

Technology and communication service providers often struggle to maintain high levels of customer service, while combating interdependencies in support operations and the diverse range of technologies available today. Working reactively, organizations don't invest enough time planning, training, reviewing, investigating, and working with their customers. The result is a failure to adopt structured, proactive working practices.

Best practices are helping organizations evolve from a reactive to proactive state, allowing them to better address customer requests and issues in a timely manner.

Today, more and more organizations are implementing universally accepted best practices for business service management (BSM) as a guideline for improving operational efficiencies across all IT Service Delivery teams. Service Delivery grows in importance, as customers require advanced facilities, at minimum cost, to meet their business needs. BSM recognizes that services and service management are essential to helping organizations generate revenue and maintain cost effectiveness. The two predominant BSM best practice guidelines

for service support and delivery are:

- Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) framework
- International Organization for Standardization International Electrotechnical Commission (ISO/IEC 20000) standard

This document offers some insight into why corporations should utilize the BSM best practices and how to implement the best strategies for ensuring success.

ITIL Best Practices Overview

The Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) framework was first published in the 1980s and encompasses a suite of field-proven best practices and guidelines that provide an integrated, process-based approach to managing Information Technology service delivery organizations. The original ITIL best

practice specifications were published to help organizations develop a competent and cost-effective approach to managing information technology support processes and technologies. The popularity and acceptance of ITIL has grown significantly since Version 2 was released in 2000.

ISO 20000 Best Practices Overview

The International Organization for Standardization International Electro technical Commission (ISO/IEC 20000) standard was published in December 2005. ISO/IEC 20000 describes the best practices for service management processes within the

scope of ISO/IEC 20000-1 and -2:

- ISO/IEC 20000-1 is the distillation of the “must do” practices of service management
- ISO/IEC 20000-2 is the code of practice giving advice for service management

Comparing ITIL to ISO 20000

ITIL best practices and ISO 20000 best practices are complementary because of their differences. ITIL is a framework to build upon and follow, while ISO is a standard to measure your organization against.

ITIL and ISO 20000 essentially follow the same logical structure. Both outline the what and why of business processes. ITIL is normally the starting point for organizations wanting to address specific points of pain. Other processes are implemented as dependencies are recognized.

While there are many similarities between the ITIL framework and ISO 20000 standards, there are several differences, which are outlined below:

ITIL Framework	ISO 20000 Standard
A framework or foundation	A standard
Outlines best practices and certification on an individual basis	Outlines requirements for achieving organizational certification
	Draws a distinction between the best practices and processes, which are independent of organizational form or size and organization names and structures
	Applies to both large and small service providers. The requirements for best practice service management processes do not change according to the organization that provides the management framework within which processes are followed.
Includes advice and options based on organizational structure and size	Completely independent of organizational structure or size
Targeted at individual processes to help organizations meet best practices	Relies on the Plan - Do - Check - Act cycle of continual improvement
Does not include business relationship management and supplier management	Includes business relationship management and supplier management

Comparing ITIL to ISO 20000 (con't)

ITIL Framework	ISO 20000 Standard
Includes service reporting as part of the process	Separates service reporting from other processes
Separates Service Continuity and Availability Management processes	Combines Service Continuity and Availability Management processes
Includes requirements for budgeting, accounting, and charging	Includes requirements for budgeting and accounting, but not for charging
Discusses information security management as a guide for organizations	Includes information security requirements with an associated code of practice
Separates Capacity Management into Resource, Service, and Business Capacity Management programs	Includes Capacity Management as a comprehensive program
Separates Asset Management, referencing it in another publication	Includes Asset Management
Plans for a refresh throughout 2006 to improve content and qualifications	Plans for an ISO Part 3 to cover scoping, applicability, and advice

The Core Elements of BSM

When Service Support and Service Delivery functions are effectively combined, your organization is more likely to sustain government and corporate compliance.

The Service Desk functions as the core of the BSM framework, facilitating the interface between the customer and the service. The Service Desk defines the common processes, procedures, terminology, and classifications, provides a consistent management framework, and automates workload assignments. Sustaining corporate and government compliance, for example, with Sarbanes Oxley or OMB A-87/A-21, is a natural derivative of a well run Service Desk.

The Service Desk is comprised of all the

underlying Service Support and Service Delivery processes.

Service Support – Operational processes, which are focused on IT resource management, or end-user processes.

Service Delivery – Tactical processes, which are focused on ensuring that what is promised is delivered, or customer-facing processes.

The processes that exist within these two categories are:

Service Support

Business Activity	Focus
Incident Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Restore services to normal operation as quickly as possible – Minimize the adverse impact on business operations by ensuring proper levels of quality and availability are maintained
Problem Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Implement reactive and proactive measures to minimize the impact of incidents and problems – Perform statistical analysis for applying corrections to prevent recurrence
Change Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ensure that consistent standardized methods and procedures are used for efficient and prompt handling of all changes to minimize impact of incidents and mitigate risk of business continuity
Configuration Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Document and track the configuration and inter-relationship of all provisioned services and related distributed assets
Release Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Protect production operations through use of formalized procedures and continual check of changes to service configurations via planning, testing, and scheduling releases

The Core Elements of BSM (con't)

Service Delivery

Business Activity	Focus
Service Level Management	– Maintain and constantly improve the quality of services and relationships with customers through a continued cycle of agreements and activity monitoring and reporting
Capacity Management	– Ensure the most efficient and effective use of all resources – Analyze statistics to ensure a legitimate balance of cost against supply versus demand
Availability Management	– Design, implement, and continue measurements to ensure business requirements of all hardware, software, and personnel resources are satisfied
Continuity Management	– Ensure that the required technical support and services can be recovered within required, and agreed, timescales to support the minimum business requirements following an interruption
Financial Management	– Implement sound stewardship of the monetary resources for the organization – Encompasses the processes involved with the planning & execution of budgeting, accounting, and charging

Performance Management Strategy

Understanding the goals, processes, and outcomes of implementing a performance management strategy is essential to its success.

Implementing a performance management strategy requires a clear understanding of the intended goals and a means for measuring performance. The goals should be defined in terms of service level policies related to business requirements and operational resources. Developing, justifying, and sustaining a performance management strategy requires an understanding of the data and the monetary gains that will result from improving performance. To achieve

legitimate business intelligence in pursuit of improving operational efficiency, management will need to leverage an enterprise-class system that provides a complete and comprehensive perspective of the inter-relationships between various support processes. Through this statistical analysis, performance-related metrics can be identified that will continually evaluate operational efficiency and determine if the intended goals are being met.

Implementing BSM Best Practices

While ITIL and ISO 20000 provide recommendations to what best practices should be pursued, they do not address how organizations should implement service delivery processes and related support procedures. Today, many organizations are struggling to effectively implement sustainable best practice recommendations, because they have

failed to successfully leverage available, enterprise-level, software-based systems to automate and manage certain aspects of the business. Successful implementation of the BSM best practices requires the implementation of software-based tools that are designed to effectively manage and report on procedure-level processes.

BSM Best Practices and the Bottom Line

After implementing a successful performance management strategy, your organization can expect to reduce overhead costs and improve service delivery.

According to studies published by Gartner, Forrester Research, and Aberdeen Group, the average organization spends between 3% and 10% of total operational revenue delivering technology and communication related services to internal departments. This statistic encompasses procurement, leasing, licensing, delivery, and operational support. Effectively following the BSM best practices, as part of implementing a performance management strategy, can improve delivery consistency and reduce the overhead cost associated with delivering IT related services.

Many organizations currently maintain service support and service delivery transactions and the associated costs in disparate spreadsheet and database applications. The proliferation of spreadsheets (a.k.a. spreadmarts) and discrete databases (a.k.a. datamarts) eventually leads to inconsistencies in data storage and additional overhead maintenance costs. The integrity of the data becomes questionable, and the good intentions of implementing BSM best practices in pursuit of a sustainable performance management strategy succumb to the continual repair of corrupted data.

Summary

The same business service managers that are being asked to improve quality and provide greater flexibility and faster responses to customers are also being required to lower costs. Effective business service management delivers high levels of customer service and better customer satisfaction. Developing an effective management strategy based on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and using software-based tools and technology to support BSM best practices will

help ensure that organizational goals are achieved. Organizations that have made the decision to proceed with the implementation of BSM best practices want to know the quickest and most effective way to proceed. Establishing a governing framework and process for IT service management and using software-based tools and technology can fulfill the goals of a broader IT governance process that is designed to maximize the business value of IT services.