A governance or management objective always relates to one process and the related components to achieve the objective. Governance objectives are associated with Evaluate, Direct and Monitor (EDM), while management objectives are associated with Align, Plan and Organize (APO); Build, Acquire and Implement (BAI); Deliver, Service and Support (DSS); and Monitor, Evaluate and Assess (MEA).

There are 40 governance and management objectives, as seen in **figure 2**.

Figure 2—COBIT 2019 Governance and Management Objectives



Source: ISACA, *COBIT® 2019 Framework: Introduction and Methodology*, USA, 2018. Reprinted with permission.

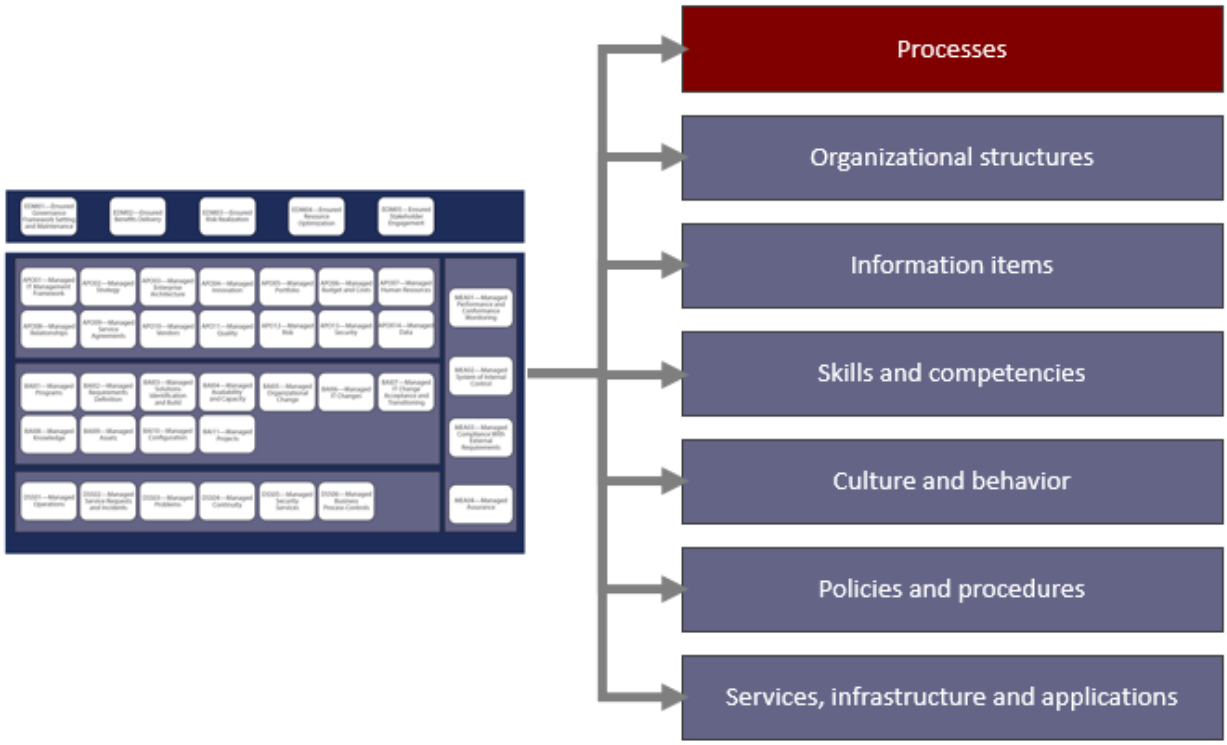
Known as the process reference model (PRM) in COBIT 5, COBIT 2019 identifies this as the COBIT Core Model. In this model, each of the 40 governance and management objectives relates to a process, which is one of the governance components. Now, how do all of these come together?

Using Governance and Management Objectives With Components

As mentioned, each of the governance and management objectives always relates to 1 process in the COBIT Core Model, so it should come as no surprise that the Core Model has 40 processes. Here is where this model is powerful. Remember, earlier I mentioned that the COBIT 5 enablers were difficult to link to the COBIT model? Well, now we see that each of these components (previously enablers) are used to describe all of the ingredients required to meet the objective.

In the *COBIT 2019 Framework: Governance and Management Objectives* publication, each of the governance and management objectives (also known as processes) is clearly described using the governance components as illustrated in **figure 3**.

Figure 3—COBIT Core Model and Components of a Governance System



Now that I have explained how these are linked, let us look at an example of how a governance or management objective is described. I will use BAI06 Managed IT Changes as an example.

High-Level Information
This includes the domain name, focus area, governance or management objective name, description and purpose statement (**figure 4**).

Figure 4—Display of Governance and Management Objectives

Domain: Build, Acquire and Implement Management Objective: BAI06 – Managed IT Changes	Focus Area: COBIT Core Model
Description	
Manage all changes in a controlled manner, including standard changes and emergency maintenance relating to business processes, applications and infrastructure. This includes change standards and procedures, impact assessment, prioritization and authorization, emergency changes, tracking, reporting, closure, and documentation.	
Purpose	
Enable fast and reliable delivery of change to the business. Mitigate the risk of negatively impacting the stability or integrity of the changed environment.	

Source: ISACA, *COBIT® 2019 Framework: Introduction and Methodology*, USA, 2018. Reprinted with permission.

Goals Cascade
This includes applicable alignment goals (formerly known as IT-related goals), enterprise goals and example metrics (**figure 5**).

Figure 5—Display of Applicable Enterprise and Alignment Goals and Example Metrics

The management objective supports the achievement of a set of primary enterprise and alignment goals:	
Enterprise Goals	**Alignment Goals**
EG01 Portfolio of competitive products and services	AG06 Agility to turn business requirements into operational solutions
Example Metrics for Enterprise Goals	**Example Metrics for Alignment Goals**
EG01 a. Percent of products and services that meet or exceed targets in revenues and/or market share b. Percent of products and services that meet or exceed customer satisfaction targets c. Percent of products and services that provide competitive advantage d. Time to market for new products and services	AG06 a. Level of satisfaction of business executives with I&T responsiveness to new requirements b. Average time to market for new I&T-related services and applications c. Average time to turn strategic I&T objectives into agreed and approved initiatives d. Number of critical business processes supported by up-to-date infrastructure and applications

Source: ISACA, *COBIT® 2019 Framework: Introduction and Methodology*, USA, 2018. Reprinted with permission.

Related Components

As mentioned earlier, there are 7 components, which were referred to as "enablers" in COBIT 5. They are:

1. Processes

Every governance or management objective relates to one process, a key element. Within the Process component, not much has changed. We still see a set of management practices, example metrics and activities, as well as related guidance. Remember that related guidance is now provided for each of the governance components. One of the major additions to COBIT 2019 is that each activity is associated with a capability level (**figure 6**).

Figure 6—Display of Process Component

A. Component: Process	
Management Practice	**Example Metrics**
BAI06.01 Evaluate, prioritize and authorize change requests. Evaluate all requests for change to determine the impact on business processes and I&T services, and to assess whether change will adversely affect the operational environment and introduce unacceptable risk. Ensure that changes are logged, prioritized, categorized, assessed, authorized, planned and scheduled.	a. Amount of rework caused by failed changes b. Percent of unsuccessful changes due to inadequate impact assessments

Activities	Capability Level
1. Use formal change requests to enable business process owners and IT to request changes to business process, infrastructure, systems or applications. Make sure that all such changes arise only through the change request management process.	2
2. Categorize all requested changes (e.g., business process, infrastructure, operating systems, networks, application systems, purchased/packaged application software) and relate affected configuration items.	
3. Prioritize all requested changes based on the business and technical requirements; resources required; and the legal, regulatory and contractual reasons for the requested change.	
4. Formally approve each change by business process owners, service managers and IT technical stakeholders, as appropriate. Changes that are low-risk and relatively frequent should be pre-approved as standard changes.	
5. Plan and schedule all approved changes.	
6. Plan and evaluate all requests in a structured fashion. Include an impact analysis on business process, infrastructure, systems and applications, business continuity plans (BCPs) and service providers to ensure that all affected components have been identified. Assess the likelihood of adversely affecting the operational environment and the risk of implementing the change. Consider security, privacy, legal, contractual and compliance implications of the requested change. Consider also inter-dependencies among changes. Involve business process owners in the assessment process, as appropriate.	3
7. Consider the impact of contracted services providers (e.g., of outsourced business processing, infrastructure, application development and shared services) on the change management process. Include integration of organizational change management processes with change management processes of service providers and the impact on contractual terms and SLAs.	

Related Guidance (Standards, Frameworks, Compliance Requirements)	Detailed Reference
ISF, The Standard of Good Practice for Information Security 2016	SY2.4 Change Management
ISO/IEC 20000-1:2011(E)	9.2 Change management
ITIL V3, 2011	Service Transition, 4.2 Change Management
PMBOK Guide Sixth Edition, 2017	Part 1: 4.6 Perform Integrated Change Control

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2. Organizational Structures

The different levels of involvement can be divided into responsible and accountable levels. Enterprises should review levels of responsibility and accountability, consulted and informed (RACI), and update roles and organizational structures in the chart according to the enterprise's context, priorities and terminology. Suggesting only responsible and accountable roles is different from COBIT 5; COBIT 5 included consulted and informed as well. Since consulted and informed roles depend on organizational context and priorities, they are not included in the new COBIT guidance (**figure 7**).

Figure 7—Display of Organizational Structures Component

B. Component: Organizational Structures											
Key Management Practice	Chief Information Officer	Business Process Owners	Program Manager	Project Manager	Head Development	Head IT Operations	Service Manager	Information Security Manager	Business Continuity Manager	Privacy Officer
BAI06.01 Evaluate, prioritize and authorize change requests.	A	R			R	R	R	R	R	R
BAI06.02 Manage emergency changes.	A				R	R	R	R		R
BAI06.03 Track and report change status.	A	R	R	R	R	R	R			
BAI06.04 Close and document the changes.	A	R	R	R	R	R	R		R	
Related Guidance (Standards, Frameworks, Compliance Requirements)	**Detailed Reference**									
No related guidance for this component										

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3. Information Flows and Items.

This governance component provides guidance on the information flows and items linked with process practices. Each practice includes inputs and outputs, with indications of origin and destination (**figure 8**).

Figure 8—Display of Information Flows and Items Component

C. Component: Information Flows and Items (see also Section 3.6)				
Management Practice	Inputs		Outputs	
	From	Description	Description	To
BAI06.01 Evaluate, prioritize and authorize change requests.	BAI03.05	Integrated and configured solution components	Change plan and schedule	BAI07.01
	DSS02.03	Approved service requests	Approved requests for change	BAI07.01
	DSS03.03	Proposed solutions to known errors	Impact assessments	Internal
	DSS03.05	Identified sustainable solutions		
	DSS04.08	Approved changes to the plans		
	DSS06.01	Root cause analyses and recommendations		
BAI06.02 Manage emergency changes.			Post-implementation review of emergency changes	Internal
BAI06.03 Track and report change status.	BAI03.09	Record of all approved and applied change requests	Change request status reports	BAI01.06; BAI10.03
BAI06.04 Close and document the changes.			Change documentation	Internal
Related Guidance (Standards, Frameworks, Compliance Requirements)	Detailed Reference			
No related guidance for this component				

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4. People, Skills and Competencies

This component identifies human resources and skills required to achieve the governance or management objective (**figure 9**).

Figure 9—Display of People, Skills and Competencies Component

D. Component: People, Skills and Competencies		
Skill	Related Guidance (Standards, Frameworks, Compliance Requirements)	Detailed Reference
Change management	Skills Framework for the Information Age V6, 2015	CHMG
Change support	e-Competence Framework (e-CF) - A common European Framework for ICT Professionals in all industry sectors - Part 1: Framework, 2016	C. Run - C.2. Change Support

Source: ISACA, *COBIT® 2019 Framework: Introduction and Methodology*, USA, 2018. Reprinted with permission.

5. Culture, Ethics and Behavior

This component provides detailed guidance on desired cultural elements within the organization that support the achievement of a governance or management objective (**figure 10**).

Figure 10—Display of Culture, Ethics and Behavior Component

F. Component: Culture, Ethics and Behavior		
Key Culture Elements	Related Guidance	Detailed Reference
Leaders must create a culture of continuous improvement in IT solutions and services, recognizing that improvement requires them to understand the impact of technology change on the enterprise, its inherent risk and associated mitigation, as well as its cost. Leaders must balance the impact of change against its expected benefits and contribution to I&T strategy and enterprise objectives.		

Source: ISACA, *COBIT® 2019 Framework: Introduction and Methodology*, USA, 2018. Reprinted with permission.

6. Policies and Procedures

This component provides detailed guidance on desired cultural elements within the organization that support the achievement of a governance or management objective (**figure 11**).

Figure 11—Display of Policies and Procedures Component

E. Component: Policies and Procedures			
Relevant Policy	**Policy Description**	**Related Guidance**	**Detailed Reference**
IT change management policy	Communicates management intent that all changes to enterprise IT are managed and implemented so as to minimize risk and impact to stakeholders. Covers in-scope assets and standard change management process.		

Source: ISACA, *COBIT® 2019 Framework: Introduction and Methodology*, USA, 2018. Reprinted with permission.

7. Services, Infrastructure and Applications

This component provides detailed guidance on third-party services, types of infrastructure, and categories of applications that can be applied to support the achievement of a governance or management objective. Guidance is generic (to avoid naming specific vendors or products).

Figure 12—Display of Services, Infrastructure and Applications Component

G. Component: Services, Infrastructure and Applications
• Configuration management tools • IT change management tools

Source: ISACA, *COBIT® 2019 Framework: Introduction and Methodology*, USA, 2018. Reprinted with permission.

Related Guidance

For each governance component, COBIT 2019 identifies the applicable standards, frameworks and compliance requirements that can be referenced. It also includes detailed references where available. Related guidance is found under each of the applicable components—this is different from COBIT 5 where this was applied only at the process level.

Keep an eye out for more of my perspectives on the new COBIT 2019 framework in upcoming articles. As always, your thoughts and perspectives are appreciated!

Editor's Note

This article is reprinted from a blog post published by the author, Mark Thomas, available here.

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Is an internationally known IT governance expert and the president of Escoute Consulting. His background spans more than 20 years of professional experience including leadership roles from chief information officer to management and IT consulting. Thomas has led large teams in outsourced IT arrangements, managed enterprise applications implementations, and implemented governance and risk processes across multiple industries. Additionally, he is a consultative trainer and speaker in several disciplines including COBIT, ITIL and IT governance.

Endnotes

[1] ISACA, COBIT® 2019, USA, 2018