



Top 10 types of resistance to ITIL improvement initiatives;

Results of a survey among 250 ITIL Practitioners and the overwhelming response to our Linked-In discussions - January 2010

As IT becomes increasingly important to business operations more and more IT organizations are turning to ITIL and such ITSM frameworks to bring IT under control and provide services that deliver business value. ITIL V3 sums up perfectly what we in IT need to deliver **"Value to customers in terms of outcomes they want to achieve without the ownership of specific costs and risks."**

Unfortunately MANY ITSM improvement programs fail, causing wasted costs and increased business risks. Many fail because of resistance to change. If we are to finally remove these wasted costs and risks and deliver real value with the frameworks it is important we identify these types of resistance so that we can learn to address them.

We have surveyed 250 ITIL practitioners who have together been involved in literally 100's of ITSM improvement projects to identify the top types of resistance. We used the [ABC of ICT card set](#) and asked the practitioners to choose the top 3 types of resistance they most often encounter.

We also started discussions on a number of ITIL LinkedIn groups and again the topic of resistance led to huge response from all over the world. The quality of the analyses and cases were impressive. We summarized the results below.

The Top 10....

- 1. No management commitment**
Managers giving 'lip' service to the importance of ITIL, or managers not 'Walking the talk'. Managers who don't address the issues of 'Saying Yes, but meaning No'. Managers who withhold or withdraw resources. Managers who become frustrated at the lack of results and withdraw commitment. It is clear from the LinkedIn discussions that management commitment needs to be consciously addressed and fed with quick wins and progress to ensure they remain committed. *The feedback from the LinkedIn discussions around this subject drove this to the number 1 position.*
- 2. Saying 'Yes', but meaning 'No'**
People promise to deliver new procedures or designs and fail to do so, other work is more important. Or in live operation people say they will follow a procedure or update a tool but don't.....

3. **ITIL Never work here**

A general resistance to changing the way people work. A lack of belief that ITIL is necessary or it will make a difference. Often people are not told or convinced of the need to change, or there is a denial that change is necessary. Once people are confronted with the fact that ITIL will happen the resistance is centered around lack of time or resources. The pressure of existing workload demands and perceived lack of staff become even more strained because of ITIL demands, causing increased frustration and resistance.

4. **Plan, Do, Stop.....No continual improvement focus**

Too often ITIL projects are simply that! Projects. The results are not embedded into a continual improvement cycle to ensure as business needs change or new IT solutions are deployed that ITSM remains aligned and that processes continue to deliver value and protect against escalating costs and risks.

5. **ITIL is the objective not what it should achieve**

Very often we communicate to the organization 'what' will happen but not 'Why'. ITIL is the goal not what we want to achieve using it. 'Other people are adopting ITIL we should too....', 'We are going to 'implement' ITIL.....', 'That is what it says in the book!...'. Often ITIL initiatives are too large or too complex and are not 'fit for purpose'. People try 'implementing' too much too fast, setting unrealistic ambitions and goals.

6. **IT thinks it doesn't need to understand the business to make a business case**

A survey using the ABC cards to identify the top ABC within IT organizations reveals number 1 'IT has too little understanding of business impact and priority'. Partly this is compounded by the fact that IT is still too 'internally focused'. Often there is a business case or set of metrics and measures however they are generally 'internally focused' and have too little customer or service focus. There is no real relationship with business 'value', 'outcomes', 'costs' and 'risks'. IT may argue that the measures do.....go and ask the BUSINESS if they agree that these are indeed the measures, value and outcomes they require.

7. **Never mind about following procedures just do what we normally do**

People do not like to change. If they see no reason or value they may resist. If there is too little management commitment this type of resistance will rapidly grow. This type of resistance can be displayed at all levels including the business and users if they perceive ITIL as a barrier.

8. **Unable to specify the VALUE required by the business**

We still do not fully understand the Value and outcomes we need to achieve using ITIL. 70% of ITIL initiatives are still unable to measure or demonstrate value. IT is not seen as an added value partner and does not know how to gain the trust of the business. Whenever we ask at an ITIL conference who knows what the definition of a Service is according to ITIL less than 5% of the hands go up.....although 90% are busy 'implementing' ITIL. The question is 'what are they hoping to achieve with ITIL?'

9. **Throwing (ITIL) solutions over the wall and HOPING that people will follow them**

Despite the more than 15 years of ITIL, the training and certification offerings and the annual itSMF conferences with the 100's of presentations and cases we still do not know how to adopt and apply ITIL. We still fail to engage and involve people in designing their own processes and procedures. We still think we can 'implement' or 'install' ITIL. In the 'ABC of ICT - An Introduction' industry experts shared their tips

and approaches. These have been summarized in our article ['What the experts say'](#) to help people identify how to successfully adopt and apply ITIL.....The question is does anybody feel responsible for reading them and doing something with them.....or will most people adopt the number 5 resistance characteristic 'Not my responsibility'.

10. **Everything has the highest priority according to the users**

Is it any wonder! If we have spent more than 15 years 'playing with ITIL' and most companies do not understand business impact and priority or the value they expect to deliver to the business using ITIL.

We will be conducting a survey of more than 1000 international IT practitioners and users of ITIL to gain a more detailed and accurate set of findings. These will be shared with the whole ITSM community. Hopefully the training companies and consulting companies will translate the findings into solutions so that we can manage the costs and risks and finally start delivering value.

Who has successfully overcome these types of resistance? Tell us what YOU did to overcome these so that we can share them with the community. If you are just embarking on your ITSM improvement program be aware of these. Ensure YOUR consulting or training provider explains how they will help address these types of resistance.

If you are a training company use these and reference them in your training and help people recognize them and overcome them.

To receive the complete set of resistance items from the LinkedIn discussions, contact us at info@abcatwork.nl.