Russian roulette

Summary

The exciting game of Russian Roulette is played with a handgun, in which at random one bullet is loaded at random. The participants in the game place the gun, one after another, against their heads and gently squeeze the trigger. Usually the game ends when the first participant dies. A reason for playing this game is considered 'the kick', (not) killing yourself seems to be very exciting.

   Of course, the chances of surviving the game are influenced negatively by putting more and more bullets into the gun.

   The thesis of my chapter is that Service Management implementations can be compared to playing Russian roulette, and that poor preparation is equivalent to placing additional bullets in the gun.

A bizarre comparison?

Well, maybe you are right. Of course the title of a chapter always has to be a bit intriguing, but to state bluntly that a Service Management implementation might be killing for a company….

   However, I hope that you will discover, while reading this chapter, that there is more to an ITIL or Service Management implementation than simply rolling out a registration tool and writing down a book full of procedure descriptions.

   A few years ago I attended a discussion where one of the participants stated that he knew not one successful ITIL implementation in the Netherlands. This particular remark triggered me in doing research on this subject. It's an intriguing statement. As an external consultant and service manager, I was initially convinced that a lack of insight caused this statement (of course, my own implementations had run fine…) but then I started to think again. Were my own ITIL projects really successful? Did the implementations I had supervised really contribute to the company's goals? In the many discussions that followed, but also at the many seminars I visited, time and time again the contribution of ITIL to the business was a hot topic. Of course I encountered difficulties myself in my own projects, and finally I realized that the majority of the problems people experience in Service Management or ITIL implementation projects had *nothing* to do with the methodology itself but *everything* with the impact of such an implementation to the organization. So that´s what I focused on. A lot of the things I have seen and experienced in the past few years are included in this chapter. Maybe you recognize the situations+ maybe you have already instinctively or consciously avoided them. Learn from it. I wish everyone a smooth implementation.

For the sake of definitions: when I am referencing to an ITIL implementation, I am talking about the implementation of one of the ITIL processes, such as Change Management or Service Level Management. A Service Management implementation, however, is considered to be the implementation of a *client-focused IT service-providing organization*, based on the ITIL processes. A Service Management implementation includes the implementation of one or more ITIL processes but is certainly not limited to that.

   Generally I will be speaking of Service Management, but this chapter applies just as well to single ITIL processes. On a more detailled level you will encounter the same problems and questions as the ones I'm discussing here.

Finally, when IT Service Provisioning is mentioned here, a reference is being made to the whole package of customer-focused IT Services, provided by an (usually internal) IT department.

IT today

It's a fact that the role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has increased strongly over the past few years. Companies are becoming more and more aware that the information they use is of strategic value, even to the extent that the survival of their business depends on it. A logical result of this is that the means for transporting, storing and processing this information and the underlying data is becoming increasingly important.
Of course there are, and probably will always be, companies with a low or even non-existent need for ICT. A company producing wooden shoes just for the village where the company is located (speaking of small markets...) won't need an extensive ICT infrastructure. However, times are changing and new opportunities occur. As soon as this little company opens a virtual store on the Internet, selling its wooden shoes all over the world, the need for a reliable ICT infrastructure becomes evident.
This results in increasing demands on the ICT infrastructure of companies. Business processes will no longer settle for generic ICT support but demand tailored services, fit to their specific and changing needs.
Where dependency of the business processes on the ICT infrastructure grows, the demands on these infrastructures will grow too. The reliability, but also the changeability and scalability of both physical infrastructure and information systems and procedures (the ICT infrastructure) become more and more crucial. Looking at traditional IT departments, organized on a product basis (for instance, with a network department and a mainframe department), you will see that they have a hard time coping with these new demands and changes. Good examples of this kind of environment are Web-based organizations, who have to compete in a very dynamic market with continuously changing demands made by (in most cases) unknown customers. With traditionally organized IT departments they do not stand a chance.
But in other (non-Web) environments you can observe the same problems too. Users of the IT infrastructure are no longer just following the directions of the IT department. They understand more than ever the possibilities of IT and try to incorporate these possibilities in their own work. Their managers, responsible for business processes, do the same. They demand an optimal support for their business processes, tailored to their needs. This, however, means a conflict of interest with the IT department, managing the IT infrastructure. From their point of view, stability and standardization are primary goals. There seems to be an obvious solution to fulfil these needs. We'll just implement Service Management, and our problems will disappear miraculously. It almost sounds like a TV commercial.

The Reality

Day-to-day business appears not to be as bright and shiny as the commercials want us to believe. The same applies to Service Management. When you start asking around to see how IT users experience support in this area, you usually don't hear success stories.

I encountered a great example during a seminar last year, where five representatives of `the business' were sitting on a stage in front of an audience of ITIL worshippers. Sad stories all around. The business felt completely misunderstood by its own IT department. The demands were not honoured; IT staff had no grasp of the requirements made by their business processes. So they pleaded enthusiastically for the next hype: to outsource as much as possible of their IT department, arguing that doing so was the best way to get a grip on their IT services. And of course: the things that you are not good at doing yourself, you should not do at all!

The response from the audience was predictable, of course. Misunderstood? MIS-UNDERSTOOD? If there was one group that suffered from misunderstanding it was without any doubt the IT department! All the relentless efforts to keep things running and controlled weren't appreciated at all. Their needs weren't recognized, and now the business wanted to start outsourcing the department? This was a reverse reality.

Yes, there are companies where things do work and IT users are satisfied indeed with the IT services they are offered. This seems to be, however, a minority. Therefore, let's have a look at the reasons why the gap between 'business' and `IT' is often so wide, and why it seems so hard to cross this gap. I will be focusing on those situations where a decision is made to implement IT services using Service Management.

A Different World

Let's be realistic. Most organizations do not have ICT service provisioning as a primary production process. The goals of the organizations are usually defined in totally different areas, whether it concerns the production of paint or the running of a hospital. That IT services can be very important or even crucial is something else. IT service provisioning has a supporting role in these primary business processes. The Tree of Aims, presented in Figure 1, illustrates this.

In the Tree of Aims the assumption is made that organizations usually focus on quality, flexibility and control of cost, each to a certain degree. For some organizations the control of cost is paramount; others have flexibility as a central motto. There are companies, like Ericsson for example, stating that 'being first' is more important than 'being best'. However, being first can only be achieved through a large amount of flexibility. The fact that, in this case, cost control usually is not paramount speaks for itself.

Walking top-down through the Tree of Aims, the first step is from Organization to Business Processes. The meaning of this step is that, in order to reach the organization's goals, you could decide to implement business processes that are contributing to the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization. Using business processes is a possibility, but there are other solutions. This is the meaning of the 'How?' arrow. So, you could contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency of the business processes by using IT Service Provisioning. Creating effective and efficient IT Services can be done by using Service Management (or any other of the approximately 25 methodologies available in this area today). Finally, Service Management can be filled in, you guessed it, by using ITIL processes.
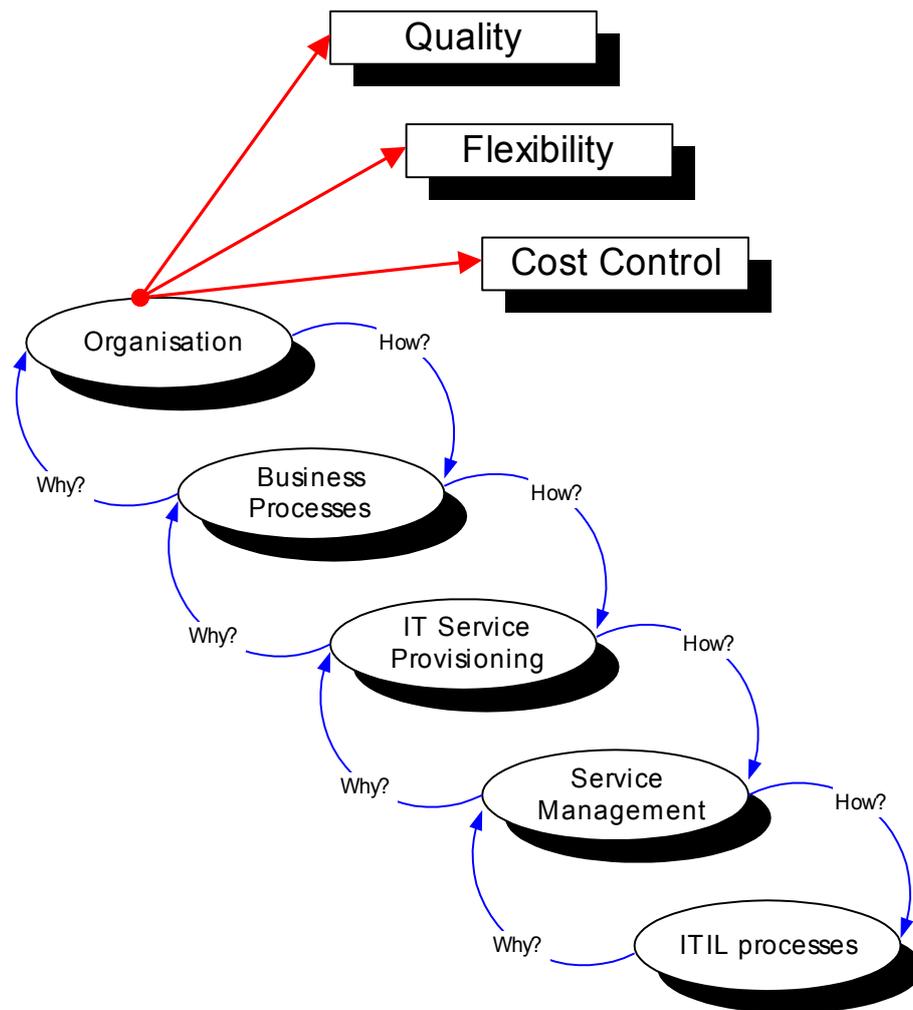
Figure 1. Tree of Aims

I often use the Tree of Aims to explain the position of IT Service Provisioning, Service Management and ITIL in organizations. The bottom line in the argument is that underlying layers have to contribute in a positive way to the higher layers in the tree. Indirectly, ITIL and Service Management, if well implemented, contribute to the organization's goals of quality, flexibility and cost control.

Of course this thesis is the absolute favourite of the managers that are responsible for the business processes within the company. All those IT whizz-kids simply have to do their jobs in such way that they contribute positively to our effectiveness and efficiency! And to be frank: we don't care how they do it, just as long as they do it.

Here lies the gap.

Whereas the business processes are directly busy realizing their contribution to the oranization's goals, the IT service-providing departments do that in an indirect way. The fact is that they play a supporting role and will stay that way, regardless the importance of their activities for the organization.

The power of the IT departments seems to indicate otherwise, sometimes. In this situation, however, it comes down to a mutual dependency. The business processes cannot do without the IT services, while the latter have no right of existence without the business processes.

A solution

In accordance with the Tree of Aims, you could improve this situation by implementing Service Management. I don't say that this is the solution to all problems; it is just one of the possibilities. Choosing such an approach is thus a problem in itself. If a client asked me to implement ITIL in its organization, my counter-question immediately would be 'How did you determine to use this methodology?'. The answer to this question is the basis for accepting or refusing the assignment (in that form, that is).

We are touching the core right now of why Service Management implementations and ITIL implementations are often such harsh and worrying activities.

Why does a company decide to use Service Management for reshaping its IT Service Provisioning? Everyone starting such an implementation should ask themselves this question, because you don't know whether Service Management is the right methodology for that company, for that situation. When you accept an assignment to implement Service Management, you'll have to be convinced that Service Management is indeed a good solution for the company's problems.

Let's go for it!

Let's assume that you have the impression or - even better - the conviction that implementing Service Management might mean a positive contribution towards a high-quality IT Service Provisioning. So you decide to accept the assignment.

For the rest of this chapter I make the assumption that the person accepting the assignment is an external (Service Management) consultant. Not too many companies have the internal expertise to do Service Management implementations themselves. On the other hand, even if they are capable of doing so, it is sometimes explicitly decided to give the assignment to an external party. To what extent the involvement of the organization is required in these implementations will be shown later in this chapter. The fact is that the majority of Service Management implementation projects in the Netherlands are led or coached by external consultants.

As stated earlier in this chapter, creating an IT management environment according to Service Management principles is no easy job. Stories from the real world sometimes draw an ugly picture. For example, take the situation where a management team hands out the assignment to 'implement ITIL'. Gradually, it becomes obvious that this team is not very united in its expectations on this subject. Remarks such as 'but we already have a help desk, don't we?' or 'change management only slows down operation, so we won't implement it' indicate that a lot of work still needs to be done.

Besides this confusion, what about the kind of blunt resistance you can encounter during the implementation of Service Management? In fact, the implementation of Service Management is actually a reorganization, an organizational change due to the switch from a hierarchical structure to a process-oriented structure. There is more on this transformation later in the chapter.

I encountered a nice example of resistance during the implementation of an Incident Management process. The support engineers involved appeared very reluctant to enter into the registration tool the amount of time they spent on solving an incident. They saw it as a means of management control and an intrusion into their freedom of acting (the Big Brother syndrome). The goal of the management, however, was to use these data to determine

workload in order to hire additional support engineers when the workload became too much.

All kinds of resistance can also occur within the business processes, especially if you don't take the time to take a really good look at the actual situation within these processes, the tasks they perform, and the problems they experience. I very well remember the conversation I had with a production manager who remarked irritatedly that he wasn't interested at all in that help-desk rubbish. The thing I had to take care of was that the computers, on which he was so dependent, kept on running. By the way, yesterday the system had been down for five minutes again. Did I realize what a mess that had caused? He gave me a clear message: focus on availability and stop introducing questionable remedies like help desks in all those cases when IT had failed once again.

There are strong arguments in favour of doing a Service Management implementation right the first time. What we must not forget is that we are talking about a lot of money here, not only because of hiring external expertise but also because of the claims that are made on the internal resources.

There are also less measurable aspects, such as a growing resistance to change, damage to the reputations and demotivation of the people involved, casting a shadow on future developments. Even if new implementation attempts are made, the challenges in this area will definitely be larger.

Where do things go wrong?

We have gradually become aware of the fact that the implementation of Service Management is more than inventing processes, writing books full of procedure descriptions or implementing a Service Management tool. We are dealing with a real organizational change, if not a reorganization. And even IT departments nowadays are beginning to see that, in an organizational change, all kinds of 'tricky' and complex factors play a role, such as attitude, culture, human behaviour and commitment.

What I am experiencing time and time again is that a kind of 'standard approach' seems to exist for Service Management or ITIL implementations. A management decision is followed by hiring external expertise, leading to a project to implement one or more ITIL processes. This is usually combined with the implementation of a registration tool, supporting these processes. In the optimal case, an analysis is done to determine where the organization is hurting most (for example, with one of the numerous organizational maturity scans); however, the results are in general only used to determine what the size and order of the process implementations should be.

Conclusion: the focus lies on the technical approach, and not on the 'softer' aspects such as the management of expectations, attitude, communication and so forth. Here lies a guarantee of failure.

Think first, act later

How unique is Service Management where these problems are concerned?

Looking at the way we run projects, you'll see that it is considered standard to look at the risks involved in a project before it actually starts. Such an analysis tries to describe and value all the aspects in and around the project that can influence the outcome of it. Knowing the risks, you can anticipate them.

Although I almost never see it happen in real life, this investigation of risk is also a part of Service Management implementations. In almost every serious book on ITIL or Service Management, you'll find that the introduction of a management process starts with a *feasibility study*. The objective of such a study is to determine the factors that hamper the implementation (or even block it), and the factors that have a positive influence on the project results. In fact, when conducting a feasibility study you follow the ground rules of strategy: determine where you currently are, put a mark on the map to indicate where you want to be, and plan your marching route. This last step, the determination of the way you intend to meet your objectives, should start after conducting a SWOT analysis. In such an analysis, originating from the world of strategy, you determine the strengths and weaknesses of the organization, and then relate these to the external opportunities and threats. These aspects influence the achievement of the goal(s) you set, sometimes in such a way that the goals become unreachable. A graphical representation of the SWOT analysis is shown in Figure 2.
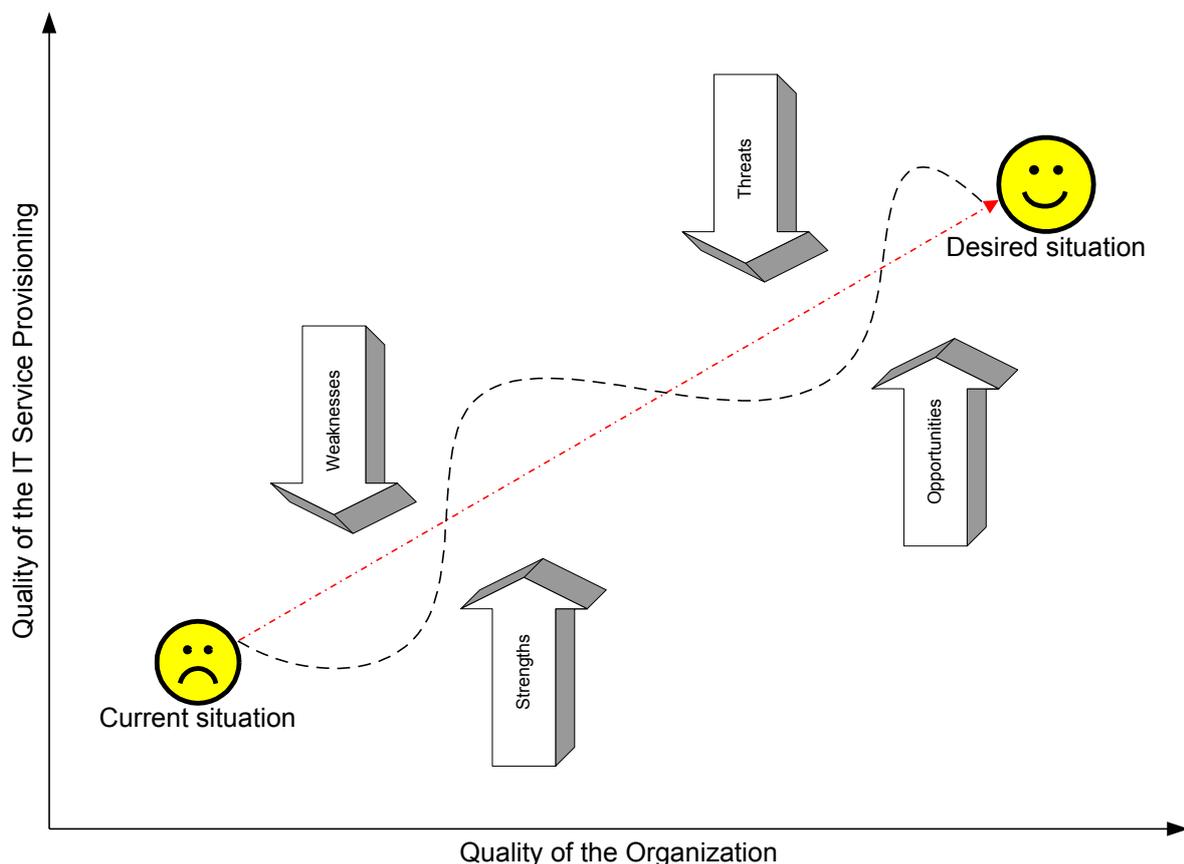

Figure 2 SWOT-analysis

The structure of a feasibility study

The structure of a feasibility study is relatively simple.
The study starts by creating an overview of the *current situation*. In what respects is IT supporting the business processes today? What parties inside or outside the organization are involved? What is the performance of the participants? Where lies the pain in the organization? Important points for attention during the determination of the current

situation are the scope of the feasibility study (what is included in the study and what is not), the identification of all parties involved and the creation of measurable results. With this last remark I mean that you have to try as much as possible to create measurable values that can serve as a basis for improvement activities. Don't, for example, conclude in the feasibility study that the IT department is too slow in answering the phone when a user calls with an incident, but instead try to collect data on the amount of calls, the number of IT employees answering the phone, the average waiting time, etc. Quantification is the keyword here. I realize that this is not always an easy task. One of the most important reasons for starting a Service Management implementation is usually the demand for a greater grip on the IT service provisioning. In the current situation, therefore, these measured values are hard to determine.

After creating an insight into the current situation, we start to determine the *desired situation*. In other words: what does the organization want to achieve? Of course the management of a company does not start an implementation of Service Management just for fun, or because it is an interesting topic of discussion while playing a game of golf (I really hope I'm not wrong about this.... Well, such an attitude of course would have been noticed in the previous stage of the feasibility study, the determination of the current situation, wouldn't it?).

Explicitly stated or not, ideas exist on what people want to achieve with a Service Management implementation. Maybe in vague terms, maybe well defined, these ideas exist in the minds of those involved. In the previous stage we determined the parties involved, so now we have to interview them, in order to capture these expectations and ideas in as coherent a way as possible. It is obvious that you must avoid the pitfall here of just writing down all the criticism of things that don't run smoothly in the current situation. Being negative is easy, but what are the solutions? What needs to be done in order to improve things? When you are in the middle of this current situation it is often hard to make such leap of thought. However, the consultant guiding this process can be helpful here. Based on his or her own experience, the consultant should be able to make a reasonable projection of the consequences of the Service Management implementation in the organization. Another important aspect is that you check this newly defined desired situation with all parties concerned. Each group you identified in your determination of the current situation should be involved in the discussion of the desired situation. Take care that a coherent image is developed, supported by all parties. Here lies a direct connection with the awareness activities, which are discussed later in this chapter.

These first two stages of the investigation are relatively simple. The real challenge appears as soon as we try to determine the marching route, the road the organization has to follow to reach the desired situation. It is less hard to define where you want to go than to define how you will travel. As a good adviser, the consultant will present proposals for the approach, the order of the activities and the estimated time needed. This of course needs an intensive dialogue with the parties involved. Not only must there be a solid foundation for the desired situation, but also for the way this final goal will be reached. Elements such as the amount of change the people involved are subject to, or the contribution they are supposed to deliver, can definitely be subject of discussion.

As described earlier in this chapter, you have to make a SWOT analysis before you start planning your activities and general approach. The way you are going to do things is heavily dependent on the strengths and weaknesses of the organization, in combination with the opportunities and threats that may occur.

An example

An organization suffers from poor IT support. End users are complaining because they don't know when their problems will be solved. They make all kinds of agreements on this matter with the IT department. but these remain vague and aren't written down or confirmed. This situation highly iritates the management of the business processes, because they see loss of production without swift action from the IT department. And if an IT representative appears, it's not clear how long it will take before production is at its normal level again.

On the other hand, the IT department is extremely busy. The highly motivated employees, having a lot of fun in their work, run throughout the whole company to solve problems as quickly as possible. Wherever they think the need is highest, that's where they run to first. There is no registration of data whatsoever, there's no time for that. Customers need to be helped as quickly as possible. Recognizable, so far?

A decision is made to restructure the IT department. And, of course, Service Management will be used to do the trick. The business process management states that they want clear and unambiguous agreements on resolution times and availability. This seems to appeal to the head of the IT department, because it will save him a lot of ugly phone conversations. The SWOT analysis shows the following. The strong points of the IT department are the motivation of the employees, the available budget and resources to make the necessary changes, and a management team that is united in its opinion that the desired situation really needs to be realized. A weak point is the fact that the head of the IT department is actually not very motivated. He wants to go along with the wishes of the management team, but sees many problems related to this approach. Besides that, the employees of the IT department are very motivated to help their customers, but on the other hand they are very attached to their freedom to solve things the way they think is best. An external threat is the possible merger with another division within the holding, with consequences for both the business processes and the IT department.

In itself this case offers quite a few angles to define some scenarios. The truth, however, is usually a lot more complex. All kinds of, sometimes hidden, agendas can be used that become somewhat clearer after a thorough investigation.

Implementing changes in an organization really is an art form in itself. Very much attention has to be paid to the 'softer' aspects of the organization.

Traps

The first pitfall lies in omitting the feasibility study. It is a fact, unfortunately, that this study is rarely conducted. Of course you can start immediately by describing the ITIL processes, bringing in a new registration tool and educating the employees, but this approach is equivalent to starting a tour around the world without consulting a map or even having the faintest idea where you are going.

The second pitfall lies in the focus on technique. It is my experience that far too much attention is paid solely to defining the operational processes, creating detailed procedure descriptions and manuals, and training the employees in order to have them understand the methodology. This is, however, only a small part of the job! Questions like 'WHY do we choose ITIL/Service Management?' and 'WHAT does this really mean for myself and the environment I am working in?' are rarely heard. The softer aspects of the implementation process, like managing expectations and the cultural influences, are strongly ignored. You may expect from an external consultant that he or she has a keen eye for (and acts upon)

these aspects, and is not preaching the ITIL dogma as a mere technocrat. Be aware of the consultant that says `This cannot be done, because ITIL says...'. Immediately accompany this person to the front door and make sure he or she never enters again!

The third pitfall lies with the management of the company — to be more specific, in their awareness of the changes at hand. The determination of the level of awareness in the several participants ought to be a part of the feasibility study. But try to imagine the following situation.

A Service Management implementation is preceded by a feasibility study. The outcome of the investigation clearly shows some severe obstacles blocking a successful implementation. So improvements are needed in the organization to create a solid foundation for the implementation of the Service Management processes. Yet, arguing from a business perspective, the management of the organization strongly urges you to start the implementation ('because we are desperately in need of a service desk for our customers...'). It looks like the management is strongly supporting the implementation. Alas, they do so with the wrong motivation.

This is a tricky situation, especially when you are acting in the role of the external consultant. Your customer really wants you to get busy, but on the other hand you know that the requested goals are hard or even impossible to reach. The question still remains whether you, in your role, are able to deal with the identified obstacles. An example of such an obstacle is, for instance, a strong 'island' culture (every manager has his or her own kingdom), frustrating all attempts to work in a process chain.

The fourth and final pitfall I wish to mention regarding feasibility studies is the idea that conducting a feasibility study once will do the job. You must realize that the world around you is changing constantly, not least because of the organizational changes you yourself are causing! Not only may the structure of the organization change, but the attitude of the participants in the change is subject to changes, too. Adversaries may become brothers in arms, and vice versa. Be (and remain) alert to the signals, look out for them. And keep on investigating whether the goal that was defined at the beginning of the change process is still feasible. If you are not certain, it is a wise idea to repeat the feasibility study. Monitoring and controlling remain continuous activities.

Mind you: conducting a feasibility study is no guarantee of success. The same applies to omitting the feasibility study: it isn't a guarantee of failure. Of course there are more aspects that influence the success or failure of a Service Management or ITIL implementation. Being or becoming aware of the force field around the implementation, the individual motivation of the 'players' involved and the constant monitoring of both the positive and negative aspects you determined in the feasibility study substantially increase the chance for success.

And now for something completely different: the Awareness Campaign!

This has already been mentioned during discussion of the feasibility study. Something should be done about 'awareness'. Alas, there is no word as ambiguous or vague within Service Management as 'awareness'. Of course everyone agrees that 'awareness' is necessary and even important, but few are able to tell you what exactly this means. A hint is given by the name 'awareness campaign', which seems to indicate that you have to think in advance, that a certain strategy lies beneath it. Well, we'll see.

As soon as a customer decides to reorganize its IT organization by means of Service Management, the average consultant usually indicates that an awareness campaign must be started, because we seem to have learnt from the past that such an activity increases the chance of a successful implementation. End users and their management explicitly need to understand the importance of implementing all these processes, and how everyone will benefit.

Well, does it really work that way? A colleague of mine described the awareness campaign as 'running a PR circus'. This attitude bothers me a bit. It creates the impression that a forced approach to the target audience is necessary to convince them of certain ideas. That way, in my opinion, there will be far too much one-way traffic in communication. Awareness will be initiated only when people feel recognized in the things concerning them.

What does "Awareness" mean?

Awareness means 'cognizance', 'consciousness'.

Obviously the organization needs to become conscious of a few things. This is, in my opinion, something quite different from 'we need to tell the management explicitly how beautiful the world will look after implementing Service Management'. Especially in those cases where the proposal for implementing Service Management is coming from the IT department, the previous thought often rules.

Unfortunately there is often a lot of (historical) friction in the relationship between those who manage the IT infrastructure and those who use it. Both parties feel highly misunderstood.

Who (the target)

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the feasibility study is used to determine the bottlenecks that could block a successful implementation of Service Management.

These bottlenecks can appear on many levels, both in groups and in individuals. The awareness campaign is supposed to break down these bottlenecks or, at least, make them manageable. It is a fact that these bottlenecks are found as often in the IT department as in the rest of the organization.

This means that an awareness campaign cannot be limited to a specific part of the company (like, for instance, the IT department), but should extend to the whole organization, the company's management included.

What (the message)

When you are discussing the implementation of Service Management in an organization, you are discussing how to change the organization. Changes, by definition, create resistance. The more abrupt, unexpected, or unclear the change, the larger the instinctive resistance of the organization will be.

Looking at the organization as a whole, we see that its composition is not of a homogeneous nature. So a generic solution, resulting effectively in a positive contribution to the success of the change, is rarely found. Each separate part of the organization has its own goals: the Sales Department is primarily concerned about turnover, the Production Department is focusing on producing as effectively as possible, and so forth. The IT infrastructure provides

them with means to do their job as effectively and efficiently as possible. So IT supports these business processes. From the perspective of these business processes, it is absolutely unimportant in which way they are supported, just as long as they are supported effectively. As an example of this situation, I quote the general manager of a hospital, who said: 'Our primary concern is taking care of our patients. If we fail, these patients suffer the consequences. Of course IT helps us in doing our jobs as well as possible. But I really could not care less if I have to use Windows 95 or Vista, for that matter.'

For the IT department, however, the perspective is a completely different one. A choice of either Windows 95 or Vista is to them a fundamental one. Choices of the network topology, hardware and software — these are all decisions that will have an impact for many years to come. The 'horizon' that an IT department is coping with usually lies much further away than the one that the business is focusing on.

In these situations, I always use the term 'mutual dependency'. The business depends heavily on IT support. However, without the business an IT department has no right of existence. Business and IT department are mutually dependent on each other.

The goal of awareness is, in my opinion, to create a broad understanding of this dependency. IT employees have to learn why their efforts are so important to their customers, and why their customers are so important to them. When you, as an IT employee, don't understand that you cannot reboot a server in the middle of the day for minor maintenance reasons, you are not fit for the job. Business processes take priority over IT processes, because IT processes are supporting them. Constant changes in the IT infrastructure are defensible from a business point of view, although most undesirable from an IT management perspective.

On the other side, the business processes (especially their managers) should understand the dilemmas the IT department is coping with, and not easily declare them as subject to their own activities. In Service Management the customer takes a central position but is not the dominating or only factor.

As long as this understanding does not exist on both sides, there will be no awareness and the implementation of Service Management will be in severe jeopardy.

How (the medium)

The keyword seems to be 'communication'.

Sounds easy, hm? We all know that when changes in an organization fail, the 'communication' is to blame. That is, the lack of it, or the failure to do it right. However, the first rule in communication is that the responsibility for the communication lies with the sender of the message. So, if you are initiating a change, you can never blame the failure on 'the communication'; it is you that has failed.

An approach I often see being used is the missionary approach. The great news of Service Management is preached zealously by its followers, usually the external consultants. Workshops are organized, training is given just to convince the organization of the necessity to implement Service Management. That is in fact the assignment they were given by the management of that same organization.

This approach, however, has far too many characteristics of 'one-way traffic' communication, since such a missionary is rarely converted himself... With a bit of bad luck, no one in the organization will be prepared to cooperate and facilitate the changes. Not the IT department, because they feel they are being forced into a restraining jacket, and not the

rest of the organization because they do not recognize their own interests in the newly proposed situation. The example of my discussion with the production manager concerning help desks versus availability, mentioned earlier in the chapter, shows this in a painfully clear way. Availability and its optimization were of major importance to him, so the IT guys should focus on that....

When (the timing)

When do you actually start the creation of awareness? Earlier in this chapter, when I described the determination of the current situation in the feasibility study, we concluded that a broad acceptance of the implementation was crucial. Apparently you have to start awareness activities at a very early stage.

There is a certain dilemma involved here. You conduct a feasibility study in order to determine whether you want to start a Service Management implementation or not. But it looks as if you have to start creating the right 'environment' for this implementation while you still are not sure whether you want to implement or not! This seems to be a classic 'who was first, the chicken or the egg?' story. Yes, a minimal common foundation is necessary just to be able to determine whether or not a Service Management implementation is feasible. So, yes, as a consultant you will have to find a way to provide this, even during the feasibility study. Awareness activities are generally directed towards the key players found by the consultant in his or her investigation, but the major focus remains on the feasibility study. When the study has shown that an implementation is possible, a full-blown awareness campaign can start.

Lifespan of the campaign

How long do you have to run an awareness campaign? Well, at least until the implementation has finished. Isolated activities, performed once to get the employees involved in what's happening, won't work — certainly not in the long run. As in TV commercials, the power lies in repetition. Of course you need to bring some variation to the activities you offer. Repeating the same message over and over again without any variation will lead to symptoms of fatigue and finally to rejection. Any willingness to participate will have disappeared by then.

Do things stop when the implementation is finished? In my opinion: no. As time goes by, Service Management organizations, especially when they are under a lot of pressure, tend to grow 'softer', less effective. Emphasis easily shifts to resolving things fast instead of resolving things right. Registration of incident data, for example, becomes more and more concise, attention to the customer declines and agreements appear to be less concrete and hard than they originally seemed. When you notice this kind of behaviour, it's time to unleash the awareness campaign again.

Actually, it is better to prevent such behaviour instead of organizing a full-blown awareness campaign when things get out of hand. A continuous, subtle awareness campaign, constantly reminding the parties involved of the reasons why we are doing the things we are doing, appears to be quite effective.

Creating awareness is a process, with predetermined goals, followed by activities and results. Processes repeat themselves, comparing results to the original goals, and if necessary adjusting the activities within the process. There is no difference between the

basics of ITIL processes and those of creating awareness. They both follow the generic scheme shown in Figure 3.
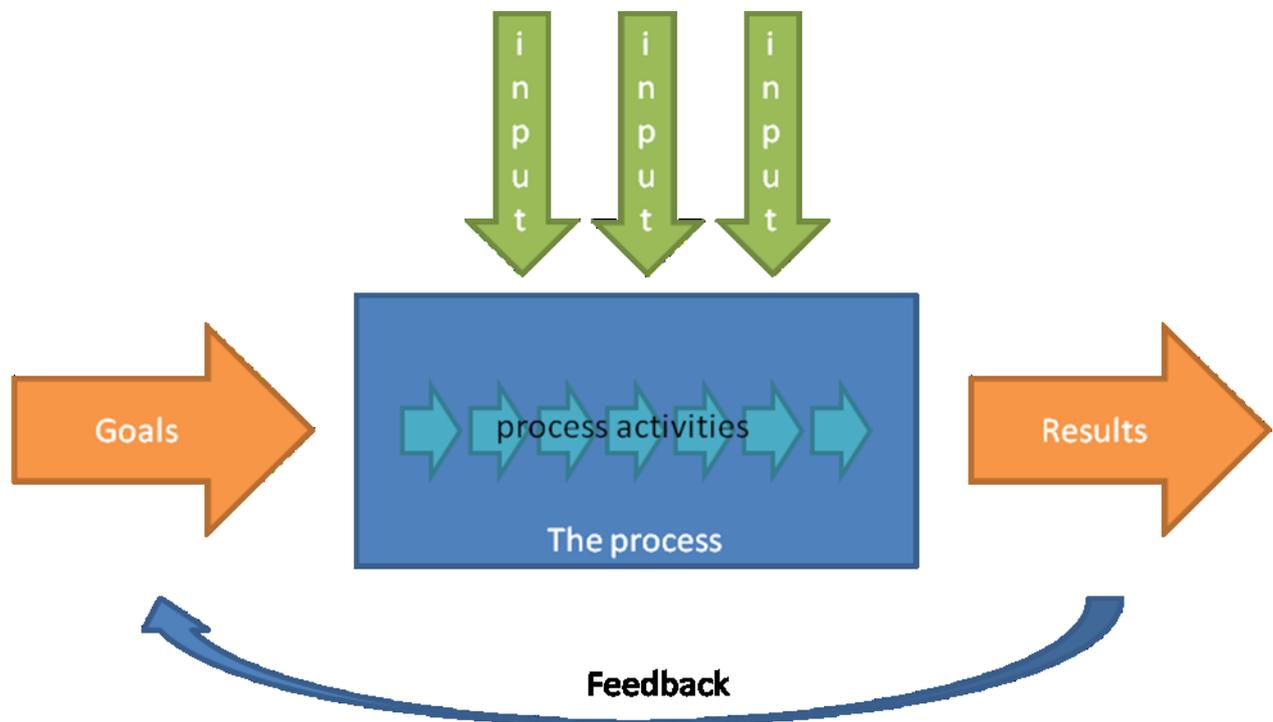

Figure 3 Generic process scheme

But how do you do it?

Is there some standard recipe for properly conducting an awareness campaign? Sorry, not that I know of.

As an external consultant you need, after starting such a task, to investigate thoroughly where the pain and resistance in the organization exist. After having done so, you have to investigate whether there are circumstances (opportunities or threats) that can help you or work against you in your efforts. This is done with a good feasibility study.

The results of the feasibility study offer you a possibility to focus on specific sources of resistance. Be aware of the fact that there is more in an organization than just those elements who are resisting. I mention this because I want to stress the fact that in an awareness campaign you shouldn't neglect organizational entities you classified in an earlier stage as `no risk' or 'minimal risk'.

An awareness campaign is a snapshot, taken at a given moment. It is entirely possible that, later, some group in the organization will start to feel neglected, creating spontaneous new resistance.

Every organization is unique. There are no golden rules. This means that high demands are made on the consultant's ability to identify the problems and situations within the organization. While selecting a candidate for such a job, this property needs to be screened thoroughly.

Conclusion

Do organizations really play Russian roulette when they start a Service Management or ITIL implementation? It depends. Of course, ITIL is not the solution for all the problems in the area of IT infrastructure management. Yet I am convinced that the methodology is a good one. If properly implemented, Service Management helps you to set up clear and measurable IT services, and to break the deadlock between changing and demanding clients on one side and an IT department that is unable to cope on the other.

You are, however, playing Russian roulette when you start an implementation within an organization that is not ready for such an adventure. There is an obvious parallel with the old (maybe stale) joke of a managing director, complaining that his company is performing so poorly. The consultant advises him to start using IT, so that all his problems will be solved quickly. Indeed, they will. But not quite as the managing director expects...

You certainly are playing Russian roulette when you think that introducing a Service Management tool and a bunch of procedures equals a Service Management implementation.

Personally, I am convinced that the role of the external consultant is crucial. This expert in the area of organizational change should be able to manage both the 'soft' and 'hard' aspects of his or her assignment. But the consultant should always have the guts to refuse the assignment when he or she is convinced that the assignment is not feasible.

Comments on this article.

I am very interested in comments on this chapter. Discussion usually broadens the perspective. So please be so kind as to share your thoughts on this matter with me. My e-mail address is dick@costeris.com.