ITSM certification for enterprise IT organizations and service providers

Exploiting industry standards to achieve best-in-class service delivery for an adaptive IT infrastructure

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Executive summary

Today, CIOs are being held accountable for the levels of service they deliver, and they must deliver cost-effective, reliable, and flexible IT services to enable business initiatives. They are increasingly being measured based on service-level agreements (SLAs), and they must function much like traditional service providers (SPs) who deliver outsourced services to clients. However, many IT organizations are not equipped to meet sophisticated and time-sensitive IT service demands. They manage platforms and technologies as isolated silos and, despite massive technology investments during the 1990s, continue to use outdated organizational structures, management systems, processes, and tools because there has been no clear path for effective change. As a result, businesses, which are increasingly dependent on IT services, are at risk—and CIOs are on the hot seat.

To achieve best-in-class service delivery capabilities, many CIOs are turning to the IT Service Management (ITSM) industry and associated sources of best practices. These world-class, globally recognized best practices and standards offer a wealth of resources to help IT organizations transform into trusted, strategic IT service providers. However, these best practices and standards can be difficult to implement, and deciding which components to adopt—and which to leave out—requires careful, time-consuming analysis of individual business needs and existing people, processes, and technology. It is no surprise that many do-it-yourself ITSM initiatives fail to realize the promised business benefits.

That’s why many IT organizations are turning to formal certification programs to accelerate and drive their ITSM initiatives. The right certification program can provide an objective, third-party, globally consistent implementation process—a fast, efficient way to measure progress in achieving best-in-class IT Service Management. Such a program will deliver a ready-made, standards-based definition of what is required to achieve particular goals, saving IT organizations the hassle of doing this work on their own. Certification requirements and the standards they embody can be used immediately to benchmark an organization’s current ITSM status, produce a detailed gap analysis, and determine a structured action plan going forward.

This paper explores the challenges of implementing ITSM-based best practices and standards and the business benefits of investing in a formal certification process. The paper also provides an overview of the HP Service Provider Certification process, a unique, globally deliverable, standards-based certification process that enables both internal IT organizations and traditional outsourcing firms to consistently deliver reliable services based on industry best practices.

CIOs on the hot seat

The disparity between business needs and the ability of IT departments to deliver cost-effective, reliable, and flexible IT services constitutes a significant business risk. An IT organization that cannot handle changing demands can contribute to dysfunctional operations and hinder innovation, resulting in a loss of trust in IT and decreases in IT budget. It’s not a surprise that, for the past five years, “business to IT alignment” has rated high among the top five CIO concerns.

This disparity also places CIOs and CEOs in uncomfortable—and high risk—positions. Improper IT security for a banking institution, for example, can place customer data in the hands of malicious hackers. Many industries are also facing increased business regulations that set high expectations for IT services and processes, such as the HIPAA regulations—which govern protection of patient information for health insurance companies and hospitals—and initiatives such as Sarbanes-Oxley and Basel II, affecting corporate governance and financial practice. Businesses must have adequate IT processes to manage and secure important data. At the same time, CIOs also face increasing pressure to reduce costs and fund new projects by being more cost-effective in other areas. And organizations are demanding not just reliable, high-quality IT services, but also a higher level of
business agility—the ability to swiftly and seamlessly accommodate, and even anticipate, change in order to benefit the enterprise. This level of agility can only be realized when IT provides highly synchronized support for business services and is viewed as a proactive enabler of business opportunity—not just a provider of technology or, worse, a roadblock to innovation.

These pressures are putting CIOs on the hot seat. More than ever, CIOs need objective, third-party recognition that their organizations are best-in-class. And if their organizations have weaknesses that hinder their ability to function as trusted service providers, CIOs need to demonstrate that they have the correct insights, best practices, and action plans to fix problems and achieve desired levels of service quality, reliability, and cost efficiency—now, and in the future.

The IT Service Management revolution

To achieve best-in-class service delivery capabilities, many CIOs are turning to the IT Service Management (ITSM) industry and associated sources of best practices. CIOs with broad perspectives realize that achieving IT agility and operational excellence requires transforming IT to focus on end-to-end service management—not just technology silo management and cost cutting. And they are reassessing their core competencies and capabilities, changing and exploiting them to deliver greater business benefits. This process requires rethinking and restructuring the existing IT infrastructure and service management capability.

Leveraging best practices and standards

Companies can achieve best-in-class IT Service Management by implementing industry best practices from a variety of sources. Most companies choose to start with the U.K.’s Office of Government Commerce IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL), a comprehensive and widely respected source of ITSM best practices. ITIL has enjoyed worldwide adoption and is strongly supported and maintained by organizations such as the IT Service Management Forum (iSMF). Many consulting and educational firms around the world now offer ITIL training and certification programs for IT professionals.

A mature ITSM implementation focuses on continuously aligning IT and business objectives through the delivery and support of IT services that meet specific business requirements and agreed-upon service levels and cost targets. ITIL provides a comprehensive library of ITSM best practices that promote business effectiveness and efficiency through the use of information systems, thereby helping to assure the provision of high-quality, business-critical services.
While ITIL is considered a foundation resource for ITSM, formal standards bodies, industry vendors, and business organizations driving the ITSM industry have also developed a wealth of additional and complementary resources (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard/Model</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BS 15000</td>
<td>The first formal, worldwide standard specifically aimed at IT Service Management. It describes an integrated set of management processes for the effective delivery of IT services. (<a href="http://www.bs15000certification.com/">www.bs15000certification.com/</a>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISO 17799/BS 7799 (security)</td>
<td>A comprehensive set of controls comprising best practices in information security. It has become an internationally recognized, generic information security standard. (<a href="http://www.iso-17799.com">www.iso-17799.com</a>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PMBOK and PRINCE2</td>
<td>A project management methodology covering the organization, management, and control of projects. It has become widely used in both the public and private sectors. PMBOK stands for Project Management Body of Knowledge, developed by the Project Management Institute (PMI) and approved by ANSI in the U.S. PRINCE2 is the U.K.’s de facto standard for project management. (<a href="http://www.pmi.org">www.pmi.org</a> and <a href="http://www.ogc.gov.uk/prince/">www.ogc.gov.uk/prince/</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HP ITSM Reference Model</td>
<td>A high-level, fully integrated IT process relationship map designed to help organizations apply ITIL guidelines. The model combines ITIL and industry-standard best practices with years of HP knowledge and experience. Unlike other ITSM models, it includes processes designed to achieve business-IT alignment. (<a href="http://www.hp.com/hps/model/">www.hp.com/hps/model/</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEI CMMI</td>
<td>The Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMMI) developed by the Carnegie Mellon Software Engineering Institute is the de facto standard for assessing the maturity of an organization’s software processes. SEI CMMI has seen widespread adoption as a method of assessing the maturity of other disciplines, such as IT Service Management. (<a href="http://www.sei.cmu.edu/cmmi/">www.sei.cmu.edu/cmmi/</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COBIT</td>
<td>A generally applicable and accepted standard for good IT security and control practices, providing a reference framework for management, users, IT auditors, and security practitioners. (<a href="http://www.isaca.org">www.isaca.org</a>)</td>
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The challenges of implementing best practices and standards

As many IT organizations learn the hard way, best practices and standards can be difficult to implement. For example, there are over 1,000 pages of text in the seven-volume ITIL library. Each book provides dense discussions of many topics, including why an organization might want to consider implementing each best practice, different approaches that could be taken, and the potential benefits. In addition, organizations must follow ITIL recommendations and adopt the best practices that suit their individual business needs. This usually requires a significant investment of time and resources to identify exactly which best practices are most relevant and how they should be implemented.

Similarly, formal standards such as the British Standard for ITSM (BS 15000) have their own implementation challenges. While the documentation for BS 15000 tends to be very concise and much more prescriptive in nature than ITIL guidelines, it can be a challenge to understand exactly what is meant by a certain requirement or what it should actually look like when implemented. Moreover, deciding which standards and guidelines to implement requires careful, time-consuming analysis of individual business needs and the capabilities and maturity of existing people, processes, and technology.
Case study: Attenda

Given these complexities, it can be frustrating and time-consuming to implement best practices and standards in the most appropriate and effective manner. For example, Attenda, a service provider and a leading European firm specializing in design, operation, and delivery of reliable, scalable, and secure application infrastructure, attempted to implement ITIL best practices and standards as an internal IT initiative. After attending workshops, scouring the Internet, purchasing ITIL books, and analyzing critical needs for the company and its clients, Attenda planned and implemented improvements, focusing initially on change management. They made key changes to their incident management process and prepared for—and passed—a BS 7799 security audit, but they didn’t use ITIL. Attenda began with the intention of applying and tailoring ITIL best practices and standards, but they found it was time-consuming and difficult, and, gradually, other activities seemed more important.

The result was surface—rather than substantive—changes to their IT Service Management capabilities. But as their business environment changed, Attenda felt new pressures to make deeper changes to their ITSM capabilities and to achieve results faster. In particular, Attenda was increasingly positioned at the high end of the SP service continuum and, as a result, clients expected high availability, high reliability, responsiveness, and first-class customer service. In competitive situations, they increasingly needed to demonstrate their level of competency; prospects wanted “experienced goods.” Since clients were impressed by the fact that Attenda passed the BS 7799 audit, Attenda thought that investing in additional, third-party “seals of approval” could lead to more business. Finally, the long-term impact of non-optimal processes was becoming obvious to both key partners and clients. Clearly, Attenda needed to make more than surface, crisis-driven changes to its ITSM capabilities.

Certification against a pre-defined standard: an accelerated path to best in class

As Attenda learned, do-it-yourself ITSM initiatives can be frustrating and challenging. To accelerate and drive their ITSM initiative, Attenda chose to invest in HP’s Service Provider (SP) Certification, an objective, third-party, globally standardized certification process. HP provided an independent review of Attenda’s ITSM implementation against a comprehensive set of best practices for reliable service delivery. Attenda began by performing a guided self-assessment and then worked closely with an HP ITSM consultant to assess their current position, plan the overall approach to certification, and determine any required service improvement activities. Next, HP conducted a detailed onsite assessment of Attenda’s entire end-to-end IT infrastructure and services and developed a detailed gap analysis. Working with the HP ITSM consultant, Attenda then implemented a program of service improvement to address areas of weakness.

After completing the process, Attenda received an independent HP SP Certification stating that the company is able to consistently deliver reliable services to a defined standard based upon industry best practices. The certification also serves as a visible, public measure of Attenda’s service management maturity.

The certification process also heightened the IT organization’s awareness that maintaining service management maturity over time requires a commitment to ongoing process improvement. Striving for the required bi-annual recertifications will enable Attenda to address changing business needs and consistently meet the expectations set by its partners and customers.

As Attenda’s experience illustrates, a certification process can provide a clear path through many information sources and standards, resulting in a faster way to reach service management goals—and a tailored implementation for each business. It’s an effective, accelerated path to best-in-class service delivery.
Business motivations for certification

Attenda chose to invest in HP’s SP Certification because it would:

- Clearly set the bar for what Attenda needed to achieve and then measure progress
- Provide an objective assessment of Attenda’s progress in achieving its service delivery objectives
- Help drive the necessary changes to people, processes, and technology
- Prove the organization’s service maturity to potential customers

Additional reasons why CIOs may choose to invest in a certification process include gaining the ability to:

- Reveal strengths and hidden weaknesses in the IT organization and processes
- Provide an objective baseline measurement of existing capabilities that is useful for CEOs, internal customers, and partners
- Identify existing service management problems
- Define optimal service management targets
- Determine how to continuously improve services
- Reduce exposure to risk

And finally, according to research by Quint Academy, properly implementing ITSM best practices not only reduces risk exposure, but it also helps organizations address other key concerns, including how to increase agility, manage costs, and increase service quality (see Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. ITSM best practices help organizations address key concerns</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Key customer concerns</strong></td>
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<td>Increase agility</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Minimize risk</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Manage costs</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase service quality</td>
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Source: Quint Academy, ITSMf Netherlands

Finally, new standards, such as BS 15000, are increasingly being adopted internationally and are likely to become basic requirements for doing business with other firms—just as ISO 9000 is today. The wide acceptance of BS 15000, for example, is the first step toward the delivery of IT services that are much more consistent across organizational and national borders. Eventually, organizations will need proof that they have met such standards, and certifications will make this possible.

The need for a vendor-neutral, end-to-end certification process

As shown in Table 1, there are many models and approaches available today for ITSM. Some have their own self-assessment materials, and others are backed up by formal, third-party assessment processes. However, until now, there has been no single certification approach that fully addresses the complete, end-to-end spectrum of people, process, and technology components required for reliable IT service delivery.
HP Service Provider Certification: a standards-based approach for enterprises

To address the need for an end-to-end certification process, HP offers a unique, standardized Service Provider (SP) Certification—a globally deliverable, consistent certification process based on industry standards. This certification assesses an IT organization’s ability to consistently deliver reliable service. During the assessment process, HP consultants measure IT organizations against a set of globally accepted standards, taking into account the business relevance of each standard or best practice. The process clearly delineates where an IT organization stands today, compares the current state with the desired state, and indicates where it needs to improve to meet current business requirements. This benchmarking data serves as a critical foundation for continuous improvement going forward.

HP also offers a series of joint service improvement workshops and a program of continuous improvement to help IT organizations close gaps and work toward the certification requirements. Customers receive certification—and a unique HP SP Certification logo—once they demonstrate that they have implemented all of the required best practices. The HP SP Certification logo shows that the services they provide can be delivered reliably and that all service-level agreements (SLAs) can be met. Achieving HP SP Certification can be seen as the organizational equivalent to the ITIL Masters/Managers qualification for IT professionals, and the program is open to any business where IT services are being provided based on SLAs.

As part of HP’s independent assessment, customers receive a curriculum outlining a detailed set of clearly articulated best practices tailored to fit their unique IT and business objectives. The certification clearly delineates an end point relevant to each business and verifies and documents when it is reached. The process also describes specific steps needed to reach the end point. As a result, IT organizations know exactly how to take action, which simplifies and accelerates the process of implementing ITSM standards and best practices. Since the certification is based on the services provided to the business, it verifies and validates end-to-end service delivery levels, identifies risks and problem areas, demonstrates areas of strength, and helps chart a course of action that can lead to cost reductions.

An industry-recognized service provider certification

As a leader in ITSM and mission critical solutions, HP brings extensive experience and knowledge to the certification process. Summit Strategies recognizes that the HP SP Certification can help customers realize their IT Service Management goals: “More than ever, service providers need assistance in the way they attract partners, bulletproof their delivery architectures, and prepare for a time when customers start buying SP services again in greater numbers. We think many SPs will find that the “new” HP way in SP certification might be an ideal way for them to achieve those goals.”

Initially developed as a certification for formal service providers within the outsourcing industry, HP’s process has now been tailored to allow both internal IT organizations and formal outsourcing firms in all industries to benefit from SP Certification.

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Two HP certification levels

Customers can strive to achieve one of two levels of certification:

- **HP Signature Certified**—This is a comprehensive assessment of all key aspects that impact a service provider’s ability to deliver services to a reliable standard. It includes a comprehensive people, process, and technology assessment. Consultants examine the full spectrum of end-to-end service delivery components, including ITSM practices, network, applications and databases, system software, hardware (servers and storage), and physical environment.

- **HP Certified**—This level serves as a starting point or stepping stone to Signature Certification by providing a technology-only assessment that certifies the quality of the infrastructure used to deliver services.

Unlike many vendor certifications that require significant hardware purchases or collaboration commitments prior to certification, HP customers receive certification based on one attribute alone: service quality. The certification’s quality seal is available exclusively to enterprises that have successfully differentiated themselves through the certification of their services; it does not depend on any required level of financial commitment to HP.

Preparation for emerging industry standards

In addition to ITIL and other industry best practices, the HP SP Certification criteria and methodology incorporate BS 15000, the world’s first formal standard for IT Service Management. Due to the high bar set by BS 15000, many organizations need external help in order to evaluate the impact it will have on their infrastructure and service management processes, as well as to determine the steps necessary to achieve certification. HP’s SP Certification process and embedded standards for reliable service delivery specify the minimum best practices that an organization must have in place for BS 15000. As a result, IT organizations can use the HP SP Certification process to prepare for BS 15000. Once HP SP Certification has been achieved, IT organizations are in a solid position to attain BS 15000 certification.

The HP SP Certification process: step by step

The HP certification assessment process is fast and efficient. IT organizations first complete a self-assessment exercise to determine where they fit within the certification criteria and to help prepare for the onsite assessment. Then, through a series of onsite visits, HP ITSM consultants verify the certification criteria by requiring proof of existing processes. After completing the audit, HP consultants use a scoring engine to determine the results in each area.
An end-to-end service analysis and assessment

The assessment criteria used by HP consultants cover the complete end-to-end spectrum of service delivery and are broken down into 22 distinct areas, covering over 1,000 best practices, as illustrated in Figure 1. Each best practice defines what is required to achieve reliable service delivery, and HP consultants evaluate customers’ ITSM implementations against these criteria.

As a result, the full spectrum of people, processes, and technology is considered in detail, with the goal of maximizing service reliability in terms of risks and countermeasures (such as hot-plug power supplies, middleware clustering, process, and skills development). In addition, operational tasks that can be undertaken to increase the availability of an IT component are considered (such as fast startup and shutdown times, periodic health checks, and other proactive monitoring).

Figure 1. 22 areas examined during the HP SP Certification

Focused on the specific business mission

To help customers achieve their desired levels of availability, HP evaluates their ITSM practices for business relevance to make sure that they are “fit for purpose.” Best practices are weighted or adjusted according to individual business requirements. For example, a relatively simple, paper-based change management process may be deemed adequate for a non-critical IT service within a small company, but not for a business-critical, 24x7 IT service such as mail and messaging within a multinational conglomerate.
Key deliverables and next steps

Once the assessment process is completed, customers receive a detailed gap analysis against the assessment criteria and a formal benchmark of the organization’s service management capabilities against their business objectives. Once the ITSM implementation satisfies the criteria, formal certification is granted. Should significant gaps need to be addressed, the gap analysis and benchmark data can be used to develop an effective and detailed service improvement plan.

Independent risk and maturity analyses

One of the key deliverables that HP customers receive is a thorough gap analysis against each of the 1,000 best practices, complete with corresponding risks to availability and an overall summary of ITSM maturity, as shown in Figure 2. The maturity levels are based on the ITIL Process Maturity Framework and represent a service provider’s ability to carry out activities in a consistent and repeatable way. The bold line marks the desired state for key process areas, adjusted for specific business needs. The shaded area indicates the current state relative to the desired state for each process area. Shaded areas falling inside the bold line indicate maturity gaps, potential business risks, and inefficiencies.

Figure 2. Level of ITSM maturity

The next step: continuous service improvement

Regardless of whether the customer attains certification on the first attempt, it is critical that the IT organization leverage the assessment data as a benchmark and establish a formal process for continuous service improvement. Achieving certification represents a single snapshot of one moment in time. To stay best in class, enterprises must continuously reevaluate and improve their ITSM implementations in the face of a changing business climate and technology upgrades. If there are significant gaps that prevent certification, the process provides the enterprise with the necessary benchmarks, targets, and priorities needed to address critical areas of weakness and ultimately attain certification.
To build and maintain a cost-effective service management infrastructure that satisfies current and future business objectives, the continuous service improvement program must ensure:

- The required availability, security, and quality of end-user services being delivered
- An appropriate level of ITSM maturity for the support and evolution of services
- The deployment of a technological infrastructure that meets business needs
- The ability to adapt quickly to changing business requirements

HP’s service improvement lifecycle, which is delivered as part of HP’s Mission Critical Partnership Service, is designed to help an enterprise confidently achieve its business objectives and reduce IT risks and costs (see Figure 3). Once an organization has identified its business objectives and SLAs, the process begins with an in-depth assessment of the IT organization’s current state relative to service management and delivery—the same assessment that the HP SP Certification provides. The next steps in the lifecycle—development of a service improvement plan, implementation of improvement activities, and periodic assessment and benchmarking—focus not just on improving availability, but on delivering better service with fewer resources, at a lower cost and at a higher value to the business.

Figure 3. HP Mission Critical Partnership: service improvement lifecycle
Only HP offers…

- **Extensive HP experience and expertise**—HP is the market-leading ITIL/ITSM training provider, having trained 34,000 IT professionals globally in 2003. And HP provides the most comprehensive ITSM services and tools in the industry, including:
  - ITSM consulting for developing new processes,
  - ITSM automation using HP OpenView technology,
  - ITSM education services, and
  - Mission Critical Services that utilize ITSM to help customers meet their availability objectives and continually improve service levels to the business.

- **Joint Microsoft Gold and HP SP Signature certifications**—HP is approved by Microsoft to deliver the Microsoft Gold certification on behalf of Microsoft. HP delivers the two certifications simultaneously, providing customers with an efficient way of achieving both certifications from a single assessment.

- **The broadest set of assessment criteria in the industry**—The HP SP Signature Certification incorporates a wide range of standards relevant to ITSM, including BS 15000, ISO 17799, ISO 9000, the full ITIL library, CMM, COBIT, PMBOK/PRINCE2, Microsoft Operations Framework, the HP ITSM Reference Model, and HP’s extensive Mission Critical Service experience. HP uses these criteria to help organizations achieve reliability, availability, supportability, and manageability in their mission critical IT infrastructures.

- **The HP ITSM Reference Model**—HP developed the HP ITSM Reference Model, a key component of every HP ITSM design project. The model includes predefined processes for a large number of the ITIL best practices that can be applied to enterprises.

- **Global ITSM consulting and support resources**—HP has more than 1,000 consultants trained in ITIL and over 5,000 consultants delivering support services based on ITIL. To help ensure consistency, HP consultants use a specialized SP delivery methodology and assessment criteria, which are overseen by a technical assessment board. All consultants who deliver SP Certification must undergo formal training and mentoring before they can become lead assessors in customer engagements.

- **Contributions to IT industry best practices**—HP contributes its expertise to ITSM standards as a Corporate Member of the itSMF. HP personnel participate as board members and active members of a number of executive subcommittees, including Publications, Marketing, and BS 15000 Certification, in many itSMF chapters around the world. HP has helped start local chapters in Japan, Korea, and China, and HP consultants also contribute content to ITIL publications and the Microsoft Operations Framework.

**Why choose HP for SP Certification?**

HP’s Service Provider Certification fully addresses the complete, end-to-end spectrum of people, process, and technology components required for reliable IT service delivery. In addition, it is the only certification program that offers a globally deliverable, standards-based certification process that enables IT organizations to consistently deliver reliable services to defined standards based upon industry and vendor best practices. It’s an accelerated path to best-in-class IT management, offering bottom-line benefits by fostering greater efficiency and effectiveness and tighter business-IT alignment.
For more information

For more information about HP Service Provider Certification, please visit:

www.hp.com/go/spcertification