



Simulations. NICE to have or NEED to Have.

The theme of the itSMF conference in Barcelona was 'Knowledge to win'. Paul Wilkinson, in his plenary session presented '**The value of business simulations – for making change happen**' and attempted to convince the 300 delegates that a simulation is 'NEED to have' in order to create winning knowledge.

At the start of the presentation I asked the question '**How many people think a Simulation is NEED to have as opposed to NICE to have?**'. About 20 hands went up. At the end of the session the same question resulted in more than 40% of the delegates agreeing. So what convinced them?

I decided to use a number of arguments to try to convince the delegates that a simulation should be a vital element of any education or training initiative.

Case for Argument 1: We can no longer afford to fail....but we don't know how to succeed.

ITIL and such frameworks are becoming NEED to have as IT is becoming increasingly mission critical. This means ITIL implementations MUST succeed. However, 70% of ITIL implementations are unable to demonstrate value. A Gartner report suggested only 20% are doing a good job.

A Forrester report revealed that 52% fail because of resistance.

94% of more than 200 IT organizations we surveyed declared that current ITIL training and certification doesn't help address these issues.

Conclusion: We don't know how to apply the frameworks to realize value, we cannot create buy-in and convince people of the need for ITIL and traditional training isn't helping.

Argument 1: Current training and certification isn't working we NEED a different type of training, one that focuses on how to apply ITSM to realize the NEEDED business value, and how to create buy-in instead of resistance. This is what a simulation can do.

Case for Argument 2: Creating buy-in and overcoming resistance.

If many fail because of resistance then the next question is 'What are the most common types of resistance?'. I presented the most common types of resistance when attempting to deploy ITIL, as identified by more than 60 experienced practitioners. These were identified using the ABC of ICT card set. The top 3 being:

- Saying Yes and meaning NO
- No management commitment
- Plan, Do, Stop....No continual improvement focus

Three more in the top 10, related to the way in which we apply (or should I say mis-apply ITIL). These being:

- Throwing ITIL solutions over the wall and hoping people will follow them
- ITIL is the objective and not what it should achieve
- ITIL Consultant: A process flow and procedures are all you need

'Which ITIL training will help address these?' I asked. *There was no response from the delegates.*

Conclusion: There is resistance in terms of buying-in and following procedures as well as resistance caused by the way that ITIL is implemented, this is coupled with a lack of management commitment, however current training does not help address resistance.

Argument 2. *Resistance is a fact of ALL ITSM improvement initiatives!. Current training and certification doesn't show you how, or help to use, or overcome this resistance or create real buy-in. A simulation can and will create buy-in and can be used to gain commitment. A Simulation will allow people to learn HOW to successfully apply ITIL and avoid the most common types of resistance associated with applying ITIL'. I will show 2 cases studies, as well as the key learning points of 1000 students relating to success and fail factors for applying ITIL.*

Case for Argument 3: Learning to relate to business value and learning to apply

A service according to ITIL V3 is 'a means of delivering VALUE to the business in terms of the OUTCOMES they want to achieve without the ownership of specific COSTS and RISKS'. I asked 'Who knows the definition of a service?'. About 5 hands went up. I said EVERYBODY in IT should be able to quote this. I suggested we use this to examine the way we currently purchase ITIL foundation training. After all, a Foundation level training course may be seen as a service being offered by training companies.

A survey reveals most purchase a foundation training for the following OUTCOMES:

- A Certificate
- A Common terminology

'Is this the VALUE I, as a Business manager, expect and want when agreeing to let you spend IT budget on sending IT people to this training?' I asked. No... was the unanimous response.

The result of this outcome based approach to purchasing a foundation training is the following:

- COSTS: Longer implementation time learning how to use and apply ITIL, higher costs due to resistance and lack of buy-in.
- RISKS: The risk that the project will be delayed or may fail. The Risk that business value will not be achieved.

As a Business manager I expect people to understand what they have learnt in the context of Value, Outcomes, Costs and Risks. *I challenged the delegates to go and ask all of the people having attended a foundation training to explain what ITIL meant to their business in this context. How would it deliver value, what outcomes would it help achieve and how would it mitigate costs and risks.* Also as a business manager I expect they would know something about how to apply what they have learnt. The VALUE I expect from the training is that they can place ITIL in the context of a business problem, understand how ITIL will help and they will know how to translate theory into practice.

Argument 3: Current training doesn't show how to relate and apply ITIL to the business needs for Value, Costs and Risks. *Current training doesn't focus enough on applying ITIL to REALIZE this. A Simulation can help do this in 1 day!*

However most people want the cheap foundation training without a simulation. They would rather spend the time, effort, energy, consulting fees, redesign work fixing what didn't work the first time and the costs of replacing the staff that left because of resistance....but hey! We saved on the costs of a simulation. OK so the business has additional risks that expected value and outcomes won't be achieved and the business faces additional threats to continuity of services but hey! We saved the costs of a simulation.....and our staff all have an ITIL certificate ☺

Case for Argument 4: Winning Knowledge is related to experience and practice.

The theme of the conference was 'Knowledge to win'. I suggested we explore what this means. I looked up the definition of knowledge in the dictionary and used this to show where we go wrong with existing training.

Knowledge:

Expertise and skills acquired through

**experience or education;
the practical or theoretical understanding of a subject.**

We focus too much on the **education and theory** and not enough on **experience and practical** application. Winning knowledge is based on experience and practice and I would prove it by guaranteeing that 100% would agree with my next argument:

Argument 4: *A trainee Pilot may take all of the theoretical classroom training and pass all of the exams and certificates with 100% pass rate. If he has however not had practical experience in a simulator would you fly with him. NO hands went up. Yet we send all our IT staff on ITIL theory and gain certification then let them loose on our mission critical IT to test apply what they have learnt! A simulation provides a safe environment for testing and learning to apply in which mistakes pose no risk to mission critical real life operations. They learn how to translate Theory into Practice. This is a much higher Return-On-Value (ROV) of a training investment.*

Case for Argument 5: **Knowing what you want to solve or learn and ensuring the training facilitates this.**

A simulation can be used for many different learning objectives from learning ITIL theory (the most common way of using a simulation in relation to ITIL foundation), to supporting and enabling Culture change programs. Learning ITIL theory is the least valuable return on a simulation. Gaining commitment, buy-in or helping change attitude and behavior, or learning to practically apply and capture improvement needs is higher return on the value of the investment. Knowing what problem you want to solve and what you want people to learn is the key to the successful selection and use of a simulation.

ITIL training should be placed in the context of solving a problem or specific learning needs. Different companies have different objectives they want to realize with ITIL.

When you know this you can ensure the simulation is facilitated to enable this. Two case studies will highlight what we mean.

Case study 1: Management commitment.

“A Help desk manager, and help desk staff were the butt of all internal IT jokes. Poor quality, lousy service, user complaints, complaints from support staff. Senior managers didn’t see value in the Help desk, little money was spent on improving it. ITIL was being adopted and the Help desk manager was told to UTILIZE her domain. Management commitment was sadly lacking. In what way? The Help desk manager needed new Help desk management system, she needed more authority to ensure she could get better, faster support from the specialists. The specialists generally put the Help desk work that came their way at the bottom of the list of things to do..... The specialist managers said they would ensure their staff complied but did nothing (saying yes, meaning no & management commitment). The IT manager didn’t address the specialist managers or invest in improving (management commitment), and let’s not forget the poor, long suffering end-user that everybody seems to have forgotten about, who was not getting a VALUE from the service and business OUTCOMES were being threatened.

The Help desk manager felt sorry for herself, the Help desk staff felt demotivated, depressed, powerless and to make matters worse they were given a book of ITIL procedures that they now owned.....written by some consultants that had never even seen a Help desk, let alone an end-user (What is that asked the consultant?).

What did the Help desk manager do to become empowered? To change things?

She asked us if we could help change the attitude of senior management towards the Help desk, try to get managers to change their behaviour toward the Help desk. How can I gain management commitment?

We suggested some interventions:

1. Get the IT manager to visit an effective Help desk and let the Help Desk manager explain how the success was realized and the role played by IT management in making it happen. Let the IT manager of this organization convince your IT manager.
2. Play a simulation with the IT management team to let them see, feel and experience the impact of a poor quality help desk, and see, feel and experience the success when the Help desk works effectively.

Fortunately the IT managers wanted to organize a getaway, brain storming event to help focus attention on process working. It was decided to play the Apollo 13 business simulation with the IT management team and the heads of all of the specialist departments. We put the IT manager on 'Capcom'(Capsule communications), which is the Help desk. As the simulation progressed the IT manager was getting more and more stressed. His face went red, he started sweating as the Astronauts (Users) demanded status updates, 'where is my incident?', 'when will you resolve this it is important!?' He was receiving fragmented, incomplete and late information from the second and third level specialists in the simulation. He had no insight into all the incidents and their status or whereabouts. 'It is just like reality!' was the general observation, and the general feeling. At the end of the round there was recognition that this was similar to reality. We showed the team the impact of their behavior on business value and outcomes. Low Customer satisfaction, higher costs, poor availability of business systems. The business faced unacceptable risks because of outages and unsolved incidents.

We helped the team scope some improvements. A better registration and tracking capability, more authority with the Help desk (Incident manager) for ensuring incidents were solved on time, increased responsibility by the second line for up to date information and knowledge transfer to the Help Desk staff, better registration and availability of common work-arounds. After the improvements were made we played the next game round. Suddenly everything went smoothly, the Astronauts (users) were happy. Availability improved, costs went down, resolution times increased. The IT manager was relaxed and smiling and feeling proud to be on 'CapCom'. We then reflected on what the success factors were, and more importantly, reflected on the impact of the changes made in the game to real life.

The IT manager sat at the back of the class, deep in thought and nodding to himself. Finally he declared there would be more funding to adequately 'tool' the Help desk, there would be more authority and even more importantly the second line managers were given the 'task' to ensure their staff spent time doing 'knowledge transfer'. The Help desk manager sat with her mouth open as she heard the IT manager commit to the changes the Help Desk manager had been proposing for a long time. Why this sudden turn around? We asked the IT manager. "In the simulation you are confronted with the impact of poor behaviour on end-users. You are confronted with the pain and frustration of end-users not being able to do what they NEED to do....you are also confronted with the dependency of end-users on the Help desk and how the Help desk NEEDS to be a calling card for IT quality and service....I realized we NEEDED to make our Help Desk equally as effective as the simulation. Then it was a no-brainer!".

Case 2: Overcoming resistance

Apollo 13 was used as an instrument to help create awareness of the benefits of process working, and at the same time capture input for a service improvement initiative. Capturing improvement initiatives from the shop-floor helped 'empower' the employees; at the same time it was played with teams made up of different departments in order to break down the 'silo' mentality that existed. At the start of an Apollo 13 simulation we were told that this particular group was filled with 'resisters', "these people will not accept it...", "these people will work against you." This was the last session and was seen as the session of 'no hopers'.

We did an introductory round. "What do you expect from this training?"

"I expect this will be a waste of time!"

"... I could be doing something more useful"

"... I do not believe in this process stuff..."

When asked to clarify, it came down to 'too much unnecessary registration and bureaucracy that nobody needs...'

"We don't have the time to explain or hand-over..."

"It will just give me MORE work and more people telling us what to do..."

It was clear this resistance was related to time pressures, workload and not believing that processes could help in any way.

We played Apollo. The initial round was a disaster. There was stress, frustration, anger and a general belief of "see, we told you that processes were a waste of time." The sponsor for the workshop was getting worried. We had made the resisters even angrier and they had even more reason to believe they were right.

The interventions in the game, thought up by the resisters themselves, were:

- get rid of the annoying repeat work that was wasting their time;
- agree a priority mechanism to help everybody decide what work should be done first;
- agree an escalation mechanism so that somebody else could make a call on priority when there was a conflict about what to do next;
- agree to give each other the right information to enable everyone to do what they need to do;
- agree to give each other feedback when things are not working as agreed.

We tested their new procedures, process design and agreements. The next round went much smoother. They achieved their goals and targets. We asked them "How does it feel?"

"Smoother, easier, less stress, more time to pick up the difficult projects, more ability to plan."

"How come?" we asked.

They concluded that it was because they had agreed their own procedures, they had all done what they had agreed and promised, they had handed over some of the workload to other people. They had, in fact, done all of the things they were being asked to do but now they were able to experience the difference this made to their own tasks.

We reflected back on what had happened and how we had listened to their underlying concerns, and we tried to show them how these could be solved by doing the very thing they were resisting.

The reflection comments were:

“...I didn’t realize it could make our lives easier..”

“...this stuff can work, I must admit I am surprised. I will tell my team we need to get involved and make sure the process design project involves us so we can ensure the right things are done...”

The two case studies clearly showed how a simulation can change the attitude and behavior at all levels of staff from operational to management, helping create buy-in, commitment and overcoming damaging resistance.

Conclusion: A simulation, when used correctly, can solve a variety of problems and realize a range of learning objectives. It can be used to create buy-in, overcome resistance, break down organizational Silos, learn how to use ITIL to realize value, capture improvement initiatives for a CSI initiative. It is vital therefore to KNOW what it is you want and expect to learn when engaging any ITIL training, especially a simulation. Failing to do so will probably mean the needed value and outcomes are NOT achieved and create additional COSTS and RISKS to your business as a result of failing initiatives. Remember. We can no longer afford to fail to successfully apply ITSM best practice frameworks to bring IT under control. Existing approaches are not working!