



Five Steps to Success and Cost Saving Step Three

Introduction

In this series of articles, we are looking at the ways in which ITIL can help you save money for your organization, in this economic climate. We are all aware of the dependency businesses now have on IT systems and services. In order to maximise the value IT brings, we need to ensure that we have effective and efficient processes delivering the services, and this is where the ITIL framework can assist.

Remember, business customers want to be able to carry out their business, and the technology that supports that should be seamless and work first time, every time.

Step Three

Once you have established your strategy, and then made that a reality through well-defined design, it is time to carry out the most difficult stage in a services' lifecycle - the preparation and transition to the live environment.

We have all experienced at some point the project that is *'thrown over the wall'* with little or no consideration of how it will have to be supported in the operational environment. Those days should be long gone, but sadly, in our experience as consultants, they still take place. So in this most important stage, we need to ensure that we are still meeting the requirements identified in the strategy. It is not uncommon for business requirements to change as they go through the design stage. Making requirements a reality in systems and in costs often requires re-evaluation of the original concept, and it is critical for this to be reflected in the transition stage.

ITIL has a number of processes in this stage, which have influence across the whole of the service lifecycle from strategy to continual service improvement. One of the most significant is the Change Management process. A frequently asked question is how does ITIL's change process fit with the PRINCE2® project management method? There is no simple answer to this, but suffice it to say that the two complement one another. All changes (new services or alterations to existing services) must be registered through the change process. In this way, we can ensure that the impact of the changes can be carefully weighed against their benefits and costs. Plans can be established for the controlled introduction of the changes into the live environment, supported by a Release Management process. This is most important in the management of cost effectiveness. Ensuring that changes, projects and implementations are assessed and managed will maintain the controls that have been put in place by the design stage.

In this stage ITIL also places importance on the management of knowledge and the IT related assets in the organization. Service Asset and Configuration Management ensures that we understand the full extent of the IT infrastructure, including elements such as people, hardware, software and documentation. Understanding how these items are connected, managing their dependencies and being able to assess the impact of altering one item on the rest of the environment. The time taken to find out information, and to understand how a change to a single item will impact on the whole, is one of the less obvious cost savings that can be made by introducing effective and efficient processes. It is often hard to quantify in advance, but can be demonstrated after the process has been implemented. This is a challenge for most cost

savings based on improvement programmes. How do we pay for the improvement, when the cost saving will only be realized when the improvement has taken place? Financial management is important throughout the lifecycle, and there must be a connection between strategy and transition lifecycle stages.

But managing these types of assets is one thing, the management and transfer of knowledge is equally important. Handover from design to operation is much more controlled and cost effective if transitioned correctly. You may have experienced the frustration of losing information back into the 'project pool' and making the operational support of the new service or system more complex and costly to support. An exchange of information with an adequate handover is critical to a cost effective and smooth introduction of a service into the production environment.

In addition to these important processes, it is also critical to ensure that any new service or system is tested thoroughly. There are many models for transition planning, and for carrying out full testing which are covered in the publication, and may provide the content for future articles, but not for now.


So transitional activities of managing change, managing the infrastructure and delivering a comprehensive design including the management of knowledge are all covered in this stage. Taking the appropriate period of time over this stage will save on re-work later in the operational environment. As discussed in the article on Step 2, designing correctly will save re-work, but as the new service or system progresses to the production environment, it is vital to ensure that what has been designed will actually work in an operational situation.

One of the most interesting concepts introduced as part of the ITIL transition stage is that of Early Life Support. This requires that the project team or development team remain accessible in supporting the early period of operational activity of a new or changed service. Although this may appear to be a costly activity, with potential duplication of resourcing for the early life of a new system or service, the benefits of ensuring that errors are corrected promptly by the original developers of the system, and that their knowledge of such matters is then disseminated to the operational support teams quickly and effectively.

Transition is always a difficult time, but when handled efficiently with effective processes, the benefit in the long term is tangible. Good transition saves time, effort and money in reducing the need for re-work.

Step Four

In Step Four we will be reviewing the next important cost saving stage in the ITIL framework - Service Operation.



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The image shows a laptop displaying a course interface. The screen displays 'Welcome to Module 5' and a list of topics: 'Module 5: Introduction', 'Module 5: Core Knowledge', 'Module 5: Service Transition', 'Module 5: Service Operation', 'Module 5: Continual Improvement', 'Module 5: Project Management', and 'Module 5: Professional 1'. A circular diagram is visible on the right side of the screen.