ITIL 4 STRATEGIST: DIRECT, PLAN AND IMPROVE IN 1,000 WORDS

BRINGING DIGITAL AND I.T. STRATEGIES TO LIFE

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INTRODUCTION

For years, proponents of service management have promoted a service mindset in which contributors throughout the organization work to co-create value with customers.

This is laudable, but the method for achieving it has been too focused on implementing a few specific processes and tools. More attention needs to be given to human skills to realize the vision.

ITIL 4: Direct, Plan and Improve focuses on the core competencies that leaders and line employees should cultivate and apply throughout their service management careers.

Readers will find ideas and methods that they can use to be better leaders and individual contributors, and that they can build upon in the future.

THE BIG IDEAS

Every single person in an organization can be a leader. The more knowledgeable everyone on a team is of how to direct, plan, and improve things, the larger the effect on the organization will be.

DIRECTION

Definition: Direction
Leading, conducting, or guiding someone, or ordering something. This includes setting and communicating the vision, purpose, objectives, and guiding principles for an organization or team. It may also include leading or guiding the organization or team towards its objectives.

Direction helps to shape a team's action plan. Once people know what they need to achieve, they can often take ownership of their work and manage themselves in order to meet those objectives.

People in leadership positions in organizations frequently direct people through mechanisms such as a vision, which is aspirational, and a mission, which is more action-oriented. Visons and missions are then supported by policies and guidelines. However, these mechanisms are not 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.

PLANNING

Once a direction and an objective have been identified, the next step is creating a plan to get there. Plans are always important, but particularly so in large organizations because plans improve coordination. They can help avoid waste and reduce risk, and they enable the efficient achievement of agreed objectives.

Planning comes before action. How much planning is done in advance (and how far in advance) will vary depending on the situation. Some organizations plan extensively, to the point that action is delayed or they have difficulty responding to unexpected events. Other organizations hardly plan at all, which usually results in rework and waste.

All planning is an attempt to increase order and reduce risk. However, risk can never be eliminated entirely, and too much order can block creativity and responsiveness. Indeed, some risk can be positive, such as the risk that more customers will sign up for a service than it was originally designed to accommodate.

Organizations can use the ITIL® service value system (SVS) as a framework to help them self-organize and to focus planning and improvement activities. The development of a formal service management office and the use of key techniques, such as value stream mapping, will help organizations to meet their objectives, including becoming more service oriented.
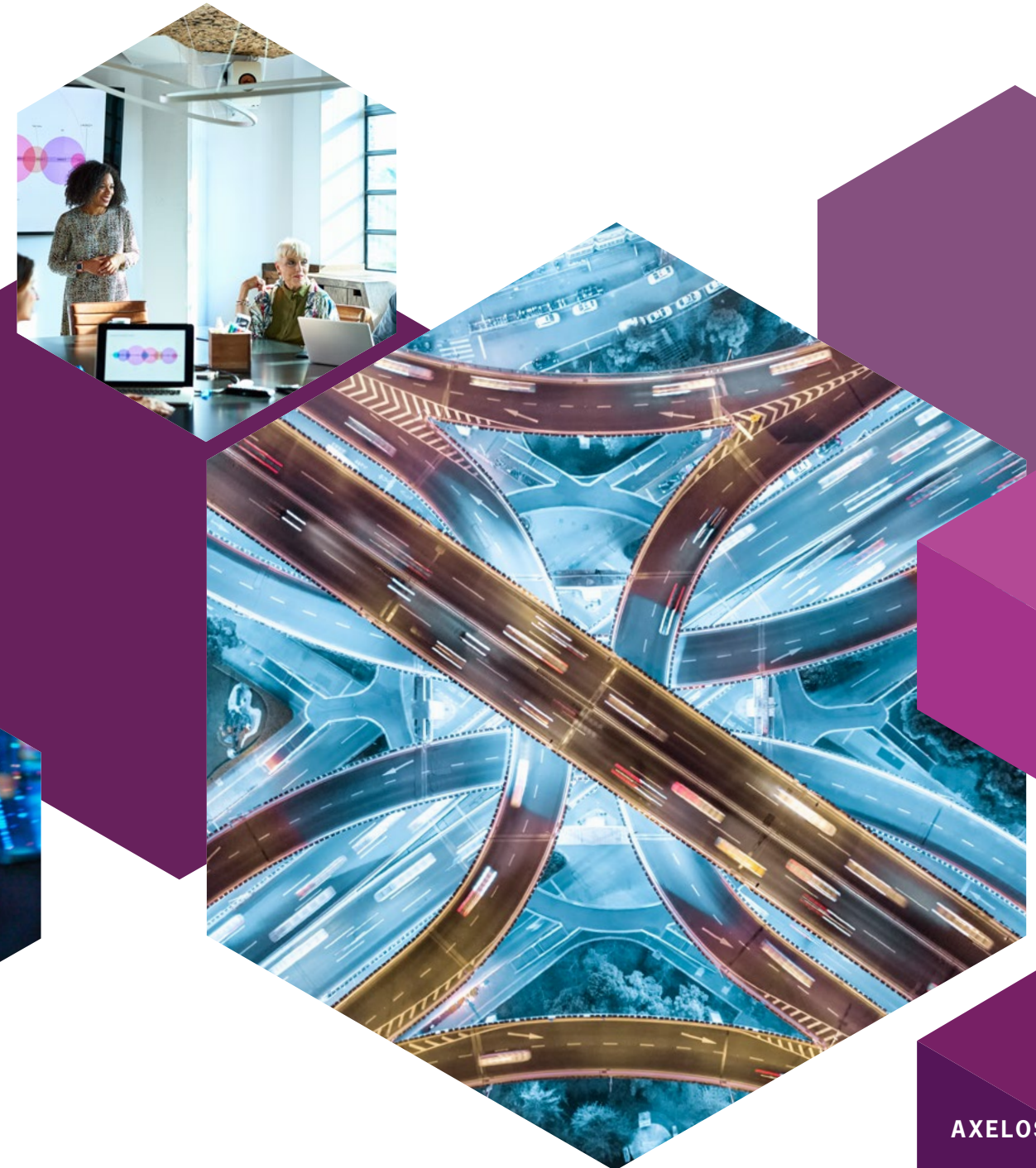
IMPROVEMENT

It is extremely rare for a situation to involve a real beginning, one with nothing before it. Almost every activity in an organization can, therefore, be seen as an improvement activity.

Definition: Improvement
A deliberately introduced change that results in increased value for one or more stakeholders.

Improvement means change. Without changes to some aspect of the current state, there can be no change to outcomes. For a service provider, the improvement of services can be expected to be a central focus; but that could imply, among other things, an improvement in service performance, profitability, or adoption.

Continual improvement is everybody's responsibility. Everyone in the organization can contribute to continual improvement. This means that everyone should understand the role of improvement in the SVS, and the basics of planning and implementing improvements.

The service management office drives improvement activities and ensures that initiatives are coordinated and prioritized whenever possible. Having people who are responsible for driving the adoption of service management principles and the commitment to continual improvement will ensure that these efforts are not wasted.

ITIL 4: Direct, Plan and Improve advocates leveraging the ITIL guiding principles, along with the ITIL continual improvement model, to drive effective and efficient improvements at all levels.

BRINGING IT TOGETHER

The summaries in Section 2 are only teasers for the concepts and skills that are explained and recommended in ITIL 4: Direct, Plan and Improve. The guidance in this publication can be used to develop competencies at the organizational, departmental, team, and individual levels.

It is important to consider the four dimensions of service management so that each person or group can become well-rounded contributors.

An organization's culture is an extremely important part of enabling successful service provision, and its importance is often underestimated. To begin to understand the organizational culture and readiness for service management, ask questions like:

• Is the organization ready for the change?

• Do people trust each other in the organization?

• Is management prepared to change their management and leadership styles?

• Is there a blame culture or a culture of fail fast, fail often?

• Is the board or executive management committed to the change?

• Are people recognized for the value and importance of their activities?

• Are people taken seriously in the organization or are they taken for granted?

Before they implement new ways of working by, for example, using value streams or implementing new tools, organizations should assess their current culture use it as a baseline.

CONCLUSION

ITIL 4 offers a great deal that can help make a service-oriented, value-focused organization a reality, but no single framework, methodology, body of knowledge, or standard can be everything to everyone.

ITIL 4: Direct, Plan and Improve is a tool that readers at all levels can use again and again. Readers should take what they learn and build on it through formal education, informal reading, and practical experience in collaboration with others.

FUTURE PROOF YOUR CAREER WITH ITIL 4 STRATEGIST: DIRECT, PLAN AND IMPROVE

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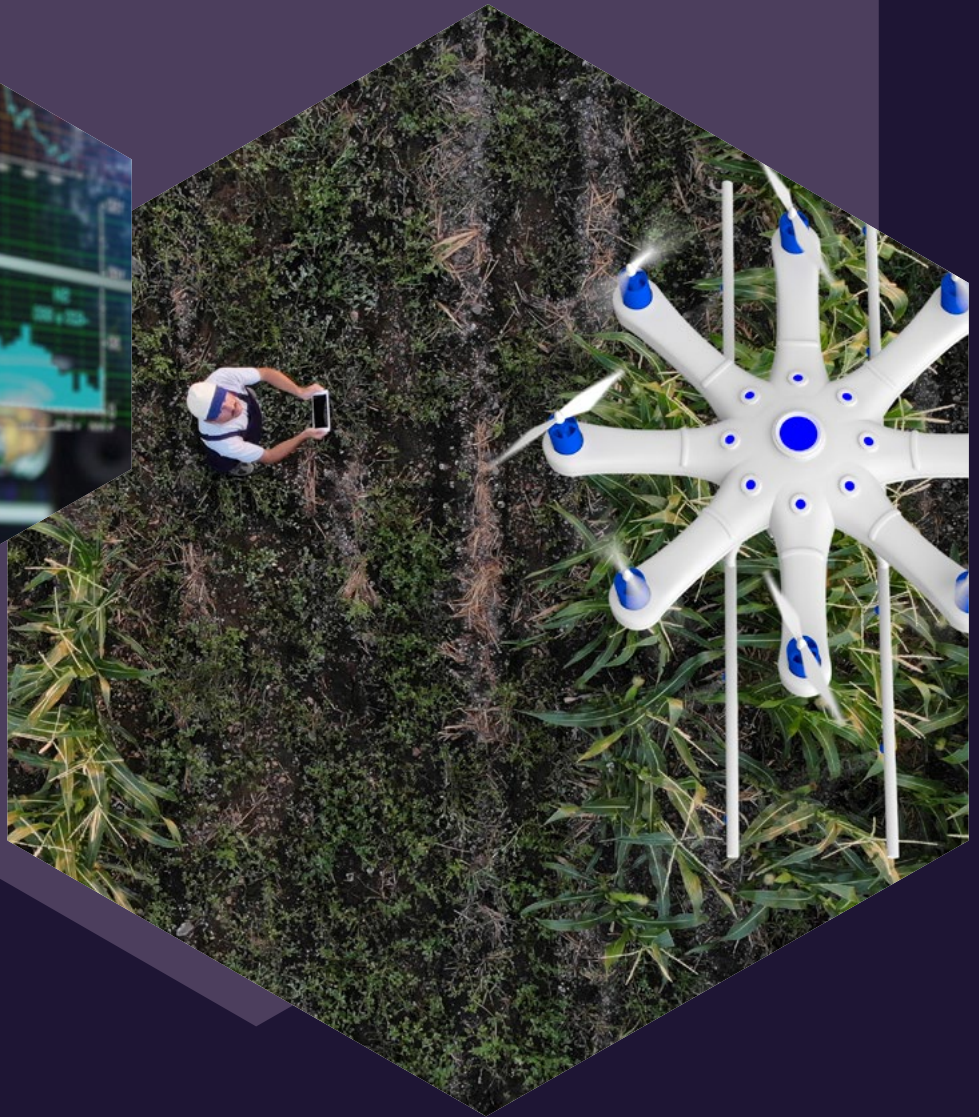
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