



The IT as a Service (ITaaS) Framework

Transform to an End-to-End Services Organization and Operate IT Like a Competitive Business

The IT as a Service (ITaaS) Framework

**Transform to an End-to-End
Services Organization and Operate
IT like a Competitive Business**

Justin Mann, CCIE No. 27040

Cisco Press

800 East 96th Street

Indianapolis, Indiana 46240 USA

This information can be gathered in a number of ways, from surveys to interviews that carefully sample each part of the IT organization. Whenever possible, leverage senior leadership support to bolster participation. Besides simply gauging the potential resistance to cultural change within the IT organization, the data gathered by change leadership teams here can inform the need for learning programs and knowledge-transfer initiatives later in the transformation program.

The best approach to capturing and documenting the information gathered should also be considered. Scaled measurements can provide an easy method for illustrating a surveyed characteristic of the organization's culture. For instance, when considering an IT organization's readiness to support a new approach to IT Service delivery, a scale of 1 to 10 could be used, with 10 reflecting a very high level of understanding and support. Multiple-choice responses offer another alternative; for example, when gathering input from business customers regarding their views of the IT organization, consider having them select from four descriptive responses.

It is important to consider any major events, either recent or even years past, that may influence the mood of the IT organization or business. Large-scale outsourcing, layoffs, or leadership changes could all sow resistance. Characteristics of the IT organization, such as large numbers of contractors or large numbers of resources new to the industry, can also present opportunities or challenges.

Another important factor to consider is the presence and number of resources within the IT organization today that already perform and share a mindset closer to that of the ideal future culture of IT. Some enterprises have already made attempts at establishing roles for IT resources that focus on dedicated engagement of business stakeholders and developing knowledge of their operations. While these roles vary widely between enterprises, are not always common, and may have been met with mixed success, they still represent opportunities for change leadership teams to identify and leverage. Another possible opportunity are resources in the IT organization who actually transitioned into IT from another business unit or have prior industry or business unit expertise. Note that IT resources with experience outside the IT organization are often more common in managerial roles due to historical approaches to rotations for management resources across various business units of an enterprise. At the individual level, change leadership teams need to assess a candidate's willingness to learn about and share a customer's goals and priorities versus a desire to focus purely on technology.

Envisioning the Future Culture of IT

What does it mean to say that an IT organization has adopted the ideal mindset in support of an end-to-end Services organization? What are the daily behaviors and attitudes of a given group of resources that manifest and sustain such a culture? In other words, what does good look like?

Change leadership teams should be able to describe the ideal future mindset of IT professionals and the culture they will cumulatively create. They should be able to

provide strong examples of how a resource who has adopted this mindset would impact interactions with their customers and their view of the value technical capabilities create for the enterprise business. Change leadership and broader IT Transformation teams should be the first to exemplify those behaviors themselves, acting as the earliest role models for the future culture of IT. They should be the first to “walk the walk.” Developing the abilities to describe and demonstrate these behaviors, guide the development of supporting training material, and act as early role models are all key activities for the change leadership function.

To begin, first consider those traits that should be shared by every member of the future IT organization. For starters, every IT resource should have general knowledge of the enterprise that the IT organization is supporting, such as its industry, relevant markets, value chain and major functions of the lines of business. Every resource within the IT organization should also understand the top corporate initiatives and, obviously, how the major goals and strategies of the IT organization support those initiatives. These resources should also acknowledge the various considerations described in Chapter 1, such as the fundamental purpose of the IT organization, obligations for supporting business outcome and operating efficiently, and the relationship and expectations associated with Service providers and their customers. Every resource should understand that IT is an end-to-end Services organization and focused on creating business value and customer satisfaction through the delivery of Services that enable business outcomes. Furthermore, each member of the IT organization should have a high-level familiarization with the organization's framework for Service delivery. Remember, these characteristics are true of every resource in the future IT organization, regardless of whether they act in a Service delivery role or focus purely on supporting a specific technology domain.

Characteristic requirements for IT resources facilitating Service delivery roles such as a Service Owner go even further. These resources should demonstrate a strong desire to partner with their customers and strive to be recognized as trusted advisors. Service Owners need to demonstrate an intimate knowledge of the operations, concerns, and goals of their customer base. For Business Operations Service types, this often requires developing knowledge of the business processes executed by the business unit and the business outcomes that these processes enable. This is required in order to understand the impact that technical capabilities have on the processes and to identify opportunities to leverage new technology platforms to improve the execution of those business processes. These resources have a thorough understanding of the Service delivery framework and constantly seek to drive value through the Services they support. Chapter 7, “Service Delivery Roles and Responsibilities,” expands on the ideal candidates and behaviors for these Service delivery roles.

Once the change leadership team has developed an initial view of the IT organization's future culture, they can compare it with the culture that exists today. In doing so, they can identify gaps and challenges that become critical inputs while shaping change leadership strategies, identifying opportunities, and informing the development of training material.

Using Strategies and Tactics to Facilitate the Cultural Shift to an ITaaS

Developing a strategy and a series of corresponding activities to foster a shift in the culture of an organization is another important activity for the change leadership team. Although the change leadership team is responsible for the initial strategy, it is key that the IT Transformation and IT leadership teams review and help refine the proposal because they will be equally responsible for executing it over time.

The strategy and resulting tactics are heavily influenced by careful consideration of the current and ideal future culture of the IT organization. Based on these considerations, the strategy should illustrate a plan for shifting the underlying culture of IT overlaid with the Services Transformation Program, highlight significant opportunities and challenges, and recommend specific activities. The strategy should also consider methods for qualifying the progress of the cultural shift and effectiveness of the strategy.

Some of the first activities applicable for all change leadership teams to support a strategy for cultural change are to prepare a set of materials that describe the target future culture of the IT organization and mindsets of the individuals who make it up. The shock of the intended cultural shift can be lessened through strong onboarding practices for Service delivery roles, regular training and knowledge-sharing sessions such as lunch-and-learns, and continuous learning programs that equally serve the Services Transformation value messaging effort. In fact, much of the materials that make up the Services Transformation messaging effort can likewise prepare IT resources for the cultural shift and raise the visibility of role models.

Some of the most impactful tactics for influencing a shift in the culture of an organization are to incentivize behaviors through rewards alignment and recognize those individuals who demonstrate the ideal behavior and mindset. The principle is simple: explicitly describe and encourage the adoption of new behaviors and mindsets, and then reward and recognize those who best demonstrate those characteristics in practice. Consider spotlighting top-performing individuals and leveraging their leading mindset for Service delivery roles. Reinforce the organization's commitment to the new culture over time by maintaining visibility and recognition. Proactively ensure that leadership approval and programs are in place to support these tactics.

Finally, the content of this section would not be complete until we share with you a hard truth of the implementation of the ITaaS framework and transformation of the culture of the IT organization: not all IT resources present today will thrive in the future IT organization. The change leadership team and IT leaders should make every effort to encourage and support every resource in the organization, but we cannot ignore that the IT organization post-Services Transformation is a completely different organization than the one that exists today. Some resources simply may not appreciate or enjoy how the organization operates, whereas others simply may not be capable of facilitating a role required in this new end-to-end Services organization. IT organizations committed to facilitating a new culture for IT Service delivery must prepare for these inevitabilities, while change leadership teams shape strategies and supporting activities to guide resources through the changing landscape. Note that this is not meant to imply in any way that a large portion of the organization will not be needed or will be unable to adopt the new mindset

of an ITaaS. Rather, our intent is to highlight the eventuality that the priorities of the organization will be much different. As a result, the top performers today may not be the top performers of tomorrow, some resources will struggle to adopt the new mindset and will need support to adjust, and in some limited cases, professionals may not be willing or able to adjust to the new culture of the IT organization.

Services Transformation Program Best Practices and Lessons Learned

The following topics relate to the overall management and successful execution of the Services Transformation Program rather than specifically to the change leadership function and its related strategies. Similar to the transformation critical success factors, making sure IT Transformation and IT leadership teams remain aware of these considerations represent a key activity to change leadership. Chapter 2, “Introducing Cisco ITaaS Framework and Services Transformation Program,” provided a brief introduction to a lengthy and complex Services Transformation Program. Despite a growing successful track record, a Services Transformation that realizes the outcomes discussed in Chapter 1 is a difficult task to achieve, and there is no reason for your IT Transformation team to repeat the mistakes of previous organizations.

Show Value Early

Realizing valuable outcomes for the IT organization and enterprise business is not limited to the completion of the Services Transformation. In fact, there is substantial opportunity to demonstrate value outcomes stemming from the transformation program within even the earliest phases and activities.

The Discovery and Design phase of the transformation program offers some of the earliest opportunities to provide value outcomes to the IT organization and its customers. In the Business and IT alignment work package, transformation teams conduct interviews across a range of both IT and business teams from operational, management, and senior management levels. While the bulk of this feedback informs the target ITaaS model for Service delivery and its desired capabilities, these interviews often uncover a lengthy list of issues that can be quickly addressed by the IT organization. Change leadership teams should quickly inform IT leaders of the opportunities and then make sure to track and share the results of any activities stemming from the feedback collected in the interviews. Examples of these low-hanging fruits commonly include IT teams quickly developing scripts or other means of automation in support of pesky repetitive tasks for business operations teams or by reprioritizing and escalating challenges that business teams had previously given up on. Other examples include IT managers making changes to policy or temporary concessions, allowing IT operational teams to better address the needs of the business where they may have previously been constrained. There is no reason to wait until these capabilities have been framed into a formal IT Service by the transformation program to support the customer. Note that similar value outcomes can be derived from the other work packages within the Discovery and Design phase again

by maintaining a sharp eye for opportunities to engage and support IT customers. Value will be created; the goal of the change leadership team is to recognize, communicate, and track it.

Demonstrating value early can benefit the transformation team in a number of ways, from bolstering change leadership efforts at spreading the word about the Services Transformation, to encouraging constructive support from key stakeholders, to quickly solidifying the support of IT and business leaders who may have at first hesitated to formally back the program. There's also just something to be said for getting a complex, multiyear program that seeks to fundamentally change the way IT interfaces with its customers off on the right foot.

Show Value Often

Show value early, and then keep it up throughout the life of the transformation program. The goal here is to develop a regular cadence for communicating value outcomes stemming from the Services Transformation, often referred to as incremental value.

Every work package and underlying set of activities provides the opportunity for a range of value outcomes—minor and major—for both the IT organization and the enterprise business. Some of these are the direct result of the work to adopt the ITaaS framework, whereas other instances of value outcomes are indirect, such as the identification of gaps in delivery of technical capabilities or cases where IT processes are constraining business operations. Whenever such a gap is identified, IT Transformation teams should communicate these and other opportunities to IT leaders who can engage the appropriate teams to address. Uncovering and reporting key information to relevant parties is itself a value outcome.

Whether directly or indirectly, relevant to IT or business stakeholders or to both, value continues to be created throughout the Services Transformation. Change leadership teams who make an effort to identify, capture, and actively communicate the value stemming from the transformation can be sure of support for their efforts throughout the program rather than simply at the beginning.

Engage the Business Early

The sooner change leadership teams engage key business stakeholders, the better. Although we established that a willingness and support for engaging the business throughout the transformation are critical success factors in an earlier section, this consideration is intended to encourage transformation teams to do so as early as possible. Engaging business stakeholders for input to the development of the framework and sharing details of the planned transformation aren't tasks that should be withheld until later phases of the transformation but instead should be done as early as possible. This is especially true for IT organizations that have found themselves in strongly unfavorable positions with their business customers.

The earliest opportunity for doing so is within the Discovery and Design phase work package for business and IT alignment, which encourages teams to conduct interviews with a range of business stakeholders. These interviews not only provide valuable input for the target ITaaS model design but also communicate that IT is eager to listen to its customers and to change its approach for Service delivery. Soon after this activity, as transformation teams complete an initial “to-be” design for the Service delivery model, change leadership teams should be strongly positioned to begin actively sharing a wide variety of value messaging. The sooner the change leadership team shares the message that the IT organization is seeking to align and partner with the business and to transform its culture to one focused on enabling business outcomes through technology, the better.

General Transformation Program Best Practices

While they may not require extensive explanation or detail, transformation and change leadership teams at some point in the future truly will appreciate this set of general best practices for conducting a Services Transformation. Consider these a compilation of tough lessons learned from Cisco Services teams dedicated to guiding customers of all sizes and varying industries through their own Services Transformations.

Respect the Realities of “Theory versus Practice”

As a creative spin on a quote intended for combat environments, I like to tell IT Transformation teams, “No business plan survives first contact with the customer.” Business teams regularly conceptualize innovative, high-value business plans that just don’t quite work out or create the level of value they had intended when put into practice, or in some cases cannot even be put into practice within real-world enterprise businesses. IT organizations and historical standards for IT Service management have struggled with the same challenges for translating theory into practice.

This principle means that IT Transformation teams need to emphasize from the earliest stages of the program that the capacity for putting a proposed design into practice trumps any other aspects of a proposal. This requires demonstrating high confidence that a proposed element of the framework can work in practice. The question that should be at the top of any IT Transformation team’s design deliberations is “Can this approach be implemented successfully across different Service types and for different customer bases?” Don’t make the mistake of overriding thoroughly tested design philosophies with seemingly big, innovative designs that have never been tested.

Cisco’s ITaaS framework and the corresponding transformation program are a reflection of Cisco’s focus on the ability to successfully implement a framework for Service delivery and achieve adoption end-to-end across the enterprise. Success is accounted for only after the Service delivery framework has achieved widespread adoption and value outcomes have been realized, not when the transformation team completes the design of a conceptual Service delivery framework.