WHAT IS...?
ITIL® Direct, Plan & Improve (DPI)

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Why Direction, Planning and Improvement Matter

When multiple people are involved in business activities, coordination and collaboration are crucial. Because organizations are usually hierarchical, **direction** is often provided from the top down. Unless the objectives and actions of groups at different levels of the organization are planned and aligned, their desired outcomes are unlikely to be achieved. Even if they are achieved, poor coordination often results in waste, including missteps, restarts, and rework.

Planning creates a shared understanding of how work will be organized and managed, allowing contributors to understand their roles, and to coordinate and collaborate efficiently and effectively.

Finally, **improvement** is a critical component of any successful organization. Identifying and acting on improvement opportunities ensures that the organization will grow and remain successful and competitive over time.

Regardless of their organizational role, everyone has the authority to direct something, even if that authority is limited to personal direction. Everyone needs to plan. And everyone should be contributing to, if not leading, improvement.

ITIL® 4 Direct, Plan and Improve describes the key concepts of direction, planning, and improvement, along with related principles, methods, and techniques. This publication and the **ITIL Strategist: Direct, Plan and Improve** certification course supports anyone involved in directing or planning action based on a defined strategy and in continual improvement.

Continue reading to learn more....

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Scope of Control

Everyone has a scope of control, which is distinct from their scope of influence. A corporate leader's authority is typically defined as part of their role and acknowledged by those around them. An employee in another role may have a scope of control limited to a few direct reports. Others have scopes of control limited to themselves and their own activities.

SCOPE OF CONTROL

The area(s) or activities over which a person has the authority to direct the actions of others or define the required outcomes.

Regardless of their official scope of control, everyone can exert influence. The difference between what a person can control and what they would like to change indicates the need for creative influence. Even if the difference does not exist, it is often more effective to influence and inspire cooperation, rather than command it.

Everyone has a scope of influence that can be used to inspire cooperation.

Direction

Direction helps to create and shape an action plan. A person who directs people or things may have been given that authority formally or informally. Clear direction clarifies expected outcomes and defines the appropriate guiding principles. Good direction provides enough clarity to enable team members to proceed, while leaving enough flexibility for each of them to make a unique, creative contribution.

Mechanisms for Direction

People in leadership positions frequently direct people through mechanisms such as a vision, which is aspirational, and a mission, which is more action-oriented. Visions and missions are then supported by policies and guidelines. These mechanisms are not, however, limited to top-down leadership approaches. Anyone in an organization can provide direction by setting thoughtful objectives that are aligned with the vision and mission.

Governance is another mechanism for providing direction in an organization. It usually consists of a framework of governance structures, including boards of directors, steering committees, and audit committees. These bodies issue directives, which are then supported by controls and reporting procedures. Understanding the nature of risks that could impede progress towards objectives is a critical part of maximizing results while mitigating harm or loss. When giving direction, it is important to identify risks and, if they are threats, eliminate, avoid, or reduce them.

Vision and Mission

Direction can be received from an organization's vision and mission statements.

- **Vision** – a defined aspiration of what an organization would like to become in the future

- **Mission** – a short but complete description of the overall purpose and intentions of an organization

By articulating a vision, an organization gives its employees an image of the future and clarifies why the organization acts the way it does. Teams can then focus their efforts and creativity on achieving the defined mission.

Policies and Guidelines

Policies and guidelines are also mechanisms for direction. Policies are stronger forms of guidance, but guidelines leave more scope for creativity. Deciding which is appropriate in different contexts is typically part of the organizational governance function.

Policies direct decisions and behavior. In most organizations, failing to follow company policies results in disciplinary action, which can include termination of employment. Policies are typically implemented to avoid an undesirable outcome or to result in something desirable.

POLICY

Formally documented management expectations and intentions, used to direct decisions and activities.

People may establish policies that relate specifically to areas within their scope of control, but these must align with organization-wide policies. Policies must not conflict with one another, as it is unreasonable to ask people to follow conflicting directives.

GUIDELINE

A recommended practice that allows some discretion in its interpretation, implementation, or use.

As the name implies, guidelines guide employees as they perform activities or make decisions. They provide general recommendations on how to act in different situations or how to do something to achieve the desired results. They are sometimes used where no specific policy applies, or where the organization aims to provide assistance to people who are unsure what to do, rather than dictate behavior.

Governance

Governance is the means by which an organization is directed and controlled. Every organization is directed by a governing body: a person or group of people who are accountable at the highest level for its performance and compliance.
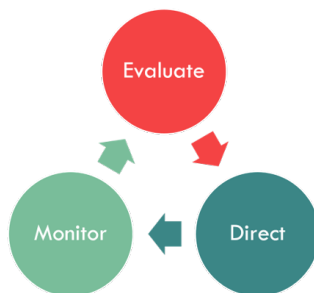
Governance includes the establishment of policies and the continual monitoring of their proper implementation by the governing body. Governance also defines the scope of control for management throughout the organization.

Organizational governance evaluates, directs, and monitors all of the organization's activities, including those of service management.

Governance, risk, and compliance (GRC) ensures that organizations are doing the right things.

There is always risk associated with an organization's activity. A **risk** is a possible event that could cause harm or loss, or make it more difficult to achieve objectives. Risk can also be defined as uncertainty of outcome and can be used in the context of measuring the probability of positive outcomes as well as negative outcomes.

Understanding risk is essential to maximizing results while minimizing harm or loss. Once risks are understood, they need to be managed, typically through the use of controls. Controls are countermeasures or safeguards that provide reasonable assurance that objectives will be achieved and undesired events will be either prevented or detected and corrected. Controls require evidence of their effectiveness.

Each control put in place in an organization must produce the desired result, without creating unintended undesirable consequences. Automating controls or building them into technology is one way to reduce the effort associated with making controls work. However, controls can fail or be circumvented. The organization must define, depending on the consequences, what degree of variation or non-compliance, if any, is acceptable for each control.

Compliance is both the act and result of ensuring that a standard or set of guidelines is followed, or that proper, consistent accounting or other practices are being employed. For governance to be effective, compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and other established policies must be ensured.
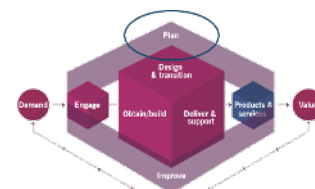
Planning

Once a direction has been established, an organization must decide how it will progress in that direction. In other words, the organization needs a plan. Plans are always important, but particularly so in large organizations because plans improve coordination. Plans also help to avoid waste and reduce risk.

Neither too much nor too little planning represents good practice. The type and extent of planning should be selected based on the type of effort being planned. Planning is useful because it gives people a clear and ordered set of actions to undertake, but plans must be continually re-evaluated and adjusted as work proceeds.

Planning is an iterative activity as well as a preparatory one.

Planning can be applied to any part of the service value system.

When it comes to planning the lifecycles of products and services, the 'plan' value chain activity is key. The outputs of the plan activity include strategic, tactical, and operational plans.

Strategic Planning

A strategy is a broad approach or course of action defined by an organization for achieving its objectives. Strategic planning is an organization's process of defining its strategy, or direction, and making decisions on allocating its resources to pursue this strategy. It may also extend to control mechanisms for guiding the implementation of the strategy. Defining an operating model is an important part of strategic planning.

Tactical Planning

Tactics are the specific methods by which a strategy is enacted. To drive efficient tactical planning, organizations typically develop standardized methods of planning projects and initiatives, sometimes using templates or frameworks. If, after a period of time, a tactic is determined to be unsuccessful in enacting a strategy, it may need to be altered or abandoned.

Operational Planning

All work at an organization's operational level is performed in service of its established objectives, and in alignment with its strategy and tactics. Depending on the environment's complexity, this may include predictable, repeatable, well-documented work, but it may also involve managing unusual situations. Either way, it is common to have agreed methods and techniques for operational activities.

Improvement

It is extremely rare for a situation to involve a real beginning, one with nothing before it. Almost every activity in an organization can be seen as an improvement activity. An **improvement** is a deliberately introduced change that results in increased value for one or more stakeholders.

Improvement relies on comparison. Something can only be improved in comparison to another state. The definition also implies that there is agreement on what constitutes 'better'. Finally, improvement means change. Without changes to some aspect of the current state, there can be no change to outcomes.

Continual improvement is key in ITIL 4 and is represented as:

- A component of the service value system
- A service value chain activity
- A practice

The continual improvement practice supports the improvement of all other practices, products, and services, and any other element of the organization's service value system. The volume of opportunities that are identified can be used as a metric to assess how well the continual improvement practice has been established within an organization.

Any improvement is a change, and change must be managed carefully. It is important to consider how changes may impact an organization's culture. Implementing individual improvement initiatives will not have the same positive impact as embedding a commitment to continual improvement into the organization's culture. In almost every case, an organization with a strong culture of continual improvement will also have a strong governance capability that allows it to allocate resources and provide the management and leadership necessary for successful improvement initiatives.

The way improvements are planned and delivered should be continually improved.
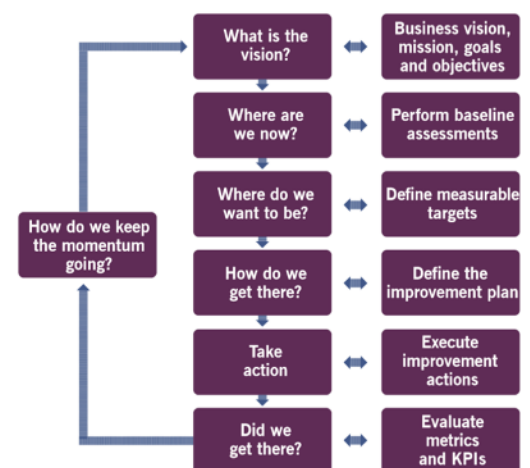
Establishing and nurturing a continual improvement culture is an aspect of the continual improvement practice and is reflected in its practice success factors. The continual improvement practice includes two practice success factors:

- Establishing and maintaining an effective approach to continual improvement
- Ensuring effective and efficient improvement across the organization

The ITIL continual improvement model is one way that organizations can establish and maintain an effective approach to continual improvement.

This model provides high-level guidance that supports improvement initiatives and increases the likelihood of their success. The model focuses on customer value and links improvement efforts to the organizational vision.

Other approaches that organizations may opt to use include the Improvement Kata and the OODA Loop.

What is the vision?	⇔	Business vision, mission, goals and objectives
Where are we now?	⇔	Perform baseline assessments
Where do we want to be?	⇔	Define measurable targets
How do we get there?	⇔	Define the improvement plan
Take action	⇔	Execute improvement actions
Did we get there?	⇔	Evaluate metrics and KPIs

How do we keep the momentum going?

Ensuring effective and efficient improvement across the organization can be achieved by establishing mechanisms that make it possible to:

- Capture and prioritize opportunities
- Hold service, product, or practice owners accountable for managing continual improvement initiatives
- Allocate resources to initiatives and ensure they are adequately funded
- Evaluate the outcomes of continual improvement initiatives

Continual Improvement Methods

There are many methods that organizations can use to support their continual improvement efforts. These include:

Assessments

Assessments are used during step 2 of the ITIL continual improvement model (Where are we now?) to measure, analyze, and understand the behaviors and performance of practices, processes, services, technology, and people. A good assessment helps to not only identify gaps and issues; it will also identify what is being done well and show how successes can be leveraged. There are a number of assessment methods that can be used (e.g., gap analysis, SWOT analysis, change readiness analysis) and it may be appropriate to use multiple assessment methods to get a clear understanding of the current state. Selecting the appropriate method involves understanding the assessment's objectives and each method's constraints.

Business Cases

A business case is a justification for the expenditure of organizational resources. It provides information about costs, benefits, options, risks, and issues. It is a decision support and planning tool that projects the likely consequences of a business action.

Business cases vary in content and structure and many organizations have specific guidelines for the type and format of analysis, particularly financial analysis, they require to support different types of business cases. As the aim is to answer the questions often asked by senior management (e.g., Why is the proposal needed?, What is the justification?), a collaborative approach that involves stakeholders can be useful when developing a business case.

Measurement and Reporting

Measurement and continual improvement are intertwined and fundamental to every aspect of IT and service management. Without measurement and analysis, improvement decisions will be made on instinct and assumptions, introducing a high level of risk. Choosing what to improve, directing activities, and validating improvement success cannot be done effectively without the information provided by measurement and reporting.

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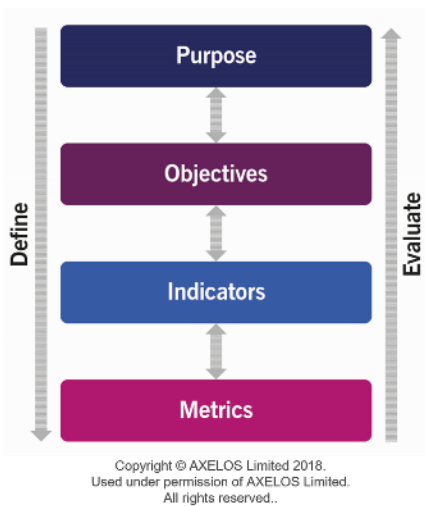
Measurements and metrics must align with higher-level requirements, including the organization's vision and mission, if they are to be used effectively to drive decision-making and improvement.

For an organization to make good decisions, it must measure the right things.

This can be done by connecting what is measured to the organization's desired outcomes and to its purpose.

Value Stream Mapping

Everything that an organization does should map, directly or indirectly, to value for the stakeholders. Value stream mapping is a method of visualizing the flow from demand or opportunity to value, and then planning how that flow can be improved. The method originated with Lean manufacturing techniques, but it applies equally well to the creation and delivery of products and services, as described in *ITIL® 4: Create, Deliver and Support*.

Value stream mapping can help to identify value-adding activities and non-value-adding activities in a value stream, while highlighting opportunities for optimization and automation. The results of value stream mapping can be used in many contexts, including writing a business case, defining a prioritized list of ways to optimize value streams and practices, and locating bottlenecks in existing practices.

Organizational Change Management

It is almost impossible to be successful in any activity without considering the human factor. The activities of direction, planning, and improvement are no exception.

Organizational change management (OCM) is concerned with the human side of change. It is a structured approach that ensures that improvements are implemented smoothly and successfully, facilitating lasting benefits.

Elements of a successful organizational change initiative include:

- Clear and relevant objectives
- Strong and committed leadership
- Willing and prepared participants
- Demonstrated value
- Sustained improvement

OCM and Direction

If an organization wishes to direct its employees to behave in a certain way, perhaps to adopt a new way of working or use new criteria for decision-making, OCM principles and methods will help to uncover and overcome resistance to those directives.

OCM and Planning

Many plans are unsuccessful because people are not committed to them. When actions that involve significant change are being planned, OCM efforts should be integrated into the plan. While it is common for organizations to consider OCM when planning programs with multiple sub-projects and broad organizational impacts, the application of OCM should not be reserved for large programs and projects. Even in routine planning at an operational level, individuals should consider the human factor and plan to address it accordingly.

OCM and Improvement

Without proper OCM, improvements cannot be achieved or sustained, because improvement requires change, and change requires people's participation and commitment.

The OCM practice is involved in improvement in two complementary ways:

- It ensures that the people involved in implementing improvement initiatives do so effectively and efficiently
- It ensures that the people impacted by changes resulting from improvement initiatives accept and adopt those changes

Each stakeholder group's contributions to improvement at each level should be understood, and the most effective methods for communicating with them should be defined. Some stakeholders may need to be involved at a very detailed level, whereas others can be involved as reviewers or approvers. The identification and management of stakeholders is a core competency associated with OCM.

Improvements invariably require people to change, which can include the way they work, their behavior, or their roles. Regardless of the scope, size, or nature of an improvement initiative, there will be an impact on people. When people understand the purpose of the change and how it will affect them and their job, and when they believe in its importance and benefits, improvement initiatives are far more likely to succeed.

Using ITIL Guidance

To get the most out of the *ITIL 4: Direct, Plan and Improve* publication, or the **ITIL Strategist: Direct, Plan and Improve** certification course, it is important to also study the ITIL practice guides. The practice guides are available online via the **PeopleCert membership program** and provide detailed, practical recommendations for all 34 practices. They also include hands-on guidance that can be applied in the context of all of the ITIL 4 publications.

Make a Difference!

Any service management related initiative will affect organizational culture. Effective communication plans, training, and clear policies and procedures are all needed to achieve the desired performance outcomes and enable collaboration between the many different people involved.

Contribute to your organization's IT service management effort by expanding your knowledge of best practices and by enthusiastically using what you learn to lead transformational and continual improvement activities.

Want to Learn More?

Training helps individuals and organizations build and maintain their capabilities. Training also provides individuals the knowledge, skills and information needed to fill their role in the organization or achieve their career goals, along with a place to test and develop the confidence to use these skills in the workplace.

The ITIL® 4 qualification scheme provides a role-based, modular approach that is comprised of qualifications focused on different aspects of ITIL best practice to various degrees of depth and detail.
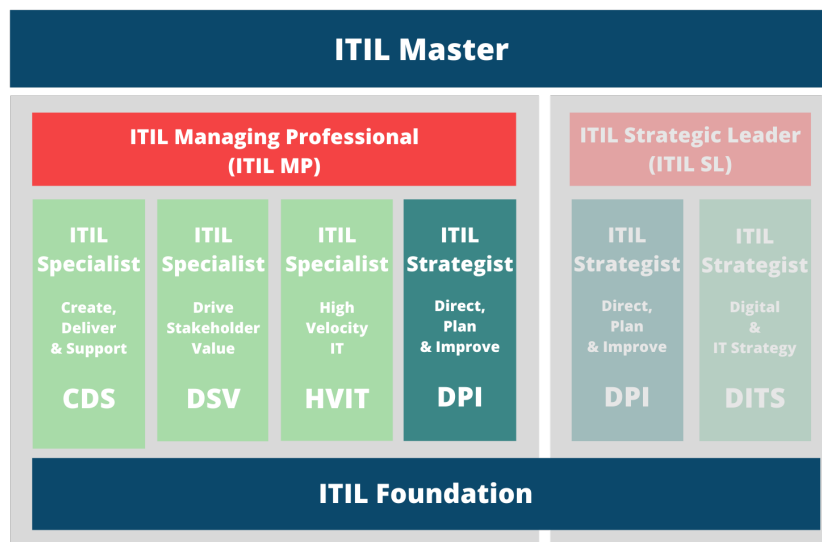
The structure of the ITIL qualification scheme offers individuals flexibility relating to the different disciplines and areas of ITIL and the ability to focus their studies on key areas of interest.

Read **WhatIs ITIL 4 Qualification Scheme**.

See ITSM Academy's individual **class options and dates** or download our **course catalog.**

Contact us to schedule time with a subject matter expert.

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ITSM Academy

We are a female owned small business, established in 2004. Our extensive catalog contains accredited and sustainable IT Service Management (ITSM) education and advice including; ITIL®, DevOps, Process Design (CPDE), Agile, Site Reliability Engineering (SRE), Value Stream Mapping (VSM) and Experience Level Agreement (XLA). Our business values are founded on trust, loyalty, professionalism and long term relationships.

...educate and inspire is not just our corporate slogan, it speaks to our core mission and goal.

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The Story of the Academy

Today, ITSM Academy is widely recognized for its expertise in multiple IT frameworks (ITSM, ITIL, Process Engineering (CPDE), DevOps, Agile Service Management, Lean) and, more importantly, how they work together. But that's not where we started.

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