

ITIL V3: UP CLOSE

AS WE BEGIN TO GAIN UNDERSTANDING OF ITIL V3, NEW QUESTIONS ARE BEGINNING TO EMERGE. JUDIT PONGRACZ INVESTIGATES WHAT V3 MEANS ON A PRACTICAL LEVEL AND LEARNS THAT IT MAY BE PUSHING US IN A NEW AND WELCOME DIRECTION.

So what exactly is new in ITIL V3? While I suspect many of us are still digesting the 1,100 odd pages, there are advantages already identified. Most obvious is the lifecycle approach with its purpose to reflect the natural flow of service provision. The other immediate improvements for me are:

- We do not want to align with the business anymore, we want to integrate with it. This by the way should obviously mean that we stop thinking like 'us' and 'them', and see ourselves as part of the business on the basis that we are key enablers of the overall service that is provided by our company.
- IT fills the gaps with V2 as identified by many practitioners worldwide.
- New processes have been added based on demand. The new elements provide ample opportunity for well-matured ITIL-driven organisations to try their hand at V3.

We can safely say that V3 lifts ITIL to strategic heights despite some tentative criticism. Very few of the questions raised in the last couple of years have been left unanswered - in fact not one springs to my mind. So, that's it - mission accomplished, the world saved, everyone's happy, off you go reading and piloting.

However I am asking you to take a step back and explore what V3 might mean in reality for the people involved. I believe that similar questions will start to flash like a light bulb in many ITIL-savvy CIO's minds:

- What do I do with my IT department now that I've read V3?
- What are the implications for the whole organisation beyond what's written in the books?
- How do I align with the service lifecycle view now that I've just managed to establish the process view?

In other words, we are talking about organisational change and what is implied in proceeding with V3 for the IT organisation.

The traditional belief is that ITIL is for the 'operational' environment. Arguments to the contrary were on shaky ground, in particular, when trying to convince ourselves that V2 release management gives all the guidance that is needed for the development department. This is the crucial question: development versus support. Or more to the point, can the integration

of the two under one umbrella be successful?

Make no mistake, development is not always separated from the support department or team, but I am sure you will agree that it is quite common to see a certain cultural split between the two. I don't intend to elaborate on this point, but in order to understand the impact of V2, it's important to acknowledge this seemingly antagonistic debate.

Of course I could have mentioned other teams that are present in some IT departments, like solution architects or IT strategy. The point is that all these silos within IT are weakening its capability to provide a service to the business, let alone adding value. In order to shake off this burden and be a real partner to the business, the logical step is to eliminate the silos. But is it possible and can we eliminate the time-consuming internal issues once and for all?

This is where V3 comes in as it aims to take the silo-based, process-driven IT organisation and transform it into a service-focussed business partner. This is where V3 has a major knock-on impact: by moving towards services, you inevitably have to change the way you are working currently, whether it's mainly functional or more process-orientated (V2) or a mixture of both.

I do not believe that traditional departmental organisations are flexible enough to accommodate such a change of paradigm; and simply switching over to 'process-mode' based on V2 would not solve this either. A new structure will need to be forged resulting in a closer knit community.

Of course we rarely get a carte blanche opportunity enabling us to implement change in a clinically clear cut environment, whether it be a process or an organisational change. There will always be a Sarbanes Oxley or COBIT, and it's probably just as well as it keeps us on our toes. Equally true, the organisation will likely be a hybrid of some sort between functions (like technical management or application management as described in the Service Operation book) and processes (extensively covered in V2).

In my view, we should strive to have functional and process teams work alongside each other, organised according to the service lifecycle. And I deliberately used the phrase 'according to', because I don't believe you should rename or reorganise your teams to exactly match what is in the book. The approach should be still 'adapt and adopt'. It is more than likely the silos with their currently disjointed way of working can find their place with the help of the lifecycle concept

- almost ten percent of the new material is dedicated to how this can be achieved.

So what does this have to do with development? My thinking, which was justified in reading the new material, is that a lot of the development work is taken care of by V3: demand management, requirements analysis, designing a service (change) that would fulfil the requirements, build, test, deploy, feedback, etc. You're probably accusing me of being very simplistic about development work, but console yourself in the fact that support could be described even more concisely and still thousands of pages are written on how to do it effectively.

The fact that you may be using SDLC or Agile, or any other development methodology, does not go against the principle of integrating more closely with each other. ITIL will not go into huge detail on how you should write code and develop. It will not tell you everything you need to do in support either; for instance, how you should migrate from one e-mail system to another. The point is to know how you fit into the big picture, and the newest big picture to fit into now is the service lifecycle. And just to emphasise again that this is true for other teams as well; they are also an integral part of the lifecycle.

My entirely unscientific and unrepresentative research shows that people on both sides are not finding the idea entirely preposterous and agree with me in saying that the thinking is slowly changing anyway: IT professionals from different disciplines can see the benefits of thinking in services. So is that very far from V3? No. Are we not moving towards lifecycles already? Yes, we are. Was not the original 'split' between development and support made in order to facilitate differing work phases for the very same cycle? I suspect it was, though I regret to say I was not there.

I believe that IT departments will achieve the biggest benefits from ITIL V3 when they move from a project lifecycle approach with support tagged on to the end, to a service lifecycle approach delivered by a united team. Is this Utopia? I should like to think it's more of a value added approach, even if we realise that we might have a long way to go. ■

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