IT Services Management

Developing an Effective ITSM Communications Plan

White Paper

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This paper describes a process to create a communication plan that is fundamental to an IT Service Management (ITSM) implementation project.

Introduction

The communications process includes a methodology to design, develop and deliver the necessary information and promote employee involvement with the intended changes associated with a Service Management implementation process. It is intended to assist in aligning employees with the vision and goals of the project underway or about to be undertaken. It assists with the following:

- Set realistic expectations
- Increase employee involvement
- Identify the desired feelings and behaviors
- Raise support
- Minimize resistance to change
- Ensure successful implementation

Scope and Description

Communication can assist both at the beginning of the internal customer justification effort and to address any customer resistance to change inherent with any major Service Management process implementation. Experience has shown that the amount of communication can have a corresponding beneficial impact on the Service Management implementation process. Further, there is a correlation between the complexity of the implementation effort, the impact of the effort, and the need for complex communication and mature communication plans.

Implementations of significant depth and scope, such as IT Service Management, have a major impact on customers and IT development, deployment and support personnel both tactically and strategically. This will require a carefully managed and mature communications plan in order to manage the successful implementation of a Service Management process. This communication plan should enable the leveraging of existing Service Management tools and processes to help ensure that all communication is coordinated between a Service Management Project Team and the development and infrastructure teams.

This communication typically includes areas such as; why the organization is implementing a new process, what the future will look like, how the project will progress and who is going to be involved. The quality of the communication can significantly affect the effectiveness and efficiency of the process deployment. An effective communication planning process will produce a tactical and strategic

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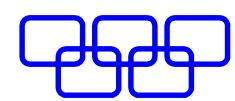
communication plan that provides the communication team with an approach and template for the project.

Communication materials for identified targets should be produced and distributed in accordance with the Service Management project process schedule. The communication plan must align with the overall Service Management release development and deployment processes.

The areas that the Service Management communication process effort include:
- Determining the objectives and themes to be conveyed
- The audiences to whom messages will be directed
- The proper source of the messages
- The messages themselves
- The communication channels to be utilized
- Issues to be resolved
- Specific activities
- Timing and responsibilities

The Service Management communication plan process should include steps to ensure that feedback is encouraged and that the effectiveness of the plan and overall communication is measured during and after the implementation of a Service Management process.

Customer Categorization

A critical factor to creating an effective Communication Plan is to identify the groups who will be impacted by the deployment of the Service Management process. IT departments that provide enterprise wide services to the organization are often labeled as "Not understanding their customer needs or business requirements". It is a difficult task for IT service providers, such as the Service Management team, to understand how a new process is utilized throughout the organization. However, there is a need to identify impacted customer segments as early as possible in the Service Management life cycle so that communication and feedback mechanisms can be put in place quickly and effectively.

The greater the Service Management team understands who their customers are and how they utilize the appropriate IT service management process in their job functions, the greater the probability that they will be able to successfully deploy the new process with minimal impact on existing business functions. A segmented list that identifies key Service Management customer categories and how they utilize Service Management processes in their job functions is an effective tool that enables the Service Management project team to determine the impact of the Service Management process.

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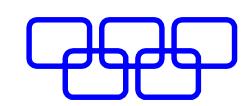
Some possible categories of customers could be:
- Business unit application development user
- Administrative user
- Business user
- Technical user
- Mobile user
- Management user

IT sub-categories could include:
- IT Support staff
- Service Management development staff
- Service Management deployment staff
- IT management staff

Communication Team

The Communications Team should be comprised of representatives of groups or departments who affect and will be affected by the deployment of the Service Management processes.

Communication Team members:
- Gather information and determining the impact of the Service Management processes on their respective areas
- Develop the Communication Plan to manage the transition to the Service Management processes
- Participate in the execution of the Communications Plan

The impact assessment includes identification of how the processes:
- Will affect their groups or departments in the performance of their job functions
- May potentially change or alter applicable job functions
- Will be positively or negatively received within their groups or departments

Typically the team would be comprised of members who:
- Have knowledge of Service Management
- Have credibility in the organization, perhaps as a "trusted advisor"
- Have good communication skills and networking
- Are interested in helping the organization to move forward and satisfy business requirements
- Are willing to be accountable to Sponsors as defined in a Team Charter
- That are not on the project team as well as on the project team
- Representative of different levels across the organization, e.g. staff, managerial, IT, business support, applications, etc.

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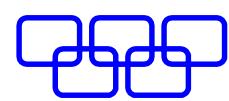
The types of functional and IT representation on the team depends on how much of an impact the Service Management processes will have upon the organization job processes and functions. The implementation of new Service Management processes will likely have a more dramatic impact on the organization than any individual change. The Service Management manager and sponsors would decide on the need for participation from a group or department and the level of that participation.

The time commitment required would depend on the impact that the Service Management processes will have on the organization staff involved.

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