IT Service Capability Assessments
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1. Introduction
Most Managers of IT Services generally believe that they are doing a “good job”. That is until a long-term customer suddenly not wanting to do business with them any more and plans are underway to move to a new provider. At this point it is perhaps too late to ask the customer whether there any issues that need addressing or what it is that requires improvement. Often, once a customer has made the decision to change it is difficult to put the “genie back in the bottle”. They have moved on and the partnership is finished and it is not a question of if but when.

One of the main areas where IT Service Managers can fall foul of customer satisfaction is with the management of outages to business critical services. Outages should be minimal but when they do occur services need to be restored quickly, otherwise the impact to the business can be catastrophic.

There are many technology improvements that can be made to reduce the risk and probability of outages and that is not the subject of this white paper. Even in the most intelligent of infrastructure architectures, good people following good consistent processes will achieve better results than where these are absent. In this white paper TORI sets out how an organisation can ensure that the processes used to support and run IT Services are reviewed regularly to ensure that capabilities are at the highest level possible.

2. Service Management Survey
One of the best ways to understand whether the current IT service capability is effective is to run regular surveys. We all need to get smarter at understanding what we are doing well and maybe not so well? Running regular surveys with customers and users of the processes should be another tool that we can select from the Service Management toolbox to help us manage more effectively

We need to focus on the key questions that will highlight whether the service provided is “up to the mark”. The smart approach is to run surveys so that they require minimal time from your customer whilst providing you with the maximum information and intelligence.

Fortunately, customer survey tools specifically developed for the IT Services area are now available, and the best of them can automate the entire lifecycle so that the required improvements can be designed and tracked through implementation.

There are a number of key benefits, features and focus areas that we need to be mindful of when running surveys. Those included in this paper are not purporting to be the definitive list of what is needed in a survey of IT Service capability – however they do provide room for thought:
3. Benefits of Surveys

- Surveys can quickly pinpoint the most important issues that you and your staff need to focus on. The focus areas are determined by the results obtained from your customers.
- The results of the survey will allow you to allocate (with confidence) resources to address the most important issues.
- A survey can give you a more complete picture of your overall service delivery, not just issues requiring a “fast response”.
- Surveys demonstrate your commitment to improve the service to the customer.
- Even the simple action of asking for their opinion will earn you plaudits and respect.
- Surveys provide an effective outlet for venting any negative feelings from your customers as long as you listen to them.
- Surveys can be repeated so that you get a true reflection of the before and after.

4. Features to include in a Survey

4.1. Scope & Objective
It is important to set out the scope and the objective of the survey so that it is not perceived as just a one off tick box exercise. There has to be a clear statement as to what you are hoping to achieve and tangible outputs such as an improvement plan.

4.2. Frameworks
The questions in the survey should have some reference to standards or industry recommended frameworks. There is little point in assessing an organisation’s capability and maturity against the industry and competitors unless the measures are COBIT, ITIL or IEC/ISO based. Even where the survey is for internal use only, the ability to map questions to established and industry wide frameworks is a valuable feature of any tool.

4.3. Ask the right questions
Don’t just ask questions for the sake of it. Ensure that the questions are constructed to solicit a useful response that will provide the information that you need. A set of pre loaded questions based around a framework or methodology is ideal but there should also be room to amend and include your own organisation specific requirements.
4.4. Make it look professional
Professional looking surveys that include your company logo, fonts and colors will make the right impression on your customers and increase credibility. You may also want to ensure that any survey appears to come from inside your organisation rather than coming from an external supplier. Customers may be more likely to respond if they see that that the information is being requested from an internal governance function within the organisation.

4.5. Data Confidentiality
The survey tool that you use should ensure that sensitive data captured is securely managed. The survey will be asking some fairly sensitive information; therefore the tool that is used to capture the responses must be running on a secure platform with the associated data security controls.

4.6. Engagement
At the outset you will need to identify a key stakeholder within the organisation as your sponsor. The individual should have a level of seniority level within the organisation that encourages participants to complete the surveys. This same individual will agree the survey audience. In most cases at least one representative from the major IT Service Management functional areas is required. It may be worth formulating a RACI, or similar, to ensure that the responsibilities are clearly defined.

4.7. Initiation
Agree the method and initial engagement with the participants. You do not want to distribute twenty separate surveys to one person’s email inbox asking them to complete them all in one week. This will have a negative impact in terms of customer engagement, which you may never recover from. Additionally, another method would be to generate automated surveys following closure of a Service Desk ticket.

4.8. Delivery
Keep the delivery mechanism simple. There may be occasions where you want to deliver a simple link to your survey through social media tools or as a link from email. For added flexibility, be sure that the survey tool you allows for a URL that links to a web-based version of your survey.
4.9. Complexity
Don’t send out surveys that are too long or complex. Keep the number of questions for each survey to around 20 to 30 questions with a duration time of approx. 20 to 30 minutes. If survey takers are presented with 50 to 100 questions they may be reluctant to participate. If you do have a complex set of questions then think about splitting the surveys up into a number of related parts.

4.10. Subsidiary Information
Ensure that you include a capability for subsidiary information to be collected in the survey. The survey should allow and prompt the participant to provide further information when this is appropriate. This information can be valuable and can be used in follow up discussions or just to add further evidence to the results. The survey should support the following response types as an example: Yes/No, Text Boxes, Multiple-Choice and Numerical Ratings.

4.11. Duration
There should be a hard start and end window for the survey duration. It is not recommended to let the surveys be open-ended as at some stage you need to complete the activity to produce the results. It is advisable to limit the process, i.e. a one-week maximum duration for each survey.

4.12. Feedback
Keep your stakeholder updated on progress. This can be done through the use of a real time dashboard or the use of daily/weekly reporting to show completion progress. The tool should be able to provide real time visibility of progress that can be shared quickly and easily with the customers. The ability to display an initial rating will increase staff awareness and may reduce the amount of reporting required at the end of the engagement. Either way, it is important to maintain a regular dialogue to ensure that the survey is receiving awareness and attention.

4.13. Monitoring
Check on individual responses as the survey window progresses. Gentle (or forceful) reminders may be required but your stakeholder should guide you in this. The survey should provide the mechanism so that you can electronically remind individuals that their action is outstanding.
4.14. Reporting

The tool should provide a standard set of formats that can be quickly generated into reports that can be sent to the customer. You should agree a turnaround time and a report format at the outset and stick to this. You do not want any awkward conversations later on about what was promised and not delivered.

5. Survey Focus Areas

With any survey you have to clearly focus on the areas or functions that you want more information on. Find below some of the typical topics that should be considered:

- For any analysis of IT capability you must gather the view of individuals who own, manage delivery or are customers of the service. Are these individuals and groups involved in the process encouraged to provide feedback and improvement ideas on a continuous basis?
- Is there a single owner of the Process identified with responsibilities for the deployment and governance within the organisation?
- Is there an awareness of the goal of the process and has this been approved and communicated widely in the organisation?
- Does every individual or group that is involved in the process aware and accepting of their roles and responsibilities, e.g. If their role dictates that they should review and approve/reject changes within a certain timeframe?
- Does the organisation have the correct level of resource and expertise in place to support the process?
- Are individuals being trained correctly both in using the process and any associated tooling? There is no use in simply providing documentation in the hope that they will understand and apply in line with what is expected. Internal and external training plans must be provided and constantly reviewed and updated.
- Have policies, standards and documentation for the process been supplied and kept up to date?
- Is information on the process, i.e. changes, developments, enhancements, work instructions, escalation rules etc. made available on a regular basis?
- Is the required reporting (real time and other) being supplied?
- Is communication between the different areas/groups involved in the process encouraged and facilitated on a regular and formal basis?
• If there is a tool that is used to perform the process, is it fit for purpose and integrated within the wider toolsets in the organisation?
• Does the process, as deployed in the organisation, include all of the technology that it should or are there gaps?
• Are the key baseline activities for the specific process being completed on a regular and continuous basis? Examples would be:
  o Are all Incidents prioritised as part of the Incident Management process?
  o Does a Business representative approve all changes?

6. Does the Configuration Management System include relationships between different types of Configuration Items?

7. Survey Output

If the surveys have been based and run on accepted standards or industry recommended frameworks, such as CMMI, COBIT, ITIL or IEC/ISO, the results will in most cases speak for themselves.

As an example - with CMMI the results from the surveys following aggregation, will show where the process maps on a scale of 1 to 5.

![Fig 1](image)

In the example above (Fig 1), the current maturity level of a particular process (or groups of process) may be measured at 2.1.

The CMMI table below (Fig 2) equates that to being managed. The process is established and in place but it is reactive and not consistently and proactively managed.
In Fig 1, the industry best practice target is to be achieving a Level 3.8. However the organisation is targeting a Level 4.8. Obviously this suggests that there is a long way to go but we have a starting point which can be tested again and again as the improvements are made.

8. Summary

There can be little doubt that running customer surveys is a useful way to obtain information on the maturity of your organisation’s service capabilities. However, the survey must have a structure and purpose that provides data to enable you to plan for improvement. You must also show that you are acting as a result of this information. As an example, you may have identified that your Problem Management capability is operating at a less than expected level of maturity. As a result, the organisation is seeing the same type of incident disrupting services again and again. You may well need to convince the organisation that they need to spend money to provide more training, hire more people or set up a new operating model to address this issue. The benefit of using the data obtained from a controlled survey is that the argument that your Problem Management capability requires improvement becomes a very persuasive argument mainly as the evidence is coming from the users themselves.

The information in this whitepaper is not intended as the definitive approach to running IT Service Management assessments but it does provide some key concepts and requirements that you should consider when embarking on this activity. If you would like to obtain more information on this subject including some examples of real world deployment please contact us at TORI Global.
9. **TORI Global**

TORI specialises primarily in providing solutions to industry leaders within global Financial Services organisations. The solutions we offer are innovative, realistic and sustainable with benefits that have real impact. We have a hard earned reputation for experience, quality and professionalism and have built long-standing relationships with clients who set the most exacting standards. We are made up of practitioners who, prior to joining TORI, have enjoyed successful careers running business and support functions for many of the global institutions we now count as our clients.

For more information contact Mike Brennan at TORI Global mike.brennan@toriglobal.com

www.toriglobal.com or +44 (0) 20 7025 5555