

Assessing IT Service Management Processes

A 5-Step Approach to Enhancing Support

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INTRODUCTION

Advances in technology and the resulting dependence on information have resulted in increased expectations for responsive and proactive services. And, the need for quality support is ever present, whether your organization supports employees, external customers or both.

Even with advances in support technologies, organizations are finding it difficult to deliver the expected services on time and within budget. In many cases, support processes need to be re-evaluated and even re-engineered to effectively meet the requirements of today's customer-centric organization.

This white paper describes SMA's 5 step approach to evaluating your service management operation and developing a strategy to change current or implement new processes based on best practices. These best practices are based in part on ITIL, the Information Technology Infrastructure Library, originally developed in the UK. ITIL has a strong following, not only in Europe, but more and more by companies of all sizes and in all industries in the U.S. and Canada.

It should be noted that while ITIL provides an important set of process descriptions, each organization will likely have a unique set of business needs that should be the basis for how they implement IT service management. It is with this in mind that we believe ITIL should be used as a set of guidelines, and modified based on business requirements, budget, personnel and other factors.

WHO SHOULD READ THIS WHITE PAPER

This white paper may be useful to people with the following roles:

Chief Information Officers
Information Technology Directors
Help Desk Managers
Customer Service Managers
Technology Implementation Teams
IT Human Resources Departments

This whitepaper highlights an approach that we have found provides the greatest positive impact on support organizations. You may want to modify our approach through discussion with our consultants based on your specific business goals and objectives.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO PROVIDE COMMENTS

We would appreciate comments and suggestions about this white paper and our approach, and how you have achieved benefits from your own initiatives. Please send comments to:

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White Papers
399 Knollwood Road
White Plains, NY 10603
Email: assessments@smasystems.com

STEP 1 - PROJECT INITIATION AND SERVICE MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW

The first step in our 5 step approach is to conduct a project initiation session. The project initiation session includes an overview of the project tasks to be performed, a decision as to who will participate in the project, data that will be collected, the project timeline and deliverables at the end of each step in the process.

During this step we will also provide an overview of service management processes and those ITIL processes to be reviewed during the project.

Participants:

- Key client stakeholders
- SMA project lead and consulting staff

Process:

Participants will attend a meeting together so that everyone becomes aware of the project plan, and is informed of everyone's roles and responsibilities. Participants will have an opportunity to provide input to the direction of the project and any specific issues and concerns that they may want addressed.

SMA consultants will also describe the ITIL processes that will be referred to during the project. These may include:

- Incident Management;
- Problem Management;
- Change Management;
- Service Level Management; and
- Other ITIL processes included in the statement of work.

The review of ITIL processes will serve as an educational exercise and provide a specific framework for the interviews, questionnaires and evaluation of current processes that follow.

We will also request that you provide us with documentation related to your current service management processes, procedures, reporting, and workflow. This will help to prepare our consultants for the observation and data collection steps of the assessment.

Deliverables:

- Definition of roles and responsibilities
- List of client documentation to be reviewed by SMA
- List of client management and staff to be interviewed
- Project timeline developed by SMA and approved by client

At the conclusion of this step we will be in a position to begin interviews with key management and staff.

STEP 2 - STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Interviews are a key step in developing a baseline for assessing current IT service management operations, understanding business needs to be addressed, and ultimately meeting our client's project expectations.

Participants:

- Key client management personnel
- Service management staff (selected by your management)
- SMA consultants

Process:

Structured interviews will take place during a 2-day period. We expect to conduct about 10 interview sessions (approximately 1 hour each), although this can vary according to organizational structure and management's availability. Prior to the interviews we provide a list of interview topics that will be discussed. This allows management to consider specific issues they would like to discuss in advance of the interview. These interviews will cover topics such as:

- Business overview/mission
- Service management mission
- Current and future customer base being served by service management operations
- Perceptions as to how service management needs to be enhanced/improved and delivered
- Discussion regarding key ITIL processes and how they may be used as the basis for improvement
- Critical success factors that should be considered by our consultants during the discovery, data collection, and GAP analysis steps

The information gathered by our consultants during this step will be factored into the evaluation of the current state of service management and where there are "gaps" between that state and the desired service management operation.

Deliverables:

- Interview notes
- Issues to be addressed during the assessment
- Management's goals and objectives for the study

This interview step is critical to the success of the assessment project as it helps to identify specific areas that we will be looking to review. It is important for our consultants to keep the results of the interviews in mind along with the best practice approach provided by ITIL and their own experiences in other organizations.

STEP 3 – OBSERVATION AND DATA COLLECTION

The observation and data collection phase provides us with first hand experience with the workings of your service management operation. We will be able to observe call flow and other processes and relate what is observed to the ITIL framework (for those processes under study).

In addition, we will provide questionnaires (in Excel format) to those that have been designated as respondents. The data gathered during this step, in combination with the observations and interviews will provide input to the GAP Analysis that follows.

SMA MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS, INC.		Service Management Assessment Questionnaire	
Contact Information			Score Code
Name:	John Smith	1	Strongly Disagree
Title:	Manager of Application Development	2	Disagree
Dept:	Application Development	3	Uncertain
Phone:	914-686-0300	4	Agree
Email:	john@smasystems.com	5	Strongly Agree
Date:	10/4/2004		
Change Management - ensuring that standardized procedures are used for efficient handling of all changes in order to minimize the impact of any related incidents upon service.			Score
1	Are the procedures for this process clearly communicated and understood by the support staff?	4	
2	As change requests are recorded, is sufficient, detailed information captured?	3	
3	Are change requests consistently categorized by one or more values (e.g. incident type, urgency, impact)?	2	
4	Is a formal Change Advisory Board (CAB) in place?	2	
5	Is there a documented process for the CAB?	5	
6	Does the CAB assess the impact and risk of changes as part of the approval process?	5	
7	Does the CAB assess the cost of changes as part of the approval process?	2	
8	Is there a well defined approval process for change requests?	2	
9	Is there an ongoing budget for investment in change management technologies and staff training?	1	
10	Is there an emergency change process in place?	3	
11	Is a schedule of changes produced and distributed to involved parties?	5	
12	Where possible, are changes prioritized, grouped and scheduled to minimize impact?	4	
13	Is a change management tracking tool in place?	5	
14	Are all change requests formally logged and tracked?	3	
15	Do existing management reporting tools provide metrics based on type and impact levels of changes?	2	
16	Is there a procedure to associate change requests with "Problems" and "Incidents"?	5	
17	Is the performance of the Change Management process reviewed regularly?	1	
18	Is there a procedure to associate change requests with configuration items?	5	
19	Is there a Change Manager formally identified in the organization?	5	
20	Is the ownership of a change clearly defined?	4	
Total Score		68	
Average Score		3.4	
Home / Config / Release / Change / SLM / Contributy / Financial / Availability / Capacity / Response Summary / Summary Chart			

Participants:

- Help desk personnel
- Client-designated questionnaire respondents
- SMA consultants

Process:

Our consultants will observe the service management function and note information on call flows, problem management, change management and other ITIL processes being reviewed during the assessment. The following, among other items, will be of particular interest:

- How calls for support are reviewed and logged in the Help Desk system
- Call escalation procedures
- Process for notifying customers about their issues and resolutions
- How issues are resolved and documented
- How issues relate to requests for change

In addition to observing the workflow, we will identify issues that need to be addressed in order to enhance service management delivery.

The responses to our questionnaires will be tabulated in order to gather data about the current state of your service management function. We will consolidate data and report an overall score, or "assessment" based on those responses.

The questionnaire results and the observations described above will be the baseline from which we will develop the GAP Analysis and Action Plan that follows.

Deliverables:

- Observation notes
- Issues to be addressed during the assessment
- Questionnaire results and report on the current state of the Service Management operation
- Development of the "Baseline" assessment

STEP 4 – GAP ANALYSIS

The gap analysis phase will help identify the variance between business requirements and the current state of your service management operation. By leveraging key information garnered in the interviews, observations and surveys it becomes possible to identify and document specific “gaps” between best practices and existing procedures.

Analyzing and prioritizing these gaps will allow for the development of a customized action plan that addresses the organization’s needs while applying industry best practices.

Participants:

- Key client stakeholders
- SMA project lead and consulting staff

Process:

Our consultants will review all interview and observation notes, combined with survey results to document a baseline of current processes. This same data will also be analyzed for comparison to key objectives of the organization. Together, this information will allow us to document the variance between where the organization currently is and where it should be based on business requirements and best practice ITIL processes.

Tasks in the Gap Analysis may include:

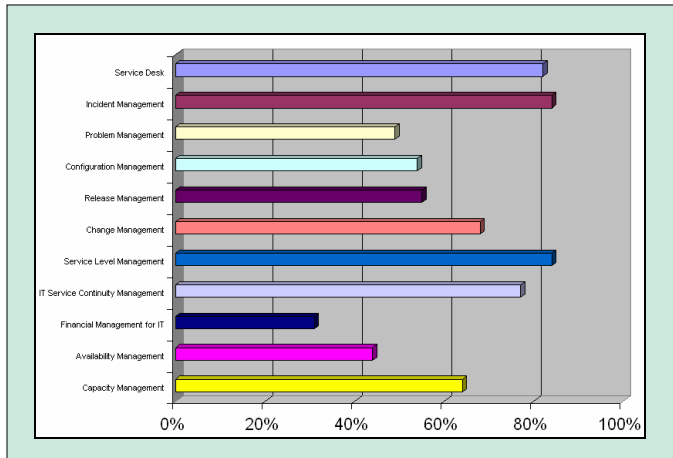
- Review interview notes and identify and prioritize goals and requirements
- Analyze survey results and identify trends and major gap areas
- Review observation notes and documentation provided, and assess current state of the service management operation

This analysis will address gaps for each of the ITIL processes that have been identified as critical for the organization.

Deliverables:

- Analysis of all data
- Review of applicable ITIL processes as they relate to identified gaps
- Documentation of identified gaps

At the conclusion of this step we will utilize the results of the gap analysis as the foundation for developing an action plan that will be presented to management at the end of the assessment project.



STEP 5 – ACTION PLAN

SMA consultants will work closely with your organization to create a customized action to better align the IT Service Management function with ITIL processes.

Utilizing the gap analysis as a tool, SMA will prepare a detailed action plan to address critical process areas.

This high-level action plan can serve as a guide to implementing changes across the IT organization. Action items will focus on the ITIL processes that have been identified to bring the greatest value to your organization.

Recommendations may include specific suggestions on improving workflow in order to incorporate the best practice processes necessary to achieve organizational objectives as specified by management.

Participants:

- Key client stakeholders
- SMA project lead and consulting staff

Process:

Our consultants will review the gap analysis and apply best practice recommendations to key areas. This process will help you develop a blueprint for successful ITIL alignment based on organizational requirements.

The action plan will be a practical, working document that includes:

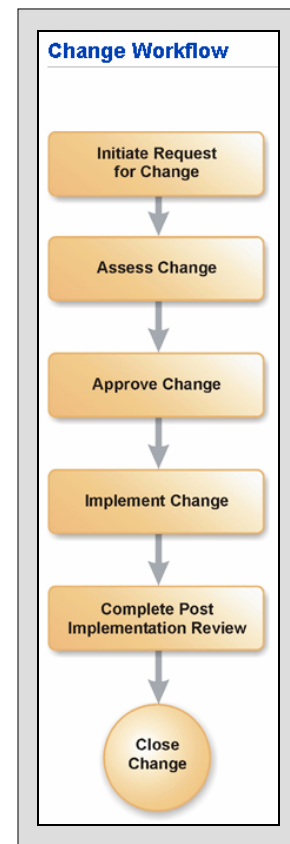
- Gap or issue identified
- Recommendations and action items
- Benefit to the organization

Designed in a chart format, the action items will include specific short and longer term tasks and suggestions geared towards bridging the critical ITIL gaps identified.

Deliverables:

- Assessment of the gap analysis
- Action plan

The delivery of the action plan, together with the project documentation, will provide your organization with the roadmap, tools and recommendations for enhancing support processes and better aligning the organization with ITIL best practices.



ABOUT SMA

Founded in 1984, SMA provides information technology service management applications and consulting solutions to meet the business requirements of corporations, government, educational and not-for-profit organizations.

Our mission is to provide software solutions, integration services and management consulting to enhance IT service management and customer service operations. We supply and support products from the leading companies in each of our core business lines.

SMA specializes in:

- Help desk products and implementation services
- IT service management assessments
- Business intelligence and reporting
- Public class and onsite training
- Management consulting, including staffing reviews and SLA development

SMA consultants have created this white paper based on their direct experience with a wide variety of clients across many industries.

Additional information on SMA can be found on the pages of our Web site, which is regularly updated with content of interest to support IT professionals.

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SAMPLE DOCUMENTS

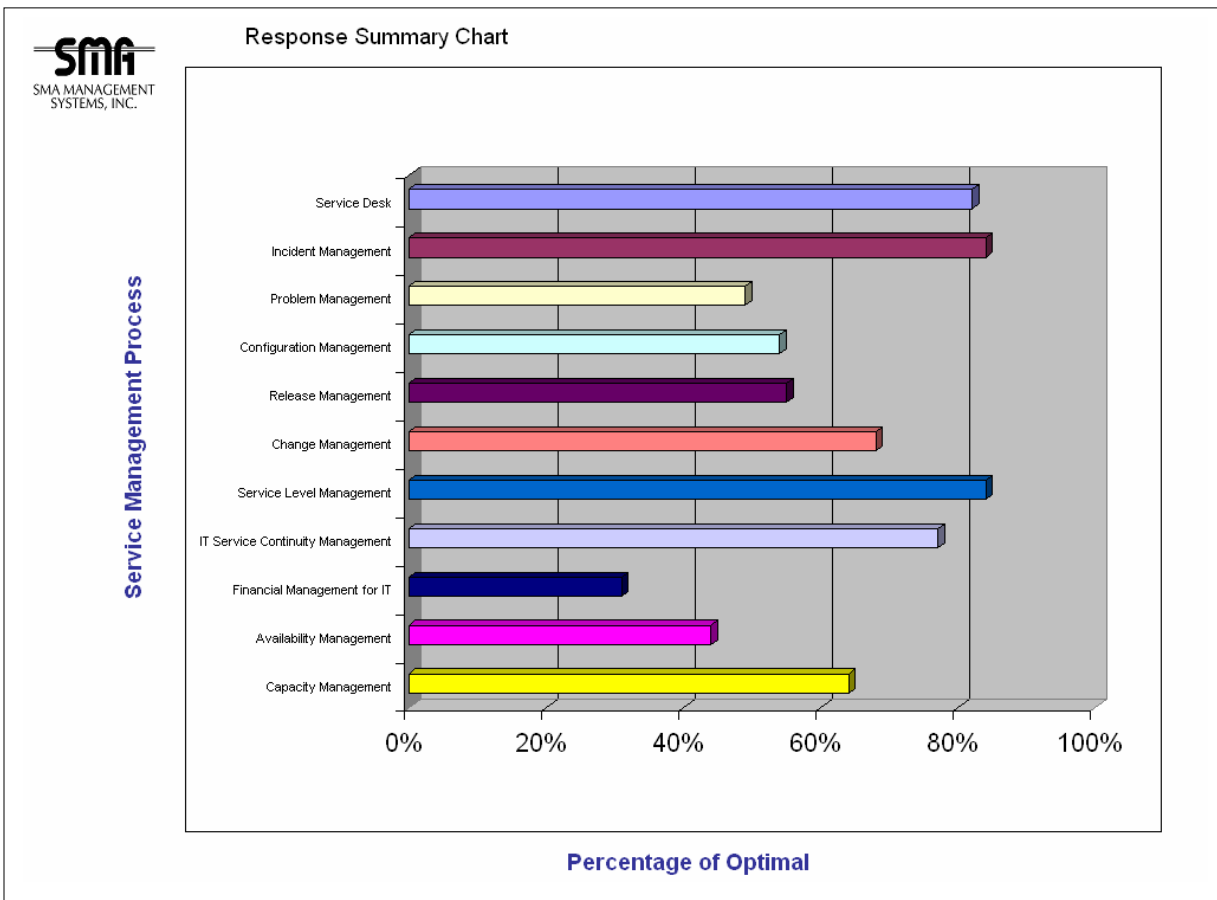
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Contact Information			Score Code
Name:	John Smith	1	Strongly Disagree
Title:	Manager of Application Development	2	Disagree
Dept:	Application Development	3	Uncertain
Phone:	914-686-0300	4	Agree
Email:	jsmith@smasystems.com	5	Strongly Agree
Date:	10/4/2004		
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<p style="text-align: center;"> ◀ ▶ ⏪ ⏩ / Config / Release / Change / SLM / Continuity / Financial / Availability / Capacity / Response Summary / Summary Chart / ⏪ </p>			

Our assessment worksheets map directly to the core ITIL processes under review. These worksheets include questions related to each specific process.

Once we receive responses to these questionnaires from all designated respondents, we consolidate the results so that we have a baseline. We use the baseline during the GAP analysis phase of the assessment.

These worksheets are provided to our client to allow them to periodically review their progress in improving their IT service management operation.

SAMPLE DOCUMENTS (continued)



The above chart is a consolidated view of the state of your IT service management operation as reflected by the response to the questionnaires (see previous page).

With this chart it will be easy to identify key areas for improvement. The action plan will also reflect those tasks where major benefits can be derived through process change.