

# **Service Agreements Round-Table Jun 10, 2010:**

## **Where do you Start with Agreements?**

There will be many, many meetings within IT when you are starting and moving forward to define Services and Agreements. Surprisingly, involvement from the business seems to be minimal, where the business is waiting for IT to bring its best foot forward.

The most common approach seems to *avoid* trying to start Agreements across all services. The accepted strategy is to focus on key and critical top-level IT services and to define Service Levels mostly focusing on Incident support targets and Availability targets. This initial effort seems to be mostly application based rather than service based, mostly due to the ease in focusing on applications rather than the debate of “what is a service?” In addition to this, it was discussed about focusing on top-level user interface components as candidates for agreements, and to group together components that can’t be operationally separated by users.

## **What is a Service?**

Discussions went back to defining a common understanding of “what is a service?” This is a common occurrence in our roundtable sessions, which is not unexpected given Agreements can’t be business focused or meaningful if you don’t know what you are ultimately delivering. There is also debate as to whether Requests and Professional Services are included for Service Agreements.

## **Hidden Agreements?**

The point was brought up to consider agreements that may already be in place: the Service Desk and Incident Support Priority Matrices. Many organizations publish the hours of Service Desk support and targets for call answer times, first contact resolution and more. This is an agreement for a professional service, and although not an IT Service it is still a service from IT.

Around Support Matrices and target resolution times, many people don’t realize these are agreements already. In fact, our discussion pointed out that Incident and Problem support matrices and agreements are crucial for Service Agreement success. These support matrices may not be for one service, but are likely covering multiple services and there are usually many different versions for different types of services (sometimes identified as critical applications vs general). This kind of broad range service agreement fits nicely into the concepts of Agreements, where an agreement is any agreed expectation between the business and IT. This type of agreement is not at the Service level, but at the group of services level (which is very common and an efficient way to start Agreements).

## **Challenges**

It was brought up that the biggest challenge is that IT thinks technically in terms of systems rather than services. In addition, IT tries to achieve 100% in everything it does without knowing the true Business Impact or Expectation, which in turn happens because there are no agreements or definition of service in place.

This technical thinking is a limitation for IT that runs to the top of some IT organizations. There is a lack of business skills and awareness when IT makes decisions concerning the Catalog and Agreements. There is still a tendency to think systems rather than business enabling IT service. Before creating Service Agreements, there needs to be some education, awareness, and training of the concepts to get understanding and buy in. This is a standard approach within ITIL and ITSM project plans.

Another key challenge identified was for control of Request Services. It was discussed that just as we have support priority matrices and expectations, the same exists for Requests. However, Requests (especially frequent ones) are anticipated and can be planned as procedural agreements when requested.

### **The Service Catalog**

The Service Catalog came up in discussion (as expected) because it is an extension of Agreements that we want the business and users to be aware of. A common use of the Catalog around agreements is the subject of “costing” and “charging”. Without an awareness of cost or per user charges, the business has no limit to what they can ask IT to do for them.

Note that it was also discussed that 70-80% of what you find in a Service Catalog (and hence defines services) is the same across different organizations. For example, there is a commonality on Desktop Services and Voice Services.