



# ITIL® and BiSL®: sound guidance for business-IT alignment from a business perspective

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## Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine the similarities and differences between the Business Information Services Library (BiSL) and the current ITIL best-practice framework. BiSL is meant to support business information management and shares some similarities with and divergences from ITIL. A main similarity is that both of these frameworks are based on a business perspective of service management – BiSL from the point of view of the user organization, and ITIL from the point of view of the IT service provider.

Each framework recognizes added value in the other. As a result, the ASL® BiSL Foundation and The Stationery Office (TSO) (the publisher of ITIL) have collaborated to produce this White Paper in order to provide guidance and understanding of the synergy and distinctness of each framework.

## 1 Introduction and conclusions

*‘Essentially, all models are wrong, but some are useful.’*

George EP Box

In order to align IT goals and activities with business goals and activities, both the IT service provider and the user organization have roles and responsibilities to fulfil.

Used in combination, ITIL and BiSL provide comprehensive guidance for IT service providers and user organizations. This paper gives a short description of both frameworks, with an analysis of similarities and differences, and draws the following conclusions:

- ITIL has a much broader scope than BiSL, giving guidance to IT service providers with a view to enabling business value. BiSL guidance, on the other hand, is aimed at user organizations and the activities associated with a domain designated as business information management (BIM). BIM comprises the responsibilities of the user organization with respect to achieving and maintaining optimal provisioning and the use of information (automated and non-automated) within the user organization.
- ITIL does not refer explicitly to BIM in its guidance; instead it includes a number of business (demand) responsibilities which it considers within the scope of IT service management. BiSL focuses solely on BIM and assumes that it is outside the scope of IT service management. It does, however, recognize that these two domains are strongly interfaced in a demand–supply relationship.
- ITIL describes the activities within BIM that are prerequisites for fulfilling the role of IT service provider, while BiSL describes BIM activities intended to be carried out within the user organization itself.
- ITIL encapsulates IT service management within the five stages of the service lifecycle. Within each lifecycle stage there are processes that support parts of one or more phases. Alongside the processes there are functions, roles and activities that are translated into capabilities, and resources are used to provide structure to the lifecycle stages. BiSL is primarily a process-based model, focusing on BIM and the interfaces with application management and infrastructure management (‘technical management’ in ITIL terminology).
- BiSL regards application management and infrastructure management as covering the entire IT management domain, while ITIL refers to technical management as one of the many elements within the entire service lifecycle, particularly those within IT operations management and control. For BiSL, the scope of these domains differs somewhat from the ITIL definitions of the same terms.
- Both models address strategic business aspects: ITIL gives strategic guidance for all relevant topics for IT service providers, while BiSL focuses on the information strategy of the user organization.
- Within ITIL there are a number of processes that incorporate the proper alignment to BIM and how this is delivered as a service. While ITIL is mainly written from the perspective of an IT service provider, its guidance encourages integration with the business and relates every action to a business outcome in order to define value to the business for IT services. The guidance is all-encompassing and suitable for all sizes of organization; however, adaptability is a key consideration as the guidance is expansive and extensive in its nature.
- BiSL is specifically written for the establishment of BIM. Therefore BiSL should be considered within its scope and is not intended as a service management framework. BiSL is the most complete guide for all BIM activities and responsibilities. It covers all the activities that should be performed on the demand side in order to get the information the business processes need in an effective and efficient way. Many of these activities on the demand side are not directly related to IT services and therefore are not addressed in ITIL. However, ITIL covers the related subjects of security policies, data management and requirements definition in more detail than BiSL. Therefore ITIL provides added value to the user organization in designing a number of elements for BIM.
- As mentioned before, the ITIL framework covers a much broader range of service management elements and so is constructed to meet a broad range of needs within the service management spectrum. As such, only certain parts of ITIL have been examined and compared for this paper.
- When it comes to BIM, customers would be well advised to adapt the strengths of both frameworks and keep in mind the intent and focus of each.

## 2 ITIL

ITIL provides guidance for IT service management incorporating the concept of business information management (BIM) as an activity that often falls within an IT service provider’s view. From an ITIL perspective, BIM permeates the relationship and activities between user organizations and IT service providers as it relates to the use of IT to manage information and the need to work with user organizations to delineate what they require to be managed. ITIL revolves around IT services and the concept of enabling business value through their use. An IT service is defined as a means of delivering value to customers by facilitating the outcomes customers want to achieve without the ownership of specific costs and risks.

ITIL explains in five publications (released by the Cabinet Office in 2011) how to:

- Determine requirements and which IT services should be provided (*ITIL Service Strategy*)
- Design, create or change services and service management processes to meet business requirements (*ITIL Service Design*)
- Validate the utility and warranty of services and transition them into the live environment (*ITIL Service Transition*)

- Provide the services and support in an efficient and effective manner (*ITIL Service Operation*)
- Ensure that the services continually address future needs (*ITIL Continual Service Improvement*).

ITIL is structured around a revolving lifecycle, with five basic stages that flow and interact to manage IT services and support business outcomes, as shown in Figure 1.

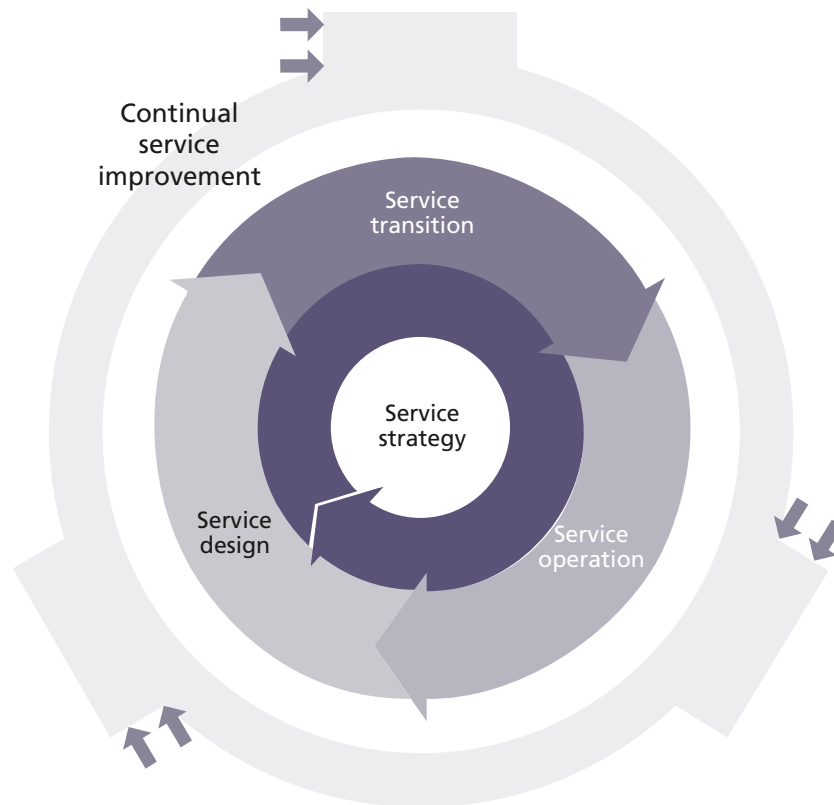
The following sections briefly describe the main points within each of the lifecycle stages.

### Service strategy

Lying at the core of the service lifecycle, service strategy provides guidelines on how to view service management as a strategic asset by focusing on developing service markets, defining service assets through managing the portfolio of services.

Service strategy covers:

- Strategy management for IT services
- Service portfolio management
- Financial management for IT services
- Demand management
- Business relationship management.



**Figure 1 The ITIL service lifecycle**

Copyright © AXELOS Limited. Reproduced under licence from AXELOS Limited – *ITIL Continual Service Improvement*, Figure 1.1

## Service design

The service design stage of the lifecycle focuses on the design of new or changed services, their supporting systems, technology architectures, processes, and measurement systems and metrics. The requirements for these services are defined and recorded in the service strategy lifecycle stage within the service portfolio. Each requirement is analysed and agreed so that a solution design can be produced that is then compared with the strategies and constraints from service strategy to ensure that it conforms to corporate and IT policies.

Service design covers:

- Design coordination
- Service catalogue management
- Service level management
- Availability management
- Capacity management
- IT service continuity management
- Information security management
- Supplier management.

## Service transition

The service transition lifecycle stage focuses on the planning and management of service changes. Service transition is responsible for building, testing, evaluating and deploying the service change as it has been designed and documented by service design. Service transition works to ensure that the outcomes desired by the business are realized in operations while controlling the risks of failure and disruption to the business. Service transition handles organizational change, communications, cultural issues and knowledge management to ensure acceptance by the business customer and the IT organization.

Service transition covers:

- Transition planning and support
- Change management
- Service asset and configuration management
- Release and deployment management
- Service validation and testing
- Change evaluation
- Knowledge management.

## Service operation

The service operation stage of the lifecycle focuses on the coordination and application of the activities and processes required to deliver, manage and support the service at agreed levels to the business users and customers. Service operation is responsible for technical, applications and operational management.

Service operation covers the following processes:

- Event management
- Incident management

- Request fulfilment
- Problem management
- Access management

and the following functions:

- Service desk
- Technical management
- IT operations management
- Application management.

## Continual service improvement

Continual service improvement exists throughout the lifecycle and focuses on value for customers by combining methods of quality management and capability improvement. By identifying improvement opportunities throughout the lifecycle, continual service improvement increases efficiency, maximizes effectiveness and optimizes the costs of services and the underlying processes.

Continual service improvement covers one process: the seven-step improvement process.

## 3 BiSL

The Business Information Services Library (BiSL) comprises:

- A process framework for BIM
- A dynamic collection of best practices contributed by industry partners
- A maturity model, with a description of five maturity levels for each process
- An organization that offers support (publications, education, consultancy and certification) to those who wish to professionalize their BIM.

BiSL offers guidance for the BIM domain, which deals with actively managing, maintaining and supporting the functionality of information systems. BIM represents the user organization that benefits from the functionality, is the owner of the information system and is responsible for the entire information provisioning of the organization.

It should be noted that BiSL and ITIL approach BIM from different perspectives:

- BiSL assumes a business point of view and describes the processes and activities related to information management that are a business responsibility. This gives a clear demarcation between business management, the users, BIM and the IT service providers.
- ITIL takes an IT service provider's point of view, describing many aspects of the interaction with the business, the importance of IT delivering value to the business, and some business roles and responsibilities with respect to BIM.

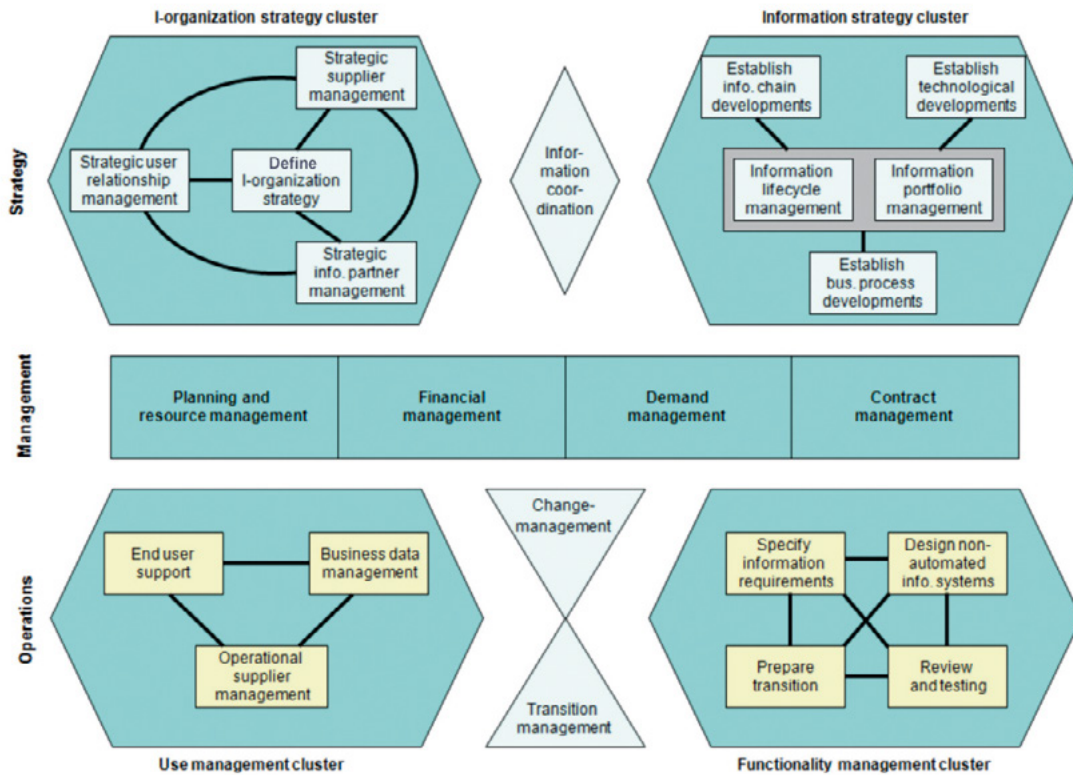


Figure 2 The BiSL process framework

BiSL is positioned according to the IT management model of Professor Maarten Looijen of Delft University, The Netherlands (Looijen, 1998). Looijen identified three forms of IT management – business information management, application management and infrastructure management – the last two of which are defined as follows:

- **Application management**<sup>1</sup> is responsible for maintaining application software and databases. As soon as modifications need to be implemented for maintenance purposes, application management is responsible for realizing and testing them. This also applies to the structure of databases.
- **Infrastructure management** is responsible for the operational aspects of the information system, comprising hardware, software and databases. In essence it is the organization that runs the information systems and maintains the infrastructure.

### BiSL framework

BiSL comprises processes at three levels, as shown in Figure 2:

- **Operational** The implementation of operational processes involves the day-to-day use of the information provisioning, and determining and effecting changes to the information provisioning
- **Management** Management includes the management of income, expenditure, planning, the quality of the information provisioning and making agreements with IT suppliers
- **Strategic** This level defines the nature of the information provisioning in the long term and how its management should be structured.

Within these three levels the various processes are grouped in seven process clusters: three at the operational level, one at the management level and three at the strategic level. These clusters are discussed in detail as follows.

#### Operational level

- **Use management** The purpose of the processes in this cluster is to provide optimum, ongoing support for the relevant business processes. The use management processes focus on providing support to users on the use of the information provisioning, the operational management of IT suppliers, and the control of data administration. The key question for use management is: Is the operational information provisioning being used and managed properly?

<sup>1</sup> This definition of application management is broader than the way ITIL describes the application domain. ITIL uses application management to denote the operational management of applications, and uses application development to describe both the initial development of applications and their maintenance and enhancement. The BiSL definition of application management includes maintenance and enhancement and uses application development to denote only the initial development of applications. The ASL® framework describes this broader definition of application management.

- **Functionality management** The aim of the processes in the functionality management cluster is to structure and effect changes in the information provisioning. The key question here is: What will the modified information provisioning look like?
- **Connecting processes at the operational level** The goal of the processes in this cluster is to make decisions about which changes will be made to the information provisioning and their actual implementation within the user organization. The key question is: Why and how should we modify the information provisioning?

### Management level

The management processes are 'umbrella' processes: that is, they are situated above the operational processes. These management processes act as a bridge linking the strategic level and the operational processes. The processes at the managerial level ensure the comprehensive management of the implementation of the information provisioning. From the perspective of planning, cost-effectiveness, needs, contracts and service levels, direction is given to administrative work, and maintenance, innovation and the connecting processes. The key question here is: How do we manage the information provisioning?

### Strategic level

The three clusters of processes at the strategic level address the formulation of policy concerning the information provisioning and the organizations involved in this. These clusters are as follows:

- **Information strategy** The purpose of the processes in the information strategy cluster is to translate developments affecting business processes, the organization's surroundings and technology into a view of the nature of the information provisioning in future. The key question here is: What will the information provisioning look like in the medium and long term?
- **I-organization strategy** The processes in this cluster focus on coordinating the communication, management, structures and methods of all the parties involved in making decisions about the information provisioning. The key question is: How should the management of the information provisioning be structured?
- **Connecting process at the strategic level** The aim of the connecting process at the strategic level is the coordination of all the parties involved and the plans of the various subsidiary elements of the information provisioning. The key question is: How can we act together?

## 4 Analysis

The following statements clarify the similarities and differences between the two frameworks and justify the conclusions made in the introduction.

User organizations need information; processes, procedures, and automated and non-automated information systems are used to provide this information.

BiSL describes business information management as a responsibility of user organizations that comprises:

- Determining information strategy
- Determining BIM responsibilities (governance)
- Specifying information requirements
- Designing and implementing non-automated information systems
- Acquiring automated information systems and related services
- Designing and implementing processes and procedures for use of information systems
- Supporting the end users in how to use the information systems (from a business process perspective)
- Ensuring that information systems are used appropriately.

BiSL aims primarily to guide user organizations on the implementation and execution of BIM.

ITIL provides guidance and good practice for IT service providers for the execution of IT service management from the perspective of enabling business value.

In addition to IT service providers, ITIL identifies two other important parties:

- **Customers** The user organizations who benefit from the IT services provided by IT service providers
- **Suppliers** Those who supply IT service components that IT service providers 'assemble' in order to create IT services.

ITIL aims primarily to guide IT service providers (and to a degree, suppliers of IT components) on IT service management.

ITIL describes part of BiSL's business information management domain and its relationships with user organizations and IT service providers. It describes this not so much as guidance for user organizations but more in order that the IT service provider has a better understanding of the role that user organizations play.

Because ITIL is written first and foremost as guidance for IT service providers and BiSL is written as specific guidance for user organizations, BiSL and ITIL can be regarded as complementary standards.

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