

INFORMATION  
TECHNOLOGY  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
LIBRARY  
ITIL

# What is ITIL<sup>®</sup>

and how can it improve your  
IT Service Management?

WHITE PAPER

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# Executive summary

ITIL is a set of best practices for IT Service Management. That means that ITIL helps organizations to deliver services that correspond to customers' requirements and provide expected value to the business.

Besides being customer-oriented, ITIL provides a framework that organizations use to set up an internal organization with related roles and responsibilities, as well as a mechanism to introduce continual improvement as a daily activity.

This white paper explains the basics of ITIL, its structure, and benefits of implementation. Implementation of ITIL

entails many challenges, but careful preparation provides a great chance to succeed. The duration and required resources of the implementation depend on the size of the organization and scope of the implementation. Therefore, the potential timeframe for the implementation spans from two months to more than a year.

ITIL is used worldwide by thousands of organizations in almost all industries. But, the roots of the framework date from the 1980s in the UK. In the 1990s, ITIL "crossed the border" and began its global expansion and adaptation.

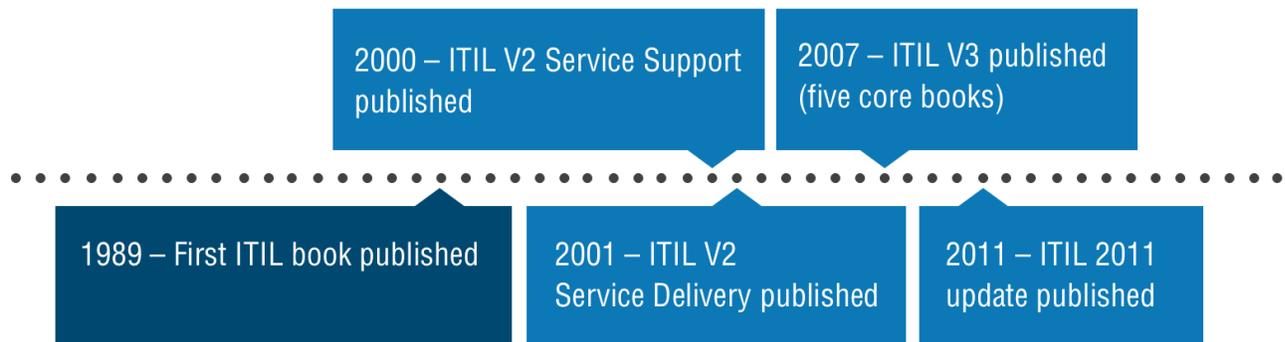


Figure: Development of the ITIL framework



# ITIL – The explanation

Though you may have read one of the many definitions of (and articles written about) ITIL, you may still be trying to figure out the meaning. So, what is ITIL? Well, ITIL stands for Information Technology Infrastructure Library. That's quite a mouthful, so even though this is still its official name, it's generally referred to as simply ITIL. As for its purpose, ITIL is a framework of best practices, recognized worldwide, for Information Technology Service Management, or ITSM.

ITIL was developed by the British government due to the world's ever-growing dependence on Information Technology (IT), which meant that standard practices were required. This standard is now owned and published by a public-private joint venture between Axelos (the United Kingdom Cabinet Office) and Capita (a private company).

As defined by the standard, ITIL is:

*“A set of best-practice publications for IT service management. ITIL gives guidance on the provision of quality IT services and the processes, functions*

*and other capabilities needed to support them. The ITIL framework is based on a service lifecycle and consists of five stages (service strategy, service design, service transition, service operation and continual service improvement), each of which has its own supporting publication. There is also a set of complementary ITIL publications providing guidance specific to industry sectors, organization types, operating models and technology architecture.”*

It might be easier to consider ITIL as an easy and logical framework designed to help you align your IT services with the overall requirements of your organization. ITIL is all about continual improvement to your ITSM processes. And, as a practical framework, it's not just a theoretical concept—actually, ITIL was created through real-world experience, rather than in a classroom. ITIL can be applied to the processes of any company, of any size, in any industry, to help ensure best practices in IT Service Management.

## Why is ITIL important?

In order to understand why ITIL is important, you must first understand how IT is related to every aspect of your organization's success. Your organization depends on IT to help reach its goals. IT influences your operations and your communications—in short, it's the foundation of the way your business works.

You depend on IT to become better than your competition, to reach more potential customers, and to increase efficiency and productivity. IT is critical, in countless ways, to helping you better your reputation—and your bottom line.

This means that it's vital to make the most of your investment in IT; your IT services need to be properly planned, expertly designed, effectively managed, and efficiently delivered. Without effective ITSM, Information Technology projects are doomed to fail, or at the very least, go over budget. Recurring costs become difficult to control, and your business could fail before ever seeing a positive Return on Investment (ROI).

So, simply stated, excellent IT Service Management is critical to the success of your business; in fact, ITSM can be the factor that makes or breaks your company.

## What can ITIL do for your organization?

When you compare your organization's way of doing things to ITIL's world-renowned best practices, you can easily see potential areas for improvement.

These days, every business feels the pressure to do more with less, so you may feel like you don't have the time or the resources to spare for process improvement. In truth, it's the companies who take this step who will ultimately come out on top. Here's why:

1. **More quality and consistency** – When you align your process with a proven framework, you end up with a better, more reliable IT service. Your staff can respond to incidents more quickly and cut downtime to a minimum.
2. **Happier customers** – When you follow ITIL, you become more focused on customer requirements and the user experience (rather than the technology behind your IT infrastructure). By extension, you'll enjoy better relationships with your customers, both internally and externally.
3. **A common language** – Internally, everyone should speak and understand the same language. If someone brings up an "incident," coworkers need to know what you're referring to. This helps everyone to understand responsibilities and priorities.
4. **Lower costs** – You can't plan your company finances if you don't understand and manage IT costs. Utilizing simpler processes and adhering to best practices will allow you to be more efficient with resources and lower the costs of IT support.
5. **Better productivity** – Consistently reliable IT services allow for better efficiency and greater effectiveness. You'll enjoy fewer incidents, and faster resolution when they do occur. And, when everyone understands their own responsibilities, no time is wasted when it comes time to deal with problems.
6. **More confidence** – ITIL is the gold standard for IT service management. Businesses

worldwide have learned how ITIL can be tailored to suit their requirements. With this proven framework of best practices, you can be confident in your process improvements and their scalability for the future.

7. **Flexibility and innovation** – More streamlined processes mean less time

required to implement crucial changes in your company. This ability to adapt to changing business needs can help to ensure the long-term success of your business.

Check out this article: [“Why ITIL?”](#) for more ways ITIL can help your organization.

## What can ITIL do for you as an individual?

In addition to the benefits it brings to a company, ITIL also brings benefits to the individuals who apply its practices. Some of these include:

**Better productivity** – With ITIL, you learn new skills that help you better perform your IT duties. This not only helps your own productivity, but also the overall productivity of your company.

**Increased focus** – When everyone on your team clearly understands their roles and responsibilities, you can focus on what’s important, rather than worrying about other matters.

**Value and recognition** – Your ITIL qualification, and the knowledge and experience it brings, makes you

a more valuable contributor to the success of your organization, earning you more respect from upper management.

**Effective ITIL implementation** – With a qualified ITIL practitioner at the helm, your organization is more likely to successfully comply with ITIL best practices.

**Improved career options** – When you have an ITIL qualification, your knowledge in ITSM best practices makes you a more desirable candidate for any job. Just as ITIL compliance means a competitive advantage for an organization, it means the same for an individual.

## What does ITIL look like?

ITIL’s framework of best practices centers on five Service Lifecycle modules, each of which comprises several ITIL Processes and Functions. These modules are:

**Service Strategy** – In Service Strategy, ITIL clarifies the relationships between services/processes and the business objectives of which they are a part. In short, Service Strategy examines what a company needs (and doesn’t need), creates a strategy to accommodate those needs, utilizes services for the creation of business value, and selects the best strategy to deliver the service.

**Service Design** – The Service Design module designs new IT services, along with their architecture, policies, processes, and documentation, to fit business requirements now and in the future. Service Design begins with the business requirements, and then ends with meeting those requirements with a service solution. At that point, the service is sent to Service Transition, where it is evaluated, built, tested, and finally deployed as either a new or changed service.

**Service Operation** – The purpose of the Service Operation part of the ITIL Service Lifecycle is to execute and manage the daily operations needed to deliver services compliant with the Service Level Agreement (SLA). Service Operation must work to control costs, while at the same time improving service quality.

**Service Transition** – Service Transition is in charge of making sure that any new or changed services meet business requirements, and that any services that are retired from the service catalog are done so in a controlled way. Service Transition also ensures that services changes, and any associated risks, are planned and managed effectively and efficiently; as well as that changes are released into

the product environment and that accurate information on any changed services is kept up to date.

**Continual Service Improvement** – Continual Service Improvement, or CSI, works to optimize costs and increase the efficiency of services and ITSM processes. CSI ensures that IT services and business processes are continually aligned and realigned according to changing business requirements. And, of course, CSI also looks for improvements to be made within CSI.

Now let's look briefly at lifecycle stages and their processes and functions:

STRATEGY	DESIGN	TRANSITION	OPERATION	CSI
Strategy Management for IT services	Service Catalogue Management	Transition Planning and Support	Event Management	7-step Improvement Process
Service Portfolio Management	Availability Management	Change Management	Incident Management	
Financial Management for IT services	Capacity Management	Service Asset & Configuration Management	Request Fulfilment	
Demand Management	IT Service Continuity Management	Release and Deployment Management	Problem Management	
Business Relationship management	Service Level Management	Service Validation and Testing	Access Management	
	Design Coordination	Change Evaluation		
	Information Security Management	Knowledge Management		
	Supplier Management			

Figure: ITIL processes and functions divided throughout service lifecycle



# ITIL Implementation in your company

In all likelihood, ITIL is the most widely adopted IT Service Management framework in the world (learn more about IT Service Management here: [IT Service Management](#)). It is service-based, simple to follow, and you can find plenty of training, documentation, and consulting services to help you begin. You can use ITIL to transform an existing IT organization into a service-oriented organization, or you can improve your current services by following ITIL best practices. Either way, the following will provide guidelines and step-by-step direction for your ITIL implementation project.

## Before you begin

Before you even begin implementing ITIL, it is crucial that those in top management understand the principles of ITIL, and that they are dedicated to its implementation. This will guarantee appropriate attention from management, and ensure the funding, training, and other resources needed for successful ITIL implementation. You can learn more about [Considerations before ITIL implementation](#) and [How to translate ITIL/ISO 20000 language into business language understandable by your management](#) to help you get support from management and prepare for your implementation.

Another key detail to address before beginning the implementation is to determine the person (or role) who will be responsible for ITIL process management. This person will make sure that all the processes work well together, that any necessary tools are available, and that processes are documented properly. You can learn more in the article [Who is your ideal project manager for ITIL/ISO 20000 implementation?](#).

## Service definition

The main focus of ITIL is on services; therefore, your best bet is to begin by developing a service overview, which comprises all your business services and supporting services. The business services are those that directly serve the customers and offer direct value to the company, while supporting services are IT services that are required to run the business services. One example could be a retail store that also operates a website—internet access is needed, but it is not a business service. You can find out more about the involvement of IT Governance with business / IT processes alignment here: [IT Governance – the basics](#).

During Service Definition, it is important to document any agreements that are related to business services

(for example, the website for the retail business above, which must have 100% uptime). These will be used later for design of supporting technical architecture and development of the SLA.

### **Introduction of ITIL roles and process owners**

It is very important that everyone knows who is responsible for what, which means introducing assigned roles and functions corresponding to the ITIL framework. Depending on your business and ITIL scope, your organization may not require all ITIL roles. But, you absolutely must determine key roles and process owners. A RACI matrix (which stands for Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed) is used to maintain all ITIL roles and their place in the service lifecycle. You can check out a full list of ITIL roles and processes here: [ITIL Processes and Functions](#).

When assigning people to each role, it's a good idea to assign people to the design phase who will also be involved in the operation of the process. In this way, they can use the knowledge they gain during the design phase later on in the operational phase.

If yours is a smaller company, then each person will need to perform several ITIL roles. Read this article: [What ITIL roles can be combined in one person?](#) to learn more about how to manage this without undermining operational activities.

### **Gap analysis**

The next step is analyzing your current processes and their statuses, and determining current process maturity. Best practices dictate that this analysis be conducted by someone who has experience in ITIL, which will help them to concentrate on the process itself, instead of on past situations that may have contributed to the current process state. Once this step is finished, it's time to look at where you want to end up so that business processes and supporting processes are strongly aligned.

So, what is a gap analysis? Essentially, it's a comparison of where you are with where you want to be. It offers

information about which processes need to be changed, which need to be eliminated, and whether new processes need to be created. Your gap analysis might be focused on your company's overall IT needs, or just one aspect of IT, such as the implementation of a new tool. Your end result should tell you what resources (time, money, human, etc.) will be needed to reach your goal.

Try this [ITIL Gap Analysis Tool](#) to measure your compliance with ITIL best practices.

### **Planning new processes**

When implementing new processes, ones that previously didn't exist, the best practice is to look at the ITIL framework as a whole. For example, if you are implementing Incident Management, it's a good idea to also implement Problem Management, because they are closely related.

Another important step is the identification of the inputs and outputs of the process, which are also known as ITIL Information Objects. Generally speaking, process inefficiencies are caused by a lack of specification of their inputs and outputs. Take, for example, Incident Management: if we don't define the data that is to be part of the Incident Record, we may end up with more work as a result of missing data (for example, "John called and said he can't work today" would not be sufficient information).

### **Process control**

During the design of a process, it is important to apply Key Performance Indicators (KPI), which will indicate whether the process is performing as expected. This information is very important to the owner of the process.

Selecting the right KPIs depends on whether you can measure them; after all, if you can't measure them, then you can't control them. If possible, KPIs should be automatically calculated (e.g., using Service Desk software to calculate number of incidents, number of first contact resolutions, etc.). Regardless, defining

measurement procedures successfully is critical to effective process control.

The last part of process control entails process reporting. Like measurement procedures, reporting procedures should be defined clearly, indicating which KPIs are to be reported, how they should be reported, and to whom.

To learn more about reporting, read this article: [Service Reporting: get the picture, big and small](#).

### Implementation roadmap

Just starting a project and meandering along until you're finished isn't the best way to do anything, especially not ITIL implementation. By using an implementation roadmap, you'll have an overview of the project, and all the steps you need to take to complete it successfully.

A good way to approach it is to divide the time you have available into chunks, and then complete steps in the implementation according to priority. The most important steps would be high-priority gaps and "quick wins"—steps that are quick and easy to complete. Once you collect metrics on those quick wins, you can show progress right away and more easily justify the project.

Try this [ITIL implementation diagram](#) to get started on your implementation roadmap.

### Implementing ITIL processes and functions

As you probably gathered already, finishing your ITIL implementation project doesn't mean that your job is one. This is the time to check if the implementation plan has worked as expected, if all the services were implemented successfully, and if the processes are resulting in the outputs you expected.

And, if not, then you can use the CSI process to find and fix any process or service that is not performing as expected. As we learned already, CSI is an important part of ITIL methodology, because it is always looking for way to improve, and it's the key driver for change within the Service Lifecycle. And, of course, such change should always result in measurable improvements. If you would like to learn more about Continual Service Improvement in ITIL, check out this blog post: [ITIL Continual Service Improvement – the never-ending story](#).

Read this article: [Ready, steady... go – Starting ITIL implementation](#) to find out more about ITIL implementation.

ITIL® Documentation Toolkit contains document templates for the implementation of all ITIL processes and functions in an easy to read and implement form. You can find it here: [ITIL® Documentation Toolkit](#).

# Implementation obstacles

Even though ITIL implementation is very “doable,” there are plenty of organizations (and the people in them) who look for reasons not to follow through. Some of the excuses that are common include:

**#1 – ITIL is exclusively for large organizations** - The most fascinating “feature” of ITIL is, by far, its flexibility; you don’t have to force complete implementation in order to get the benefits. Smaller IT organizations may even have an advantage in ITIL implementation – smaller implementation scope means a faster and more cost-effective implementation. Some common issues smaller organizations may face with ITIL implementation are addressed in the following articles: [ITIL Incident Management – How to separate roles at different support levels](#), [What ITIL roles can be combined in one person?](#), and [5 ways ITIL can help your small business grow](#).

**#2 – ITIL is exclusively for IT service providers** - Every IT organization is a service provider. What differentiates one from another is its customers; Type I (Internal Service Provider) is tied to a single Business Unit, Type II (Shared Services Unit) provides services to the whole organization (just like Finance, HR, or Procurement), and only Type III (External Service Provider) provides services to external customers. By following best practices in ITSM, each service provider type is trying to gain a competitive advantage in order to secure its existing position; Type I and Type II will compete against external providers, and vice versa. If Type I and Type II service providers are not doing anything to ensure a competitive advantage, they are at risk for getting outsourced by better-performing external organizations.

You can read more on service provider types in the following articles: [ITIL Service Provider types – Type I: Internal service provider](#), [ITIL Service Provider types – Type 2 or Shared Services Unit](#), and [ITIL Service Provider types – Type 3 or External Service Provider](#).

**#3 – ITIL Implementation is time consuming and expensive...** if performed by untrained individuals, or unfocused / undedicated organizations – if I may add. It should be obvious that at least some level of familiarity with ITIL is required before considering implementation. Luckily, knowledge can be obtained easily through training and certification (both online and offline), external consulting, and of course, Internet articles such as this one.

As mentioned before, ITIL is flexible regarding implementation; therefore, implementation can start with one or only a few “core” modules from Service Operations (notably Event Management, Incident Management, and Request Fulfillment). A smaller scope will result in a shorter implementation time scale, and necessary documentation is easily found on our website, which contains everything you may need for ITIL implementation without expensive consulting fees.

**#4 – ITIL has no visible benefits** - IT organizations may fall into a false sense of security when business is going well, when almost every problem can be solved by throwing enough money at it, or by hiring more people to take over the additional load. But, once circumstances change, which we all experienced with the fall of the global economy, IT organizations face challenges to do more with less.

One of the major guidelines within ITIL is to provide the best possible service with the lowest possible cost. This philosophy is present in every part of the service lifecycle, and is one of the core values in the whole value chain. On top of that, ITIL is focused on creating value for the business by bringing a clear connection between business and IT processes, measurable performance of supporting processes, and measurable quality of service provided.

**#5 – Our organization has external providers doing most / all of the work** - Managing a large number of vendors and external providers is like trying to keep a

colony of ants in a straight line using a wooden stick. Each provider is only concerned with its own service scope, and generally, chaos is ensured when a single action requires coordination between two or more providers. Managing third-party providers and suppliers, their contracts, and obligations requires a great deal of understanding of your own organization, even greater than if outsourced work would be done internally. When services are provided internally, there is still flexibility to change or improve anything that was

not arranged properly, without contractual setbacks or additional charges that are often included when dealing with external providers.

Only once you clearly understand both the business your company is in, and the outcomes IT has to produce in order to support the business, can you confidently outsource parts or whole services to third parties. You can read more on this topic in the following article: [ITIL Supplier management – the third party you depend on.](#)



# IT SERVICE MANAGEMENT

## ITIL and ISO 20000

One thing that must be emphasized is that ITIL is not a standard; it is a framework that offers guidance and best practices for IT Service Management. The standard that defines ITSM is called ISO 20000, and it is based on ITIL best practices. You can learn more about ISO 20000 here: [What is ISO 20000?](#)

The main difference between ITIL and ISO 20000 is that ITIL offers best practices on managing all the IT processes in your business, while ISO 20000 provides the methodology needed to put those pieces together.

Basically, ITIL is like a library of best practices and descriptions of processes and functions in the Service Lifecycle. It is descriptive—not prescriptive. Many things are possible with ITIL: you can implement any of the processes, but you don't have to. ITIL offers great advice

on what you can do, what you sometimes should do, the best way to do it, etc. There are no hard and fast requirements for what you HAVE to do. For this reason, ITIL cannot be fully audited.

On the other hand, ISO/IEC 20000 is a fully auditable standard. The 2011 version contains 256 hard requirements that must be met. It provides a complete set of processes that an organization MUST implement in order to earn a certificate. To clarify, the standard has two main sections:

- ISO/IEC 20000-1 – requirements, what MUST be done
- ISO/IEC 20000-2 – code of practice, detailed guidance for HOW it should be done

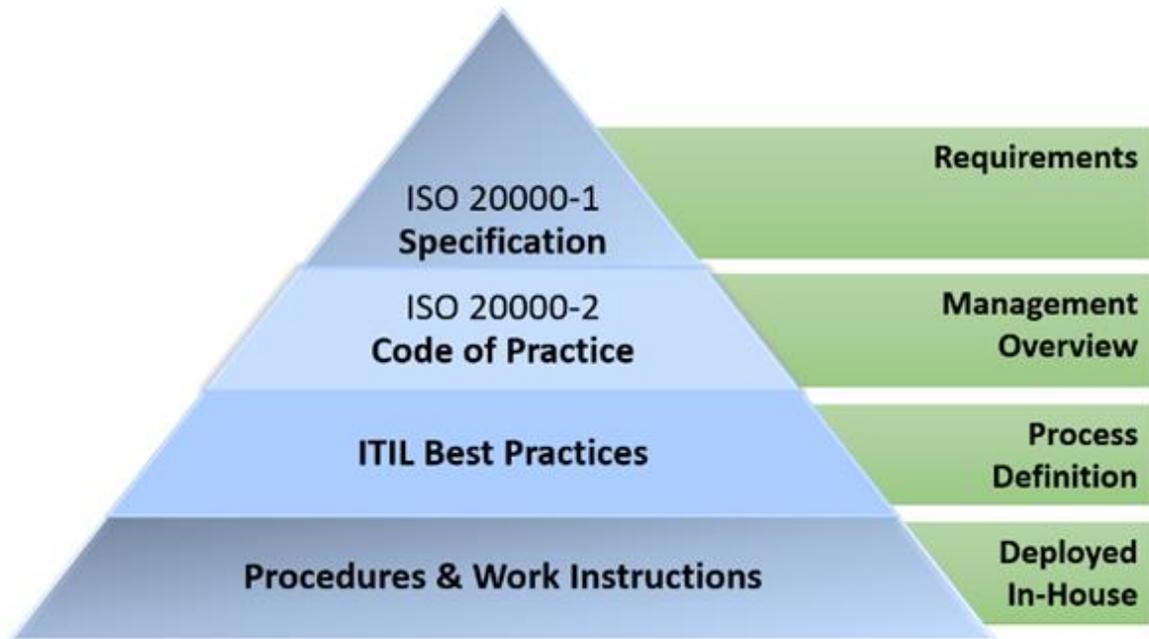
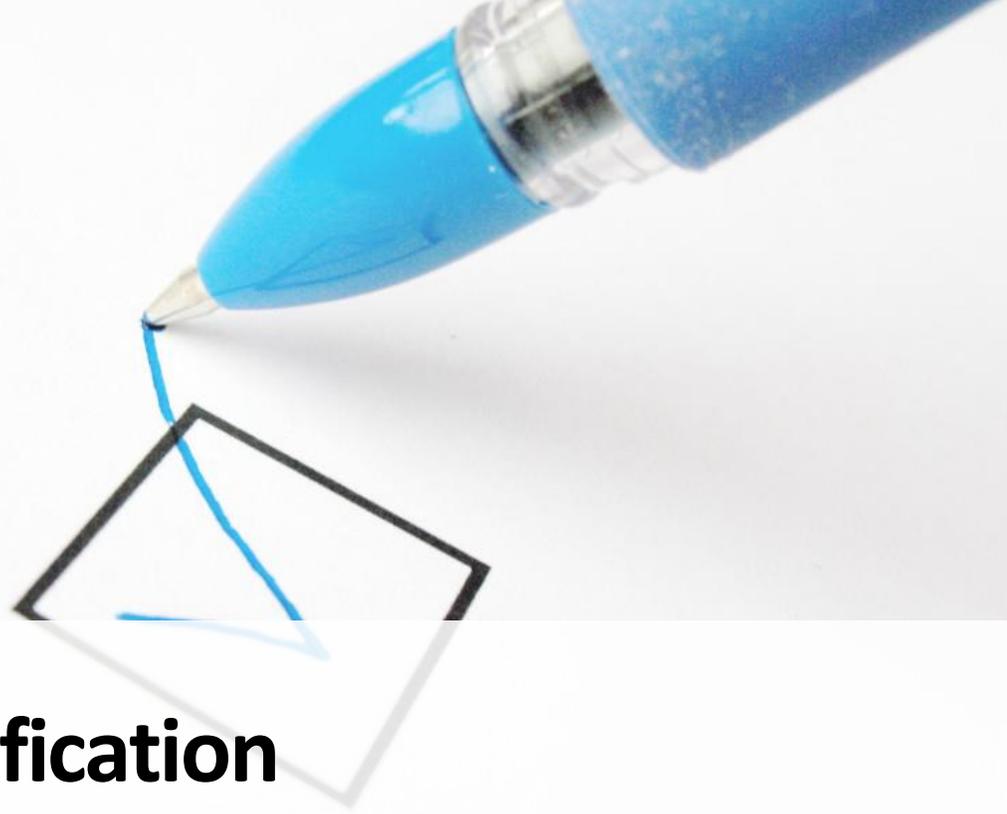


Figure: ITSM pyramid, which describes the position of ISO 20000 and ITIL

## Certification as a differentiator

Another important difference between ITIL and ISO 20000 is the manner in which certificates are issued. ITIL certification is for individuals: people take courses and pass exams for the foundation, intermediate, and expert levels. They earn the certificate themselves, and they take it with them if they change jobs. ISO/IEC 20000, on the other hand, focuses on the IT Service Organization. It captures organizational knowledge about IT services, and helps employees to follow strict rules in the day-to-day operations as they prepare for the company's certification.



# ITIL Certification

In contrast to organizational certificates, like ISO 20000, an ITIL certification follows the individual in his own personal career—so having such qualification will make you more desirable to potential employers. When you earn an ITIL certificate, it's yours and yours alone; no company or organizational ITIL certificate exists.

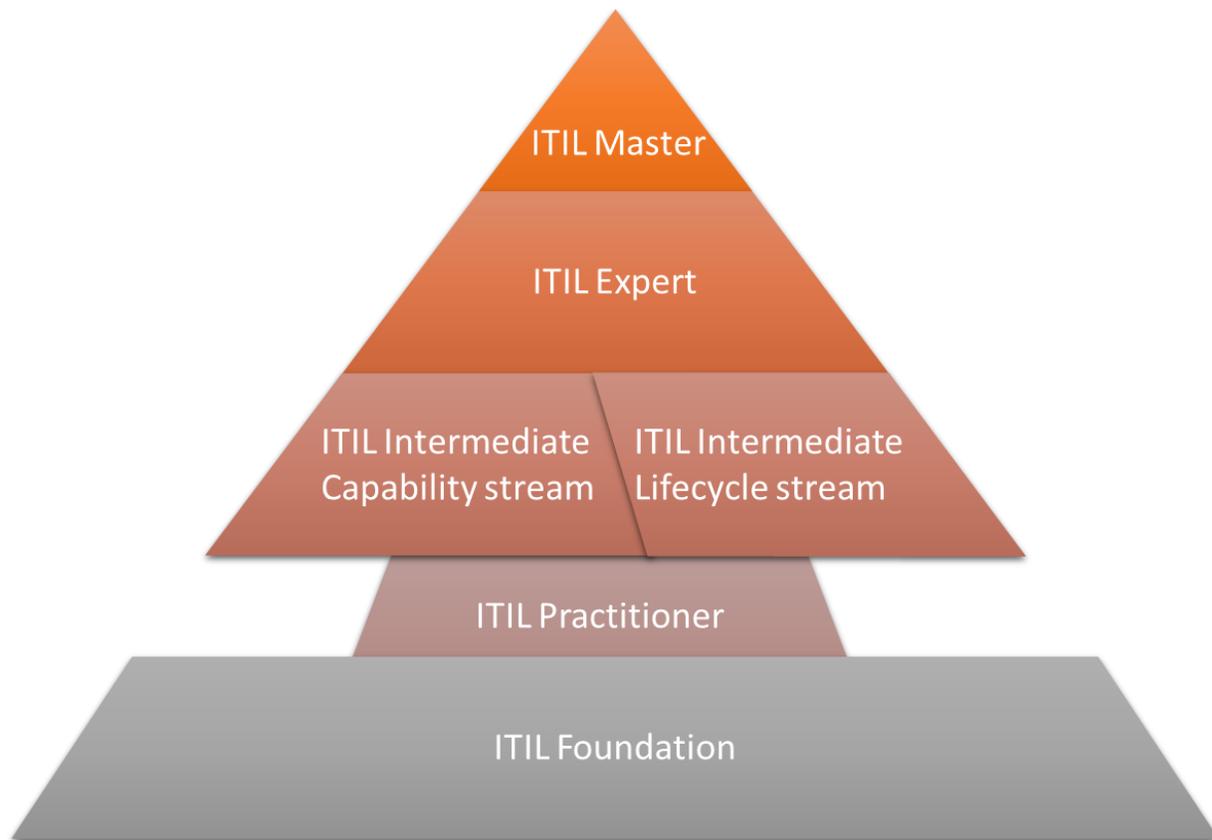
And, unlike technology- or vendor-specific training and certifications, which involved specific tools or software you must master, an ITIL certificate is based on your knowledge and skill in applying ITIL best practices in real-world scenarios.

In addition, if everyone inside an IT organization (Service Delivery, IT Management, and IT Governance) follows the same set of best practices throughout, they will be able to communicate more clearly through a common “language.” This greatly decreases the risk of misunderstanding and miscommunication.

Besides the materials and lectures to learn from, ITIL has a complex certification system that recognizes your individual progress through the ITIL Qualification Scheme.

## ITIL Certification Path

Although the ITIL certification system is credit based, you should aim to follow a path of training and certification that is diverse. Particularly at the Intermediate level, you should work through as many different training modules as possible, even as you focus on those areas that will offer you the most benefit in your daily operations. This may sound contradictory, but all the modules overlap somewhat, so you can efficiently gain a wide variety of knowledge even while focusing on certain areas.



*Figure: ITIL certification path*

The only way to start your journey to ITIL certification is through the ITIL Foundation level of training and certification. By completing it, you will learn an approach to best practice methodology that is valued worldwide. Each person in an IT organization should be eligible for the ITIL Foundation, particularly anyone who works with IT support or IT operations. You can learn more about ITIL Foundation in this article: [ITIL Foundation – all you need to know](#).

Once you have finished the Foundation level, you'll have an excellent overview of ITIL best practices and your own role in the IT organization. Then, at the ITIL Intermediate level, you can explore many different modules as an IT Finance Manager, IT Manager, Capacity & Demand Manager, Service Level Manager, Availability Manager, Business / Service Continuity Manager, Supplier Relationship Manager, and Service

Portfolio Manager. This level is the most diverse, and has two separate and distinct sets of modules. Each of the two sets was designed to take in account real-life applications. For example, if you are in management and focus on ITIL practice across teams, then Service Lifecycle would be the set for you. Or, if you are more active in specialized processes in daily operations, then you would use the Service Capability set to learn best practices.

Another choice after ITIL Foundation is ITIL Practitioner. This is a new certification option, which gives a more practical overview of ITIL implementation with a focus on continual improvement.

The capstone course is ITIL Managing Across the Lifecycle, or MALC. This level builds upon the knowledge and experience gained during the Intermediate level. To

successfully complete this course, you will need to apply your knowledge and experience through performing service management functions; make sure you plan, strategize, utilize, and measure ITIL principles using an integrated approach. In addition, MALC is a requirement if you want to earn the title of ITIL Expert. To learn more about MALC, check out this article: [ITIL Intermediate – the next step into the ITIL world](#).

Becoming an ITIL Expert is not the end of your ITIL certification journey. After all, what good is all of that knowledge if you can't apply it in real-world situations? There are no set requirements for the title of ITIL Master (the pinnacle of the ITIL Qualification Scheme), but successful ITIL practice in the workplace is expected.

Once you have your ITIL certificate (any of the titles), it never expires, and never needs to be renewed. But, ITIL best practices evolve over time, and new experiences and practices are always being introduced into the framework. For this reason, it is highly recommended that you stay up to date on ITIL news.

## Where to Become ITIL Certified

If you want to take an ITIL training course or go for the certification, you should make sure that you receive your training through an official ITIL Accredited Training Organization, or ATO. These ATOs and their authorized affiliates are the only organizations licensed to offer the copyrighted training courses and exams.

For the lower-level certifications (ITIL Foundation and ITIL Intermediate), you can take courses and exams either in the classroom, or online. If you choose the online training sessions and exams, you just need a computer with a reliable internet connection and a webcam.

Higher-level certifications, such as ITIL Expert, are granted automatically upon completion of MALC, provided you have accumulated enough credits along the way. There is no set curriculum, training session, or exam for ITIL Master. If you have earned the title of ITIL Expert and would like to pursue ITIL Master, you'll need to contact an ITIL ATO to learn more.

# Conclusion

ITIL covers a very important area in an organization's business: – IT services, which support most of the business processes and activities. Independent of the customers (internal or external), reliability and quality of provided services are crucial for an organization's survival. Therefore, particular care should be taken

regarding integration with business and implementation. To achieve this, a wide base of knowledge is needed. But, at the end of the day, it's worth the effort. Customers are, after all, the final judge of the quality of provided services, and they know how to reward efficiency and excellence.

# References

Axelos: [www.axelos.com](http://www.axelos.com)

20000Academy: [www.advisera.com/20000academy/](http://www.advisera.com/20000academy/)



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