

WHITE PAPER

THE 7 ESSENTIAL STEPS TO ACCELERATE ITIL®

Payback in Application Support

INTRODUCTION

This paper provides seven essential steps or best practices to accelerate the deployment of Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL®) processes, and payback from ITIL investments, in supporting and maintaining enterprise applications. For most companies, these best practices should decrease the time to payback and identify additional areas of financial return.

CHALLENGES OF APPLICATION SUPPORT

With over 30 years of experience as a specialist in Application Management Services (AMS), Sierra has the methodology, tools, and people in place to not only reduce costs but also provide better service to business users in terms of responsiveness, performance, and reliability.

How does Sierra do it? Sierra has leveraged its vast experience working with customers to lower operational costs and has developed an AMS ROI and Maturity Assessment tool and methodology. The approach enables Sierra to work with its customers and follow a step-by-step process that quickly assesses the maturity level of an organization's IT support operation, determines its readiness to quickly move to AMS best practices, and calculates the near and long term ROI opportunities available to the organization. The tool is specifically calibrated to identify quick-hit savings opportunities and streamline the process of transitioning to AMS best practices.

An organizational improvement roadmap is then produced that maps to an organization's specific ROI attainment and business improvement objectives. Sierra then injects best practices and rigor into the AMS processes. The final step is to develop and implement a governance model giving control to the client and explicitly aligning business and IT goals.

Today's IT professionals face constant pressure to:

- Reduce costs
- Increase productivity
- Decrease resources/head count
- Align the IT and business organizations
- Meet service level commitments
- Transition applications from development to support without untimely delays

This white paper can help reduce any of the above pressures that may exist in your organization by providing practical steps based on best practices that have been proven to reduce costs, improve productivity, and increase the reliability of existing installed enterprise applications. These best practices have been used successfully for more than 30 years, and continue to be the foundation of effective application management within some of North America's most recognized and respected organizations.

ITIL V3 and Application Management Services

ITIL V3 brings together many disparate disciplines and provides an integrated way to manage IT departments. There is an increased emphasis on AMS, which is beginning to be recognized as a separate and distinct discipline in the industry.

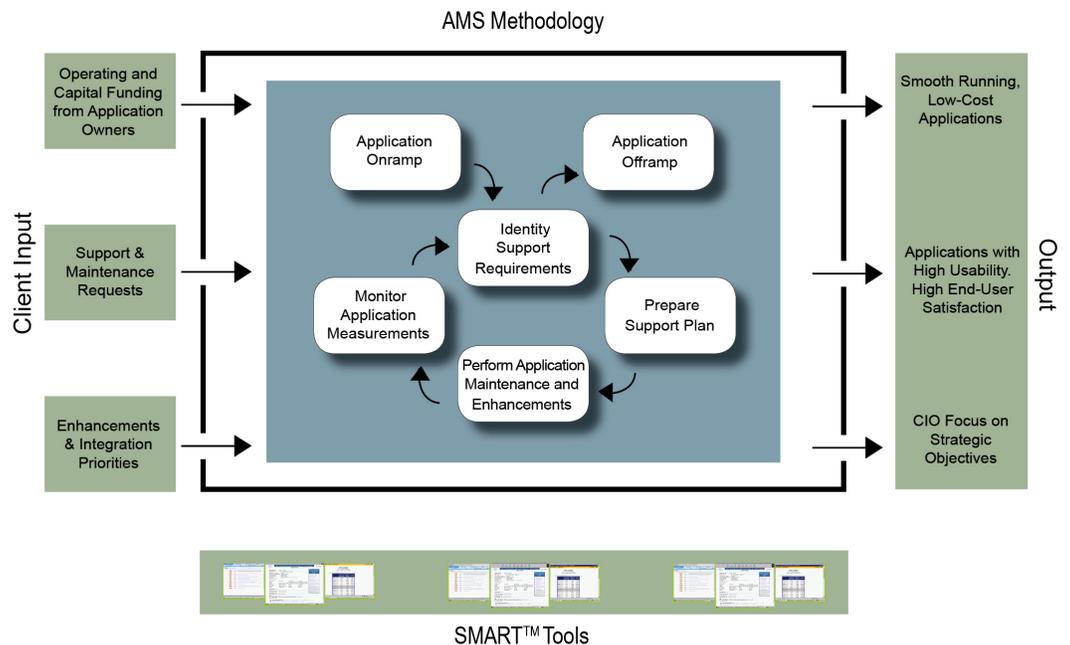
No matter which version of ITIL you are using, this paper provides specific best practices that enhance the use of ITIL within application support – enabling IT professionals to deploy ITIL processes with greater payback, in shorter time frames.

THE SEVEN ESSENTIAL STEPS

Step 1 The black box delivery model

The black box model can drive productivity improvements by up to 20%.

The black box approach is designed to ensure that only one team of programmers is responsible for the smooth operation of the application. To do this, development and support must be separate, application custodianship must be based on the required skill set, and break-fix activities should be combined with application enhancements. This breakdown enables support teams to increase productivity through proactive enhancement work. Thus, the integrity of the code is preserved, resulting in smooth running applications with high reliability, uptime, and performance. In addition the black box approach results in decreased support costs.



Step 2 Governance

Treating applications as corporate assets and support teams as application custodians maximizes value to the organization. This ensures that IT support activities are directly aligned with the business units and ultimately, with the existing corporate structure.

Formal, scheduled communication and rules of engagement between the support team and its corresponding business unit is the foundation of an effective governance relationship.

This joint communication and decision making ensures that only approved prioritized work is carried out by the application custodians. In this manner, effort is expended only on items that are of value to the business. IT productivity increases along with business unit satisfaction levels.

Step 3 Custodial Reporting

Regular custodial reporting provides discipline and accountability to an area of IT that tends to be treated in an ad-hoc manner. Within the report, actual results are compared to plan. The subsequent metrics are then used by the application owners and executives to assess the value/cost/worth of applications and enhancement work, and to build a plan for the upcoming year. Custodial reporting drives a better planning process for both the business unit and IT.

Step 4 Problem Ownership Culture

Instilling a culture of true problem ownership and accountability ensures support staff take personal responsibility for problem resolution so that reoccurrence is minimized. This leads to applications that run smoothly without the intervention of programmers, leading to increased productivity and a reduction of cost and headcount.

Step 5 Continuous Improvement Culture

Management by metrics and trend analysis are used to continuously improve applications based on an understanding of historical data. This continuous improvement will, in turn, reduce failures and expensive reactive work, replacing it with more proactive and planned work, thereby reducing costs.

The concept of “Custodians” and “Assets” is a mind shift for many organizations and is critical to improving IT and business unit alignment in support.

Cultural change is more than an IT process change; it goes straight to the way people think about their work in support.

Standard taxonomy ensures that everyone is speaking the same language.

Step 6 Taxonomy

The use of a master taxonomy check-list – a standard definition of terms – to define all applications, tasks, and procedures provides the organization with a common understanding of the application portfolio and the work needed to support the portfolio. It eliminates the ambiguity and confusion around requests, procedures, and types of applications. Furthermore, adopting a master taxonomy reduces costs by:

- Ensuring services provided align with corporate strategy
- Maximizing use and value of the installed base of applications
- Reducing risk, starting with ensuring mission critical applications are identified
- Eliminating communication confusion
- Eliminating duplicate, low value and/or unused applications

A similar process to CMMI, maturity levels for support provide a yardstick to ensure improvement year on year.

Step 7 Maturity Levels

The use of assessments and scorecards to ascertain and measure an organization's ability to follow best practices parallels the Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMMI) approach. The appropriate measures are based on size and sophistication of the organization and cost effectiveness. The use of annual targets and assessments to measure maturity levels is an effective way to ensure gaps are being addressed year on year. Furthermore, the process of providing specific goals for IT support teams and departments significantly accelerates progress in process maturity.

Reduce your spending on application support, maintenance, and enhancement by as much as 40%

A Few Words on Accelerating Application Support Performance

The best practices provided in this white paper have been used by some of North America's most recognized and respected organizations for more than 30 years. They are based on fundamental principles of outstanding support service and continuous improvement in enterprise applications.

If an organization is using ITIL for application support, these best practices will accelerate the payback of ITIL process change, and provide the means to identify additional productivity gains.

Based on proven principles, organizations can use one or all of the best practices to help address the IT challenges mentioned above. Typical results of their implementation include productivity increases, cost reduction, meeting headcount constraints and closer alignment with business units.

These best practices are a subset of 12 formal best practices in Sierra's SMART Methodology™.

CONCLUSION

Sierra Systems has created tools to assess your application portfolio, resource skill gaps and measure AMS practice maturity level. Sierra's SMART Methodology™ is a well-documented, ITIL compliant framework of 12 best practice how-to's for Application Maintenance. It allows organizations to coordinate, manage, and implement the AMS transformation. Sierra has also authored the three book series *Maximizing IT Value*, which describe how to improve AS performance.

For more information on best practices in supporting, maintaining, and enhancing enterprise applications or more details on the topics discussed here please contact us:

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