Q&A FROM AUGUST 2010 WEBINAR:
USING MODELS

JAYNE GROLL, ITSM ACADEMY

Q: What is the first step to set up a model.

A: I think the first thing is to look at your history. Let's say you've decided to build a Major Incident Model. If you have documented well, you will have the series of actions that you have taken in the past, which is a great staring point. Then go talk to the people involved, because documentation doesn't tell the whole story. Almost like a focus group, "what do you do? What do you wish you could do better / faster? Had more resource, support for?" Filter out what works, what doesn't work. Look at the bottlenecks, escalations, timelines (which could be defined in SLA). How many times did we breach? If we breached, why did we breach? Don't forget to talk to customers. Capture what's working, and build the model from there

Q: I think our organization uses "models" and "SOPs" interchangeably. Can you please highlight their differences?

A: Maybe not at all. It may be that your models are part of your SOP. Or conversely, you may take your models and build SOPs. *On the slide deck, look at the "model for the model" on the slide titled What is a model?*

Q: In your models, do you typically include things NOT to do? Issues that could occur if steps are ignored, or if false steps are taken?

A: If it's critical to the sequence, "don't start this until this is done" then you should include it. If it's extra information that could be confusing, then don't include.

Q: How do you gauge the level of detail required in a model?

A: Of course, a lot of that will be based on two things. Look at the skills and experience of those using the model. If the steps are automated, then the level of detail can be less. For those with more skill or experience, the model can be a checklist; for those who access multiple models or have more generalist skills, the model can include or reference specific work instructions.

Q: Would you consider a documented model to be a substitute for process documentation of some internal processes? Example: bug fixes?

A: Remember that in the end, you only have 1 process (ex: Change). For each type of process, there are inputs, outputs and a very defined series of activities. Activities breakdown into procedures. Models help you define procedures for different types of situations.

Q: What is the difference between a problem model and troubleshooting documentation?

A: Your troubleshooting documentation will be a great start to the "model". Go through the list of model elements and see if you've covered it all.

Q: In your experience, how often should CSI be applied to established models in order to review/update information? On an as need basis (which proves difficult due to resource constraints), certain times through the year or other?

A: Making on the fly changes is never a good plan. Part of the process definition is asking the question, "what are the events that will precipitate the change to a model?" You want to be able to report on the use of that model, so take that into consideration. You will want to have some metrics in place that tell you how the model is working. If you have conformance issues, then you might have to look at human change management. So, look at reporting first. Set up a review schedule, minimally annually, but in the beginning monthly or quarterly.

Q: What is the best practice for ensuring that the staff uses the model?

A: The best practice is automation! But there has to be accountability for making sure that they use the model. You have to communicate what the model is, make it easy for them to use. Drive the fact that the model is there for a reason. Avoid enabling non conformance with the model. You have a lot of information that will be captured in the tool. Perhaps you include the model template into the tool. Your culture **cannot** allow circumvention. If they are going rouge, find out why. Follow it or change it.

Q: Incident Management vs. Production Support - Is it appropriate to NOT use Incident Management for production support for Software or Service?

A: Is Production Support a department/function or a process? It is likely that Product Support is executing some type of Incident Management process to restore services. Incident Management is not only performed at the Service Desk – everyone in IT, including suppliers, work on incidents at some point or another. Therefore, everyone executes some aspect(s) of Incident Management.

Q: So if a Service Request doesn't meet that criteria it's not a legitimate request from the customer? Customers request service, may not care whether IT has procedures for it, but want it handled.

A: That's why the model has to be communicated beyond IT. A lot of what we do internally in IT is really sound, but we need to share with the customer the Rules of Engagement. So if you are asking for an IPAD, here is what you need to do to possibly get approval for it. The model should bridge across IT into the customers and users.

Q: Can you compare / contrast the differences in definition and practice between a model, a process, and a procedure?

A: Process is the high level, end-to-end. Starts with a need, ends with the fulfillment of that need (outcome). Defines the activities that take you through the process. Procedures define how you perform the activities. For example, Incident Management's "detect and record" activity. This could be accomplished through a monitoring tool, a call to the service desk, etc. You can "model" procedures for different types of situations. The work instructions are the actual, granular steps for performing a procedure. (Step 1, Step 2, etc.)

Q: How can access requests be "pre-approved"? We have many systems that require individual approvals for systems.

A: One of the things that ITIL talks about is the concept of a User Profile. You can group together field, executive, salespeople, etc. then define a series of rights for them based on that profile. That would determine things that you have rights to. If you are asking for access outside of your user profile, the model will define needs to be done (reject, require additional approval, etc.)

Q: How do you hand a request for a service that IT does not have in their service catalog but is found to be secured to a department from a grant. How should it be handled, a request, incident or a problem?

A: This is a great opportunity for a model that tells the requestor, IT and the provider what to do in this situation.

Q: Is Service Manager responsible for acquiring budgeting or other approvals, or should that be acquired by the requestor before the request for service is entered?

A: It depends. That's one of the things your model will include. For standard services, the budget would all ready have been approved. If it is out of the normal that doesn't fit the model, the budget and the approval would need to be obtained.

Q: I didn't think the change management process was visible to customers - only for internal use, like IT. Any customer Change should have started as a Request? Right?

A: Yes, all changes, no matter where they come from, always start with a Request for Change.

Q: What tools do you find to be most useful for illustrating and documenting models? Visio? UML tools? Others?

A: All – flowcharts, brainstorming sessions, UML tools can all be helpful. Ultimately, the model should be easy to access and read.

Q: Project changes are handled as "PCR" Project Change Request that does not follow my ITSM Change Management. Do you see any major downsides to that?

A: You could build a model for it so that projects have the autonomy for their own changes until (*fill in the blank*). Then the restrictions should be built into the model. Define the line that they cross.

Q: Why wouldn't we use the incident models to handle reboots? If the server doesn't come back, wouldn't that be an incident?

A: Reboots fit into so many different models because it's the number one work around. Are you rebooting a desktop, router, server? The question to ask is "why are you rebooting" that should help you determine which model it goes into.

Q: Also, how do models differ from SOPs and from Knowledge Articles/Knowledge Items

Your SOPs may be models of the basic, everday type. Knowledge articles too – however, you can use a model to consolidate procedures that are kept in different places. Once you have basic models for SOPs, try building models for more unique situations – such as Security or Major Incidents.

Q: Are there links or resource that provide sample models. I have searched the internet and have not found anything useful.

A: The best free resource that I know of is the Microsoft Operations Framework documentation, as it provides question based guidance. Go to www.microsoft.com/MOF and pull out the SMF on Operate and look at the customer service desk map. Those are the questions I would ask to build my model. It's all free, and all founded on top of ITIL. It's all good service management. And use mind maps for models as well.

Q: Could you review the escalation process model?

A: It wouldn't necessarily be its own model, but a part of each of the other models. The model would define when additional resource (based on time or skill) is needed.

Q: Is RACI always a part of the model?

A: As you are building your model, one of the elements is responsibility. RACIs are models that map roles and responsibilities to tasks/procedures. It can be a very helpful tool.

Q: Where would you place a model in the process, procedure, work steps hierarchy?

A: Somewhere between procedures and work steps, depending on how you define it. In a model, you are predicting certain types of circumstances. Model at the procedural level, then create work instructions that map to the procedures.

Q: If incident models are the highest use - isn't problem management failing? If incidents aren't declining, something is wrong - change management?

A: Incident models are goaled to restore service while Problem models are goaled to define Known Errors and permanently remove errors. In any failure, the first response is to restore service (Incident Management/models) and then to prevent recurrence (Problem Management/models). So it is not a question of who is failing – it is a question of linking the models to make sure both processes are engaged and successful.