

TRENDS



December 6, 2005

Trends 2006: New Generation For Service Desks

ITIL, ITSM, And New Product Releases Drive Improvements

by **Chip Gliedman**

with John Ragsdale and Elisse Gaynor

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The potential for a brief hiatus in technology growth gives IT management an opportunity to evaluate and enhance the business technology infrastructure and infrastructure management. Concurrently, the maturation of the ITIL model for infrastructure and service management provides a framework for potential improvements. With most tool vendors releasing ITIL-based solutions in current versions, and with the majority of current service desk software users using prior versions of these tools, times are ripe for a mass migration to a new service desk process and tool model.

EIGHT-YEAR INNOVATION/SPENDING CYCLES

Technology innovation and spending follow repeating eight-year cycles. We are currently approaching the latter half of the current cycle, with the next period of business innovation forecast to start in 2008.¹ If past patterns hold, the next three years will be the transition to a period of technology innovation and growth. This period will start in 2008 with a new generation of technology reaching a tipping point of maturity. During this period, businesses will be receptive to making new investments to deal with persistent problems and challenges that the current generation of network computing technologies failed to solve.

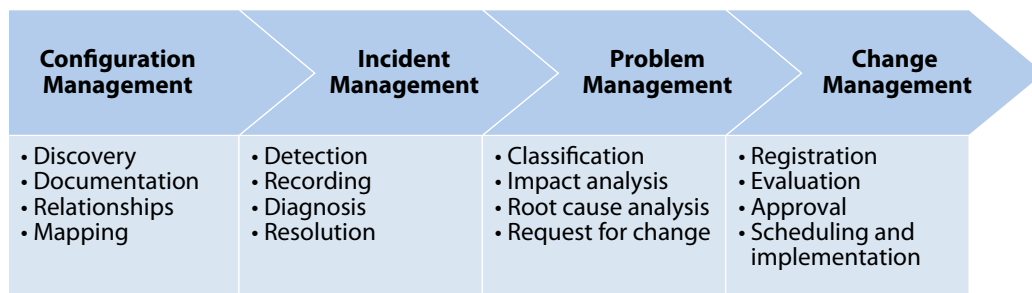
This window of time presents the opportunity for IT service management to catch up with prior business technology adoptions and refine and enhance existing processes and technologies to both streamline current support services and implement the framework for future technology improvements. Fortunately for IT infrastructure and service desk managers, the progress made in expanding and refining service management definitions and practices under the banner of “ITIL,” coupled with an increase in products that implement “best practice” models out of the box, means that moving to the next-generation service desk model will be much easier.

ITIL AS DIRECTION, BUT NOT NECESSARILY DOGMA

The codification of service desk processes and the logical process integrations between incident, problem, change, and configuration management, as outlined within the ITIL framework, spurred an evaluation of processes and procedures within many organizations during 2005.² During 2006, we expect to see the results of these evaluations manifest themselves in:

- Broad adoption of ITIL definitions.** Wide adoption of ITIL-standard definitions by service desk and systems management vendors leads to broader use of this terminology within user organizations (see Figure 1). Consistent definitions allow IT and service desk management to better define processes, roles, and responsibilities. Handoffs between groups become clearer; inputs and outputs are articulated and codified; processes and governance models are mapped to expected and desired outcomes.
- Internal process improvements.** Processes that are predefined in the ITIL model and pre-articulated in vendor products provide a framework for internal evaluations. An organization looking to improve can refer to the ITIL reference model and can selectively implement the components that will provide positive organizational benefits. The result — ITIL-based or ITIL-like service desks emerge where appropriate practices are implemented taking organization dynamics, maturity, and overhead into account.
- Gap analysis and remediation plans.** With a target model in mind, organizations can associate and map current governance processes, supporting tools, organizational structures, trust, and human capital resources and then identify existing and potential gaps. Remediation and improvement plans can then and only then be initiated. Knowing the destination makes rational trip planning possible.
- Technology user benefits.** Organizations can map applications and services to business benefits. Instrumentation of individual tasks and handoffs follows, and prescribed actions are automated. Analytics point to areas of improvement. As a result, organizations can set service levels to find the most efficient use of resources and provide the best user experience and maximum business benefits.
- Accelerated growth in vendor revenues.** Service desks finally have a reason to re-evaluate installed management tools and build the business case to upgrade or change. As a result, a market usually considered highly stagnant sees a bump in growth rates for 2006 and 2007.

Figure 1 Basic ITIL Categories And Tasks



Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SEIZE THE MOMENT

As many organizations are midway through an eight-year technology acquisition/absorption cycle, the service desk has the opportunity to step up and start the move from random firefighting to predictable and intentional service experiences. To best accomplish this move, the service desk should:

- **Put everything on the table.** Just because something has been done one way for a long time doesn't mean that it is right.
- **Partner with your business customers.** Ensure that you understand which business and technology processes are currently generating business value and which are expected to generate future business value. Use this knowledge to create the most appropriate service management strategy.
- **Associate metrics with improvements.** Each initiative must be accompanied by business-relevant metrics to ensure that everyone is in sync as to direction and goals. Keep the metrics actionable and business relevant.
- **Build the business case.** Justify product and process improvements by monetizing expected improvements in metrics. Regardless of how good something may sound, few organizations will initiate a major initiative or acquire major new technology without a defined business case with ROI and payback periods defined.
- **Report your success.** Use pre- and post-project measurements to document improvements and communicate the same to management and customers. Successes in this area will help elevate the role of the service desk and make future changes easier to justify.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ After two years of moderate 7% spending growth, the US tech sector will go through a slowdown in 2007. That slowdown, which will last into 2008, will set the stage for a revival in 2009 and 2010 as companies will have absorbed the previous boom's Internet technologies and will be poised to ingest newer ones. See the October 11, 2005, Market Overview "[Expect A Tech Slowdown Before The Next Boom.](#)"
- ² ITIL is the Information Technology Infrastructure Library, a series of publications documenting an idealized process for the service desk developed by the UK Office of Government Commerce (OGC). See the November 1, 2004, Trends "[Trends 2005: IT Service Desk.](#)"