

Are you deriving value from your ITIL initiatives?

By [Edward Carbutt](#)

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Many organisations embark upon ITIL (Information Technology Infrastructure Library) training with the hope of improving IT Service Management (ITSM), only for the significant investment in time and money to fail to deliver the expected benefits. The underlying reason for this is that most ITIL courses are theory based, imparting information but not necessarily delivering the practical capabilities required to put the information into practice.



Edward Carbutt

This failure can also often be attributed to an emphasis on certifying all staff on ITIL, without due diligence being given to ensuring the right people receive the right training to help them improve overall service levels. The gap between ITIL and achieving ITSM improvements must be bridged - a process that should address a number of key factors in order to ensure organisations derive value from ITIL initiatives and training.

A growing challenge for ITIL-based service provider companies is pressure from their customers to have all of their staff trained and certified on ITIL, at least at a Foundation level.

However, this mass certification neither guarantees service provider compliance, nor does it automatically result in improved service levels. Ultimately, this drive towards mass certification can be an expensive exercise that often does not achieve the returns expected.

Without support, guidance and mentorship, the theoretical knowledge is never contextualised and ITIL-certified employees might find it difficult to apply the knowledge they have gained to real-world scenarios. This is further exacerbated by a lack of alignment between IT and business. Organisations often do not develop a clear road map for service improvement, with goals against which progress can be measured and managed.

Consult an experienced partner

Before embarking upon ITIL training, it is advisable to consult an experienced partner to analyse the organisation and advise on the levels of ITIL training required for specific people and areas of the business. Achieving value from ITIL requires that the right people receive the right training and the right mentorship at the right time, depending on their job and the level of their activities within the organisation.

There is generally no need, for example, for all technical staff to obtain an ITIL Foundation certificate. While it may be beneficial for them to have ITIL knowledge, there are shorter and less costly ITIL Awareness courses available that would better suit this need. This then frees up the training budget to ensure that those who are directly involved in ITSM tasks can be certified to the required level and can be used to further enhance the ITIL knowledge of more senior ITSM staff members.

This more tailored approach also enables the budget to be made available to engage with consultants who can mentor and coach certified ITIL staff, helping to grow expertise and practical ability around ITSM. The end result is improved service delivery and management of IT services. This may also serve as a springboard for ISO/IEC 20 000 certification, which far more accurately demonstrates a service provider's ability to deliver effective IT services than an organisation in which all staff members are ITIL certified.

Ensuring the success of ITIL initiatives requires that several factors be addressed:

- **Develop a service strategy:** This is the cornerstone of any successful ITSM initiative. Without a strategy in place it is impossible to measure progress or align service management with the needs and goals of the business. Developing a service strategy helps to ensure that the right people are sent on the right training so that ITSM spend can be used appropriately to deliver the highest possible returns, and helps to bridge the gap between business and IT to deliver superior IT service and improved customer satisfaction.
- **Develop objectives to measure against:** Once a service strategy is in place, linked to business requirements, the end goal of the ITSM improvement venture, such as ITIL training, needs to be identified. Once this end goal is identified, organisations can work backwards to identify areas that need to be addressed, including quality management, governance, the service portfolio and so on. This will help organisations to ensure that they invest money in the right areas, and can identify appropriate actions and training to address issues and meet the end goal.
- **Create accountability:** There needs to be a person within the organisation accountable for the service strategy at an executive level. A Service Management Officer (SMO) will help to ensure that people are adhering to processes and strategy, and that they are aware of their roles and responsibilities in ensuring continual service improvement. The SMO should also be tasked with ensuring that processes are reviewed to ensure they are up to date and continue to deliver on service improvement goals.
- **Ensure organisational change management:** Service delivery is not a process, but a mindset within an organisation - and a way of doing business. Change management is necessary to help acquire this mindset. It is vital to identify the purpose of the organisation and how each person contributes towards the organisation's mission and goals, and then to ensure that people understand their roles and responsibilities in this regard.
- **Get the help of the experts:** Formal service management frameworks, such as ITIL, have been developed over the past 30 years, and there are an increasing number of experts who understand the value of this beyond simply creating processes. Using experienced ITSM consultants to coach, mentor and guide staff in ITIL best practice can add value by contextualising theoretical information, imparting insights and experiences, and ensuring that ITIL can be practically applied to improve service management within an organisation.

While ITIL training can be of enormous benefit to an organisation looking to improve ITSM, it needs to be implemented correctly if it is to deliver the desired value. The various courses provide a wealth of theoretical knowledge; however

applying this knowledge in a practical capacity can prove to be challenging. ITSM is not a once-off initiative, but a living entity within an organisation, aimed at creating continuous service improvement. Without a service management strategy, organisational change management to ensure enterprise-wide buy-in, accountability, responsibility and the correct processes and measures, ITIL training may fail to deliver the expected value.

The end goal of any service management improvement project should be improved levels of service, sustainability and quality whilst still maintaining repeatable service delivery and consistency, linked with a service improvement programme. Partnering an experienced ITSM consultancy can assist organisations to approach ITIL in the most appropriate way and mentor ITIL trainees to ensure that theoretical knowledge is backed up by practical capability to ensure the venture is a success.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Edward Carbutt is the executive director of Marval South Africa

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