WHY DO ITSM IMPLEMENTATIONS FAIL?

IT service management is often viewed as a technology implementation that governs business processes. However, most ITSM implementations fail to focus on a critical element of the ITSM implementation process: the people change.

In this article, we will discuss the top reasons organizations lose focus on their mindset, people, and culture when implementing ITSM—ultimately failing to achieve their ITSM goals.

The Short-Sighted Approach

The goal for a successful ITSM implementation is to establish long-term business process improvements, driven by effective technology solutions available in the ITSM industry. Many organizations operate without an ITSM framework, so they pursue new ITSM implementations as a quick fix. These initiatives are often inadequately planned and poorly developed, so they cannot address the unique issues facing your organization.

As a next step, you consider your lack of in-house expertise and opt to hire external ITSM consultants. Your organization and people get excited about the new process change, but the strategies are often inspired from *other* companies' implementations—they're not custom to you. The consultants identify the problems with the existing ITSM approach, but they leave these for your internal workforce to handle.

This approach resolves the *symptoms* of your problem, but the root causes remain undiscovered. Additionally, new problems arise once your ITSM implementation is marked as complete. At this

time, users may not be inclined to follow up with alternatives or improvements in the ITSM framework process in response to the changing business requirements, ultimately failing to achieve the long-term goals that the implementation was meant to achieve.

A Stagnant Process

You should view your ITSM implementation as an approach for continuous improvement. User adoption is a critical component of a successful ITSM implementation. Users may not have the capability to use new technologies to the full potential for any number of reasons: lack of training, change in implementation champions and experts, and the exit of external consultants. Many functions may be outsourced to third-party vendors and agencies using a different set of technologies. Priorities within the organization change and IT leaders may then focus on other key ITSM functions.

This causes organizational and information silos as geographically disparate teams operate independently—with little communication, collaboration, and business-process alignment. The ITSM implementation program, once designed to streamline and simplify the business process, now turns into a complex system where individual components fail to work together efficiently as originally intended.

The Toolset Mindset

Although ITSM technologies are instrumental to the success of any IT service delivery, they should not be the *only* component of any new ITSM implementation strategy. ITSM technologies should be chosen following an extensive planning and assessment of business and IT requirements over the long term. The planning should incorporate user requirements, training requirements, business processes, and the organizational culture that determines how well a new technology is adopted. The policies, processes, and support should be designed to ensure this goal.

However, many organization invest in a technology with respect to its functionality, vendor reputation, cost, and other technical or business factors—factors that *don't* directly affect the user base. Any wrong choice can later require re-engineering of the technology or the ITSM process, ultimately leading to budget overruns and failing ITSM implementation.

Focus on Wrong Requirements

The decision to invest in a new ITSM implementation programs is often inspired by a limited set of issues that must be addressed by investing in new technologies and adopting new framework processes. These requirements narrow down the focus of the ITSM program as organizations follow phased approaches to implementing new technologies. Only when an implementation phase is completed, new possible future scenarios and requirements emerge. This causes organizations to follow up with inevitable changes to the ITSM program, which are accompanied by budgeting, trust, and technology issues.

Disruptive Fixes Don't Work

ITSM implementation can go wrong at several hierarchal levels across the organization, which makes it important to identify problems at *all* levels. For example, both the lack of leadership

support and end-user training can cause investments into new ITSM technologies to fail. The organization may bring in a new CIO and IT managers to offer enough executive support as required for a new ITSM implementation. Or, they can force the workforce to adopt new technologies and the necessary processes as documented within the new ITSM program.

Both strategies are disruptive and present implications that exceed a failed ITSM implementation. First, it can take several months before new executive support inspires effective and welcome changes within the organization. Second, large enterprises have limited leverage on their workforce and may not be able to force disruptive changes without damaging the organizational culture.

Lack of Critical End-User Training

A technology and business process works only as well as users can make them work. Lack of training, support, and expertise can cause delayed rewards and suboptimal performance of an ITSM program. ITSM is no longer just a set of framework guidelines; it incorporates an exhaustive set of tools, processes, best practices, strategies, culture, and mindset.

It is important for users to understand how technology-driven business processes change following the ITSM adoption and how the technologies can be used best for perform the necessary ITSM functions. This requires a thorough understanding of core business services and using ITSM frameworks to drive business process improvements.

Succeeding with your ITSM implementation

An inaccurate or inadequate definition of ITSM success (or failure) can present a false impression of true ITSM performance. When and how you describe an ITSM implementation as complete can make a difference in ROI on ITSM investments. Improvements in ITSM programs continue even after the ITSM technology implementation has been marked as complete.

However, many organizations don't establish a governance process that would facilitate such improvement. Designating individuals who would be responsible for overseeing the progress of improvement can be the first step to evaluate possible areas of improvement in the future. It is important to understand that like all organizational initiatives, it is the people, not underlying technologies, that are responsible for a successful ITSM program.