



Alternatives to ITIL: what are they and how should they be managed

This lazy Sunday afternoon I was drawn into a discussion in a LinkedIn group, where John Gibert asked what would happen if ITIL indeed would be [sold](#).

John - being a member of the [ITIL Advisory Group](#) - started with some criticism on the way ITIL v3 was developed. He was not alone in that criticism. I remember Ivor Evans was quite critical too, and I think I've done a bit myself. The problem was that the project - as usual - was caught by the big vendors, and their aim is maximizing the complexity instead of giving away solutions. After all, their business models are not served by a real DIY best practice solution. So, in fact, *the battle was lost before it began*.

Another big problem (and a result of the statement above) was **the incredible lack of architecture** applied in the development of ITIL v3.

Edward Williams suggested to look at the dictionaries were developed by lexicographers: creating a "new solution" by sending out "people" to find and create that solution. I don't think that would have a chance of success. Who would enable that? It would demand quite a lot of money to get that going. Solutions based on complete voluntary mechanisms are very very rare. Perhaps Wikipedia could be called a success, but I'm sure many won't even agree to that. If you would want to go for one cover-it-all solution, it would require quite a lot of resources and funding. I don't see any party covering that.

Peter Gerritsen made an excellent point when he commented that "*no collection of best practice will be able to always please everybody*", and he mentioned two alternative flavors that currently attract attention: USMBoK and the ISM Method. I'd like to add COBIT to that shortlist.

All in all, I think it's best for the world to indeed have **a choice**, and the 'better' solutions should then be put in the hands of a management organization that preserves an **open licensing system** (as Richard Pemberton suggested), so we can all benefit.

Evolution taught me that new alternatives simply **need** to be developed, to test them, to challenge the existing reality, to see whether they can stand out and bring real value. Once that is proven, I would support handing them over to independent organizations. *But until that point, they need to be managed by the people that had the guts to invest in these alternatives* - that's where they should stay until they have gained enough momentum.

This means that Ian Clayton should go on managing his [USMBOK](#) to prove he's adding value, more than the existing offerings in the market. And that's why my team will go on developing the [ISM Method](#), until the same thing happens. And we should also keep an eye on the [COBIT](#) alternative: although COBIT is stronger in governance than in management, it still offers an alternative.

Now, if we were to continue the search for better solutions, it would be great if we could find **a common blueprint** for all these developments, to express their position and the area where they add their value. In fact, most of the listed alternatives are rather *complementary*. They were developed from very different viewpoints and they have very different 'powers'. So - before we would spend effort on comparing the available

alternatives and lose ourselves in cross-references, we might just have to look into **the underlying architecture**, the common blueprint of "information support".

I've spent some time studying this specific question, and the result was gathered in one 'ancient' article (mid nineties) and two more recent articles that we had to write in addition. Perhaps we could start there. If you agree to such an approach, try reading the following:

1. the KPMG model of value-based 'maturity'
2. the modeling of the information management domain in the SAME model
3. the difference between processes and functions (one of ITIL's major flaws) as described in the ITSM Global best Practices Vol. I

All three are [free downloads](#) at the ISM Portal.

I guess some other 'key' articles would need to be added to these, to get it going. Suggestions would be very welcome.

The discussion can be continued in the [LinkedIn group](#), or - if you can't get access - right here.