

GLOPORE IMS

So ITIL® version 3 is here!

As usual, the new version is greeted with a lot of appreciation, excitement, caution, apprehension and some brickbats too.

Some early adopters and pro-ITIL® professionals are thrilled at the new structure and improvements, starting to sing praises; at the same time some are really taken aback by the amount of changes. Some people across the globe are raising strong voice against the foray of ITIL® into areas like 'Strategy'.

To summarize, the dust is yet to settle down.

So much of dust is given, considering the amount of hype and expectations that preceded the release. Add to that, unclear signals from the sources, yet-to-be-released major components of the framework itself, major revamp of the qualification system with a large portion of it still unclear. Phew! Have fun!

While the stake-holders in the industry are either *i)* choking in the dust, or *ii)* sitting on the sidelines in a wait-and-watch mode or *iii)* ignoring the dust and pretending fair clarity, it is important to propagate the right awareness and avoid some traps in front of the dust filled eyes.

Let us start from the fundamental - what is the objective of this new version?

Why new version of ITIL®?

ITIL® is a set of documented best practices for IT Service Management.

A web search on the term 'best practices' has given many results; one being: 'The most efficient (*least amount of effort*) and effective (*best results*) way of accomplishing a task, based on repeatable procedures that have proven themselves *over time* for large numbers of people'

From the above definition, it is imperative that best practice always evolve. To remain competitive, organizations innovate; such innovations, once proven, lead to widespread adoption and adaptation- evolving a new set of best practices.

In the last decade after the ITIL® V2 has been published, there has been further evolution of better practices, improvements of IT Service management framework and the IT industry itself. If ITIL® remained at V2, it would eventually face the risk of being an outdated set of documentations.

Why Version 3?

A question arises: If ITIL® new version is to incorporate the improvements, why it is version 3 and why not version 2.1?

Going with the general versioning approach, a version 2.1 would mean a minor modification of Version 2 without a major restructuring.



Here, it is in fact a prominent restructuring of the framework itself. So it has to be a *major release* of the framework - and hence it is ITIL® Version 3.

Why restructure the framework?

One of the key drivers for the process oriented structure of ITIL® (till V2) was to avoid the focus on 'silos' which was prevalent in the IT industry. Incidentally this silo approach was labeled as 'worst practice' by Gartner¹. The intent was to focus on end-to-end process that cuts across these 'silos', to manage the services. As admitted even by a few in the ITIL® core committees, this approach has led to formation of 'process silos' in at least some organizations - which was entirely against the intent of ITIL®.

In addition to this, the structure of V2 with key ITSM processes grouped into two core modules: Service support and Service delivery, has led to other publications of ITIL® being ignored. Thus ITIL® was viewed widely as a framework focusing on just delivering and supporting 'live' IT services - rather than on the end-to-end service life-cycle.

Hence the structure of ITIL® V3 has a focus on the entire life-cycle of services - rather than on processes or functions. The structure is aligned with distinctive stages of service life-cycle.

A prominent focus is given to Service Strategy continual improvement.

Why Strategy?

In their publication about ITIL in 2004¹, Gartner also puts forward the maturity levels of IT Service delivery operating models - with the model of IT acting as a profit generator being the most mature one. When IT has to operate at such a level of maturity, there is an immense need for another prominent aspect in addition to operational excellence - a strong strategy.

As Prof. Michael Porter observed²: 'Operational effectiveness and strategy are both essential to superior performance, which, after all, is the primary goal of any enterprise. But they work in different ways'



Strategy, in essence addresses areas like: creating customer value, positioning of the services and establishing competitive differentiation that can be preserved.

By incorporating and giving prominence to this key aspect, ITIL® V3 now caters more strongly to the requirements of IT Service provider organizations - where the IT is the business, quite literally.

Purists argue that ITIL® is (unnecessarily) venturing into an area where there strong practices exist. The counter argument to that could be - on the contrary, ITIL® is channeling those concepts and practices to an audience who otherwise, quite possibly, were not fully aware of those.

Why Now?

How was the timeline of this new release chosen? Could there be any logic behind that?

One point worth mentioning here is that the process of restructuring (officially termed 'ITIL® Refresh') started some time in 2004.

Probably by coincidence, this maps to the same year when Gartner came out with the maturity levels of IT Service delivery models, with the current 'frontier'³ level performance being achieved when IT modeling itself as a profit center.

On a second perspective, ITIL® V2 has been in existence for almost a decade. Considering the pace at which the global business scenario is changing, it is a considerable time-frame for a paradigm shift in best practices.

Many global organizations have already adopted and adapted the ITIL® framework as per V2. For moving further up on maturity levels, at least some of them were forced to innovate and create better practices. These practices were proven and raised claims to be among the 'best practices' - the documented best practices had to evolve to meet the challenge!

IT Service management - or sometime still referred to as IT infrastructure management - is projected to be the next 'big wave' in the industry - probably the third, after 'software development' and 'Business process outsourcing (BPO)'. In this context, it is important to have a proven reference framework to cater to the requirements of such an industry. The obvious choice for that would be ITIL®, provided it evolves to the maturity expected.

All these perspectives give us strong foundation to believe the timing of the ITIL® new version is quite apt.

Whether the needs of the current industry are catered to or whether industry will succeed in interpreting, adopting and adapting to the new version - only time will answer the questions such as these, but the initial indications are quite promising.

References:

- ¹ Gartner audio conference - ITIL® Implementation Best Practice, July 2004
- ^{2,3} 'What is strategy' by Professor Michael Porter, 1996

About GLOPORE IMS:

GLOPORE IMS is a globally focused IT Infrastructure Management Services (IMS) company headquartered in Bangalore with global presence.

GLOPORE IMS has enabled businesses by implementing ITSM related standards and best practices like ITIL®, COBIT and helped them achieve industry benchmarks such as ISO/IEC 20000 and ISO/IEC 27001 certification.

Based on Service Oriented Approach, the professionals at GLOPORE IMS plan, design and deploy customers' IT Infrastructure and proactively manage end-to-end IT Services from the Global Network Operation Center in Bangalore, INDIA.

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