

# Key Guidelines for IT Service Management

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## Service Management

Service management is the cornerstone of your IT organization. Covering everything related to planning, providing, monitoring, coordinating and reporting service quality, service management drives all aspects of managing an effective IT organization. Starting with a service level agreement, service management establishes the basis for IT service delivery processes such as availability, capacity, continuity, security, and production operations management, as well as support processes like problem, configuration, release and change management, among others.

### Case Study:

In Q206 I was hired by a small IT organization (Microsoft/Windows environment) headquartered in the northeast, which was supporting a rapidly growing company. The issues were enormous:

- Poor system availability
- Poor customer support
- Poor communications
- Inefficient
- Reactive nature
- Lacked organization structure
- Lacked service level Agreements
- Lack of respect throughout the business

My objective was to implement structure and change the staff culture from reactive (support mentality) to proactive; creative and resourceful (service-oriented). This was a major challenge considering this intelligent group of technicians didn't even know how to spell the word structure. My focus was equally on people development and service management. My overall goal was to improve IT performance by doing more (efficiently) with less. Over the past year we implemented the processes and mentored our staff in self-discipline (time/goal management, priorities, etc.). The results have been:

- Designed a formal Infrastructure Support organization based on a customer-oriented (proactive approach) for infrastructure services
- Improved customer satisfaction
- Integrated IT with business objectives
- The staff is doing more with less

To summarize we Implemented service management best practices and established a Performance Growth Program for our staff in order to build a competitive IT organization

### **Step 1: Define your IT services**

First, you need to identify and describe the services your IT organization provides. It is important to describe these services from the customers' perspective and cover service levels and main service components. The main objective is to understand your IT organization's services. Focusing on IT services is a key element to aligning IT with desired business outcomes. Some examples of IT services include hosting services (floor space, rack space, uninterruptible power, network connectivity and bandwidth), server configuration and management services, streaming media services, e-mail services and application management.

### **Step 2: Define your IT service levels**

With well-defined service levels you need to describe and quantify expectations for the services your IT organization provides to its customers. You also need to define service levels your vendors provide to your IT organization. The main objective is to set specific targets to evaluate performance and provide a foundation to define formal agreements and the quality of service. With appropriate performance measurements your IT organization can provide acceptable levels of service. For example, IT service levels may cover hours of operation (24 by 7 support), connectivity (redundant network connections), availability (99.99 percent uptime), capacity, accessibility, backup and restore, disaster recovery, call response, problem management, etc.

### **Step 3: Identify IT growth projections**

To plan capacity you need to quantify the expected growth in IT service demand. The best projections are based on models utilizing built-in feedback mechanisms to ensure both accurate inputs and planning assumptions. IT growth projections may also include strategies for meeting anticipated growth. The main objective is to understand IT performance and capacity characteristics in order to determine their impact on IT services. With an understanding of the factors that impact the demand for IT services, you will have the right capacity to achieve desired service levels and optimize the use of IT resources. IT growth projections cover a range of metrics including the growth in the number and/or utilization of various aspects of the IT infrastructure. This may include applications, servers, users, transactions, networks, staff, space, and environmental factors. For example, server projections may be based on planned growth rates, square feet per cabinet, servers per cabinet, cabinets per square feet of data center space. Also network projections may include bandwidth projections based on sales forecasts for new customers and servers, and bandwidth for growing existing customers.

### **Step 4: Identify critical IT assets**

You need to identify the key components of your IT services, covering people, process and technology. Without these components, the committed service levels cannot be achieved.

The objective is to understand critical IT assets and their impact on IT services. With an understanding of critical IT assets you can make special provisions for availability and security to achieve committed levels of service. For example, critical assets may include servers and storage systems for business-critical applications and data. They may also include backbone network components.

### **Step 5: Identify IT opportunities and risks**

IT opportunities are conditions that could be exploited to improve IT services for the benefit of your business. Conversely, risks are threats and vulnerabilities that may need to be mitigated. *The objective is to understand your IT organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats so appropriate actions can be taken.* At any point in time, you need to be aware of opportunities for and threats to your IT organization's ability to achieve committed service levels. Examples are SWOT analysis, risk assessment, business impact analyses and security assessments.

### **Step 6: Establish IT control and design objectives**

You need to establish key criteria for the design and management of IT services and underlying IT infrastructure. The main objective is to identify and understand the criteria to assess, build and manage IT services, and provide linkages with IT services and the underlying elements of the IT infrastructure. With well-defined control and design objectives you can achieve service levels in a cost-effective way, you need to establish. The following sets of principles and criteria are examples of controls: CoBIT control objectives; SysTrust Principles; and ITIL assessment areas. Design objectives may include high-availability; high levels of system performance; high levels of systems and data integrity, availability, performance, scalability, security, manageability, interoperability, accountability, integrity, confidentiality, accountability, and auditability.

### **Next Steps**

Your IT organization's success in providing high quality IT services depends on its ability to align IT services and the underlying IT infrastructure. The next step is to structure and organize your IT architectures and processes to ensure that availability, performance and security are aligned with IT service commitments – and do it cost-effectively. In future articles we will outline more plans of action to help you build and manage the key technologies and processes that enable your IT organization to achieve its desired levels of service.