

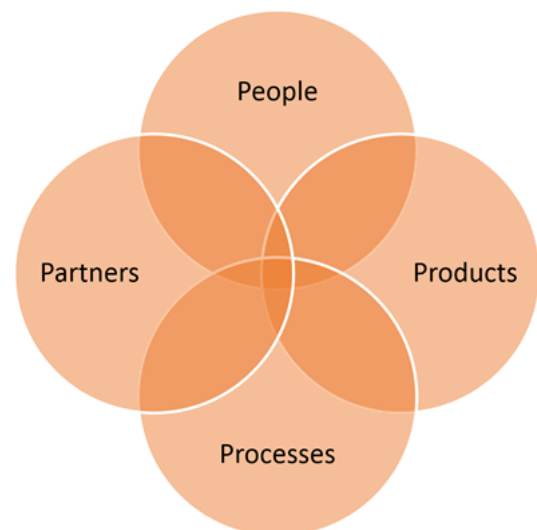
4 P'S OF ITIL SERVICE DESIGN/MANAGEMENT



ITIL defines the 4 P's of ITIL Service Design (or Service Management) as:

1. People
2. Products
3. Partners
4. Processes

To ensure that the IT services we are providing to an organization are fit for purpose and fit for use, it is imperative that we consider all the People, Products, Processes and Partners involved.



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Failure to have the four P's in mind will lead to services that fail to appropriately meet the needs of the business, IT and users of the service. To gain the greatest benefit from the use of the four P's, organizations should determine the roles of processes and people, and then implement the tools to automate the processes, facilitating people's roles and tasks.

We've seen it all before: a spectacular launch of a new product or an overdue upgrade. And then the complaints start coming in – key features not working, personal data compromised, or support limited in nature. Before long, the help desk is unable to keep track of the avalanche of tweets, and developers are struggling to get fixes in as the bosses are on their necks, demanding answers, while regulators prepare warnings and fines. And the scenario keeps replaying, and it usually boils down to whether all bases were covered when the product was being designed.

When it comes to designing of IT services, it is crucial that everyone involved understands that we are not just looking at the solution itself but also everything else that will manage the quality of the service in a way that meets the needs of the business funding the service, IT staff developing and managing the service, as well as users of the service. A holistic approach is required to ensure that not only is functionality considered, but also the warranty aspects tied to service levels agreed with the customers of the service. When following best practices such as ITIL®, the objective becomes designing these services so effectively that minimal improvement during their lifecycle will be required.

What this means is that functionality together with management and operational requirements have to be considered at the very start during service design. A holistic approach to designing an IT service will consider five main aspects:

- Service solutions for new or changed services
- Management information systems and tools
- Technology architectures and management architectures
- The processes required
- Measurement methods and metrics

And that is where the four P's comes into the picture.

People are central to the successful development, deployment and operation of any IT service. A good relationship between a service provider and its customers relies on the customer receiving an

affordable service that meets their needs and which performs at an acceptable level. Without understanding customer outcomes or the value they want to achieve from the service, there is a huge chance that the designed service will fail to satisfy their needs, resulting in wasted resources and opportunities for the organization involved. The IT staff involved in design and delivery of the service have to be properly trained and equipped to ensure that the requirements from the customers are actualized.

Products here refer to the service itself and the underlying technology. In pursuit of the balance between functionality, performance and cost, choosing the right technology cannot be overstated. While the main driver will be the features that come from the customers' requirements, it has to be underpinned by the appropriate environment, infrastructure, applications, interfaces and data sources that will make the service work. And how these are put together like a jigsaw will depend on the choice of architecture that will drive the technology design activities.

Processes take one or more inputs and turn them into defined outputs. They include all of the roles, responsibilities, tools and management controls required to reliably deliver the outputs. A mature process is one where appropriate controls and enablers have been provided to enable the process activities to run effectively and efficiently. Whether automated or manual, it is vital that appropriate processes be developed to support the new services during design to ensure that once the services go live, the right process activities and roles are put in place—whether access or request fulfilment, change or deployment, inventory or billing.

Partners have become essential to today's IT service delivery particularly in this age of outsourcing, managed services and cloud computing. Any service provider will usually procure service components from an approved supplier, and the underpinning contract will usually specify terms, conditions and targets that will support the service levels agreed with the customer. Whether a strategic, tactical, operational or commodity supplier, it is essential that a good working relationship is established as the IT service provider will never meet the needs of the business without the help of a partner who is in tune with the organization's needs.

In conclusion, the design of any IT service must consider all the elements required for the service to be delivered and managed in the way that the customer envisages and will result in value for the money spent. Any IT service provider worth their salt has to be cognisant of the four P's while using an integrated approach to deliver the desired business outcomes and planned results in a quality and cost-effective manner. So whether it's an app, a cloud service or connectivity, a holistic approach that covers all bases is the only way to design right.

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