

How does MOF and ITIL affect the IT Manager

By Dr. Stuart D. Galup in Conjunction With Harris Kern's Enterprise Computing Institute

A recent Gartner report stated that 80% of the cost of an Information & Communication Technologies (ICT) infrastructure is in the delivery of information technology services. ICT are at the heart of day-to-day operations for most organizations and mitigating risk through system stability is paramount. In fact, C. G. Lynch stated in a March 1, 2006 CIO Magazine [1] article that between 40% and 90% of U.S. companies have one or more information technology service management (ITSM) implementations underway.

ITSM is a discipline for managing the IT infrastructure that focuses on the customer's perspective of ICT contribution to the organization [4]. ITSM is process-focused and shares common themes with the process improvement movement (e.g., TQM, Six Sigma, Business Process Management, and CMMI). The most popular and well know ITSM framework is the British Government's Office of Government Commerce (OGC) information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL). ITIL was developed during the 1980s and is the foundation for ISO/IEC 20000, the international standard for ITSM. A new version of ITIL, called ITIL v3, was released in May 2007, and consists of five books: Service Strategy, Service Design, Service Transition, Service Operations, and Continual Service Improvement. ITIL is a descriptive approach to managing IT services.

Microsoft's Operations Framework is based on ITIL and is a collection of best practices, principles, and models that offers guidance to IT management on running IT services. MOF was designed to complement Microsoft's Solutions Framework for solutions and application development. When combined, they provide guidance throughout the ICT life cycle [3]. MOF is a prescriptive approach to managing IT services based on ITIL.

MOF is comprised of several foundation elements [2]:

- The Process Model is a blueprint of the processes used to manage IT services and overlaps the ITIL framework (see Figure 1).
- The Team Model supports the Process Model by providing guidelines for organizing employees into teams or role clusters. The model describes key activities within each role cluster.
- The Risk Management Model integrates proven risk-management techniques with the overall framework.

There are several fundamental principles of ITIL that will affect the day-to-day delivery of IT services. For example, the process and quality management focus of the framework follows the plan-do-check-act method of continuous improvement. When approaching the management of IT services using this method the organization must develop work strategies (plan); execute the strategies (do); define, capture, and analyze metrics (check), and make decisions as needed to improve the IT services based on the metrics (act). As the saying goes, *There is no finish line...*(Nike Inc.).

One of the most challenging aspects of the day-to-day delivery of IT services is deciding the appropriate method to start the adoption and use of MOF. One of the underlying management issues for Microsoft dominated IT organizations is the proliferation of servers

throughout the organization. Managing numerous servers in geographically diverse settings is an onerous task. Organizations typically embrace MOF because their IT servers are not stable resulting in disruptions to normal business operations or their environment is stable but needs to be more efficient.

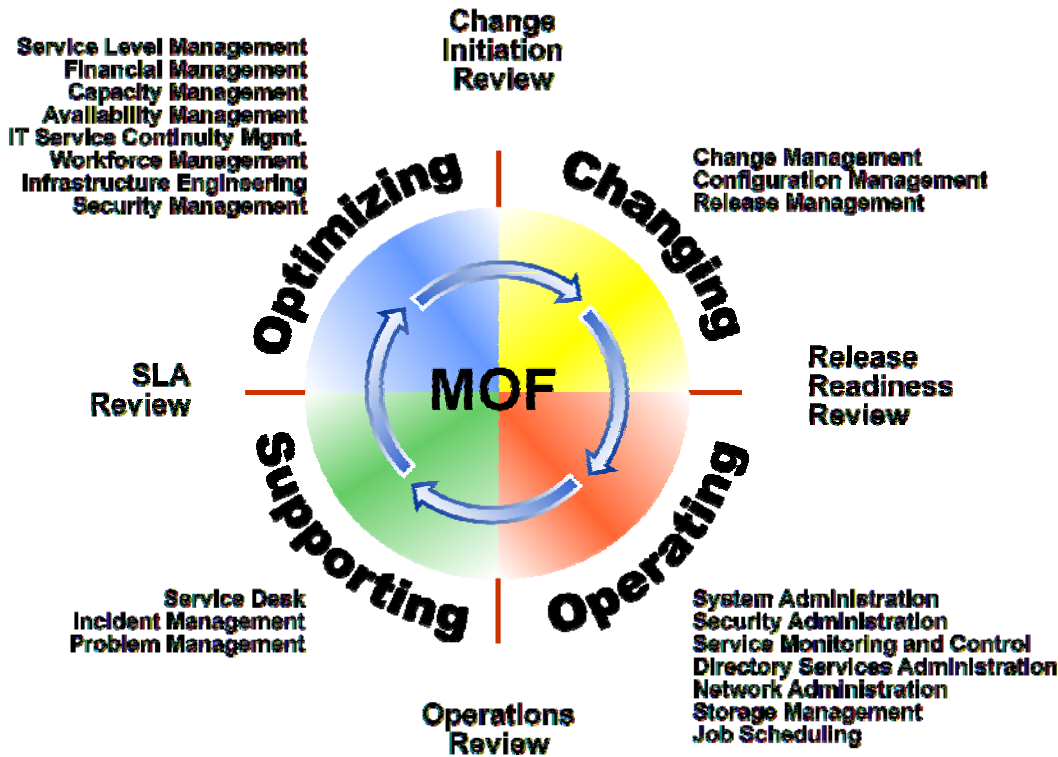


Figure 1: Process Model

When an environment is not stable the typical approach is to introduce a Service Desk, Incident Management, Problem Management, and Change Management. Successfully implementing and assimilating these processes into your environment will stabilize your IT services. There are many challenges associated with this approach. For instance, Incident Management uses lines of technical expertise to detect and resolve an incident. These lines include technical personnel throughout the organization. Getting technical personnel to actively participate in this process can often be difficult. Some will say they are too busy or it's not my job. Others simply may believe that the new approach is the latest fad.

If your environment is stable and your objective is greater efficiency, then an often cited challenge is the development of the Service Catalog. Deciding what constitutes an IT service and clearly describing the service is a daunting task.

The best way to get started is to take the MOF Self-Assessment Tool (<http://www.microsoft.com/technet/solutionaccelerators/cits/mo/mof/moftool.mspx>). It guides you through the development of a detailed problem-and-impact analysis of a targeted IT service or operational process. This tool is designed to enable you to:

- Better understand the effectiveness of the IT services and processes in your organization.
- Define a specific problem or opportunity regarding your IT services and/or processes
- Identify a variety of follow-up actions based on information you provide

Once you complete a 15- to 20-minute assessment, you receive a detailed report including the assessment data, a problem statement, a summary of impacts on the organization, and a customized next-step list of recommendations to help remediate the identified problem.

The key to success with MOF is not whether you are doing the processes. It's a matter of how well – or poorly – you are doing them.

1. Lynch, C. G. "Most Companies Adopting ITIL® Practices," *CIO Magazine*, March 1, 2006.
2. Microsoft Operations Framework: Executive overview version 3.0, August 2004.
3. Microsoft Operations Framework: An Actionable and Prescriptive Approach to ITIL, November 2005.
4. Wikipedia