

Understanding the ITIL Language

35 Key Terms and Definitions

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projects succeed,
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Do you Speak ITIL?

Ingrained within any successful IT organization is an ability to understand unique languages. This can range from specific programming syntax and logic to generally accepted jargon that would only be familiar within a specific team. However, even with a predisposition to find order in what outside observers see as chaos, IT professionals can have a tendency to reject the introduction of new language, or terminology. In an odd way, this rejection of the new runs counter to the very foundation that has made IT the single, most relied upon asset within an organization.

Taking a step back and looking at this rejection objectively, we can start to understand that much of this is rooted in previous attempts at change being incomplete, or haphazard. Often IT team members are presented with buzzwords aimed at driving a new initiative that is making the current blog and media circuits. For individuals that derive success through a scientific and direct approach to solving issues, they can quickly spot the rouse, build barriers, and establish a front against the initiative.

Here at The ITSM Lens, we want to see projects succeed, especially for teams looking to implement the best practices found in ITIL. We also want teams to be onboard, and have tools, not marketing hype. Thus, we have created a custom guide to the core language of ITIL. Written specifically with IT teams in mind, we have taken what can be hundreds of definitions, and culled it into a core group of thirty-five key terms. We have then defined each term using real world applications and understanding that can be used in anything from an IT Service Management initiative to general IT training for the modern IT organization.

In contrast to simply picking key words that will work well in a meeting, we have focused our list on terms that will have an impact and application in common processes. Important to keep in mind is the fact that while much of what is

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contained in this list is easy to understand, it is very much its own language, and as such will take time to bring your team up to speed. Change is good for teams though, and while it may prove challenging at first. The rewards are well worth the temporary difficulties you might experience.

35 ITIL Terms You Should Know

The terms below have been taken directly from ITIL. However, we've taken a more open approach to defining them, and have done so with the beginning IT Service Management initiative in mind. Reading through the list once should get you thinking about how your organization can begin to adapt and implement some of the core ideas to which these terms relate.

Service Asset and Configuration

- 1. Asset Management** – is the process of ensuring assets are ready and available to meet the service expectations of the organization, as well as keeping track of what the asset is, who is using the asset, as well as how, when, and where it is being used. Assets can range from infrastructure items like buildings, laptops, and servers to non-physical items like process documentation and domain registration.
- 2. Asset** – any resource or function that the organization has and is used to add value or conduct business.
- 3. Configuration Management** – the process of ensuring that information about each asset is configured and maintained to the organizations specifications. It is important to remember that configuration is not exclusive to technology. Non-tech items, for example a service contract or other types of documentation, can have components that can be configured as well.

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4. **Configuration Item** – a component (most commonly an asset) that is stored in a record within the Configuration Management Database (CMDB), and indicates an item which provides, or contributes to the provision of, services for the business. Configuration Items are maintained through Configuration and Asset Management.
5. **CI Type** – the distinguishing element of a configuration item. Typically this is represented by broad-based categories such as hardware, software, documentation, intellectual property, etc.
6. **Component CI** – in cases where there are multiple parts to a configuration item, the Component CI will be used to represent the individual pieces. For example, hard drives and memory for the standard work station within the organization.
7. **Configuration** – can represent either the group of items and settings that contribute to a single service/function, or the individual settings for a single, particular item.
8. **Configuration Baseline** – the agreed upon configuration for an item which any change or future versions will be compared back to. For example, the specific software and hardware each laptop includes.
9. **Configuration Control** – a component of configuration management which ensures that adding, editing, or removing configuration items, follows a specific process.
10. **Configuration Management Database (CMDB)** – the repository for assets (configuration items). It includes details of each item, and stores the history of any changes made. The CMDB is closely tied to Changes and Change Management.

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Change Management

- 11. Change Management** – the end-to-end process of ensuring that changes to functionality and services provided by IT are evaluated for scope and effect on the organization. Directly tied to understanding and maintaining the state of assets and their corresponding configuration.
- 12. Change** – the result of adding, editing, or removing anything and everything related to IT and the delivery of services to the organization.
- 13. Request for Change (RFC)** – a formal/official request to alter an item from its current state. It is typically recorded by paper or electronic means, includes the proposed change details, and must be approved by an individual with the proper Change Authority.
- 14. Change Authority** – specifically this is the power to approve change. This power can be given over specific types of changes and/or assets.
- 15. Change Advisory Board (CAB)** – Typically this group represents a selection of individuals from across the business and within IT. The CAB should include both technical and non-technical members of the organization, and may include direct customers. Together, this group will review changes that may have a wide scope or deep impact on the availability of a service, or set of services. In addition, this group will review the RFC, provide feedback, make necessary recommendations for the change, approve or disapprove the change, and set the schedule/timing for the change.
- 16. Change History** – the historical record of the change which is typically recorded in the CMDB and can aid in determining which change may have created a problem.

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17. Change Schedule – a customer-facing document, produced by IT which identifies the implementation times of any proposed changes, as well as any potential impact on the business.

18. Emergency Change – a change which is the result of an unexpected or unplanned incident or issue. For example, a major virus that attacks a recently discovered web browser vulnerability, but has a corresponding patch available now.

Service Desk

19. Incident Management – the end-to-end process behind which incidents received by the IT organization are received, evaluated, and then resolved.

20. Incident – an issue which corresponds to a disruption in a particular service or function provided to the business. For example, a loss in network connectivity or the failure of a server component.

21. Incident Record – the record containing detailed information about the cause and eventual resolution of an incident.

22. Knowledge Management – the process for collecting, storing, and sharing information that will be useful in providing and maintaining services for the business.

23. Known Error Database (KEDB) – this database serves as a system of record for any reported incidents or problems and is typically consulted or utilized in incident, problem, and knowledge management.

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- 24. Major Incident** – indicates a serious failure or fault in the delivery of services to the business. For example the hard drive failure on a front-facing web server.
- 25. Problem** – indicates the cause of an incident (or incidents) and is typically discovered during the Incident Management process.
- 26. Problem Management** – the process for ensuring, when possible, a resolution to incidents is reached and then communicated, thus preventing future incidents.
- 27. Resolution** – the act or steps (fix) taken to solve, or work around, an incident and/or problem.

Service Catalog

- 28. Business Service Management (BSM)** – the process to ensure that a cohesive and positive relationship is maintained with the business, including regular review of the services provided, and level to which they are satisfactorily performed.
- 29. Customer-facing Service** – the set of functions IT provides directly to customers (internal or external). This can range from user account creation to delivery of computer hardware necessary in the day-to-day activities of the business.
- 30. Service Catalog** – a collection of the services offered both to customers outside of IT, as well as internal IT team members (the requests are used to fulfill other requests). Services listed will include a detailed description, as well as necessary information to complete the request. In addition this list of services tends to be a starting point for automation. This is because modern ITSM tools allow for custom form

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modification. In turn, this provides a mechanism for collecting information from the requestor without the need of human interaction. While the list of services is most often gathered together in centralized database that has a Graphical User Interface (GUI), it can be as simple as a document.

- 31. Service Catalog Management** – process for creating and maintaining the list of services provided within the service catalog.
- 32. Service Desk** – the single point of contact between a service provider and the requestor. While similar to a help desk or support desk, those would more accurately represent just a part of the whole suite of available services.
- 33. Service Level Agreement (SLA)** – An agreement between the provider of IT service, and a customer. The agreement typically includes items such as negotiated response times and service availability. It is important to note that an agreement can be reached with both internal and external customers, and in some cases both.
- 34. Service Request** – a request from a customer to perform a specific service such as installing new software, or to request access to a specific system.
- 35. Supporting Service** – these services usually pertain to functions that must be performed within the IT department, and are necessary to provide a service to the customer. For example, when a new employee starts and a laptop setup is requested by the manager, the IT team may need to order a laptop from a supplier (an internal request).