

## An INTERVIEW with Jan van Bon

16 08 2007

The IT Service Management Library is now being managed by itSMF International, and its chief editor for the next four years is Jan van Bon. In this profile, we get to know about the work that Jan performs and the challenges he faces as ITIL continues to spread further around the globe.

After completing a degree in biomathematics, Jan van Bon worked as an academic researcher and then entered the professional field of IT in the late 1980's. His work in IT was concentrated on managing end-to-end services and processes in large data centre and network environments. From 1990 onwards, he was constantly involved in the implementation of process-oriented working methods in IT service organizations.

Jan's ITIL Service Manager's certificate (1992) was one of the first in the Netherlands and UK, with a two-digit number. In 1994 he was one of the initiators of the Dutch itSMF chapter, being the secretary of the board for a number of years. In 1994 he also was part of the team that developed ITIL Essentials, now known as ITIL Foundation. Since 1996 he has constantly been working for the itSMF-NL chapter. He is involved in several innovative projects and activities of itSMF-NL and others, and he represents the Netherlands in IPESC, the itSMF International Publication Committee, in which he has been a driving force since its initiation.

Apart from managing large numbers of publications he advises small and large organisations in quality improvement projects, and is a regular trainer in issues related to IT service management and IT governance.

### **Please explain the role that you have taken and its relevance to the service management community.**

The role of chief editor of the ITSM Library is linking the operational team (editors, publisher) and the owner (itSMF International). The role oversees the entire Library, and concentrates on planning and control issues. It requires a broad overview of the field of ITSM, and a keen eye for innovation. Its relevance is clear: the ITSM Library is set up to cover existing and arising best practice. It has provided our members with easy-to-read introductions to complex frameworks, while also bringing relevant but less familiar frameworks to the attention of our readers.

The role of chief editor is directly related to these activities: what are the needs of our readers, and what relevant material is available in the market, at universities, with companies, etc. In fact it could be seen as the liaison between knowledge demand and knowledge supply for the field of IT Service Management.

### **What is the significance of the ITSM Library transfer to International?**

The Library was initially developed as a local chapter initiative, but over the years other chapters increasingly adopted it. Some of the most successful publications

# SERVICEtalk

The Journal of the *it* Service Management Forum

were produced in 13 languages. This has transformed the Library into globally accepted resource. And since itSMF International is the only itSMF element with a global character, the move to itSMF International was a very natural one. The board of the Dutch chapter understood this and agreed to the migration. And since local chapters can still publish in the ITSM Library, there was in fact nothing lost for the Dutch.

But there is another major value involved with this migration. If you look at other global membership organisations, you'll see that they all produce publications on topics that are of interest to their members - they all develop their own intellectual property, which makes them independent from third parties. Some of them, like ISACA, HDI, IIA, IEEE, have developed huge libraries. But so far this has not been the case with the itSMF International. Being a very young organisation, itSMF International was still struggling with its primary operational functions. The migration of the Library enables it to take a giant leap in terms of providing added value to the members and establishing independence. The Library - which can be used by all local chapters - enables International to realise its primary objective: "the exchange and sharing of experiences which will assist organisations to manage their IT services in accordance with good practices and standards".

## **What will your immediate, and future, challenges be?**

The migration has confirmed the global position of the Library, and - as a consequence - the governance of the Library needs to reflect this. With the help of IPESC, the international Publications Committee, I'm working on a new editorial board that takes responsibility for the further development of the Library. A large number of titles that were in progress were involved in the migration. This is the short term challenge: guide these new titles through their development phases, and create added value on topics like Implementing Metrics, Business Information Management, Implementing ISO 20000, Security Management, The RFP for Outsourcing, Practitioner Support and Restore, etc. All of these will offer very practical guidance on tasks that our members have to focus on at a day-by-day base.

The longer-term challenge is related to the further development of the involvement of local chapters; itSMF International can now provide chapters with the operational support for publishing their contributions to documented best practices. This should make publishing a lot easier for chapters that don't have the infrastructure for publishing themselves.

The overarching challenge is this: "How do we get the best practices available for our readers?" There is a vast reservoir of best practice guidance available in the ITSM sector. Most of this guidance is in the hands of vendors, specifically consultants. The fact that they've repeatedly serviced their customers on the same topic has given them the advantage of recognising the best approach for the job. But at the same time this guidance is their set of crown jewels. So the real challenge in fact is this: "How do I persuade them to share their assets with the readers of the ITSM Library?" I'm very happy to say that I see more and more colleagues who are willing to share. It's a sign of commoditisation of certain services. And if we can just find the most mature service providers to share their assets on behalf of those that come behind, we can be of immense value to this industry.

# SERVICEtalk

The Journal of the *it* Service Management Forum

## **How has the service management industry changed in recent years? Has it changed for the better?**

First of all, there is not just 'one service management industry'. The maturity of local markets differs tremendously. This is partially due to cultural aspects: some countries could easily adopt a customer-centric and process-based approach. Others have had a strong focus on products, or on hierarchy, and have ignored these practices for many years. Globalisation now puts a stop to that. The basic requirements of standardised communication, standardised procedures, and a standardised interpretation of the concept of 'service quality', has made clear that we need at least some kind of common understanding of the IT services market. This is a very positive change. I now talk with Asian, European, and American colleagues, and we can at least understand each other. Just look back ten years in time, and you'll see the difference - it will be huge.

Furthermore, IT services have been commoditised to a large extent lately. New service strategies (shared service centres, ASP, SaaS) are increasingly accepted in the market. IT service providers have matured - causing a shift in focus from the technology domain to the information management domain. This widens the scope of what we call IT service management - we may call it information support in the end.

## **What do you do to relax away from the industry?**

I've got three kids who are still going to school which keeps me busy, as you will understand. And when I'm really off from work, I tend to spend some of my time in game keeping, trying to balance the forces of nature in my direct environment. And sometimes, believe it or not, I just grab a book.