

Seven habits of effective IT service management

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IT service management (ITSM) comprises a series of habitual behaviours and tasks. There is little to ITSM that is once off; the entire service lifecycle is an ongoing process where various components are repeatedly revisited to ensure its continued success and its continual improvement. But in order for your ITSM strategy to effectively succeed and constantly revitalise your business, there are seven habits your business can adopt.



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Habit 1: Take charge of your ITSM strategy

ITSM starts with awareness to continually improve. Making a start on your ITSM strategy means identifying the areas of improvement and taking responsibility for them. By owning these areas, you are able to break them down and identify the weak and strong points. Knowing that change is needed is the first step. What and how to change comes later.

Habit 2: Build your strategy with the end goal in mind

In order to improve, you need to know what you hope to achieve, your end goal. Knowing the end goal paints the picture or vision you aspire to. Comparing the end goal to your current position or state, identifies the areas to focus on, defined as objectives. By building a set of goals and objectives – and keeping them in mind at every turn – you can ensure the execution of your strategy stays in line with the outcome you want.

Habit 3: Prioritise

From the very start of implementing your ITSM strategy, it is vital that you work on the most important areas first. What's important can change though and what isn't important today can become vital tomorrow, so it is necessary to be agile in your prioritisation. Your strategy needs to be flexible enough to allow focus where it's most needed. Vital business functions and critical services supporting those functions creates a focus on what is important. Too often time and energy is spent on what is not important wasting a lot of resources, time and money.

Habit 4: Benefit everybody in the business

The ITSM strategy needs to be incorporated throughout the organisation, so it is necessary for everyone to be involved and to buy in to the idea of change, and improvement. People are the foundation of any company, and if they are not united behind the idea of improvement with the business itself and its management team, then change will be resisted and will likely fail.

Habit 5: Listen before you talk

An ITSM strategy is something that must be developed in consultation with all the relevant departments and people. Closely connected with the fourth habit, this one seeks to not just gain buy in from everyone, but also obtain their input. By listening to the business's needs, you can ensure they are properly addressed. It is far too often the case that an ITSM strategy is created without listening to – or understanding – the needs it seeks to address, and is simply forced upon a company. Such a strategy contains no real understanding of the business and what's needed to provide the best service, resulting in a strategy that's already on the back foot.

The ITSM strategy – and the execution and delivery of it – is your responsibility and must be addressed with confidence and authority, but it is vital to encourage everyone, from your team to the rest of the business, to speak freely. With this participation, your strategy can benefit from unknown ideas and are encouraging interest in ITSM and promoting its importance.

Habit 6: Teamwork

A successful ITSM strategy is not the work of a single individual, but takes a team of invested people, all with specific skills and experience which will benefit the strategy. Having a strong and united team behind your ITSM strategy will also back up habit 4 and 5, ensuring that everyone is aware of the benefits and is keen to buy into the idea, and that the relevant parties are cooperative and constructive.

Habit 7: Continual service improvement

This habit is also an actual stage of the ITIL service lifecycle and likely the most important one. Service improvement is an ongoing initiative, and one which must be addressed at every turn. An effective ITSM strategy invariably leads to complacency about its functionality and success, and can blind you to areas where improvement is still required. And even if there appear to be no areas of improvement, doing appropriate checks and assessments of the strategy, the business's changing needs and outside influences, like changing technology, enables you to continually strive for perfection and complete ITSM maturity.

Our final habit unfailingly brings you back to the first habit, highlighting the fact that these habits are an interconnected series of repetitive behaviours which, when exercised, will lead you ever closer to an effective ITSM strategy and full ITSM maturity.

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