

# ITIL Practitioner helps to put service delivery into practice

**The ITIL Practitioner qualification is the first significant addition to the ITIL scheme since the 2011 revision. Panagiotis Fiampolis explains the thinking behind the new Guidance.**

A brand new ITIL qualification from AXELOS, ITIL Practitioner, will enable those qualified at ITIL Foundation level to confidently and successfully adapt and adopt the framework. The Practitioner Guidelines are targeted at professionals in any role related to the delivery or support of IT services – all of whom may initially question the need for yet another exam. On closer inspection, though, ITIL Practitioner delivers vital practical experience, filling a gap in the ITIL series of qualifications.

A number of key issues are driving the need to improve the skills base of IT service management (ITSM) professionals, who also need to be able to apply what they have learnt and demonstrate the measurable difference their service management skills have made to their organisation.

Best Practice in ITSM aligns IT service delivery very closely with the needs of the business, focusing on improving IT processes to deliver customer benefits. For example, omni-channel customer communications call for joined up and responsive communications and service delivery across mobile, web, telephone and email channels. The use of technology to support increased personalisation and differentiation enables businesses to compete effectively for new customers and retain existing customers with offers of products and services that appeal to individuals. Today's IT service manager needs to be in a position to drive initiatives on all these fronts.

More than ever, there is a need to focus on customer-facing business issues and business processes rather than tools and technologies. The focus has shifted from IT

as infrastructure. IT professionals must be capable of developing a clear business case for their service delivery and be confident in applying this to the latest technologies from automation to real-time reporting and cloud computing. They also need a wide-ranging grasp of a number of Best Practice approaches – not just ITIL – so that they can adapt and tailor a strategy that is right for their organisation. Finally they need communication skills so that the benefits of the ITSM strategy are clear to all stakeholders. Many ITSM professionals are aware of these requirements, but lack the skills to put them into practice.

## A practical focus

As competition between businesses becomes global, IT service delivery needs to be flexible and adaptable to mirror the fast-moving requirements of the business and its customers. ITIL-based best practice in service management enhances customer relationships by delivering services that meet their needs and underpins service improvement by managing business risks more effectively. Over two million ITIL certifications have been awarded worldwide to service management professionals seeking to improve their practice. The ITIL qualification scheme now comprises: Foundation Level, Practitioner Level, Intermediate Level, Expert Level and Master Level. Practitioner Level, introduced February 2016, represents an evolution to the series focused on providing greater practical support.

Feedback from ITSM practitioners using ITIL for professional development was

highlighting a real challenge for the many IT managers who had qualified at ITIL Foundation level. The ITIL Foundation training and qualification provides a good grounding in IT service management, focusing on the 'what' and the 'why', but not the 'how to', leaving many professionals feeling they did not have the confidence or skills to put their new-found knowledge into practice. Now ITIL Practitioner has filled the gap, providing practical skills to enable trainees to adapt ITIL Best Practice to the particular challenges and aspirations of their organisation.

The ITIL Practitioner qualification will sit alongside the existing qualification scheme with a focus on Continual Service Improvement (CSI). ITIL Practitioner emphasises the CSI approach to structure service improvement that is being implemented in response specific business needs. ITIL Practitioner in turn will contribute practical guidance on using the CSI approach to maximise the benefits of its adoption. ITIL Practitioner does not replace the CSI Intermediate qualification, but has practical synergies with it.

## Who can benefit?

In the past, ITIL professionals who did not hold any ITIL certification started with ITIL Foundation level and some did not progress beyond this, perhaps because of the issue of applying it in practice in the specific circumstances of their business. Now, the synergy between the basics (Foundation), the adoption/adaption skills (Practitioner) and specialist skills (Intermediate) means that professionals considering ITIL for the first time can choose the route through the

qualification series that suits them best. Some might start with ITIL Foundation and ITIL Practitioner in combination and then choose the most relevant Intermediate path for them, or they can start by taking Practitioner together with the most appropriate Intermediate qualification.

ITIL Practitioner is also designed to deliver benefits to ITSM professionals who have already achieved some or all of the ITIL qualifications. ITIL Practitioner is a follow-on qualification from Foundation level – it is a requirement to hold the ITIL Foundation qualification before progressing to ITIL Practitioner. The ITIL Practitioner qualification counts as three credits towards qualification at Expert level but it is not a pre-requisite for the higher level ITIL certifications. It is not necessary to attain the ITIL Practitioner qualification before progressing to Expert or Master levels.

The ITIL Practitioner framework addresses issues relating to handling stakeholders and sponsors and applying change management principles to planning and implementing service developments. ITIL Practitioner has a practical focus on how to measure success metrics and, importantly, how to communicate them effectively, covering topics such as the purpose and value of communication and communication tools & techniques.

The syllabus covers three areas that are critical to the success of service improvement: organisational change management; communications; and measurement and metrics. Within these overarching themes the ITIL Practitioner framework follows nine guiding principles:

1. Focus on value
2. Design for experience
3. Start where you are
4. Work holistically
5. Progress iteratively
6. Observe directly
7. Be transparent
8. Collaborate
9. Keep it simple

Individuals and organisations should expect to see tangible benefits from an investment

of two days spent on ITIL Practitioner training. ITIL Practitioner sets ITSM professionals up with lifelong skills and an ability to draw from many major best practice approaches to create an ITSM strategy that most effectively meets the needs of their organisation's plans and aspirations.

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Panagiotis Fiampolis is Research & Development Director of PEOPLECERT. PEOPLECERT partners with multi-national organisations and government bodies for the development & management of globally recognised certification schemes and the delivery of their related standardised exams in over 150 countries. .

