GRAHAM FURNIS, B WYZE SOLUTIONS

Q: On a practical level, can you talk about where Service Ownership lies? Is the service owner an operational manager/ technical manager? Or is it more a director level person who does strategy, service reviews, service roadmaps, etc?

A: The owner should be high enough in the organization that they can represent IT to the business. The director level can accomplish this, but the position may be too high and the director may be significantly distracted by dealing with IT strategies and organizational issues. When ownership lies at the technical level, the person is usually very technically focused on a single service component rather than an actual IT Service. This is usually the case with applications (components of a service) are considered the actual IT Service.

That I have experienced, it works best at a customer relationship level where the person is seen as a part of the customer group ensuring the customer is getting what they need from IT. As such, this position typically represents a set of IT Services rather than just one.

Q: You suggested in the beginning to start small, can you talk about that?

A: Starting small can happen from any number of perspective… start small with one IT Service, and then apply to other services. Or, you may want to focus on one customer group. Or look at things from a "who owns what" perspective. Then build a plan for how you will slowly add services in. Start small when looking at what needs to be included; availability metrics, change and release policies, etc.

A common and highly visible element that usually needs to be included in agreements is to define support targets and related support matrix timescales. This is usually a hot issue that the business wants brought under control for a significant number of (if not all) IT Services. If improvements are demanded before there is time to define IT Services, you can start with a generic top level corporate or department agreement - covering all services – that includes your priority table targets (P1-P4). Then you can focus on identifying your most important service dependencies and OLA agreement structure based on support escalation flows.

And finally, let's be honest. Lots of companies still struggle with "what is a service." If you aren't there, then look at applications. Even though this is not an actual IT Service (it's a component of a service), it is still highly relevant to the customer. So define the agreement starting here. What you are actually defining is a top-level OLA which will have supporting OLAs. You can always create a higher level SLA at a later when you have a better definition and understanding of "what is a service".

Q: When measuring availability for devices (e.g. 99.9%) MTBF/MTTR, etc., is it best to use network monitoring tools, incident management tools (e.g. ticket times) or both ?

A: Both. Of course, it depends upon what you have available in your organization. There are many ways to measure. Not every component of the service is always covered through the devices. Typically, down time is measure in incident tickets, so they definitely should be part of the equation.

Q: One of our concerns is that we will become a slow responding bureaucracy - any overall guidance on how not to get bogged down in details?

A: That's the Pandora's box slide from the beginning of the presentation. As you grow your services, they do become more complicated, and some clarity can be lost especially with cross dependencies in the OLA structure. There is the danger of becoming slower in your responses. It's important to keep things small, and not grow them too quickly. We seen success with companies who don't try to achieve 100% of the dependencies, rather go for the 80/20 rule… the top 20% of dependencies that typically meet 80% of our needs. Don't complicate your dependencies!

The other advice is not to add too much detail in your agreements. It's the same 80/20 rule… the top 20% of detail that is needed to meet 80% of our service management needs.

And finally, if available, use your process workflow and scheduling tools to spread your review cycles evenly over the year, and not all at once at year end. Try to create a structure. How often do we review it, is part of the agreement. As you mature it, you could look at going to a review every 12 - 18 months.

Q: In the polling questions, you were not surprised to see IT Services 1st and Customers 2nd, why?

A: In every business, there are a certain things that are very high profile and (hopefully are the same thing that) lead to a business' successes. We find that most companies focus on identifying the key services first. You want to show that you are managing and helping drive success. That IT is trying to get control and deliver success.

Q: What books, if any, do you recommend?

A: Surprisingly, no.

Then many people suggested he write one!