Six Key Objectives of an Excellent Service Design Framework
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Six Key Objectives of an Excellent Service Design Framework

In today’s cloud-first world, the way IT teams deliver networks, support and infrastructure to their end users has changed enormously. While many aspects of best practice remain relevant, others have changed radically. This eBook outlines the six key objectives of an excellent service design in this new frontier of IT provision.

IT can be seen as just like any other service – from healthcare to banking to postal services. A service is a commodity which delivers value to the end user through the completion of a set of actions by the ‘vendor’. Service users do not expect to understand how the service works, rather they simply expect it to fulfil a need.

For example, when sending a letter by post, the customer simply expects their post to arrive at the expected address in the defined timeframe. They do not expect to think about their letter’s journey from the post box to the sorting office, the system by which their letter is distributed to local warehouses or how the postman’s schedule is organised.

In the same way, end users do not expect to understand how their company’s IT services actually function ‘behind the scenes’ - they just expect them to work.

Beyond ITIL?

IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL) is a framework for best practice in IT delivery created by the British government in the 1980s. ITIL has evolved to reflect the changes in IT over the decades and is seen as a global standard for service delivery. The standard was created to offer professionals guidance and advice on how to deliver technology services in the most efficient, cost effective, and user focused manner. Although it is difficult to calculate precisely, Gartner reports that companies that leverage ITIL see a 50-75 percent reduction in unplanned work for mission critical services and a 10-25 percent boost in productivity.

Despite the widespread recognition of ITIL’s value, the emergence of cloud computing and Software as a Service (SaaS) environments such as Microsoft’s Office 365 have cast some doubt on ITIL’s relevance. For example, Office 365 provides end-users with numerous pre-configured tools which are updated centrally from Microsoft HQ. At the same time, Microsoft does the ‘heavy lifting’ of infrastructure management or maintaining servers for instance.

Nonetheless, while some aspects of ITIL have changed, it is still a relevant guide for best practice. As Randy Steinberg of Deloitte Consulting puts it:

“I don’t see how you can do this [cloud computing] without ITIL and service management… I think we’re on the cusp of a new evolution in IT. What IT used to build and design on their own, they can now rent. Therefore, IT’s role is becoming more of a service integrator.”

With Office 365, Microsoft has taken over responsibility of parts of ITIL that were once in the hands of individual IT teams. As such, IT teams’ role in service delivery has changed. Where IT teams were once reactive – installing patches downloaded from their provider or updating their entire systems every four or five years – SaaS means they must now be proactive. The need to know when products and updates will be coming out, how these will impact their users and weigh on their broadband requirements.

In order to prepare for a cloud-first world, IT teams must adapt their service delivery approach. This eBook outlines best practice to help service managers re-adjust to this new frontier in service design.


As the quote from Deloitte’s Randy Steinberg points out, the cloud shifts the role of IT departments to that of a service integrator. This is an exciting time for IT. In the past, much of a service manager’s work was focused on trying to avoid outages. By contrast, today they can focus much more on aligning services with actual business goals, thereby helping the organisation become more agile and adaptive. This is welcome, but requires a different approach to ITIL.

Content and Code has developed a service design framework that provides the rigour to ensure all services will be provided on time, as expected, while also offering the adaptability to fit around an organisation’s specific needs. This takes the basic processes of ITIL and extends these to respond to the characteristics of Office 365. The additional elements to our approach are outlined in the following table.

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By extending standard ITIL, Content and Code delivers a service design framework which fits much more comfortably around an organisation’s business needs. Rather than simply deploying Office 365 and expecting end users to ‘get on with it’, this approach is much more targeted.
When designing your new services, we recommend you build a service design framework which fulfils the following objectives.

1. **Targeted services**

Best practice service design should always be focused on aligning IT with specific business goals. IT should provide services that facilitate business, but which also help drive it forward. It is therefore essential to define the services which will most effectively serve this goal.

*How does Content and Code do this?*

We collaborate with senior executives and end users in order to understand how the business works, and what the company’s strategy is. This helps select the right services and tools which will really align with those goals. This helps us recommend the best tools to achieve those goals.

> "Content and Code’s Service Design approach provided clear definition of roles, processes and transitional activities in easily absorbable formats and language. This allowed project and support teams – internal and external – to fully understand how to introduce the new complex cloud based services, and ensure this was as productive as possible for the customer base.

> It was a pleasure to work with them on this programme."

*Peter Barnes – Global Head of Service Delivery (Interim) – Mott MacDonald*

2. **Efficient process design**

Having decided which services will be necessary to fit around your strategy, it is essential to plan how you will actually put that into place. Therefore, the second objective of service design is to design efficient and effective processes for the transition, operation and improvement of high quality IT services.

*How does Content and Code do this?*

When moving to Office 365, we help design the steps you’ll need to follow to get full value from the platform. For instance, rather than simply ‘dumping’ Office 365 on your end users, we design a series of steps which focus on your high value activities, choosing the right services for your specific needs.
Manage risk

Before moving to a new environment, it is important to understand the possible risks involved. It is important to ensure that you at least have the same level of administration, maintenance and security that you came to enjoy with your on-premises implementation. Just as you planned and implemented high availability in the past, you can do the same with Office 365 by working with Content and Code to insert resilience to mitigate risks.

How does Content and Code do this?
We draw on over 15 years’ experience to help minimise the risk of downtime or migration problems. We can stress test your new environment before it goes live and provide secure back-up for ‘worst case scenarios’. and tools which will really align with those goals. This helps us recommend the best tools to achieve those goals.

Measure and assess

One of the primary reasons an organisation would upgrade its IT services is to access better tools. However, service managers are under constant pressure to provide evidence that their choices were justified and deliver ROI. It is therefore essential to create a series of reliable metrics to measure success.

How does Content and Code do this?
We articulate KPIs and base rates to evaluate how well a new service is being implemented. We can test a variety of measures to demonstrate ROI, productivity improvements and usability.

Support the design

A key part of service design is to produce practices and documentation which will support the service. Produce and maintain plans, processes, policies, standards, architectures, frameworks and documents which support the service.

How does Content and Code do this?
We are able to work with our clients to provide best practice guidelines and document all recommended processes, with a focus on the needs of Office 365.
Develop the right skills

A final objective for a service design framework is that it helps towards the continuous development of skills and capability within IT. This is about staying up to date with changes in the new platform and learning how to improve it further.

How does Content and Code do this?
We can provide the latest training and information from Microsoft. Our consultants combine our unique methodology and expert guidance to ensure businesses receive best practice methods endorsed by Microsoft.