

HOW TO MANAGE THE NEW ITSM TOOL ONCE IT GOES LIVE?

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This article addresses two topics:

- How to track issues users have with the ITSM Tool, and;
- Who is responsible for its administration?

During a project, stakeholders and users usually know where to report their issues. Most tool implementation projects use an issue log, action register or defect-bug tracking tool to manage issues and requirements.

This usually continues for some time after the tool is commissioned to production (i.e. go-live) in order to manage issues discovered during the warranty period and early life support. Then, it is usually discontinued when the project is closed. Unfortunately, at times this creates a void as users no longer know where to report issues.

Although this gap is a symptom of a lack of transition planning to operations, one approach is to instruct all users to log their ITSM tool related Incidents and Service Requests in the tool. An alternative is for users to contact the Service Desk for logging. Some may argue that people can log their own events since the Service Desk is not a notetaking service; however, the advantage is that the Service Desk can also answer how-to questions and provide process guidance given that they quickly become power users as it is their primary work tool.

The benefits of using “the tool to manage the tool” are that it:

1. Gathers data and statistics on the ITSM/ITIL program.
2. Helps gauge resources required to support the tool.
3. Enables users to see the status of their request.
4. Sets user expectations since they can see the number of requests currently opened.
5. Builds a knowledge base on the ITSM Tool decreasing resolution times.
6. Tracks issues reported to the supplier and gathers data to evaluate and monitor performance against their SLA.

This approach also helps tool administrators to:

- Experience the tool from a user perspective leading to a better understanding of user requests and empathy as they may be experiencing similar difficulties.
- Learn the tool and build expert knowledge in its use resulting in more efficient and effective support.
- Pilot new features by using them before making them available to users.

Now that all these calls are logged, who is responsible for the tool’s administration?

If the organization has an Application Management process, then the ITSM tool is no different than any other application except that the customer is Information Technology (IT). In absence of an established process, the natural inclination is for whoever bought the tool and implemented it to be responsible for its administration.

Often this ends up being the Service Desk as many organizations justify the tool’s acquisition to replace an aging call center tool.

However, an integrated ITSM tool is like an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system for IT. Many different groups use it and sometimes compromises must be made in its configuration and enhancements to meet all stakeholders’ needs. In addition, changes must be coordinated to avoid inadvertently impacting the business process of another group using the tool.

Caution must be taken to ensure that whoever is responsible for the tool’s administration does not configure, evolve and give priority to their modifications over other groups’ requests and needs even though they have the power and control over the tool and can use it to their advantage. If the Service Desk has this responsibility and they have a “it’s our tool” attitude, the tool will become branded as a “Service Desk” tool as it will primarily meet their needs. If it is to be used by all of I.T., tension will develop between the Service Desk and the other groups like the Infrastructure, thus reinforcing silos. This can cause significant head winds to the maturity of Service Management.

Moreover, a proliferation of tools can result as people’s needs are not properly served by a shared tool. For example, one organization has two ERP systems as one was made to manage the supply chain to the detriment of other groups, thus HR implemented its own to meet its business needs.

An established governance of the ITSM tool helps balance the needs of all groups. A comprehensive Responsibility-Accountability-Consult-Inform (RACI) matrix should be developed to clarify everyone’s role and responsibilities. In the meantime consider the following as a starting point.

Business Owner	An I.T. executive to act as the customer and hierarchical escalation is a referee if required. The individual whose budget acquired the tool can be considered but, ideally a neutral party should be found like the Project Management Office or the CIO.
Manager of the System Administrators	Ensures that the business needs of all groups are met and that a change does not impact with another group’s business process or tool configuration.
Group Representatives	Represents their group’s needs, coordinates the review and testing of planned changes as well as communicates changes to their group.
System Administrators	Design and implements solution to address user needs based on the tool’s functionality and limitations.

Input to this governance can be submitted by having users log their issues in the tool or by contacting the Services Desk as discussed

previously. Some organizations may want to instruct users to assign their issues to their Group Representative so that it can be reviewed first to ensure that the issue is indeed related to the tool and not to the business process or its rules.

Lastly, do not forget to inform users of the procedure to report their issues. This can be done during their tool training, project updates, by adding a sentence or two in the email communiqué or newsletter announcing the new tool. Simply put, the message is "use the tool to manage the tool."

About the Author:



Denis Matte has over 20 years of IT experience in the private and public sector. As a consultant he helped organizations implement ITSM integrated toolsets and ITIL based processes by designing and managing projects at the operational, tactical and strategic levels. He currently manages the ITSM team in a public organization that administers the ITSM tool and helps internal groups progress in ITIL as

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