

**Recommendations from
the book**

Owning

ITIL®

**a skeptical guide
for decision-makers**

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The book *Owning ITIL®* is essential reading for **all decision makers** (IT-literate or not) who are presented with an ITIL proposal or asked to oversee an ITIL project, or who find something called “ITIL” or “Service Management” in their budget. It tells you what the ITIL industry won’t.

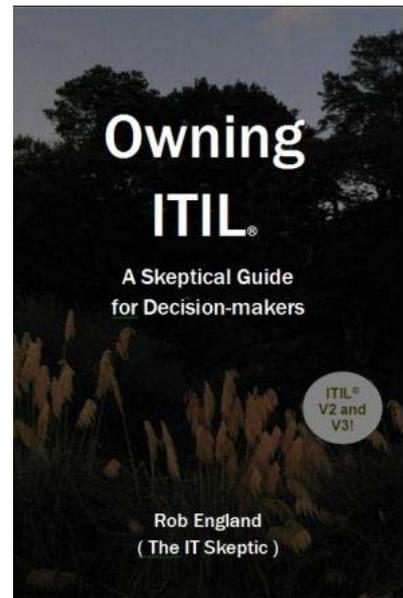
For **everyone else involved in ITIL** projects, read this book to help you stay grounded and safe.

Every IT department in the world is at least pondering ITIL. As the ITIL projects proliferate, **this book is for the executives who must fund them or manage them, and for those who ask those executives for money.** The book explains, in lay-manager’s terms, **what ITIL is.** It reveals what ITIL is **good** for, what it is **bad** at, what to **expect** from it. It describes how to ensure an ITIL project **succeeds**, what to look for in the **business case**, and how to measure the **results.**

It does these things **in business terms**, written by an **independent and critical observer.** Read the book to get an understanding of ITIL and a context for the recommendations. Or just read the recommendations which have been picked out for your convenience. The busiest managers can use the four checklists at the back as ITIL survival tools.

For more about the book *Owning ITIL®* visit www.itskeptic.org/owning or buy it now from Amazon.com.

The book provides 104 recommendations for those who own ITIL:



ITIL books

1. When starting out with ITIL it is worth reading about ITIL3 to get the big picture even if you then head down the ITIL2 road.
2. For your first book to read consider buying *Passing your ITIL Foundation Exam*. When compared with the more obvious place to start, *The Official Introduction to the ITIL Service Lifecycle*, it is the same size, half the price, and covers much the same territory. And it includes sample exam questions to check whether you are actually getting the hang of it or not. [Note: as of early 2009 this book was out of date due to the ongoing changes to the ITIL V3 Foundation syllabus. The book still makes a great introduction but we do **not** recommend it as a study guide for the exam unless it is revised.]
3. The *Foundation Exam* study guide may prove to be all you need. If you need more, read *The Official Introduction*. Alternatively, if you are really on a budget, or if all you want to do is talk the talk, then read itSMF's free download *An Introductory Overview of ITIL V3*¹.
4. An "owner" of ITIL is unlikely to need any more, but you could consider an ITIL Foundation training course.
5. If that isn't enough, then read one of either the ITIL2 "red book and blue book set" (*Service Support and Service Delivery*) or *Foundations of IT Service Management based on ITIL V3*.
6. If you need to read the five ITIL3 core books, you have too much time on your hands for a decision maker.

Alternatives to ITIL

7. Don't get swept away on a tide of ITIL. After determining what changes and improvements to culture and process you need to make, then (and only then) take a look at what best suits your business. ITIL is very good at what it does. It may be the right thing for you. Or not.

Best practice as a given

8. Implement ITIL (or any "best practice") when there is a business case for it. Where there isn't, don't flog yourself and don't weaken your organisation.
9. If you want gold, then consider the possibility of different standards of excellence that allow you to get ahead of those who are following the mainstream "best".

¹ *An Introductory Overview of ITIL V3*, itSMF 2007.
ISBN 0-9551245-8-1 www.itsmfi.org/files/itSMF_ITILV3_Intro_Overview.pdf

ITIL the Cult

10. Try to measure your organisation against something other than the proposed solution (see “Measuring ITIL with ITIL”, p63).
11. If the organisation is resisting, perhaps there is a good reason. Re-examine the premises behind the ITIL proposal.
12. Don't let anyone get righteous with you (“I have far more experience of ITIL”, “I'm an ITIL Master”, “You weren't on the training”).
13. Don't be fastidious about compliance (“cleanliness”).
14. And most of all: reject any absolutist position (“We will do it the way the book says, period.”)

Because everyone else is

15. Implement ITIL because there is a business case, and for no other reason. (See the discussion of ITIL business cases, p88)
16. Do ITIL in stages. Ensure each chunk is manageable. Start where the maximum pain or payback is.

Don't expect evidence

17. Don't expect an evidence-based business case. Have a methodology (determine your organisation's practice) for evaluating subjective business cases.
18. Look sceptically at evidence proffered. Reject any that is analyst/vendor hearsay and guesstimate. Evaluate the remaining business case on its merits.

You don't 'do' ITIL

19. Expect ITIL proposals to have target maturity levels for proposed processes (and an assessment of current maturity levels).
20. Ensure the proposal includes provision for ongoing measurement, maintenance and improvement of processes. Your organisation will have its own policy on whether this needs to be part of any cost estimates or ROI calculations.
21. Use resulting maturity level as a key KPI for the project. But watch out for that cultish measuring-ITIL-with-ITIL: have another independent measure too (see Measuring ITIL with ITIL, p63).

Measuring ITIL with ITIL

22. Consider using COBIT (or eSCM or ISO20000) to measure your organisation's maturity. It provides accessible, structured metrics that do an excellent job of IT audit and benchmarking.
23. You will probably need to commission assessment by consultants, but before you do, download COBIT¹ (unlike ITIL it is free and in the public domain), and evaluate whether you could "roll your own" assessment.
24. Set KPIs that reflect the real business motivations for the ITIL project. If the business case for the project was to improve availability then measure the project on availability. If it was to improve customer service then survey satisfaction before and after.
25. Consider direct measurement of cultural maturity. The ultimate objective is to change the way people behave, so measure ABC: Attitudes, Behaviour and Culture. Bring in experts in this area to conduct assessments before and after. You need HR consultants not IT consultants.

If IT ain't broke don't fix it

26. Look beyond the "because I think so" or "because everybody else is" arguments.
27. Look beyond solid evidence that it will be better. So what? Why does it need (in business terms) to be better? Does the status quo fail to meet current and forecast business requirements?
28. If it works, leave it alone. Spend the money where it is most effective.

CMDB can not be done

29. Ensure that a pragmatic approach is planned to Configuration Management, where the minimum data necessary is gathered.
30. CMDB is seldom the best place to start with ITIL. Ensure more important priorities are addressed first.
31. Develop a Service Catalogue early (see p10): do a technical version as a point of focus for IT people. In that technical Catalogue, document the key CIs that support each service. If you really want to let the geeks out for a run, record the Services in your Service Desk tool and link the key CIs there. But keep a very tight rein on this initiative; it must be *maintainable for reasonable ongoing cost*. That may be as close to CMDB as you will ever get.

Vendor references

32. Discount vendor references or statistics derived from references when evaluating proposals.
33. Look to other sources, especially forums and discussion boards. These tend to attract the bitter and dissatisfied customers. As such they are equally as biased as the vendor's references. A balance of both sources might get you somewhere near an objective view.

¹ www.isaca.org

Compliance with other methodologies

34. Require consideration of other incumbent methodologies as part of the impact analysis in the business case
35. Require estimation of the work to resolve the interfaces

The benefits of ITIL

36. Ensure alternatives (see “Alternatives to ITIL”, p34) have been considered: MOF for married-to-Microsoft shops; COBIT if it fits requirements better; ISO20000 or SM-CMM for a service provider; something simpler like FITS.
37. Consider something much simpler: like any transformation of process, ITIL requires a cultural change program to bring the people along. What if the project consisted of nothing but the cultural change program? What if you gave people training in current process, showered them with some attention, ran workshops so they could be heard, and re-organised the roles and structure to better fit current process?

Questionable business cases

38. Look for tangible returns on investment that can be banked, not funny money cooked up through questionable assumptions or anecdotal evidence.

ASP or ISP

39. In all discussions of what the IT services are or could be, start with a definition of ASP and ISP, and then check everyone is on the same wavelength in any issue.
40. In the Service Catalogue, be clear what model each service belongs to.
41. In any argument about services, check that the cause is not a mismatch of mental models between ISP and ASP.

Cultural Change

42. Measure cultural change as the primary deliverable of an ITIL transformation.
43. Listen to the “vibe” to do your own informal monitoring of culture change: what words are people using? Are they referring back to services?

Return on investment

44. Benchmark proposed external spending against the rules of thumb of:
 - half on consultants, a third on tools and a sixth on training
 - say £6,000 or US\$10,000 per IT seat in 2008 terms
45. Also look at the ratio of total spending on People, Process and Technology (see **pError! Bookmark not defined.**).
46. Find a methodology to evaluate VOI, or make the decision on faith.
47. Far too much ITIL is done because IT wants to do things "better". Ask yourself:
 - Is there a VOI or ROI?
 - If there is, great but does the business *need* "better"?
 - And even if they do, is the investment the *best* use of scarce funds? (See "Don't do it", p98)

Artefacts

48. Make sure an early product of any ITIL project is a Current Service Catalogue. Look for it and set it as an early milestone to produce one (see "Do a Service Catalogue early", p123).

Metrics

49. Measure cultural change outside of the ITIL framework.
50. Also measure the success of ITIL in terms of process improvement and compliance.
51. Finally, if you must, you can also measure ITIL against ITIL, i.e. measure the change in ITIL maturity. (See "ITIL the Cult", p46)

Don't do it

52. Assess all IT proposals to the four levels described above.
53. If it does not pass all four tests, make a management decision whether to proceed regardless but at least you will make it in full understanding of the situation. Naturally the IT Skeptic in general recommends rejecting any proposal that does not meet all four criteria.

Do it as a project

54. Make it a formal project: business case, budget, goals, milestones, and PIR¹. The point here is that if you are going to do it you should do it properly.
55. Don't ask people to transform the processes they use in their spare time. Don't mess about with half-assed tinkering that will always go nowhere.
56. Don't all pack up and go home when it is done: there must be an ongoing program as described in "ITIL is an approach not a project", p113

Cultural Change (again)

57. Make cultural change the primary goal and success indicator of the project.
58. Don't accept any planning that does not make cultural change its main objective and a large part of its activities.
59. Look at the project spending on activities such as communications, collaboration, workshops, walkthroughs, training, monitoring, coaching, feedback, reviews and celebration. 5% on people is token. 30% is more like it. 50% is getting serious about culture change.
60. Train a few in-house specialists and champions in ITIL theory. In their case, Foundation is not enough. They need some Intermediate too. If they want Expert they are probably leaving you soon :)
61. Rent real expertise from external consultants (because no training course will create in-house experts).
62. Develop in-house training.
63. Monitor the "vibe". There will be resistance. Resistance is not useless – resistance is a positive sign, at least in the early stages. All good sales people know that objections are buying signals. However if resistance continues, and even becomes entrenched, management must take action. Bombard the entrenched positions with training and workshops. In the worst case "if you can't change the people, change the people": get someone who will play nicely.

Executive commitment

64. Integrate Service Management into the image and culture of the largest possible unit of the organisation (at best, the company; at least, the Production section of IT).
65. Project a Service Management ethos to clients and expect it from suppliers and partners
66. Get Service Management written into everyone's KPIs. At executive levels too high to influence their KPIs, show them how ITSM delivers on their current KPIs (if it doesn't, you have a problem).
67. There are two ways to deal with executives taking "back doors":

¹ Post Implementation Review

- 1) Ensure the CEO is committed to the program and will over-rule them when they try.
- 2) Change the rules to make executive privilege transparent. Have a Platinum level of service that permits what they want – make it official.

Resourcing

68. Get consultants.
69. The good local independents are best – use word-of-mouth referrals. Next best are the reputable big firms.

ITIL is an approach not a project

70. Approach ITIL as a cultural change program.
71. Engage cultural change expertise.
72. Have a budget and resources (and accountability) for the ongoing program after the project “ends”.

Integrate

73. Ensure the ITIL project is properly integrating with the rest of the organisation: check workshop attendees, trainee lists, design sign-offs.

ITIL2 vs. ITIL3

74. For the average site, if you are starting out on the ITIL road, look to ITIL2 “red and blue books” as the map, or if you have good consultants then mix and match ITIL2 with a few of the better elements of ITIL3, such as Request Fulfilment, Event Management, Service Evaluation and Service Portfolio.
75. Wait for ITIL3 to mature and for consultants to get some experience. Wait at least until 2010. [Update 2010: the ITIL community is clearly still struggling to come to grips with ITIL V3. OGC is in the midst of a major project fixing and clarifying the books. The debates on LinkedIn are if anything more frenzied than ever. ITIL V3 has some useful content than can be adopted and adapted, but other parts of it should still be considered with caution]
76. If you are already an ITIL shop, or you are an advanced site in need of all that ITIL3 holds, then by all means consider the case for stepping up to ITL3 – it offers a lot.

Do a Service Catalogue early

77. Ensure the Current Catalogue is an early planned deliverable. Don't let the perfectionists hold out for more information or a clearer picture – get a Current Catalogue out to your IT staff as soon as possible, if only as a basis for debate.
78. Ensure the Current Catalogue is a keystone of the communications plan.

Restrain Configuration Management

79. Severely limit your Configuration scope.
80. For most sites (except those aiming for maturity 4 or 5 Configuration Management, such as NASA or Boeing or EDS or Tata), don't do a CMDB.
81. Have a "CMDB called Sue": two or more humans tasked with knowing the configuration of your environment and being available as impact analysis experts.
82. Encourage the use of out-of-the-box CMDB tool solutions, however imperfect, rather than in-house developed systems.
83. For preference, the CMDB – if you must have one - should be an integrated part of the Service Desk tool, not a separate product, i.e. buy the integration – don't do it yourself.
84. Stamp out attempts to implement a complete idealised by-the-book ITIL CMDB unless yours is a very large organisation with perfectionist standards or critical requirements, and deep pockets.
85. If there really is a business case for full CMDB, do not lay the burden of maintaining the data on a central team. Ensure all groups responsible for the development, maintenance and operation of services are required and incented to take responsibility for "their" data in the CMDB. Do however have an owner of the CMDB responsible for maintenance, audit and reporting.
86. If you don't need a CMDB, then focus on network configuration ("what is connected to what"), asset data ("what is what"), and device inventory ("what runs on what").
87. Consider "on-demand CMDB", a team, expert in producing on-demand configuration information.

They all work

88. Get the process right, then shortlist tools that fit, and then any of the tools will be adequate. Sure, some will be better than others, but they'll all do the job. Buy on vendor and price.
89. When assessing fit, ensure that vendor credibility, financial stability, local support, and price all receive sufficient weight – don't let the geeks obsess on features.
90. Don't overlook open source and software-as-a-service (SaaS) options.

Process drives requirements

91. Ensure all tool implementations start from cultural change, from people, improvement, and move forward from there into process and things.
92. Don't try to fix people with technology.

ITIL compliance

93. If you are going to do ITIL, look for vendors who have real understanding of ITIL, tools that really were designed with ITIL in mind, and a local capability to deliver on an ITIL framework.

Get tools services

94. Get the right amount of money in order to ensure a proper return on the investment in the tool.
95. Spend that money on people who will get the job done right and quickly.
96. Select individual people not the organisations they work for.
97. Select those people based on references: they are only as good as what they have delivered to someone else.
98. Look for a standard package of services: if they have enough experience they should be able to define what they provide.

What tools?

99. Keep it simple. Unless tools are significantly automating process or increasing the efficiency or effectiveness of process, they serve only to increase cost and risk and time.
100. Integration isn't what it cracked up to be except in the most advanced of sites. Don't sweat it, so long as incident, problem, change, assets and users have some level of linkage.

IT is a customer of IT

101. All IT tools should be in the Service Catalogue as part of services provided by IT to IT, as well as in the Availability and Continuity plans.
102. All tools should have multiple environments: at a minimum test, training and production.
103. All tools should be subject to the same change control as business systems.
104. All critical tools (at least the service desk; the monitoring console; and the network, server and storage monitors) should have designated Level 1 and 2 support personnel, and a "business" owner.

And so on, just as any other service.

14 questions to ask about an ITIL project proposal

1. What is the vision? What is the strategy to achieve that vision?
2. What is the driving need or requirement?
3. How will success be measured? Relative to what benchmark measured now? Are we measuring with something other than ITIL? (See p6) Do the metrics measure the benefits stated in the business case?
4. What process maturity level(s) is the objective? (see p5)
5. Where is the value? Will it reduce costs, increase customer satisfaction, reduce risk, increase competitiveness or what? What dollar value can you put on that? Based on what metrics and where do they come from? Where is the real money?
6. Why do we need this? What is broken? (See p6) Do we really need best practice? Can we go for something simpler? (See p4) In particular is there a CMDB proposed? Why do we need it? (See p6) What does it give us over how it is done now? What pain or risk does it address? Weighed against that, what proportion of the costs is it? Does that include ongoing maintenance and audit of the data?
7. What resistance to this is there? Sometimes there is a good reason for resistance. Go ask the objectors.
8. What proportion of the budget is allocated to people-related activity: cultural change, training...? (See p9)
9. Where are the people resources coming from? People cannot do ITIL in their “spare time”. And the people doing this should not all be learning how as they go: make sure some external expertise is being brought in.
10. Who did the estimates (risk, time and cost)? What is their practical experience of doing this same thing before? Does that translate to this situation? Process change and cultural change are even more chronically underestimated than projects are in general, especially when estimated by technical people.
11. What ongoing activities will ensure the implemented changes stick, and that improvement continues over time? Who will own that? How will it be funded? See p9)
12. How does this integrate with other methodologies in use in our organisation? (See p10) ...and other processes currently in place (e.g. procurement, project management, security, hires and fires, facilities)?
13. Have you chosen the tools yet? If so, throw it back. Tools come much later after process requirements are well understood. Technology driven projects usually fail.

14. Do the CEO and CIO support this strongly? If not what makes you think you can change that? No solid executive support = no hope.

This is not an exhaustive list, just suggestions. Check the *Owning ITIL* webpage at www.itskeptic.org/owningitil to see if we have grown or revised this list, and to provide your own feedback so we can.

14 questions to check on progress of an ITIL project

1. Have you encountered resistance? (Resistance is good). How have you / will you overcome that? (*Ignored* resistance is bad)
2. What champions have you 'converted' to the cause, who weren't on board at the beginning?
3. What cultural change activities have you conducted: workshopping, communications (newsletters etc), consultation, walkthroughs, training, coaching, monitoring, feedback, celebration? NB. Emails don't count as communication
4. Who has been involved and how, from Development, Operations, Testing, Project Management, Architects, Finance, Business Managers, HR?
5. How are you socialising new processes? (emails and posting to websites don't count)
6. In Kotter⁴ terms, who is your "guiding coalition"?
7. Have we reviewed the decision to use ITIL as a basis? Have we looked at any other options? (COBIT, MOF, FITS, ISO20000... See p4)
8. How is executive sponsorship holding up? Are all management embracing this? Who is asking for exemptions (e.g. from change approval, or from standard PC models or SOEs)?
9. Show me the Service Catalogue (it should exist from early in the project, at least the Current services, see p10).
10. Are we documenting all adaptations, variations and exceptions to "standard" ITIL, with their rationale? (Adaptation is good, so long as it is tracked and the rationale captured)
11. To what extent are we duplicating or replacing existing process? Was the option canvassed to incorporate existing process instead? What compromises were involved and why were they rejected?
12. What are customers asking for? Have we documented that as a Brochure catalogue? (see p10) How much of that can we deliver? How much can we measure?
13. Have you identified the need for any new technology? On what basis? (Technical requirements should derive from identified process improvements – see p11). Do the vendor's implementation services include implementing our new procedure

⁴ John Kotter's eight-step change model. Google it.

workflows? (See p12) What customisation of tools is required? (every customisation should be resisted and justified – they add greatly to future maintenance costs)

14. Is the steering committee still active and involved? What don't you want the steering committee to know?

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14 questions for a post-ITIL-implementation review

1. How has this changed the way people think, speak and act? Describe instances/anecdotes.
2. What has been the feedback from customers? Suppliers?
3. How did we measure success? Did we measure against something other than ITIL? Did we succeed?
4. What has been re-scoped, deferred or dropped since the business case?
5. Are we measuring the ROI? When will we review again to check that we got the ROI expected in the business case?
6. Who owns each and every process? One person per process. Do those people agree they are the owner?
7. Do we have procedure guides for each job role? How does each person know what is expected of them, what has changed in their world and how that impacts them? What KPIs do they have? Are we measuring those? What incentives do they have to meet those KPIs?
8. Where is the process documentation? How is it accessed? Who knows it is there? Who owns it and keeps it current? How much use is it getting?
9. What tools were implemented? Are they treated as production systems? (See p12)
10. Have we documented all adaptations, variations and exceptions to “standard” ITIL?
11. **Most important of all:** What processes are in place to consolidate and protect the investment made? Are we monitoring and reviewing and auditing process compliance? Process quality? Process subversion? (See p9) Are we doing regular skills refreshes? Is there a coaching program for staff who are finding it difficult? Are we training new staff? Are we celebrating success and finding new ways to invigorate the processes?
12. What is the ongoing continual improvement process? Who owns it? Who is funding it? Who is monitoring their accountability? What are we measuring? What are the improvement goals and who is setting them?
13. What are the succession plans? Who will be the next owners and stewards of ITIL?
14. What is the next phase or project? When will it be?

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14 questions for an ITIL environment health check

1. Who owns the relationship with each customer? Are all customers owned?
2. What service catalogue do customers see? Users? IT staff? (See p**Error! Bookmark not defined.**)
3. How do users request a new service or a change to how they get the service? How is that provisioned?
4. When did you last celebrate good performance or a goal met?
5. What person owns each process?
6. What accountability do people have for process compliance? How is it measured? Rewarded?
7. Is the service performance benchmarked and reviewed regularly? What is the process to act on unacceptable results of that review?
8. What training and coaching are new staff given? Check it includes work procedures. Do existing staff get updates and refreshers?
9. What has improved in the last year? How can you tell?
10. How is customer satisfaction tracking? How is it measured? How often?
11. How is user satisfaction tracking? (Not the same thing. Customers pay. Users use.)
12. How do you review processes and procedures? Who is involved? How often?
13. When was the last priority 1 incident?
14. What is the data quality of reports, especially service levels? What can't you report on?

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