Exploring ITIL® Implementation Challenges in Latin American Companies

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to explore the challenges faced when implementing the information technology infrastructure library (ITIL) framework. An online survey was completed by 169 Latin American companies. Questions focused mainly on the current perceptions and assessment of ITIL benefits. A descriptive statistical analysis approach was employed. Evidence suggests that the main challenges of implementing ITIL are the time devoted by the information technology staff involved in the project, their understanding of ITIL purposes, and the support they receive from senior management. Participants suggested that the existence of a service management office (SMO) could represent a way of addressing these challenges and to more effectively realize ITIL benefits.

KEYWORDS

Information Technology (IT), Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL), IT Service Management (ITSM), IT Staff, Latin America, Service Management Office (SMO)

1. INTRODUCTION

Today’s companies are demanding a better and more disciplined delivery of information technology (IT) services to ensure perfect organizational functioning, and the provision of high-quality solutions to their internal and external customers. The Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) is the market’s most popular model and contributes to improving organizational processes and bringing better results and quality to organizations (De Barros, Salles, Gomes, Da Silva, & Costa, 2015).

As such, the demand for disciplined IT and IT service management (ITSM) is a key issue today due to its proven success factors, and the fact that the traditional functions of IT management now include business-oriented support services (McNaughton, Ray, & Lewis, 2010; Ravasan, Mohammadi, & Hamidi, 2018).

IT and information systems departments are expected to respond with agility when considering new business opportunities, to demonstrate responsible financial management, and to satisfy customers as well as internal staff and management through online systems. This level of service can only be achieved with effective communications between IT and specific lines of business (Berrahal & Marghoubi, 2016; Kahre, Hoffmann, & Ahlemann, 2017; Pollard & Cater-Steel, 2009; Pollard and Cater-Steel, 2009; Pollard and Cater-Steel, 2009). Achieving high quality IT service levels requires

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the implementation of “best practices” in ITSM frameworks and strategies that guarantee its use, permanence, and efficiency once the implementation phase ends.

During the last 20 years, several ITSM-related management frameworks have been developed to help managers improve their IT operations (Nastase, Nastase, & Ionescu, 2009). The frameworks have mainly been proprietary in nature and company-specific (e.g. Microsoft’s Operations Framework, IBM’s Systems Management Solutions Lifecycle, and HP’s IT Service Management Reference Model). However, of the other available ITSM frameworks, ITIL has become the most popular and influential (De Barros et al., 2015; Economics, 2012; England, 2011; Iden & Eikebrokk, 2013; McNaughton, Ray, & Lewis, 2010; Mesquida, Mas, Amengual, & Calvo-Manzano, 2012; Sune & Lichtenberg, 2018). ITIL is a collection of defined and published best practice processes for ITSM that is managed by the IT Service Management Forum (itSMF, a non-profit association that owns and supports this framework), with chapters in many countries, although there are no defined international standards for ITSM. Despite this, it is now considered to be a de facto standard for implementing ITSM worldwide (England, 2011; Iden & Eikebrokk, 2014; Marrone, 2010; McNaughton et al., 2010; England, 2011; Marrone and Kolbe, 2010; England, 2011).

As the de facto ITSM standard, ITIL allows many education and training specialists to supply excellent courses on ITSM with ITIL certifications. While ITIL training and education prepares skilled and motivated people for the implementation of best practices, some questions and challenges still arise (Fry, 2008; Marrone, 2010): Will the skilled people fit into the IT department? Should there be a separate service management department (SMD) or service management office (SMO) in order to guarantee ITIL benefits after its implementation? If so, who should be in that department? Should problems, incidents, and change management all be addressed by the same team? How does the implementation of ITIL processes affect the maturity of its implementation?

It is important to realize that one of the challenges of institutionalizing ITIL within an organization is the planning and careful specification of ITIL components, defining the degree to which they have been implemented, and assessing the level of maturity planned with achieving ITIL implementation (Marrone, 2010; Marrone & Kolbe, 2011; Ravasan, Mohammadi, & Hamidi, 2018; Sune & Lichtenberg, 2018). Additionally, other key challenges must be considered, such as involving the right people (human resources), processes, technologies, project management, and the role of a service manager (managerial) as agents to ensure that value for the customer is created through agreements between the customer and the service provider (organizational) (Hubbert, 2008; Lucio Nieto & González-Bañales, 2016; Ravasan et al., 2018).

Therefore, practitioners and researchers are interested in understanding the perception of the challenges when implementing ITIL, but studies related to ITIL are dispersed in the current literature, making it difficult to obtain a general overview on the subject (De Barros et al., 2015). It is important to mention that despite the relevance of ITSM-ITIL for providing better IT services, empirical and methodological academic research for ITSM-ITIL publications are growing (Cater-steel & Pollard, 2008; De Barros et al., 2015; England, 2011; Marrone, 2010; Mesquida et al., 2012; Pollard & Cater-Steel, 2009; Shahsavaran & Shaobo, 2011). Iden and Eikebrokk (2013) targeted peer review articles on the implementation of ITSM and ITIL (published between January 2000 and August 2012), and identified 21 journals and 16 conference relevant articles. The review included publications related to implementation in terms of reasons to implement, preconditions, strategies and methodologies, status, and consequences, including outputs and benefits. The continents that dominate ITIL and ITSM studies are Australia (11 articles), North America (7 articles), and Europe (17 articles, spread among 11 countries), and Brazil (1 article) (Iden & Eikebrokk, 2013).

Considering the above, although an ITIL framework seems to be the de facto standard, not all authors agree that it encompasses all aspects of ITSM best practices (Carter-Steel, Tan, & Toleman, 2007; Donnell, Washburn, Mann, & Hubbert, 2011; England, 2011; Marrone & Kolbe, 2011; Mesquida, Mas, Amengual, & Calvo-Manzano, 2012; Sune & Lichtenberg, 2018), thus more research is needed.
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