



## **LIFECYCLE APPROACH TO SERVICE MANAGEMENT ROLES**

### **WHITE PAPER**

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While designing a process may be challenging, the assignment of roles and responsibilities can also be daunting. Who should own the process? Manage it? Execute it? Where should the roles sit in our organization?

The IT infrastructure Library™ (ITIL®) defines 26 IT Service Management (ITSM) processes, with the best practice recommendation that each of these has a designated and accountable owner. Each process also requires one or more process managers who are responsible for overseeing process activities on a day-to-day basis and driving the efficiency and effectiveness of the outcome. Of course, for many organizations, it is not realistic that 26 individual owners, and perhaps 26 more process managers, be assigned. Grouping ownership of similar processes has always been a practical option. However, the logic of process ownership combinations has not always been apparent. This whitepaper will explore a lifecycle approach to process ownership, management and execution.

### **What is a Role?**

Before we begin to assign roles, we have to first understand what a role is (and isn't). By ITIL's definition,

***A role is a set of connected behaviors or actions performed by a person, team or group in a specific context.***

The definition has three distinct messages. First, a role must execute a series of connected behaviors or actions that have been defined *by a process*. Next, the connected behaviors or actions must be assigned to and performed by *an individual, team or structured group* (such as a department or business unit). Finally, the connected behavior or actions must be performed by a designated person, team or group *in a specific context or situation*. Under a different set of circumstances, that person, team or group may be performing other connected behaviors or actions and therefore playing a different role. As a result, one individual or team can assume multiple roles. For example, a member of the Network Support team may at times diagnose an incident (Incident Management), investigate the root cause of a problem (Problem Management), or perform a project-related task (Project Management).

Role assignment does not need to change your organizational chart or require the involvement of Human Resources. Service Management roles can be assimilated into existing job descriptions or, if agreed, can create new positions.

### RACI Models

There are four “parts” that any role can play in a specific activity or process:

- **Responsible** for execution
- **Accountable** for results
- **Consulted** for their expertise
- **Informed** through communication tailored to their needs

A RACI model (also known as an ARCI model or authority matrix) is an excellent high-level tool for mapping roles to responsibilities. While not necessarily easy to build, the process of building and agreeing on a RACI model will facilitate dialogue and encourage buy-in from key stakeholders. The return on the time and effort spent here will be apparent when negotiating Service Level Agreements, Operational Level Agreements and contracts, producing budgets and allocating resources and gaining commitment to Service Management initiatives.

	Service Design Owner	Service Level Manager	Problem Manager	Security Manager	Procurement Manager
<b>Activity 1</b>	A,R	C	I	I	
<b>Activity 2</b>	A	R	C	C	
<b>Activity 3</b>	I	A, I	R, C, I	I	
<b>Activity 4</b>	I	A	R	I	
<b>Activity 5</b>	I	I	A	C	

As you can see from the chart above, each role can play multiple parts for a single activity. While many roles can execute, be consulted or be informed about a specific activity, there can only be *one accountable role per activity*. The *accountable* role is focused on and singularly responsible for the outcome or results of that activity.

Certain roles are accountable by the nature of the work that they do:

- IT Steering Group(s)
- Senior managers
- Line managers
- Process owners
- Service owners
- Change Advisory Board(s)

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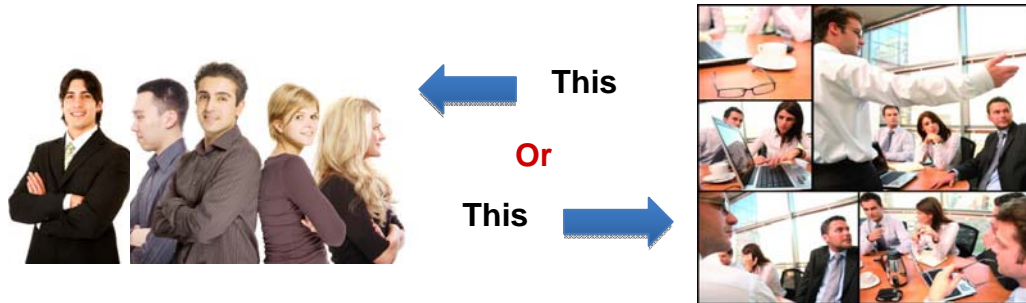
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### Process Owners and Managers

Process owners are accountable for the results of the entire (end-to-end) process. They may or may not perform the actual work. Process managers help define the process activities, oversee the budget and resource allocation and ensure conformance. They therefore must be given sufficient authority to drive the results. Process owners can delegate the management and execution of process activities to other resources.

ITIL is built around a five stage service lifecycle. If ITIL professes a service lifecycle, shouldn't we consider allocating process ownership using the same approach? Applying this logic, the natural division of accountabilities becomes an organic element of the service lifecycle through five "Stage Owners".

### Lifecycle Stage Owners



Lifecycle Stage Owners would be accountable for the results of all of the processes within that stage: Service Strategy, Service Design, Service Transition, Service Operation and Continual Service Improvement. The Stage Owner role would be handled by individuals or groups who perform a set of connected behaviors or actions in a specific context – e.g., during that stage of the service's life.

Stage Owners would ensure that there is only ONE of each process being executed within the entire organization, driving conformance and improvement. They may even choose to approve variances in local procedures or tools if the results or outcomes still meet agreed requirements.

Stage owners should sit at IT's enterprise level, but do not necessarily need to be titled positions unless you are establishing a Service Management Office (SMO). Generally, these owners would already be managing one or more IT units that are tasked with related activities. And remember, the "owners" are not necessarily the "doers." So whether you are a large, globalized organization or a small, local environment, the Stage Owners are accountable for results and can delegate day-to-day process management or execution to other resources. "Local" can be defined by region, domain, business unit, etc.

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Responsibilities of Lifecycle Stage Owners would include:

- Designing, improving and overseeing the implementation of stage processes
- Ensuring policies, plans, objectives, outcomes and metrics are aligned for all processes within that stage
- Ensuring stage processes are properly integrated into other stages of the lifecycle
- Assessing metrics and key performance indicators to ensure processes are meeting requirements
- Delegating process management and tasks to skilled staff at the local level
- Ensuring timely and complete deliverables and handoffs
- Communicating stage policies, performance and requirements to key stakeholders
- Approving variances in procedures and/or tools but ensuring the same results
- Working with the Continual Service Improvement Owner to identify and implement improvement opportunities to processes within that stage
- Accepting accountability for end-to-end results of *all* processes within that stage

The advantages of designating Stage Owners instead of Process Owners include:

- Supporting a “big-picture” view of the service lifecycle, resulting in higher service quality
- Reducing the number of accountable process owners while increasing the possibility of delegating to multiple operational managers for the same process (e.g., local Change Managers, domain-specific Release Managers)
- Aligning and integrating processes by and between the stages
- Limiting the likelihood of process silos
- Establishing the foundation for a SMO, if appropriate
- Ensuring sufficient authority for oversight, governance and improvement

To avoid stage silos, a high-level ITSM RACI model should be built to document the different parts that each Stage Owner plays in their own and other stages of the lifecycle. For example, while the Service Transition Owner is accountable for Change, Release and Service Asset and Configuration Management, all of the other Stage Owners will likely play a responsible, consulted or informed role as a service transitions into the production environment.

### Recommendations for Stage Ownership Assignments

#### Service Strategy:

**Process ownership:** Strategy Generation, Service Portfolio Management, Demand Management, Financial Management

**Possible placement:** CIO or IT Steering Committee

#### Service Design:

**Process ownership:** Service Level, Availability, Capacity, IT Service Continuity, Information Security, Service Catalog and Supplier Management

**Possible placement:** Application Development, Lead Business Analyst, Sales or Account Manager

#### Service Transition:

**Process ownership:** Transition Planning and Support, Change, Release, Service Asset and Configuration and Knowledge Management, Evaluation, Service Validation and Testing

**Possible placement:** Project Management Office

#### Service Operation:

**Process ownership:** Event, Incident, Problem and Access Management, Request Fulfillment

**Possible placement:** Director of Operations

#### Continual Service Improvement:

**Process ownership:** Service Measurement, Service Reporting, and Service Improvement (7-Step Improvement Process)

**Possible placement:** Senior Data Analyst, Internal Auditor, Service Manager, Quality Manager

### Process Management

The beauty of assigning accountability to five Stage Owners lies in the opportunity to now delegate the management and execution of the processes to *multiple* resources. The operational roles can be assimilated into the responsibilities of existing positions and mapped to responsibilities using a RACI model. For example, instead of trying to pick a single Change Manager for the entire organization, you may now delegate authority to several Change Managers – perhaps by region or business unit – to manage changes that are within their subject matter expertise.



All staff involved in Service Management processes must be trained and committed to following the processes as approved by the Stage Owner. The Stage Owners will also need to define thresholds for local versus enterprise activities and empowerment. Although one group or team could manage multiple processes, avoid combining roles from different lifecycle stages. Combining roles from different stages may create role confusion and dilutes the concept of a service lifecycle.

### **The Service Management Office (SMO)**

The five Stage Owner accountability approach naturally lends itself to the formation of a SMO. Similar to a Project Management Office, the SMO is an organizational unit for process owners and managers.

The SMO should be led by a certified ITIL Expert™ with advanced knowledge of all stages and processes within the service lifecycle. This leader would own and be accountable for the entire Service Management Program.

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The five Stage Owners, as well as any other titled process managers, would report into the SMO. Individuals who have process management responsibilities built into existing positions would have “dotted-line” reporting into the SMO (meaning they are required to deliver against objectives defined by the SMO but remain with their line management).

The creation of a SMO visibly demonstrates the organization’s commitment to applying Service Management best practices and continual process improvement. The SMO team has the same focus, goals and objectives. Because of this focus, process alignment is more probable with the creation of an SMO.

SMOs do have potential pitfalls, not the least of which is the risk of adding another silo to an already silo-rich environment.

Should your organization establish a SMO?

- **Yes, if**
  - You are a large organization, have a wide footprint and/or high volumes of change
  - You are having difficulty assigning ownership
  - The Stage Owners need an organizational structure
  - You have the budget and approvals to create org-chart positions
  - The SMO will have sufficient authority and resources
  
- **No, if**
  - The SMO will add another silo or layer of bureaucracy
  - You are succeeding with ownership roles that are spread across the organization
  - You do not have sufficient support and resources



### Conclusion

Since Service Management roles do not necessarily map directly to traditional IT roles, the assignment of process ownership and management responsibilities can be challenging. However, by simplifying the accountabilities into five Lifecycle Stage Owners, the opportunity for consensus, aligned policies and procedures and process integration is increased.

Defined accountabilities open the possibility of having multiple individuals or groups play the same role for one process in a specific context. So, you could have multiple Change Managers, Release Managers, Incident Managers, Service Level Managers, etc. The Stage Owner would ensure that everyone is delivering against the same agreed results.

RACI models are invaluable tools for defining what “part” each group and individual plays in managing IT services. While building a RACI model can take some time and patience, it is a worthwhile effort.

SMOs are emerging as the organizational structure for Service Management roles. While there are many benefits to establishing a SMO, be wary of the potential pitfalls. SMOs should be well planned and led by an ITIL Expert.

As in all things Service Management, it’s all about growth and continual improvement.