

How to ensure proper ITIL expenditure



Is there such a thing as ITIL projects?	2
Vetting ITIL projects.....	3
Best practice as an assumed given	4
ITIL the Cult.....	5
Because everyone else is	6
You don't "do" ITIL.....	7
If IT ain't broke don't fix it	8
CMDB can not be done.....	9
References.....	11

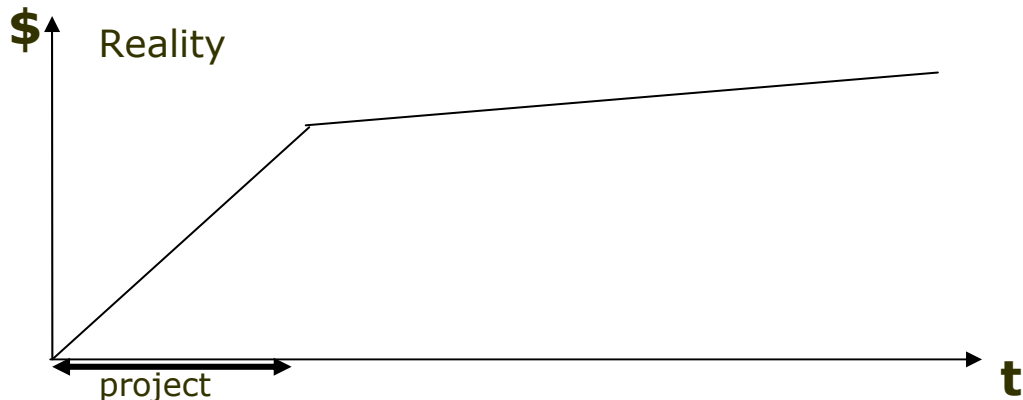
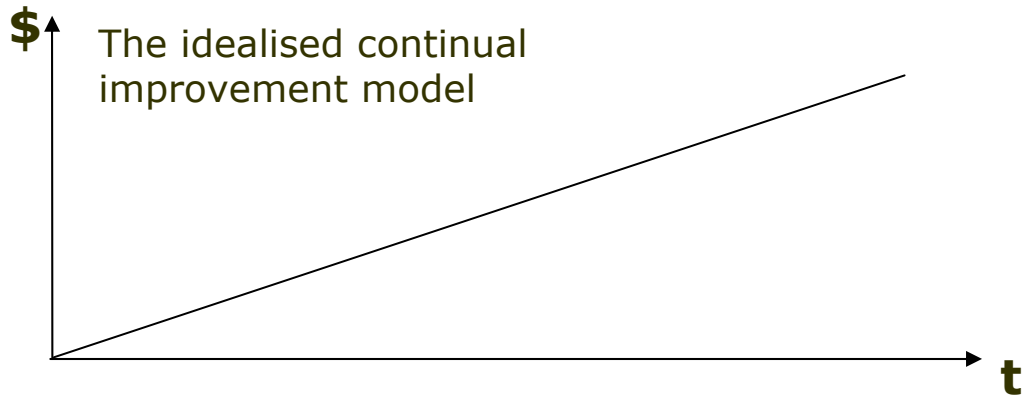
This document includes extracts from the IT Skeptic's book-in-preparation, *Owning ITIL*.

Is there such a thing as ITIL projects?

There is a school of thought that one does not “do” ITIL.

But:

- All ITIL initiatives need initial planning, analysis, design, organisation and promotion in order to overcome organisational inertia and establish momentum.
- In order to show return there needs to be some initial quick wins and visible progress.
- And most organisations use a project structure to gate funding.



Vetting ITIL projects

Proposed **IT projects should be examined on four levels:**

- The need/requirement/problem
 - Is there a good reason to do this?
- The expected return
 - Is it worth doing?
- Alignment with plans
 - Is it the kind of thing we should be focusing on?
- Their place in the project portfolio
 - Is it the best use of resources?

This applies as much to ITIL as to any IT project. But **many only get looked at to the first one or two levels**, especially if Excessive Technical Fastidiousness (ETF)¹ kicks in.

We examine some **hard questions to ask around the need/requirement/problem:**

- Best practice as an assumed given
- ITIL the Cult
- Because everyone else is
- You don't "do" ITIL
- If IT ain't broke don't fix it
- CMDB can not be done

Best practice as an assumed given

As New Zealand business commentator Mark Di Somma says²:

Focused and achieved excellence is powerful, whereas striving for excellence everywhere (and not achieving it anywhere) is much less competitive. Better to be unbreakable everywhere and unbeatable in selected places than to attempt to be unbeatable everywhere, and not get there!

Di Somma also said “**World class best practice looks like everyone else**”. Gaining a competitive edge or differentiating yourself is not about doing what everyone else does.

It is not ITIL that is the issue here, so much as **the uncritical acceptance of Best Practice as the only acceptable standard for everything**. Look at what CoPr says³:

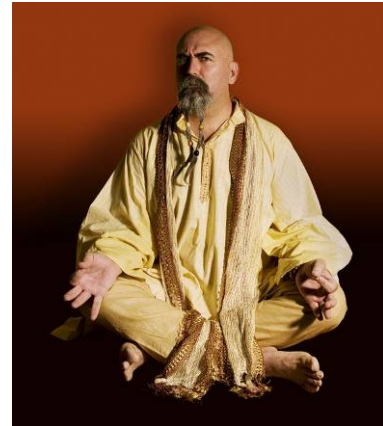
Best Practice has become something of a sacred cow in business... Pursuing Best Practice is a strategic decision, which should be taken when there is an agreed ROI (tangible or intangible) for the resource investment required to get there...

We believe the world is ready for Core Practice [CoPr]: the strategic decision to minimise cost in a discipline of the enterprise by implementing practices sufficient to (a) meet obligations and (b) to make processes work to a standard sufficient that risk (to the organisation and to people in its care) is reduced to some acceptable level.



ITIL the Cult

1. What defines “bad” process that “needs” ITIL?
 - Getting a low score on an ITIL maturity model.
2. What is that model benchmarked against?
 - The ITIL definition.
3. How do you get a better score?
 - By being more like the ITIL definition.
4. Who defines the model and then measures it?
 - The consultants who stand to profit from “fixing” the processes.



“This may work in practice, but I doubt it will work in theory”.

4

A movement that defines the problem in terms of its own proffered solution sounds like a cult.

What if we measured existing processes against independent assessable metrics on usefulness to the business or value returned on investment or quality, or whatever the organisation cares about?

We might find the existing processes don’t fit the ITIL model but they work.

That is, we might find there is no business case for changing.

Because everyone else is



In a well-known survey⁵

- 72 percent claim the biggest barrier to ITIL adoption in their business is organizational resistance. At a very distant second, 34% are not sure where to start.
- ITIL is quickly becoming visible at the enterprise IT level, with 36 percent of respondents working on re-engineering enterprise IT service delivery, and 29 percent planning to leverage all 10 ITIL discipline areas.
- Most ITIL programs are living in a potentially dangerous vacuum. While 95% selected ITIL as a framework they are using to improve IT Operations, less than 20% even showed awareness of COBIT or CMMi.

These numbers scream out that people are embarking on ITIL projects because everyone else is.

They don't have the support of the organisation, they haven't looked at alternatives or context, and about a third are launching in holus-bolus, without proper planning, hacking away at everything. It is unlikely that a third of organisations have processes broken in all ten ITIL disciplines to such an extent that there is a good business case for fixing them.

You don't "do" ITIL

Watch for proposals that talk about "implementing ITIL" or "putting in place Incident Management" or "doing change management". This may point to limited understanding of ITIL (though everyone expresses it that way at times). **You don't implement a process, you improve it.**

Everyone does Incident Management. The question is how well they do it. This is usually measured by a CMM maturity level, from 1 to 5. If someone says they have no process, they do really: they are at level 1. Things still happen. People try to restore service. They just do it in an anarchic fashion.

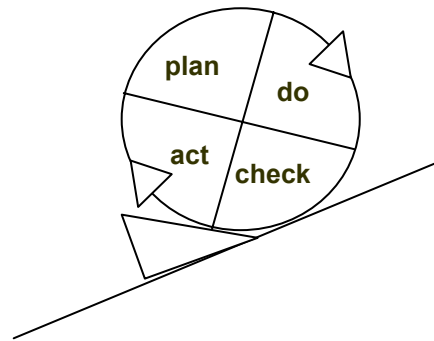
ITIL is about continuous service improvement, and it does it by providing **model processes to use as a target or ideal** in defining and documenting and measuring and managing and improving our own processes.

So you don't implement Incident Management: you try to lift your maturity in Incident Management, from say 1 to 3.

This improvement is a continuous process.

The initial project to enhance processes is only the first step. There must be an ongoing quality improvement program to protect, consolidate, and build on any gains made, or else the organisation will slip back again. If you are familiar with the Deming Cycle, look for its application.

If there is **no provision for ongoing maintenance of the processes** in the proposal - if they are not "chocking the wheel" of the Deming Cycle - then this is another indicator of inadequate understanding of the fundamentals.



If IT ain't broke don't fix it

The IT Skeptic has renovated three houses now. In all cases they were fit for habitation already. It was not money well spent: the house didn't leak, the doors were secure, it was sanitary and there was no fire risk. So renovation was just for our own satisfaction. It was overcapitalising - we would not get a good ROI when we sold the house.

Now if I want to spend my money changing the way my house looks it is my right: it is my money. ITIL project money isn't mine. So often, adopting ITIL is like ripping up perfectly good carpet so you can polish the floorboards: **it is very satisfying but there is no business case for it.**

IT operations are a domain that tends to attract perfectionists. This is a good thing when sites are aiming for three-, four- or five-nines [99.999% availability]. **The unfortunate aspect of perfectionists is that they can't leave well enough alone.**

Others make changes because change is power. That great business commentator of the late 20th century, Scott Adams said⁶: "**change is good for the people who are causing the change.** They understand the new information that is being added to the universe. They grow smarter in comparison to the rest of us".

Then we have that phenomenon The New CIO (or Operations Manager). You know the one: brought in to make some changes. Or because they are new they feel the need to make some changes. **Good managers find what works and leave it alone.**

CMDB can not be done

CMDB can not be done as ITIL defines it with a justifiable return on the investment of doing it - it is such an enormous undertaking that any organisation attempting it is going to burn money on an irresponsible scale. Organisations that need to get their Configuration Management processes to a CMM maturity of 4 or 5 are probably going to have to attempt it; others will generally struggle to cost-justify the effort.

Put another way: a company could put a man on the moon. It would be great marketing. Whether that would be the best use of funds is another matter.

The requirements are complex, especially the amount of data to be gathered and maintained, the integration of systems, and the compliance and audit requirements.



People are doing fine without CMDB now. In statistics for implementation of ITIL processes, Configuration Management is always one of the lowest percentages. For example, Incident-Problem-Change works fine on top of a single asset database. It is not that important whether Availability or Release or Continuity or Financial or other disciplines use the same repository – the perfectionists love it if they do but there is no great downside if they do not.

It is nice to store those basic “depends on” links to show the key CIs which services depend on. My experience is that most organisations can manually maintain these service mappings for about ten to fifty services. Yet most have two to ten times that many services. They all seem to end up pragmatically picking the top services to store the mappings in the database. What happens to the rest? **They wing it; they work it out on the fly;** like they always did. It works.



Rob England is an IT consultant, writer and entrepreneur, based in New Zealand.

His interests include IT Service Management, governance, internet communities and commerce, and professional development.

He is best known as The IT Skeptic (www.itskeptic.org), a critical voice in the ITSM community.

Rob is editor of the itSMF New Zealand newsletter and a member of the Editorial Board of the itSMF Global Best Practices book.

His portfolio of published work is at <http://www.twohills.co.nz/portfolio> and includes the recently released humorous book Introduction to Real ITSM, see www.realitsm.com .

"The IT Skeptic" is a trademark of Two Hills Ltd.

ITIL® is a Registered Trade Mark and a Registered Community Trade Mark of the UK Office of Government Commerce ("OGC"). ITIL® is registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

COBIT® is a Registered Trade Mark of the Information Systems Audit and Control Association and the IT Governance Institute.

Microsoft® is a Registered Trade Mark of Microsoft Corp. in the United States and/or other countries.

CMM® is a Registered Trade Mark of Carnegie Mellon University.

ISO® is a Registered Trade Mark of the International Organisation for Standardisation.



References

¹ *Introduction to Real ITSM*, R. England, Lulu 2008, ISBN-13: 978-1-4092-2300-9

<http://www.realitsm.com>

² <http://www.markdisomma.com/upheavals.asp>

³ <http://www.corepractice.org/>

⁴ "The Making of a French Manager," Jean-Louis Barsoux and Peter Lawrence, Harvard Business Review (July-Aug., 1991): 58-67.

http://cbi.gsia.cmu.edu/papers/cbi_workingpaper-1999_03.pdf

⁵ *North American Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) Benchmark*, Evergreen Systems, 2006, http://www.evergreensys.com/campaign/itil_benchmark_2006/blog/index.html

⁶ *The Dilbert Principle: A Cubicle's-Eye View of Bosses, Meetings, Management Fads & Other Workplace Afflictions*, S. Adams, Collins, 1997 ISBN-13: 978-0887308581