



Translating Knowledge Into Results

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This is the first in what will be a series a series of Pink Question Reflection (PQR) white papers and blogs. In this white paper we reflect on the question, “Why is it so hard to transform IT organizations from an adequate technical resource to business partner?”

Some projects to transform IT organizations into high customer satisfaction service providers have been completed, but more have been cancelled before they were completed. Of those completed, a subset achieved the desired results. Why?

Thousands of well intended people have poured their hearts and souls into IT transformation efforts to make their internal IT organization the preferred supplier of IT services for their business customers. Most fail, and as their reward, they are replaced either by new employees/management or 3rd party service providers. Why?

Of those that succeed, maintaining a preferred supplier relationship against competing providers is not as simple as just meeting Service Level Agreements (SLAs). Why?

The good news is that these challenges have been overcome time and again by champions of IT Service Management (ITSM), Six Sigma, LEAN, Agile, Internet commerce or name any successful idea. We all believe the return on ITSM improvement efforts is great. Many organizations are willing to work long and hard thinking, planning, designing, building, and delivering IT services in new ways that will turn customers into raving fans.

So what are the (set of?) transformation constraint(s) that are so hard to overcome? Some assert that the provision of ongoing Information Technology services is still very immature compared to agriculture and fishing, retail, mining, accounting, banking, wholesale, transportation, construction, retail, and even manufacturing. That assertion is a good start as an answer but doesn't go far enough to provide the full picture. Compounding factors are the narrow focus on technical competencies and lack of soft skills in the hiring profile for technology workers and the promotion of technicians to management with insufficient management skills training.

A key question is: What is missing in IT's maturity that is impeding transformation from a distrusted outcast group into a partnering service provider? Take a look at IT's main delivery components: Technology, Process and People. They are each maturing at different rates. Technology is overcoming the better, cheaper and faster triple constraints and increased expectations every day. Processes are improving only in so far as people are individually or in small pockets improving their designs and performance of them. People's performance is the result of our thinking, which in turn is the result of whatever each person has learned in their lifetime running on a platform (the human brain) developed over 50,000 years and optimized around [Maslow's hierarchy](#). Formal and experiential Education – the learning in our lifetime – enables us to transform our thinking. Our thinking can alter our attitudes, behavior and culture to apply and optimize our performance.



The business verticals that are more mature than IT have achieved their maturity through centuries and decades of applied education and organizational design. In short they have been around the block a few times. IT people's attitudes, behaviors and culture are the constraint on IT becoming a trusted supplier and partner. What are we going to do about that? ITSM practitioners will recognize these next steps as the beginning of the Continual Service Improvement model described in IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL®).

Step one: What is the goal? The goal is, "IT is – and remains – its customers' trusted service provider and partner."

Step two: Where are we now? Most of us are pretty sure that we are not achieving the goal. We may have customer satisfaction surveys or anecdotal information to ground that assertion. We know from ITIL that IT services exist to provide value to our customers. More specifically that, "A Service is a means of delivering value to customers by facilitating outcomes that customers want to achieve without the ownership of specific costs and risks." At our current performance level, do our services fulfill this definition – from our customers' perspective? Are we thinking about our services as our customers do? We can be sure the 3rd parties that want to be an IT service provider are thinking about this! We know that our thinking and therefore our attitudes, behavior, and the underlying culture are impediments to transforming ourselves to achieve the goal. What can we find out about our thinking – and more important, what we are showing our customer in our attitude, behavior, and culture?

In acknowledgement of these goals Pink Elephant has integrated an experiential learning component into our ITIL Foundation course and consulting practice.

GamingWorks created the Attitude Behavior & Culture (ABC) exercises to examine exactly these – and other – constraints in IT organizations. The exercises use a deck of cards with descriptions of IT and customer situations. The cards are grouped into suits related to Attitude, Behavior, Culture, and Stakeholders. Each grouping has 13 situation descriptions, and Partners, Performance, Process, People and Product have one description each. GamingWorks defines these areas as follows:

Attitude – What people think and feel. It shows itself in our behavior.

Behavior – What people do. Our demeanor, body language, ethics, integrity, and the words and expressions used to communicate.

Culture – The accepted ways of working in a group or organization – the formal and informal values and behavior standards.

Stakeholders – Typical IT and customer roles.

Partners – 3rd parties that perform functions and services for IT.

Performance – Delivery of outcomes.

Process – Established sequences of actions to transform specific inputs into specific outputs and to manage the actions.

People – The actual personalities that perform the stakeholder roles.



Product – The technology and other tangible resources leveraged or consumed by IT to provide IT services.

Participants in the ABC exercise select cards that best match their situation. Paul Wilkinson of GamingWorks has [blogged](#) on his findings from 10 years of conducting ABC exercises around the world.

Pink Elephant has begun adding value to our ITIL Foundations courses with two ABC exercises to help students define 1) the gap(s) in IT's performance (the Problem) and 2) the impediments to IT's progress to becoming the customers' preferred service provider (the Resistance).

Below are the early Problem Rankings by ABC area from our ITIL Foundation students and several consulting engagements. Behavior and Attitude are the greatest Problems. The ranking is not terribly surprising except that after so many years of ITSM education and practice, Process is so high on the list!

Problem Ranking By ABC Area:

1. Behavior
2. Attitude
3. Culture
4. Process
5. Partner
6. Performance
7. Stakeholders

Digging a little deeper, here are the top 10 Problem situations being experienced by consulting clients and students so far, grouped by ABC Area:

Behavior

- Everything has the highest priority...according to the users
- Maybe we should have tested that change first
- Too little business involvement in requirements specification & testing
- Never mind about following procedures...just do what we usually do
- The solution the customer sees isn't the one that IT sees
- Throwing solutions (ITIL) over the wall and HOPING people will use them

Attitude

- (IT has) no understanding of business impact and priority
- IT not seen as an added value partner to the business

Culture

- Not my responsibility
- Internally focused



The early Resistance Rankings by ABC area from our ITIL Foundation students and consulting clients have some overlap with the Problems. Behavior and Attitude are at the top of the list. Products (read ITSM Tools – their functionality and cost) are a resistance point – instead of an enabler!

Resistance Rank by ABC Area

1. Behavior
2. Attitude
3. Product
4. Culture
5. Process
6. Stakeholders

The more specific Resistance situations experienced by our clients and students are somewhat similar to the Problem situations with some interesting exceptions (again, not necessarily in order).

Behavior

- Never mind about following procedures...just do what we usually do
- No management commitment
- We don't measure our value contribution to strategy
- Everything has the highest priority....according to the users
- The solution the customer sees isn't the one that IT sees
- Saying yes but meaning no

Attitude

- (IT has) no understanding of business impact & priority
- ITIL never work here

Culture

- Them and Us culture – opposing and competing forces
- Plan, Do, stop...no real continual improvement culture

What are these people asserting is wrong and needs to be changed? And to what should they change? What is the success criterion? How does an IT organization successfully and permanently eliminate these Problems and overcome these Resistance factors?

We'll address these questions and raise others in upcoming PQR white papers and blogs.