



## 20 answers to the challenge: Describe "IT Service Management" in 140 characters - or less...

When I posted a question in one of the popular ITSM LinkedIn groups, a wide variety of answers was provided. This was the question:

**CHALLENGE: Describe "IT Service Management" in 140 characters - or less.**

As Einstein said: *"If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough."*  
IT Service Management is a very young discipline, but can we pin it down to no more than 140 characters to get the ultimate ITSM tweet?

The first 20 answers provided a wide variety of styles and definitions, emphasizing different aspects of the topic.

ITSM was defined as a lot of things, including:

- a base line
- a framework
- a method
- a set of capabilities
- a structured approach
- adoption of best practice frameworks, methods and standards
- an activity
- the application of concepts and methods
- art and techniques
- comprehensive quality management
- a discipline
- improvement
- management of...
- an opportunity
- providing value
- a practice

14 out of 20 used the word **customer** or **business** (or 'others') in their definition.

But what does ITSM bring you? The answers again varied heavily. According to the definitions provided, ITSM:

- helps you to get organized
- enables alignment
- manages the expectations, interactions and experiences of customer using services
- enables professional behaviour, ensuring outcomes
- provides value to the customers
- deploys and utilizes IT resources for business goals
- delivers IT services to the business



- providing information systems as a service
- facilitates outcomes on a cost effective and risk managed basis
- provides IT services
- plans, designs, builds, delivers, improves and retires services as required
- oversees the lifecycle of actions so that they are delivered as required
- provides customer focus improvements
- manages the risks, costs and delivery of value for Customers' business outcomes
- ensures the agreed quality of live IT services
- refines the offered/availed IT Services
- provides value to the business by providing IT services to them in a structured manner
- ensures that customer services support business objectives
- provides a holistic view on service lifecycle with focus on customer value.

There also were a few more abstract deliverables that were mentioned, like ITSM:

- strikes a balance between value, cost, risk and profits
- keeps momentum going

It obviously is clear that ITSM at least relates directly to the value delivered to a customer or his equivalent, the business. But it also is clear that there is no widely accepted understanding of what you actually need to do to get to that. The focus of the activities that a service provider needs to work on is very different, as the various verbs used in the definitions show. These verbs range from 'help', 'enable' and 'facilitate', through 'oversee' and 'refine', up to 'deliver', 'deploy', 'provide' and 'manage'.

In terms of a pure definitions, the words IT, service and management may not be used in the definition of IT Service Management, to avoid circular reasoning. Obviously, the members of this large LinkedIn group tried to find other words for 'management' (although not all of them succeeded). The big question of course then is: "what is management".

The Ultimate Dictionary to IT Service Management (to be published later this year) says "**The coordinated activities to direct and control an organization, a system, or a process**".

So we could apply that to an IT service. The Dictionary says: "**A supported information system provided to one or more customers by an IT service provider**".

But what is an information system? The Dictionary: "**Coherent data processing system for the control or support of information for one or more business processes, containing personnel, processes, documentation, and information technology**".

Oops - that tends to be slightly circular, since it uses the term 'system'. But luckily the Dictionary provides a definition for 'system': "**Object, or collection of associated objects which together provide a specified functionality**".

There are many requirements, ideally agreed with customers, about what this 'IT service' should do. So, if I want to shorten this as much as possible, an IT service would be "**supported functioning functionality**".



And IT Service Management could be "**The coordinated activities to direct and control the delivery of supported functioning functionality to a customer**" (*118 characters*)

Which means that ITSM is *not* application management or database management, *not* system management or network management, *not* human resource management, *not* facility management, and *not* document management. It only concerns directing and controlling these activities.

Think about the consequences....

[partially based on: "The ISM Method (Integrated Service Management), past, present and future of IT service management")]