

# **TOP TEN REASONS TO APPLY CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT OUT OF THE GATE**

**Date** : January 2008  
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Over the years organizations implementing ITIL® have approached Continual Service Improvement from many different perspectives.

- Some organizations launch their Service Improvement program with a plan to phase in Continual Improvement after implementing their first round of formal process improvements
- Other organizations begin applying Continual Improvement as soon as they deploy newly designed Service Management processes
- And others talk about it, but don't actually implement any type of Continual Improvement practice. These organizations have a very short minded goal of developing and implementing some ITIL processes and magically they all work well and never need to be revisited. Of course, this is a huge risk

However, many organizations can increase the effectiveness of their Service Management Improvement programs by applying Continual Improvement from the beginning.

**Here are ten reasons why:**

10. Walk the talk: Visibly demonstrate to key stakeholders that the program leadership is genuinely committed.
  - This includes engaging key stakeholders, including customers and staff, in defining the vision, strategy and goals for continual improvement
  - Identify a few key initial measurements and begin reporting. For example, most organizations have some means to measure Mean Time to Restore Service (MTRS) and Percentage of Unplanned Changes. Even if there is widespread consensus that both are unacceptable, actually measuring, reporting these, and following up on trend analysis with actionable improvement signals that meaningful change is underway
  - These activities often yield productive results and quick wins long before substantial process redesign is complete



9. Provide a unique opportunity to establish credibility and trust with customers and staff, often when it is most needed.
  - IT service providers who need to earn credibility and trust with their customers, staff and other key stakeholders, and who need to begin doing so immediately, often benefit from practices such as external benchmarking, externally conducted process maturity assessments, etc.
  - Sharing the results, recommendations and actually taking action to improve something sends a strong message to the customers as it helps demonstrate a commitment to improvement. It also demonstrates a willingness to be open and honest with customers about the service provider's performance results
8. Improve service in target areas for more meaningful quick wins.
  - What gets measured gets done
  - Motivate action to make immediate progress addressing targeted pain points
  - Targeting two or three achievable KPIs is recommended
  - Good examples include MTRS and Percentage of Unplanned Changes
  - At first, even bad data is better than no data; the first thing that will improve is the quality of the data
7. Feed program momentum.
  - Focuses attention and effort in the subsequent weeks and months
  - Combined with awareness and training, generates greater organizational support for program and for the efforts of the process design team
6. Motivate staff who may have the capacity to lead from within.
  - Frequently, organizations have any number of internal staff members who have an affinity for continual improvement. They may be team members who already interact between Service Level Management, Availability Management, and Capacity Management, for example



- Another example: Activate the seven-step improvement process, with corresponding roles and delegated authorities. In some cases, organizations already have people with an aptitude for this work who, given the opportunity and support, can flourish and add great value
5. Leverage existing underutilized information and improvement opportunities.
    - Look for existing or underutilized reporting capabilities
    - Ask what information simply needs to be shared – by whom and with whom?
    - Often, individual teams will have sponsored targeted improvement efforts that can easily be leveraged as part of continual improvement
  4. Begin adopting practices of a Learning Organization.
    - Learn early on – lessons learned at the end of each project phase or milestones should be input into the next project
    - As an organization starts down their Service Management journey there should be ongoing lessons from the beginning of the project. Why would an organization want to wait until the end of a project to collect lessons learned when this information can be valuable for the next project that may start three months after the first project starts?
  3. Build a basis for demonstrated value and shared organizational success later on.
    - Instinctively, many organizations wait to begin measuring and reporting until after they have accomplished some service and process improvements. However, by capturing and reporting a baseline measurement of service and process performance before the service provider begins improving them, the service provider is better able to measure the improvement they achieved and demonstrate the value they contributed
  2. Proactively address governance issues.
    - Continual improvement is part of the overall governance structure that needs to be considered during the program and after the process have been deployed



- Document key roles, responsibilities and authorities at the beginning to clarify expectations and requirements. Review these periodically during the course of the program and improve them as needed
  - It is often useful to establish key policies up front as well to clearly establish expectations and to foster consistent behavior
1. Keeps the program focused on its primary purpose.
- In particular, ensures that program strategy and design efforts do not become bogged down
  - Ensures that the program begins increasing value to the business at every step of the way