

Standardized IT Processes Support Business Vision

The ITIL framework helps Cisco manage the IT service lifecycle better and align more efficiently with IT and business goals.

Several years back, Cisco IT began seeking how to bolster its focus on operational excellence. As the organization investigated service management best practices, it found that its work paralleled that of the British Office of Government Commerce-developed IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL) process framework. Today, Cisco IT has adopted the ITIL framework broadly.

The de facto global standard for IT service management, ITIL provides a set of best practices for managing all phases of the IT service lifecycle, from early development to phase-out and even afterwards.

“Using standardized processes means that we don’t have to spend time reinventing the wheel. We can devote the time to activities that make Cisco more competitive.”

Ian Reddy, IT Manager, IT Global Operations,
Cisco

Standardized processes developed using the ITIL framework help ensure that users get the services and support they need. At Cisco, the IT Global Operations group is tasked with managing several of these processes IT-wide.

Physically a set of manuals, ITIL became especially useful to Cisco IT with the release of Version 3 in 2007, says Ian Reddy, an IT manager in the IT Global

Operations group. “Version 3 is strategically oriented and prescriptive compared with Version 2, which described processes but not how they connected up,” says Reddy. “The new version covers how recommended processes are connected to each other and how to implement them, making ITIL an effective lifecycle approach to IT service management.”

ITIL V3 deals with 24 processes. To date Cisco IT has employed ITIL techniques primarily for Incident, Problem, Change, and Configuration Management processes. Service Catalog, Service Portfolio, Service Level Management, and other processes are being implemented.

Speaking the Same Language

An important objective for IT is that all parties involved in service delivery speak the same language. “ITIL provides a common taxonomy, and taxonomy is tightly coupled to process,” says Kevin Smith, an IT manager in the IT Global Operations group at Cisco.

When Smith started working with ITIL, he often used different service management terms than those used by his IT counterparts. By employing a common taxonomy described by ITIL, everyone in the organization has the same understanding of, for example, an “incident” and a “problem” and how to manage each of them to support IT and business goals.

An incident might be a laptop not booting up or an application running improperly. It is something to be corrected quickly or immediately if its impact is mission critical. On the other hand, a problem is the underlying cause of a recurring or related incident. According to the ITIL framework, problem-solving should not stop with short-term fixes to incidents. In line with best practices, the IT Global Operations group has implemented a standardized problem management process that includes performing root cause analysis for business-impacting incidents, evaluating the likelihood that they will recur, and tracking the long-term fixes required.

“For problem management to be truly effective, it must look at overall service quality rather than service unavailability,” says Kartik Jaggi, an IT manager in the IT Global Operations group at Cisco. “Problem management should be about understanding and correcting service management issues, not just service operations issues.”

During the last three years, the group’s focus on adopting a standardized problem management process and reporting has yielded a significant drop in incidents of approximately 45 percent.

Evangelizing ITIL

Since 2005, ITIL Foundation certification has been mandatory for all IT Global Operations personnel, to help ensure that the ITIL framework is correctly and consistently communicated across the organization.

An IT service management evangelist, Reddy crafted a plan for promoting the framework across the entire IT organization. “We had all the IT Global Operations people trained in ITIL procedures, and while the training was going on, we invited other IT managers to have some of their people sit in,” he says. “We made it easy for others to come on board. And as they did, they told us, ‘Now I understand what you guys are talking about when you say problem or change management.’”

To date approximately 600 employees throughout the IT organization have received accredited ITIL foundation or advanced training through Cisco internal offerings. As Reddy says, that is enough to build a critical mass. “Now we’re getting a lot of people speaking the same language and asking how ITIL can help solve their problems.”

For organizations beginning to adopt ITIL, Cisco IT recommends capturing a statistically valid amount of data to help determine what processes need to be developed or deployed throughout the company.

For example, Reddy suggests tracking incidents for a year: What incidents are occurring? What is the business impact? What is the cost of preventing a repeat incident? “Answering questions like these will be a big help in pinpointing what you need to change

and where you need to apply ITIL techniques,” he says.

Also, Reddy points out, selling ITIL to your organization will be more successful if your IT champions listen to and address CIO pain points. A universal pain point: Where is our time and money being spent? Broad adoption of standardized operational practices helps to focus IT resources, providing greater business value through increased productivity and lower total cost of ownership. Applying the ITIL configuration management techniques can also help in tracking and summarizing the costs of delivering various services.

Cisco IT also recommends involving customers, vendors, and partners in adoption of the practices. For example, when bringing in vendors that provide on-site support, ensure that they understand IT change management policy and procedures, have access to the applicable tools, are included in planning for change, and know how to engage in the event of a change-related incident.

Also keep in mind the “small stuff,” Reddy says. Simple measures, such as mapping priority and severity scales with partners and agreeing on the terminology to use in the event of an outage, will save time and effort and promote good will all around.

Meeting Service Expectations

Underscoring its commitment to service process improvements, Cisco IT recently created the new job profile of IT service manager, who will be responsible for facilitating the relationship between IT and its clients.

According to Reddy, “A service manager will ensure that the IT service roadmap and the operation of services meet customer expectations over the entire service lifecycle, will strive to optimize and leverage investment in a given service, and will drive the adoption and utilization of new service offerings and options.”

The Cisco IT Global Operations group believes strongly in the benefits of adopting the ITIL framework.

“Using standardized processes means that we don’t have to spend time reinventing the wheel,” says Reddy. “We can devote the time to activities that make Cisco more competitive.” ■

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For additional Cisco IT content, including case studies, best practices, and videos, visit Cisco on Cisco: Inside Cisco IT. www.cisco.com/go/ciscoit




Americas Headquarters
Cisco Systems, Inc.
San Jose, CA

Asia Pacific Headquarters
Cisco Systems (USA) Pte. Ltd.
Singapore

Europe Headquarters
Cisco Systems International BV
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Cisco has more than 200 offices worldwide. Addresses, phone numbers, and fax numbers are listed on the Cisco Website at www.cisco.com/go/offices.

 CCDE, CCVP, Cisco Eos, Cisco StadiumVision, the Cisco logo, DCE, and Welcome to the Human Network are trademarks; Changing the Way We Work, Live, Play, and Learn is a service mark; and Access Registrar, Aironet, AsyncOS, Bringing the Meeting To You, Catalyst, CCDA, CCDP, CCIE, CCIP, CCNA, CCNP, CCSP, Cisco, the Cisco Certified Internetwork Expert logo, Cisco IOS, Cisco Press, Cisco Systems, Cisco Systems Capital, the Cisco Systems logo, Cisco Unity, Collaboration Without Limitation, Enterprise/Solver, EtherChannel, EtherFast, EtherSwitch, Event Center, Fast Step, Follow Me Browsing, FormShare, GigaDrive, HomeLink, Internet Quotient, IOS, iPhone, IP/TV, iQ Expertise, the iQ logo, iQ Net Readiness Scorecard, iQuick Study, IronPort, the IronPort logo, LightStream, Linksys, MediaTone, MeetingPlace, MGX, Networkers, Networking Academy, Network Registrar, PCNow, PIX, PowerPanels, ProConnect, ScriptShare, SenderBase, SMARTnet, Spectrum Expert, StackWise, The Fastest Way to Increase Your Internet Quotient, TransPath, WebEx, and the WebEx logo are registered trademarks of Cisco Systems, Inc. and/or its affiliates in the United States and certain other countries.

All other trademarks mentioned in this document or Website are the property of their respective owners. The use of the word partner does not imply a partnership relationship between Cisco and any other company. (0801R)