

ALTESS News

Continual Service Improvement Supports the Customer and the Soldier

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Efficiency and standardized practices are essential for any organization. For Product Director Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology Enterprise Systems and Services (PD ALTESS), they are also essential to the customers. PD ALTESS provides the Army acquisition community and hosted customers with full life-cycle information technology (IT) support in a secure environment. Inherent to the fulfillment of that mission is customer satisfaction. The Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) approaches services from the perspective of the customer and the value delivered.

In addition to its focus on the customer, PD ALTESS must approach services from the perspective of the Soldier. The products and services used by the warfighter require efficient

planning, deployment, and support. The ITIL framework recognizes the importance and attainability of this efficiency. PD ALTESS' adoption of ITIL and an IT Service Management (ITSM) Program has been essential to the execution of its mission and its support of the Soldier.

ITIL is a best-practice set of processes that establishes a framework for aligning people, resources, processes, and technology to create a superior level of service. PD ALTESS' ITSM actively implements ITIL across the organization.

PD ALTESS implemented ITIL in 2007 to standardize its business practices. Implementation was accomplished via a "Quick Wins" initiative. A series of small teams were formed to identify organizational pain points and develop initial measures to mitigate them. During the Quick Wins initiative, 11 teams were established to focus on processes throughout the ITIL life cycle and how they could be implemented within the organization. These processes included, but were not limited to, Capacity Management, Change Management, and Incident Management. This initiative was a steppingstone toward mature ITIL development and a formal ITSM.

ITSM now includes Process Managers who represent teams throughout the organization and guide the development and application of specific ITIL processes, supporting these throughout the service life cycle. They meet regularly to discuss improvement opportunities and to leverage ITSM advancements.

Keeping the Focus on the Customer

ITIL processes standardize the way business is conducted. By facilitating communication and cooperation among team members, PD ALTESS sustains a customer-focused culture. Below are some of the major benefits that the most mature ITIL processes at PD ALTESS have provided to the organization and its customers:

- Incident Management has instituted a Single Point of Contact, which provides customers with a centralized location for all issues, concerns, and requests. Incident Management has also standardized the recording, classification, and resolution of incidents.
- Using Problem Management, PD ALTESS identifies the underlying problems behind recurring incidents and resolves them using problem investigations and root-cause analysis.
- Change Management has instituted the coordination and control of changes, ranging from those as simple as resetting passwords and rebooting a server to more complex actions such as creating a new server and upgrading a system. All changes are categorized according to type, based on the risk of executing the change; the impact to the affected users; and the amount of time, resources, and effort required to implement the change. Changes occurring on an enterprise level are communicated across the organization and presented before the



PD ALTESS must approach services from the perspective of the Soldier, as the products and services used by the warfighter require efficient planning, deployment, and support. Here, Soldiers of the 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, acquire a grid coordinate for a suspected improvised explosive device during a search near Combat Outpost Meade, Baghdad, Iraq, Dec. 5, 2009. (U.S. Army photo by PFC Benjamin Boren.)

Change Advisory Board. Communication of change activities between teams prevents conflicts of time and resources, thus providing customers a more reliable level of service.

- Service-Level Management has created robust relationships between PD ALTESS and its customers. Service-Level Agreements are created in concert with the customer; PD ALTESS Service-Level Coordinators identify each party's needs and responsibilities.

Continual Service Improvement

As part of the ITIL life-cycle framework, PD ALTESS has also developed a robust and ongoing Continual Service Improvement (CSI) initiative that identifies improvement needs. CSI allows PD ALTESS to determine where the organization is, where it wants to go, and—the top priority—how it will get there.

A recent CSI effort is PD ALTESS' revised Change Management process. Through feedback and analysis, the ITSM Program staff determined that the initial Change Management process, used throughout the organization, relied too heavily on “oral history.” Information was passed along by word of mouth instead of being properly documented.

The initial process also relied on a culture of individuals acting as heroes to accomplish tasks. Change types were not clearly defined, and the organization lacked a central repository for change requests. Further, Team Leads and Service-Level Coordinators did not receive notifications for changes affecting their teams or customers.

After identifying these deficiencies in the Change Management process, the ITSM staff developed improvements. To ensure support and ownership across the organization, PD ALTESS leadership at all levels was included in the design of the improved process prior to its deployment.

PD ALTESS selected the BMC Remedy Change Management application, by BMC Software, to automate the change process and to serve as the organization's central repository for changes. As a result, communication among teams became more efficient. The workflows of the Change Management process were also modified and automated in BMC Remedy to include a new step requiring Team Lead approval, as well as notification to the Service-Level Management Team for changes affecting customers.

The revised Change Management process also introduced a Forward Schedule of Change (FSC) calendar, which provides a central location for information on upcoming business events, releases, and other activities. The FSC enables PD ALTESS to raise the awareness of change and release activities taking place throughout the organization. In doing so, the FSC improves interorganizational communication and reduces scheduling

conflicts. The FSC is coordinated by a dedicated Master Scheduler, a role introduced in connection with the revised Change Management process. Collaborating with the Change Initiator, the Master Scheduler sets the scheduled start and end dates for each proposed change to avert potential conflicts.

Once the design of the revised Change Management process was complete and it was added to the CSI communication plan, training on the revised process was provided to meet each team's specific needs and concerns.

Overall, PD ALTESS' ITSM, coupled with its institutionalized ITIL processes, has created quick wins for the organization and its team members. Adopting ITIL processes has also created benefits that will be realized for years to come.

These efforts have effectively “broken down the silos” between PD ALTESS teams. Each team now shares a common organizational goal: to provide value-added service to customers and, ultimately, to the Soldier.

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