


Are you eating dry cream crackers?



IT Service Management (ITSM) is thought by many to be dry, hard work and often a “painful hiding to nothing” – a bit like eating dry cream crackers!



Having formal IT Service Management disciplines is the “nice to have” to which many IT Service Managers aspire. However the likes of delivery schedules, user demands and the achievement of service up-time targets usually result in ITSM

improvements being relegated down the to-do-list.

For the IT Service Manager the addition of the IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL) framework and ISO/IEC 20000 (the international standard on Information Technology–Service Management) are the carrots at the end of a seemingly very long stick!

The Evolution of IT and the Business

Once upon a time the IT department consisted of a couple of chaps sitting in the basement from 9am to 5pm looking green behind the glare from their dumb terminals. The growth and complexity of IT estates have ballooned exponentially over the last 20 years, and have exceeded expectation in terms of functionality, capability, demand, scalability, and accessibility. In the face of rapid expansion, the demanding number of skill sets required to do the job and the now almost ubiquitous reliance on IT, the concurrent deployment of formal IT Service Management

disciplines has not maintained a similar pace. Following a number of high profile control breaches many businesses are now heavily regulated by, for example SOX, PCI DSS, Data Protection, BASEL II. These requirements lean heavily on the efficiency and effectiveness of IT and its management, quality and control. In the face of this regulation, now is the time to take stock. For the business to succeed and meet its customers’ and regulators’ requirements, IT needs to be given the chance and resource to catch up. In many cases this means that business culture needs to change to embrace and recognise IT as the enabler for achieving operational business objectives.

“Nobody can go back and create a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending.”

Maria Robinson

IT Service Management

IT service management is the contemporary term for IT Management. It is a combination of capabilities for designing, delivering, maintaining, monitoring, managing and improving IT service upon which formal controls, principles, practices and disciplines should be applied. Quality management and continuous service improvement are key elements which underpin the delivery of effective IT service to support internal and/or external customer requirements. The principles apply to internal IT functions as well as to externally managed IT service providers, the former being more likely to face the greater challenge in introducing robust service management disciplines

The ISO Standard: ISO/IEC20000 – 1 and 2 2005

The ISO standard was formed to meet the need to demonstrate compliance with the disciplines of quality improvements and the core ITSM principles from internationally recognised frameworks such as Six Sigma, ITIL, and COBIT. The ISO20000 standards provide a measurable set of common benchmarks.



To attain certification and demonstrate ongoing commitment to improvement, organisations and businesses must be independently audited every year by an accredited auditor.

N.B. “Certification demonstrates compliance with the ISO standard; it is not possible to be compliant with a

best practice framework.”

The ITIL Framework

ITIL is an evolving public framework that describes ITSM best practice. It covers governance, service support and service delivery; and focuses on quality improvement, monitoring, measurement and management of service.

It is now in its third iteration and is underpinned by the ITIL service lifecycle. It takes into account IT processing from a business and customer angle as well as from an IT perspective. The 5 stages of the Service Management Lifecycle are:

- Service Strategy
- Service Design
- Service Transition
- Service Operations
- Continual Service Improvement

Despite retaining the term “IT” within the title, ITIL version 3 is now a framework which can be applied to any business sector. It also provides a robust framework against which the ISO20000 standards can make reference for certification. The framework is not a “one size fits all” and has the flexibility to enable it to be applied in accordance with the maturity and complexity of the organisation.

Quality Assurance

The old adage of “Get it right – first time, on time, every time” is an excellent motto in terms of the business expectation from an IT service provider and is also exactly what an IT service provider wants to achieve. It means less cost and less hassle. Achieving it however is not so

“Quality is remembered long after the price is forgotten.”
Gucci family slogan

easy. The daunting task of implementing formal ITSM disciplines should be countered by the fact that a well run, well disciplined and well controlled IT function will get close to achieving the adage. The measurement, management and enforcement of good controls also have to be maintained to ensure that they continue to provide the level of discipline commensurate with the task and the desired outcome.

The mechanisms used to ensure that ITIL disciplines, inputs, outputs and controls are established and maintained are referred to in ISO20000 as the Management System. The composite elements of the management system are:

- Quality Management System (QMS)
- Continuous Service Improvement Programme (CSIP)

Appropriate reporting of ITSM activities and the management system provides auditors, regulators, business and customer management with ongoing evidence of the adequacy, effectiveness and efficiency of both the service and the IT service provider.

The Benefits for the Organisation

Will the benefits of introducing formal ITSM outweigh the risk and cost? Most definitely they will if it is implemented properly and commensurate with the size and scale of the organisation. If it is too unwieldy it will slow service and reduce performance; too lightly applied and the benefits won't be realised.



The aim of ITSM best practice is to establish consistency, control, and increased efficiency within the IT function and improve the availability, security and integrity for the business and customer. In turn this results in cost reduction, improved quality, reliability and a timely response for all parties.

Recognition for the IT function; cost and risk reduction; business alignment; business/customer confidence; fewer IT problems; greater reliability; and less chance of

reputational damage – all of these benefits are achievable with careful planning for, full consideration of and controlled implementation of ITSM best practice. Attainment of ISO2000 certification demonstrates compliance with the disciplines of best practice and provides assurance that an organisation or function is capable of delivering an effective IT service.

How we can help

Kingston Smith can provide education and advice on ITSM best practices and ISO20000. We can help organisations prepare for best practice implementation; undertake a current state assessment against ITSM best practice to help organisations identify areas of strength and limitation; and perform pre-ISO20000 audit readiness reviews to identify those areas where more support may be required before pursuing certification.

About Kingston Smith Consulting LLP

Kingston Smith Consulting is the specialist consulting practice associated with the top 20 accountancy firm Kingston Smith LLP.

Kingston Smith was originally formed in 1923 and the firm has grown to its current position through organic growth and mergers. Kingston Smith is a member of KS International which is an association of independent accounting firms in over 50 countries around the world.

Kingston Smith Consulting LLP

Devonshire House, 60 Goswell Road, London EC1M 7AD, UK Telephone +44 (0)20 7566 4000 Fax +44 (0)20 7566 4010 info@kscllp.co.uk www.kscllp.co.uk

A list of partners is available for inspection at the above address.

Registered in England and Wales as a Limited Liability Partnership: No OC341786 Registered office: Devonshire House, 60 Goswell Road, London EC1M 7AD.