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Q: Would you suggest that the ITSM program be under the Project Management Office (PMO) or have a new Service Management Office (SMO) created?

A: There isn't really a right or a wrong approach – we see some of both approaches out there in the industry. If you have a formal Project Management Office, you will definitely want to tap into those resources to help manage your program. One real advantage of initially assigning ownership to the PMO is that the PMO spans all functional areas of an organization. This can help reduce proprietary issues and turf wars, and allow you to step back and focus on the bigger view for your ITSM program.

In some organizations the PMO doesn't report to IT. In this case you will need to make provision for an ongoing, recognized ITSM program as a permanent part of your IT organization. Keep in mind that the purpose of your ITSM improvement program is to implement best practices and establish an ongoing, recognized ITSM program as a permanent part of your IT organization. I recommend you go out and do some research on this topic – there is good information out there. The role of IT Service Manager needs to be placed at a high level in your organization. It is likely to be either your CIO or a direct report to your CIO.

Q: Does it really take several years to see any benefits? It seems like there are some areas that might be "quick hits" for a quick return. Do you think we should start at the Service Desk?

A: If you look across the different process areas there will be quick hits you can experience. In order to get buy-in, your program planning should identify a mix of short-term wins and long-term benefits. In an interview several years ago, CIOs overwhelmingly identified Change Management and Incident Management as their top two areas of focus. Change was top of mind at the time because of Sarbanes-Oxley, and this is still an important driver. In your organization Incident Management may be the right place to start. To determine whether to start with the Incident Management process or the Service Desk function, evaluate where the organization has its biggest pain points. Make sure you know enough about your chosen framework to map your organization's pain points to that framework. That will help you identify the best starting point.

Q: Can you provide examples of tools and technology that support ITSM for a given organization?

A: ITSM tool suites include tools and technology alike. For example, Configuration Management Databases and the Configuration Management System are a huge area in the tools and technology arena right now. Determine where the critical pieces are in your environment and describe them. Some other key areas are the Service Portfolio and software that supports the Service Level Management process and helps create and manage Service Level Agreements and underpinning agreements and contracts. Many organizations overlook performance monitoring technology that can greatly improve your capabilities in the areas of Capacity and Availability Management. There are lots of great vendors out there. The answer to which one is best for you depends on your organization and what you already have in place. You don't have to buy whole suite. Many vendors have tools that will integrate with what you already have – just be careful in your evaluation and selection process.

Q: How do you promote process ownership across the organization?

A: This is a tough question and a very hot topic. We want the focus to be on accountability, not on power. It is the duty of program management to use awareness and education to communicate across the organization and create the mindset that ownership is about accountability and getting the job done, rather than about turf and power.

Q: What is the best way to make the leap from a purely technical career to a project management career, given no company training is available? I have tried obtaining entry level certifications such as six sigma green belt and am currently pursuing ITIL Foundation.

A: There are certifications for project management which are separate IT service management certifications such as ITIL. In the United States one of the popular is the PMBOK. The PMP is one of the most widely recognized certifications in the U.S. In the United Kingdom it is PRINCE2. This is a little bit more IT-focused than PMBOK, which is more generally applicable. For leadership roles in IT service management, individuals with credibility in the organization and who have project management as well as ITSM certification are a great fit. The cost of acquiring these certifications is fairly reasonable, and there is web-based training available that doesn't require travel.

Q: We don't have a Project Management Office, but are planning to implement some ITIL processes. Can you recommend a way for us to structure the team without having a formal PMO?

A: The PMO acts as a resource to help you organize your improvement projects and program. Smaller organizations often don't have a formal PMO, there are often individuals in the organization who have project management certifications and/or experience. You can tap into those resources even if you don't have a PMO. The organization needs to recognize, though, that the IT Service Management program is a permanent part of your organization and needs to be resourced accordingly. It is not necessary to have a job title, but there must be a permanent, established role that will remain even after individual process improvement projects have been completed.

Q: How would I coordinate my multiple resources who are each doing pieces of Process Maturity Assessments?

A: This comes back to program management. Are these individuals all using the same process maturity assessment tool? Examples are ITIL's Process Maturity Framework and the CMMI version, and there is an ISO version as well. Make sure all of these individuals are using the same framework, and that someone is coordinating how they use it. In one organization I worked with, individuals got together and, as a group, came up with how many people and which individuals they wanted to talk with, the questions they wanted to ask, the framework to use, and the format to report the assessment results.

Q: Are colleges and junior colleges offering courses in project management?

A: Many colleges now recognize that formal, structured project management is a key part of today's business environment, and are offering project management courses as a part of the regular business curriculum. They recognize that these skill sets are necessary to equip students who are graduating and going out into workforce, and to re-educate those who are already out in workforce. Look up your local colleges or community colleges and see what they're offering in the evenings.

Q: How can I do a Process Maturity Assessment if we haven't begun implementing ITIL yet?

A: It is not necessary for the process maturity assessment to be tightly integrated with the ITSM framework you're going to use for your process design and implementation. The information from the maturity assessment you perform will be very useful regardless of which ITSM framework you select. The ITSM frameworks talk about the integration of processes with the other and, beyond that, integration across a lifecycle. You can choose a maturity framework independent of that to assess the characteristics of what you're doing now, regardless of what you plan to do with your ITSM framework in the future. You can look at the characteristics of higher maturity level processes and combine that with the specific information you need for your management framework.

Q: I do not have budget to hire an outside consultant to assess my capabilities. How do I do this using my in-house resources? Should I use ISO 20000 as my assessment standard? Do you have any other suggestions?

A: Looking at ISO 20000's list of "shalls" and "shoulds" will tell you not so much where you are now, but where you will need to be for ISO 20000 certification. There's lots of good information out there now to help you with your assessments. It's my understanding that the ITIL V2 process assessments provided by itSMF are in the process of being revised and updated for V3. If you're not already a member of itSMF (IT Service Management Forum), join it. It's a great resource, and their assessment templates are free for you to download. One company I worked with downloaded the itSMF assessment templates, then formed a team which decided how to conduct the survey, whom to interview, etc. They did a lot of research themselves, and got involved with their local itSMF group to share information with others who had done the same thing. This worked out really well for them.

Q: We're wrestling with the education and acceptance of service ownership vs. product ownership. Product often gets misinterpreted and thus service focus is lost. Do you have any suggestions?

A: The awareness, education, and training branch of your ITSM program really comes into play here. Some of what you're trying to overcome are cultural barriers -- "this is my world," "this is the way it's always been done." We're asking people to make some great leaps from what they've known up until now. You have to address the "soft" side of things and focus on organization change management. There are lots of valuable resources out there to help you with that. John Kotter's book is one very good resource. You can use education for the folks who have been really IT-focused to help them understand the concept of what a service really is. Once they understand that, the lightbulbs begin to go off, and they can start to distinguish between what's technology and what's a service.

Q: You mentioned process design training? What is that?

A: When you are embarking on an ITSM program, it's a number of individual process improvement projects, each one designed to take you from where you are now up to higher level of maturity and to implement best practices your framework says you need to have. If you're at Level 1 and you need to be at Level 3, training comes into play. You need to know your framework. Lots of organizations send people to Foundation training, which is just what it sounds like. It teaches vocabulary and provides a high-level overview. It will not equip you to go back to your organization and start designing processes. That's where the intermediate-level knowledge comes in. Your core team, including process managers and owners who are now going to redesign processes, need to have a more intimate knowledge of the framework you'll be using (e.g. ITIL, MOF, ISO 20000, COBIT).

Look across your entire organization and determine which people only need training at the basic level and what subset needs training at the intermediate and advanced levels.

Additional training is also available. For example, CPDEs (Certified Process Design Engineers) learn a complete, agnostic, independent 10-step process for process design. Look at some other skillsets like process redesign and engineering, quality management, etc. Look at your whole staff and identify how many you need at each skill level. A lot of this you can do yourself once you have the training. It's not always necessary to rely on outside subject matter experts; you can grow and retain that expertise in-house.

Q: Are you seeing a bigger alignment between PMI and *it*SMF because of ITSM programs?

A: In the United Kingdom and Europe, we see alignment between PRINCE2 and ITIL. Here it's more a natural evolution between ITIL and PMI. We began to see that, in order to succeed, we needed to do more than just look at the tactical and operational levels of processes. This was a natural companion to the kind of discipline and structure that has been espoused by project management methodologies for decades. PMI's methodology and ITIL complement each other nicely.