DONNA KNAPP AND JAYNE GROLL

## SLAs/OLAs/CONTRACTS

**Q: In my organization, we have a service desk that is not part of the main IT department. Since we are a service desk solution provider, it is actually in one of our businesses units. So our IT department has chosen to take advantage of that in-place service desk to effectively also be the service desk for internal employees. Is this a situation where an OLA applies? Or are the "parts" of the internal organization too far apart and an SLA is more appropriate?**

A: **Donna:** Let's talk about the role of the SLA, which is an agreement between a service provider and its customers. ITIL defines different types of service providers, including a Level 1 provider that is embedded internally and serves internal customers. A Level 3 provider serves external customers. Could a provider be both a Level 1 and a Level 3? Absolutely. A Level 3 provider can also be a service desk that services to different business units within the company. ITIL talks about Type 1 service providers that are embedded within organizations. The service provided will be driven by the SLAs that are negotiated with different types of customers. IT groups that supply supporting technologies or services will negotiate an OLA with the service provider. But what about contracts? Any time you are talking about an external supplier, you are talking about a contract since it must be a legally binding agreement. Contracts and OLAs need to underpin SLAs. You should never agree to an SLA until you have all of your OLAs and contracts in place, to make sure you can satisfy the service level targets of the SLA.

**Jayne:** I agree that this is a SLA. Any Service Desk can provide support to both internal and external customers. And while it looks different, it's really not. They are still providing the service to "customers" and therefore will negotiate one or more SLAs to define service level targets that meet specific customer requirements. It's significant to understand the difference between an SLA and an OLA, -- SLA between an IT Provider and any customer. The OLA Underpins the SLA by committing to providing supporting services whose individual targets enable the achievement of the SLA targets.

## PROBLEM MANAGEMENT

**Q: We need advice on how to best implement problem management now that we have had some experience. We want to make sure we have a very strong foundation so the process develops fully. We are thinking problem models, training for us on problem solving, and weekly problem management meetings to get the department involved. I feel like we are missing some fundamentals but not sure what.**

A: **Jayne:** At the beginning of problem management, the step that is usually missed is agreement on the definition of a "problem" within the context of that organization. Too often, problems are confused with incidents and the terms are used interchangeably. Remember, incidents do not "grow up" to be problems, they raise the possibility that an underlying problem exists. I suggest sitting down with the service desk and business and IT stake holders and discuss and agree on a common understanding of a "problem" so that everyone is saying and meaning the same thing. Then determine what evidence is required to validate the problem or launch a root cause analysis. While all the problems will have an underlying root cause, you will probably not invest your resources in a problem that won't give you a big enough return. To help manage problems, ITIL encourages the creation of models, which is a predefined step of procedures to handle a specific type of problem. Models help avoid the reinvention of the wheel.

Donna: If there is already a business case template in your organization, embrace that or else sit with your team and create one. Really get good at justifying and showing real, true ROI in problem management. Otherwise, it will be easy to go back to fixing things fast through incident management but never actually preventing future incidents through problem management. Learn to look at the interfacing processes and how you're going to impact them. What are the downstream ramifications of eliminating problems? We must think more strategically, take a proactive approach and try to get involved in the early stages of the service lifecycle.

## RELEASE AND DEPLOYMENT MANAGEMENT

**Q: What do you think the Release & Deployment Management process should focus on?**

A: The best place to start is to understand the definition of a release. It's one or more changes that you are bundling together. You can therefore have multiple changes that are underpinning one particular release. You are going to have all kinds of standard changes happening on a day-to-day basis that don't require a rigorous process – they quickly make their way through the change process. What change management is doing is controlling those changes to minimize risk to business services. Deploying more changes more quickly will require agile change management and release management. Planning is critical. In order to be good at release and deployment planning, you have to get really good at building templates and checklists, so as to not reinvent the wheel every time you prepare for a release. This also helps capture what works and what doesn't. So, think of change management as a control process that monitors and oversees all the changes that are happening with a very "big picture" view. Change managers are focused on the change schedule, about bundling sets of changes into a release, about authorizing developments – but mostly about managing risk. Release management plans, prepares and deploys the release. Another piece is early life support, we make sure those devops folks are engaged so we can make sure the deployments are going well, and if any incidents are occurring, that they are taken care of as quickly as possible.

**Jayne:** Different change categories and change models will spawn different types of releases. Agile development is becoming more and more important and this will rely heavily on the use of check lists and templates to enable operational folks to successfully release in a rapid environment. You need to be predictive and proactive to be successful and to move more quickly into the future.

## CONFIGURATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM ROLES

**Q: Is there a best choice for which functional group to maintain ownership of the Configuration Management System (CMS)? This becomes especially tricky in a global environment, across multiple vendors, e.g., A for Service Desk, B for network, C for site services, etc.**

A: **Jayne:** The CMS has different levels of ownership – from local CMDB data to amalgamated data at the SKMS level. The ability to decentralize that ownership of some aspects of configuration management is not only possible, but encouraged. Decentralized data sources that are maintained/owned at the local level sit with the experts that know the most about that data. Roll all of those individual data sources into a virtual system or CMS, and include other data such as incidents, problems and changes. The CMS should also have some type of ownership, but where that role sits can be tricky to determine. The concept of SM Office is emerging, where key process or lifecycle stage owners directly or indirectly report. The model is very similar to a Project Management Office. An enterprise level SMO type model allows these process leaders to integrate, collaborate and govern the service lifecycle and associated processes. A SMO sends a message that the organization is serious about service management. SMOs are viable for organizations of all sizes and do not necessarily have to create a "department" on an HR organizational chart.

**Donna:** You have to distinguish between process and system; it's really up to the process owner to make sure that the scope of the system has been clearly defined. Once that's defined, then you can start to look at these different CMDBs and their different owners. What everyone needs to understand, is that the CMS is a definitive source that serves all the other processes. The owner helps to define the process and scope of what will be captured in the CMS based on its relationship with Change Management and the Change Manager. Change Management defines all the changes that happen in the CMS. There should be a big planning exercise to look at all the processes and how they will use the CMS. I'm not saying you need to deploy them all at the same time, but you need to scope and define the processes as an integrated set.

## ORG CHANGE MANAGEMENT

**Q: How do we keep the momentum going, and what do we do if middle managers don't really want to change?**

A: **Donna:** In Service Transition, there is a lot of good info about organizational change management that relates to everything that we do, in every stage, in every process. We must constantly think about capturing feedback and lessons learned, and thinking about the fact that everything we do or want to do in service management affects organizational change. The fundamental principles of keeping the momentum going includes preparation, motivation, education and training. Define "where are we going" to help keep the momentum going and create short, medium and long term goals. It takes years to mature your processes, so you must always have a longer term strategy and vision. And always remember to communicate, communicate and communicate some more.

As far as middle management, all you can do is show proof of concept, get good at building a business case, get good at showing ROI, and convince them that they want to change. Learn how to establish baselines that provide a snapshot of where you are today, and where you want to go, Success will breed more success

**Q: Can an organization have 2 change management processes?**

A: **Jayne**: No. Every organization only should have one of each process, but they can allow variations on procedures when required. A "process" takes an input and through a series of high level activities create an output. The activities are always the same – however, the procedures for performing those activities can vary based on local capabilities/tools and needs. To do this successfully, however, you have to have good policies to define what is (and isn't) allowed. The process has to be governed, measured and non-conformance addressed. One change management process, one set of high level policies, and different local level procedures.

### ADOPT/ADAPT

**Q: What if a company already has a process in place that has the same name as an ITIL process but does not reflect best practice?**

**A. Jayne:** A rose is a rose unless it's a daisy – so disguising a "common practice" process with a best practice name, doesn't make it a best practice. Start your process implementation by identifying your "as-is" state - what does that name truly represent? Capture and keep what's working, discard what's not. Build a common vocabulary You don't NEED to call a process by an ITIL term – but the spirit of best practice should carry through regardless of what you call it.

### TEMPLATES

**Q: A recently certified CPDE student asked if we have recommendations for templates for RDD (Requirements Definition Doc) and Gap Analysis? He values the PDD (Process Definition Document) we have provided and wondered what else exists or what we recommend. Please advise.**

A: Go to our website (www.itsmacademy.com) and download our process templates (on the right side of the website). Some other sources of documents can be found here:

- www.projectmanagementdocs.com
- www.project-documents.com
- www.docstoc.com
- www.isizsigma.com/tools-templates

### CERTIFICATION

**Q: I am considering furthering my Education and would like to look into this area, although I am not sure what the best options are for getting started. I have been in the Computer Service Industry for many years and would like to take on some new challenges. Any information for me would be greatly appreciated.**

A: **Jayne**: If you look at the graphic, you can see the ITIL qualification scheme (similar in ISO, CPDE etc). Try to identify the courses that address either your current job or the job/role that you want in the future. Build a track that is right for you. Everyone starts at foundation. If you work "in" processes on an operational basis, look to the capability courses. If you are going to lead a process or lifecycle stage, pick from the lifecycle courses. Every organization should have one or more ITIL Expert who can "manage across the lifecycle" and is in charge of organizational change and process integration. If that's you, then you will need to build a learning track leading to MALC.

**Working with a company that has change configuration and CMDB, have not defined what a CI is...**

**Donna:** You should start ultimately with clarifying your definition of a service. From there, you can define the scope of configuration items (hardware, software, documentation, incidents, contracts, changes, SLAs, etc out what you want the output to be, Then take a step back and think what data you will need to report, who will need the reports and and how they will use that information. . Get an understanding of what an output looks like, and that will help you work back to what kind of data you need to be producing. That's what your categories will represent. Determine what should you be measuring, what do you want to measure, what can't you measure? And once you have those answers, you can close those gaps. Data has to be meaningful and manageable, if you achieve both of those, then you are at the right scope.

**Summary:**

**Jayne:** There is no finish line, it's all about continual improvement, and you really need to start at the beginning, by engaging your stake holders, creating a common vocabulary, setting expectations and discussing the ultimate goals

**Donna:** You really don't want to reinvent the wheel. Resolve your vocabulary, so everyone is talking about the same thing. Here is where adopting a framework will help, to get everyone on the same page. Use your ITIL definitions as a jump-off point, and adapt from there to your specific organization. Understand the spirit of the best practice and guidance. Remember it's all about organizational change and about the people…education, training, communication etc. You have to answer "what's in it for me?" to truly be successful. Be aware that it will take some time.