

# HOW TO GET STARTED with **ITIL**

The Ultimate Tips Guide





So, you want to get started with ITIL?

Well, you've come to the right place. In this eBook, I'll tell you as much as I can about how best to approach it, including how **ITIL 4** has seriously upped ITIL's game.

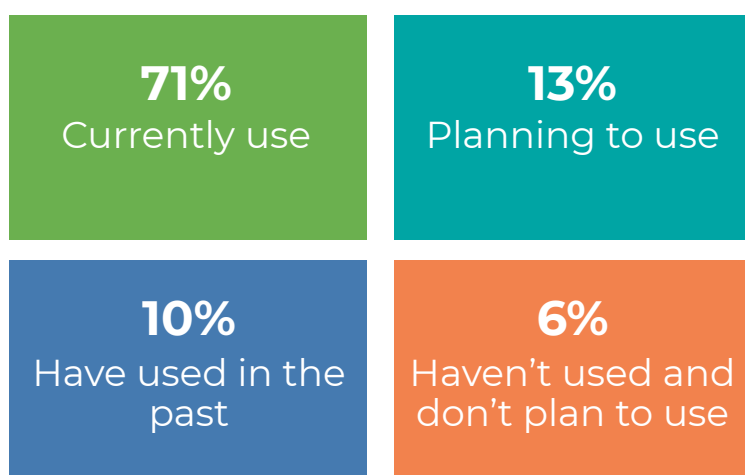
Let's start with what ITIL is.

## What's ITIL and who's using it?

ITIL is the most popular IT service management (ITSM) best practice framework in the world.

ITSM, quite simply, is an approach to IT service delivery and support – a proven way to improve business performance through better IT delivery.

As to the level of its popularity, the most recent **HDI** “*Technical Support Practices & Salary Report*” offers up the following ITIL adoption levels for IT support teams in North America:



The level of adoption does differ around the world though, with this not only dependent on geography, but also other factors such as organizational size, industry, and IT maturity level.

It's also worth noting that while ITIL offers a wide range of ITSM best practices, most organizations will only use a part of it. And that is completely okay, because **ITIL is designed to be “adopted and adapted” as needed** – because it's best practice ITSM guidance, not an industry standard that needs to be complied with.



## The high-level benefits of, and creating the business case for, ITIL

There are many benefits available from ITIL adoption, with these in the main stemming from the consistent use of ITIL's best-practice ways of working. These benefits include:

- **Reduced operational costs** – thanks to consistent, best practice processes that efficiently deliver desired outcomes.
- **Improved quality of service** – because ITIL-espoused capabilities facilitate higher IT service availability levels and fewer delays and errors.
- **Increased customer satisfaction** – with proven IT service delivery and support capabilities creating a better customer/employee experience.
- **Improved governance and risk management** – thanks to more formal practices, employed controls, and the auditability ITSM tools bring.
- **Increased speed of change including the delivery for new IT services** – ITIL best practice allows your organization to be more agile, moving more quickly while also lowering risk.
- **Increased competitive advantage through better IT enablement** – where your IT is a differentiator in your market.



Many of these benefits can be leveraged in creating the business case for ITIL adoption. For example, calculating the IT-level labor savings of more efficient IT incident and request handling – based on time saved and the hourly labor rate. The business-level saving can also be included in your business case if it's simple enough for you to identify them – for instance, avoiding the losses associated with previous major incidents (which ITIL will both help to shorten and reduce in volumes). This is also amplified when the **automation** and **service orchestration** capabilities of ITSM tools, such as **SysAid**, are employed.

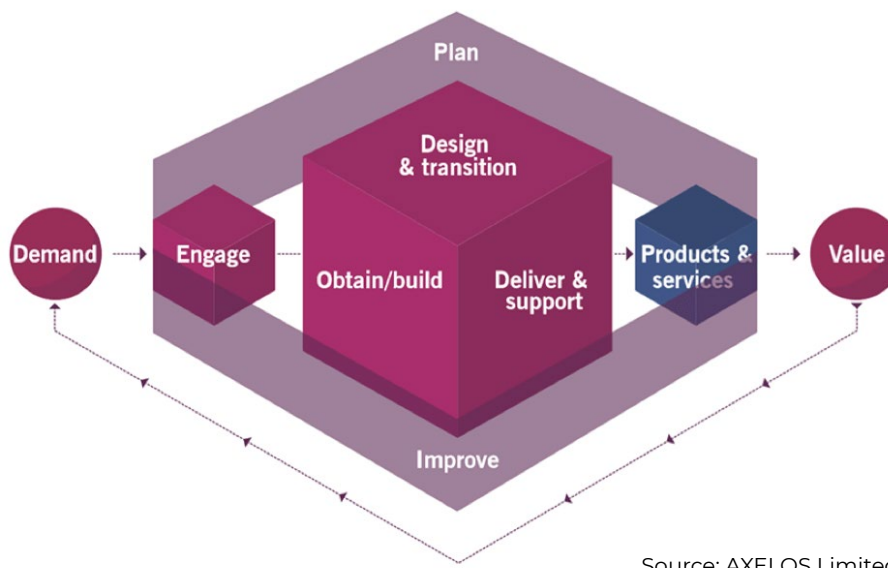
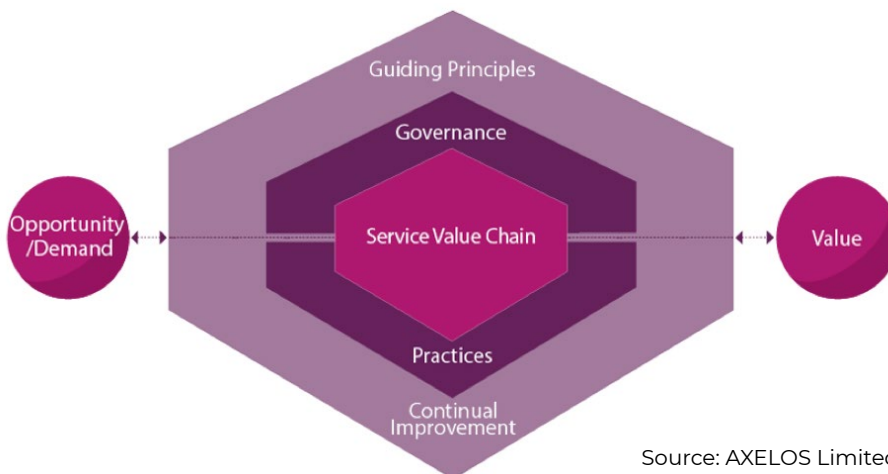
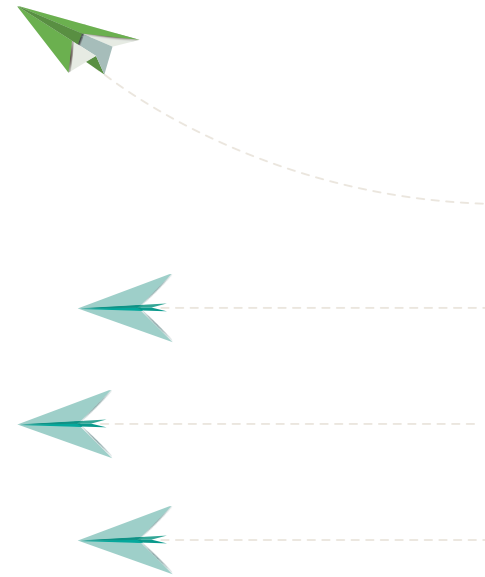
Importantly, though, it's best not to create and put forward a generic “business case for ITIL” but rather a business case to improve something important to the organization, with ITIL adoption the “means” rather than the “end.” For example, a business case that's focused on higher levels of customer retention (thanks to the benefits of ITIL adoption) is likely to be far better received than one that proposes the introduction of problem management, say, and the benefits this brings to incident management.

# Key changes in ITIL 4

Much of the freely available ITIL content currently available online relates to the previous version of ITIL – ITIL v3 2011 Edition. However, it's important to be aware that in early 2019, a new version was released – ITIL 4 – to better reflect the changing needs of, and pressures on, IT service delivery and support. For example, to deal with cloud management, digital transformation, and the growing importance of employee experience.

Some of the key changes that you need to be aware of between ITIL v3 and ITIL 4 include that:

- Value creation, or co-creation, is now front-and-center in ITIL 4 – with a focus on business value not just IT value.
- ITIL has now moved beyond ITSM to talk in *service management* terms, in recognition of ITIL's additional use cases outside of IT.
- A new ITIL service value system (SVS) has been introduced, with the ITIL service value chain at its center (for more information, see: [ITIL 4 Value System, Value Chain, Value Stream: What's the Difference?](#))



- There are a number of new or changed elements within the SVS:
  - ✓ 34 ITIL 4 management practices versus ITIL v3's 26 processes (see: [ITIL 4 Practices – What's New and Changed](#)).
  - ✓ ITIL's seven guiding principles (see: [The 7 Guiding Principles of ITIL 4: Practical Advice to Help You Make Decisions](#)).
  - ✓ ITIL v3's continual service improvement (CSI) is now called continual improvement in ITIL 4 (see: [5 Tips for Adopting ITIL 4's Continual Improvement Management Practice](#)).

For even more information, please see: [Everything You Officially Need to Know about ITIL 4](#).

These changes don't mean that all of the ITIL v3 content that you can find online is no longer valuable, simply that you'll probably need to take into consideration the key changes made in ITIL 4, to get the most out of your investment in ITIL.

So, with those key ITIL 4 changes now covered, it's time to look at how you can best approach getting started with ITIL.

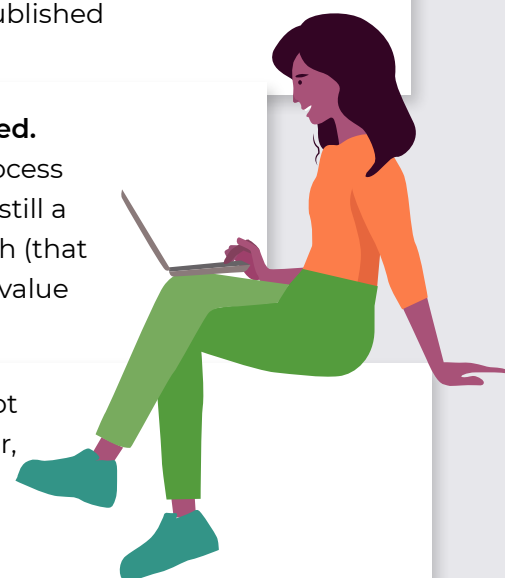
## 10 top tips when planning for ITIL adoption

When adopting ITIL, there's a need to consider and address the following 10 planning tips:

**1** **Ensure that everyone involved knows what ITIL is and isn't.** For instance, that it's best practice guidance, not a standard to be complied with. Also, that there have been different versions published across the last 30 years.

**2** **Get on the same page as to which ITIL version will be used.** While much of the core IT service delivery and support process content has run through from ITIL v2 in particular, there's still a need for everyone to be thinking about the same approach (that sits above the ITIL processes). For instance, ITIL 4's service value chain is different from ITIL v3's service lifecycle approach.

**3** **Understand that ITIL is more than just ITSM processes.** It's not just incident management, problem management, etc. Rather, it's an *approach* to delivering better business outcomes, with a need to "use" ITIL for a bigger purpose rather than simply "doing" ITIL.



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**Be aware that ITIL is not the only source of ITSM best practice.** And that other best practice approaches such as [COBIT](#), [ISO/IEC 20000](#), [IT4IT](#), and [VeriSM](#) can be blended with ITIL to create exactly what your organization needs for IT service delivery and support.

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**Understand that a new ITSM tool will not simply deliver ITIL.** It'll help, but ITIL adoption requires people, process, and technology change (and it's why ITIL 4 has moved from *processes* to *practices*).

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**Realize that ITIL adoption is a journey, not a one-time project.** Clichéd I know but ITIL is very much about continual improvement and as such your organization will always be adopting it. Many organizations choose to initially take a phased adoption approach to ITIL too (rather than a “big bang” approach).

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**Make ITIL part of your overriding strategy and vision for IT and business improvement.** Don't make ITIL adoption the strategy. Instead, make it part of a higher-level strategy (or multiple strategies) – similar to the aforementioned approach to business case creation.

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**Create a formal business case for ITIL adoption (or for the initiative that ITIL adoption supports).** There's a need to sell the benefits of ITIL to key business stakeholders including those who will be using it. Importantly, this shouldn't be selling incident management, say, as a best practice, it should be selling the better business outcomes it delivers.

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**Set out a realistic delivery timeframe.** ITIL adoption usually takes longer than people expect. In particular, because it usually involves culture change alongside the new ways of working. It's worth noting that it takes longer than the time it takes to implement the new ITSM tool that's probably being introduced at the same time.

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**Plan now for your future ITIL adoption phases.** This might be the later adoption of additional ITIL practices – perhaps your phase two and phase three projects. This requires “hooks” being in place in the first-phase capabilities, such as incident management, so they'll seamlessly work with later additions from phase two or three, such as problem management or service configuration management. Or it could be the ambition to extend ITIL, and ITSM tool use, out to other lines of business such as human resources (HR) and facilities.



These 10 tips are very much focused on lining everything up ready for the introduction of ITIL within your organization. Now we need to look at what needs to happen next.

# 10 top tips for adopting ITIL

When adopting ITIL, there's a need to consider and address the following 10 "implementation" tips:

- 1 It's best not to label your ITIL adoption activities as an "implementation."** To do so reinforces the idea that ITIL is all about process or technology implementation. Instead, stick with the phrase "ITIL adoption" as part of an overriding strategy or business improvement initiative.
- 2 Don't try to do too much too soon** (similar to #9 in the planning tips). Be conscious of your organization's capability and capacity limitations when driving the change. Plus, remember that while ITIL adoption is all about improvement, improvement doesn't need to deliver "perfect" at the first attempt. It's important to ensure that you get the basics right first.
- 3 Employ organizational change management tools and techniques.** As a minimum, ensure that different sets of business stakeholders understand the "what's in it for me?" Interestingly, organizational change management is now one of ITIL 4's 34 management practices (see: [What's Organizational Change Management and Why Should ITSM Pros Be Bothered?](#)).
- 4 Don't assume that people with ITIL qualifications are qualified for ITIL "in real life."** Whether these are your existing staff or new employees, simply holding an ITIL certificate might not be enough. Instead, look for people with the right personal skills and capabilities for the different ITIL-espoused roles.
- 5 Be careful about how ITSM consultants are employed.** There are lots of very experienced ITSM consultants available to help with your ITIL adoption, but it's important to get the greatest possible value from your spend on them (if used). Not only is this ensuring that their time is not wasted on low-value tasks, it's also ensuring that there's sufficient knowledge transfer over to your team members before the consultants end their time with your organization.



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**Create measurements and baselines that will demonstrate progress.**

Whether this is process improvement or value-based, it's hard to demonstrate what has been achieved without suitable metrics and an agreed starting point to measure improvement against.

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**Don't overly focus on "the easy stuff."** ITIL 4 offers up 34 management practices. Before this, ITIL v3 offered 26 best practice processes. So, there's a lot of guidance available to your organization that goes beyond the simpler practices such as incident management. It underserves your organization to focus all your attention on these reactive capabilities rather than also investing your improvement resource in some of the more proactive ITIL 4 practices such as problem management or IT asset management.

8

**Ensure that your key performance indicators (KPIs) for each practice are customer-centric.**

Given the historical focus on ITIL processes over outcomes, it's easy for organizations to end up with very operational metrics – that measure things like "How many?" or "How quickly?" I see this a lot with IT service desks in particular. So, please ensure that you also have performance measures that look from the customer's or end user's perspective, for instance, employee experience metrics or eXperience level agreements (XLAs). (For more information, see: [Defining Metrics for the Service Desk.](#))

9

**Free up your best people to help with your ITIL adoption.** While the team you assemble to deliver the change might be great at managing project-type activities, you'll also need your subject matter experts (SMEs) and other experienced staff to be involved. After all, when the assembled team walks away once their work is done, your staff are the ones that'll need to embrace and work with whatever is delivered.

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**Ensure that the "enabling" ITIL 4 practices aren't left for later or ignored.** Some ITIL practices will be needed to support multiple other adopted practices. For instance, continual improvement, knowledge management, and perhaps service financial management (just to name a few) are ITIL 4 practices that enable and improve upon several of the more operational practices such as incident management.







## Next steps

This eBook has covered a lot of ground. Hopefully, you've found my tips helpful – those related to the need for ITIL adoption and those on how best to get started.

If you'd like to discuss how SysAid's ITSM solution can support your ITIL adoption journey, let's get you set up right away on a [1:1 demo](#) with one of our product experts.

[I'd love a personal demo](#)



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