

## Introduction to IT Service Management (ITSM)

### IT Service Management (Johnston, Shulver, Slack, & Clark, 2021)

**Service** is characterized by the four (4) features of services, known as the “IHIP” characteristics.

1. **Intangibility**, in that it is not a physical item. A service cannot be touched compared to a product that has a physical form, such as a car, a dress, or food. In contrast, a service, such as a theater performance, a dental appointment, or financial advice, cannot be touched as such.
2. **Heterogeneity**, in that it is difficult to standardize. It means that each time a service is delivered, it will be different as the needs and behavior of customers can vary. No matter how well the service is designed and advertised, customers may still request a service beyond what is presented. For example, in a massage salon, a patron might occasionally request a more complex type of massage and prefer a lighter one on a separate day.
3. **Inseparability**, in that the production and consumption of services are simultaneous. The service provider is often physically present when a customer consumes it. Such as, in education services, an instructor discusses concepts while students comprehend them or when doctors listen to their patients to diagnose or recommend treatments.
4. **Perishable**, in that it cannot be stored. It means that services have a limited “shelf life.” Such as, if a hotel room is not booked for Christmas night, the service meant to be provided has perished, as the same room for sale on the following night offers a different service.

The development of information and communication technology (ICT) has significantly affected the extent to which the IHIP characteristics apply and how the limits they place on service operations can be overcome.

**IT Service Management (ITSM)** allows organizations to maximize business value using information technology (IT). It is the implementation and management of quality IT services that meet the needs of and deliver value to the business.

ITSM demonstrates a set of practices or processes, establishing a service management system. Industrial, national, and international standards for ITSM set up requirements and good practices for the management system, such as the **Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL)**.

An ITSM example could involve an employee requesting laptop maintenance from the IT department. The employee must submit a request through a helpdesk or the organization's portal, fill out a ticket with relevant information, and await IT personnel to acknowledge the request from their queue to start the maintenance.

But ITSM is more than day-to-day, essential IT support as it oversees diverse workplace technology, from desktops and local servers to business-critical software applications.

#### Critical Benefits of ITSM:

- **Business Alignment:** ITSM affords the IT team a more in-depth and precise understanding of a business's requirements. Business alignment ensures everyone is on the same page and working toward the same goals. An effective ITSM makes processes far more scalable and easier to replicate, which is best for saving time and resources.
- **Increased Productivity:** Effective ITSM and accounted roles and associated responsibilities lead to increased productivity within the IT team.
- **Satisfied End-users:** ITSM results in greater end-user satisfaction, contributing to the overall business success as it ensures end-users receive the best service with reasonable expectations.

- **Improved Problem-solving:** ITSM lessens the time between incident identification and solution implementation as it gives access to detailed analytics. It assists in executing a more proactive approach to incidents, allowing them to strike preemptively before issues do any damage.
- **Compliance:** ITSM ensures that the organization is satisfying and meeting all the relevant regulatory requirements that an organization must possess.

### Brief ITSM History (Ivanti, 2023)

Many points to the introduction of ITIL, with a set of best practice books, as the starting point for ITSM.

#### The mid-1980s

- ITIL was first created when the British government was not satisfied with the quality and strategic benefit of the IT services they provided.
- They then tasked the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency (CCTA), now the Office of Government Commerce (OGC), to create a set of practices for efficient and financially responsible use of IT resources in the private and government sector.

#### 1989 – 1996

- The CCTA developed and published ITIL v1, containing more than 30 volumes.

#### 2000 – 2001

- ITIL v2 was released to make the framework more accessible and usable for IT professionals.
- This updated version condensed 30 volumes into nine (9) books, with related processes, categorized together based on each publication.

#### 2006

- An additional glossary was published for ITIL v2.

#### 2007

- ITIL v3 is released as the current version of the ITIL framework, widely known as ITIL 2007 Edition.
- ITIL v3 combined the 26 processes and functions of ITIL into five (5) volumes corresponding to a stage of the ITIL service lifecycle. Most ITIL practitioners are familiar with this iteration.

#### 2011

- ITIL v3 was revised with ITIL 2011 to resolve errors and inconsistencies in the text and graphics.

#### 2019

- ITIL v4 was released, which builds on the detailed process guidance offered in ITIL v3 and has less information about ITIL processes and offers more service management guidance with an additional focus on service management principles and concepts than processes.
- It also highlights a comprehensive approach to ITSM through the seven (7) guiding principles.

Some would also argue that much preceded ITIL that could be considered ITSM inside and outside the IT community, thus making ITSM and service management older than ITIL.

In early large-scale mainframe environments, it is common to have various managements for configuration, change, problem, availability, and disaster recovery that optimize an operation. And outside of IT, service management is always relevant to all service providers. While ITSM owes a lot to ITIL, its origins are traced back to traditional IT operations' best practices and the general service provider community.

## ITSM Tools and Software (Cornell, 2022)

ITSM tools can be categorized based on what they can do and the quality they deliver.

- **Service Desks** are communication centers that provide a single point of contact between a business/organization and its customers/employees. It aims to streamline communication—both internally and externally.
- **Helpdesks** – designed for companies to resolve customer issues through automated complaint resolution practices such as a business' ticket management processes. A good helpdesk tool can effectively improve the rate at which incidents for customers and employees are resolved.

Service Desk	Helpdesk
<i>Business-centric</i>	<i>User-centric</i>
Focuses on the business	Focuses on the end-user
<i>Proactive Service</i>	<i>Reactive Service</i>
Allows to develop long-term solutions proactively	Allows to respond to user issues reactively
<i>The Complete Picture</i>	<i>Break-Fix Model</i>
Works to prevent incidents in the future	If something breaks, users contact the team to fix it
<i>Process Oriented</i>	<i>Task-Oriented</i>
Focuses on how the entire support process can be improved	Focuses on providing the right solution to the user's need

Table 1. Service desk vs. helpdesk

### Requirements for Choosing ITSM Tools:

- **Understanding the Team's Goals and Needs:** This deals with answering the users' expectations, what support experiences to offer employees and customers, and what features the organization needs and can live without. Answering these brings the organization closer to finding a tool that matches the team's needs.
- **Testing the Interface:** The tool must be simple and easy to use as the time it would take for the team to adjust to the tool can raise a new challenge. If the user interface (UI) is more intuitive, it will take lesser time for employees to feel confident resolving user issues and requests.
- **Focusing on Scalability:** Contact the tool vendor and ask if the tool can manage an increase in support cases over time. There is no point in investing time and money in a tool that fails to adjust to the organization's future needs.
- **Exploring the Reporting Features:** Timely reports using report and analytics features can help measure employee performance, user satisfaction, and team productivity. Capturing metrics relevant to the organization, such as average first response time, customer/employee satisfaction, ticket resolution time, and unresolved tickets, will help the organization avoid problems.
- **Checking the Vendor's Reliability and Support:** With the right vendor, the organization can stay assured that they are ready to resolve any issues that affect the users at the earliest. Go for vendors with 24/7 support, as vendors only available via email might not resolve the problem promptly.

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## ITSM Software

1. **SolarWinds Service Desk** – a cloud-based ITSM software with features including change management tracking to self-generating knowledge bases. It is easy to install and customize and allows users to manage service tickets and company assets from any smartphone or tablet, which makes it ideal for device-heavy environments or employees working remotely.

It is scalable and only charges per agent per monitored device, suitable for any organization, regardless of their requirements.

2. **SolarWinds Web Help Desk** is slightly more minimalistic but gives access to powerful helpdesk ticketing functionalities.

The best feature of this software is its intuitive dashboard that gives users an easier time navigating between tabs and platforms as they track support tickets or check if an asset is available.

3. **Zabbix** – a popular IT server monitoring tool- is open source and freely available, fitting it for configuration change management. Monitoring for network, server, cloud, and application is available in this software as it is designed to be as versatile as possible.

Users are almost guaranteed to face issues with the software's steep learning curve. It takes more time to learn to customize its features as needed.

4. **Jira Service Desk** - a cloud-based ITSM solution by Atlassian best known for its efficient self-service feature, as customers can self-resolve tickets and queries by accessing its knowledge base.

This software can be set up with a codeless configuration and instantly ready to go after installation.

5. **Zendesk Suite** – has a cloud-based helpdesk management solution with customizable tools to build a customer service portal, a knowledge base, and online communities. It has a live chat feature lets users communicate with their customers more easily.

Customers can submit queries via email, chat, social media platforms, and phone. All these are in a centralized, unified console, which makes the employee's experience of responding to queries organized and efficient.

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