

Enduring relevance is a category of research and commentary which was published more than 10 years ago, yet its ideas, arguments and facts are as relevant today as they were then.

### Enduring Relevance

## ITIL -- Turn and Face the Change

The Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) methodology has much to say about the management of technical changes to an organization's IT portfolio and less about the business change introduced by those technical changes. However, given the amount of attention ITIL pays to the subject of change suggests that organizations that respect ITIL will develop this specific analytical capacity just by adopting the methodology.

I have written about ITIL and the change the methodology itself introduces to organizations ambitious enough to take on the full methodology and the guidance it offers in just about every facet of IT management (see "[Value in IT? If You Enjoy Change](#)," 3 October 2007). Scary as that topic might have been, this *Advisor* pays homage to the amount of managerial attention ITIL invests in the subject of technical change and argues that this level of attention will raise an organization's IQ surrounding the business issues involved.

To see how ITIL's treatment of technical change can provoke meaningful analysis of business change and, therefore, enhance

value creation from technology means first exploring how ITIL approaches the subject. In the broadest sense, ITIL addresses change in two ways. One, it provides advice for defining change processes and policies to ensure that all technical changes are handled with consistency and discipline. In ITIL, this is called Change Management. At a tactical level, ITIL provides guidance for the management and execution of specific configuration changes to specific pieces of technology infrastructure within those defined management processes and policies. In ITIL, this is called configuration management.

So when a financial services company makes GUI changes to its customer Web site to satisfy a new regulatory directive, ITIL Configuration Management provides the means to handle the planning, naming, control, and audit of that specific interface change. It also advises within Change Management about the processes that will oversee many configuration changes, including this GUI example. These Change Management processes include prioritizing all technical change requests with which an organization is confronted, reviewing proposed changes;

requiring documentation of changes, including forms requesting a change and perhaps a form inviting comments on that change before it is implemented; and communicating those changes to relevant populations.

Organizations exposed to Version 3 will discover its explicit intent to provide tighter integration between the core issues of ITIL found in previous iterations -- high quality of technology services delivery -- with the imperative of business value. Certainly, an appreciation for the management of change at the level of resource commitment that ITIL requires should provoke deeper thinking about the business impacts and risks of IT change. Moreover, deeper thinking here will add clarity to business value and ROI considerations.

How? For example, what are the business implications of technical changes to our e-commerce site? Will we gain customers or lose them? Or perhaps we'll just confuse them. What about changes internally introduced by a new payroll system? Are users adequately trained? Have they bought into the change? If not, how will management get stakeholders to buy into the new way of doing business? While ITIL does not prescribe an off-the-shelf way to deal with these issues, managers who can think in ITIL's terms can develop a methodology for the repeatable analysis of them. In addition, consistently dealing with the potential business implications of change introduced by technology sharpens an organization's understanding.

I have explored the subject of change frequently in my writings for Cutter Consortium. Perhaps this is the most powerful context in which to engage a discussion. Because while you might not believe me and my consistent argument for the need to analyze the business implications of change in relationship to technology, the companies who have successfully adopted ITIL and its attention to change can't all be wrong.

