

A Study of Retrospective Change in ITIL Service Management

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Abstract : This Paper is talking about the fundamentals and various factors about the Retrospective change under ITIL Based service delivery management like Why the Retrospective change is required, what is the criteria to involve Retrospective change, the way of implementing this type of change, Merits/Demerits of this and points to be noted importantly while we work on this.

I. Introduction

ITIL is the most widely adopted approach for IT Service Management in the world. It provides a practical, no-nonsense framework for identifying, planning, delivering and supporting IT services to the business.

ITIL has been adopted by thousands of organizations worldwide, such as NASA, the UK National Health Service (NHS), HSBC bank and Disney™. ITIL is also supported by quality services from a wide range of providers including examination institutes, accredited training providers and consultancies, software and tool vendors and well known service providers such as IBM, Telephonic, HP and British telecom (BT).

A comprehensive qualifications scheme offering a variety of training courses and certifications has been developed against the guidance. This scheme can help organizations to effectively implement ITIL, achieving success by ensuring that employees have the relevant knowledge, skills and techniques, but most importantly, ensuring the entire organization is using a common language and are fully invested in the process.

ITIL advocates that IT services must be aligned to the needs of the business and underpin the core business processes. It provides guidance to organizations on how to use IT as a tool to facilitate business change, transformation and growth.

The ITIL best practices are currently detailed within five core publications which provide a systematic and professional approach to the management of IT services, enabling organizations to deliver appropriate services and continually ensure they are meeting business goals and delivering benefits.



The two most commonly used disciplines in ITIL SERVICE MANAGEMENT are Service Support and Service Delivery.

Service Support comprises of:

- Service Desk Incident Management
- Problem Management
- Configuration Management
- Change Management
- Release Management

Service Delivery comprises of:

- Service Level Management
- Financial Management for IT Services
- Capacity Management
- Availability Management

II. What is change Management

Change management is an [IT service management](#) discipline. The objective of change management in this context is to ensure that standardized methods and procedures are used for efficient and prompt handling of all changes to control IT infrastructure, in order to minimize the number and impact of any related incidents upon service. Changes in the [IT](#) infrastructure may arise reactively in response to problems or externally imposed requirements, e.g. legislative changes, or proactively from seeking improved efficiency and effectiveness or to enable or reflect business initiatives, or from programs, projects or service improvement initiatives. Change Management can ensure standardized methods, processes and procedures which are used for all changes, facilitate efficient and prompt handling of all changes, and maintain the proper balance between the need for change and the potential detrimental impact of changes.

Objective of the change management is Standardized methods and procedures are used for efficient and prompt handling of all changes and all changes to service assets and configuration items are recorded in the Configuration Management System

III. Type of changes

Based on the need and situation, ITIL changes are classified as below:

Preapproved (Routine) - Less risk involved and perfectly tested changes

Normal (Standard)-Changes which has less priority and this type of changes will go through CAB/TAB Meetings.

Urgent type1-This type of changes are for major hardware or for software issues, these changes does not go through traditional change management process like TAB/CAB.

Urgent type2 - This type of changes are for major business requirements and this changes should have valid business justification, these changes does not go through traditional change management process like TAB/CAB.

Emergency Change-This change will come in picture where the customer has huge business impact and the application/system is completely down. This kind of changes also not falling under traditional change process, But the change request should not detailed info and change manager approval is required before processing the change.

IV. What is retrospective change?

This change is from the emergency change family but this does not have a traditional change request ticket and approval on tool. But the communication to top management and to all stake holders can happen through normal communication methods like Email.

Proposed retrospective change is an attempt to restore the service but it does not guarantee for 100% success.

In order to facilitate speedy / timely correction/fixing of a system outage ITIL recognizes the need to complete documentation retrospectively. In other words, fix the problem, and then document it.

V. Need of what is retrospective change?

Most of the times changes are come in picture in 2 ways. One is through Incident/problem or through CIP/SIP (Continual improvement plan/Service improvement plan).

When the business affected to customer due to the unavailability of application there will be an incident raised based on the urgency and impact. This will go to normal process flow in order to get the solution but this will not help in all the situation and it will leave with some unidentified issues.

For an example, Bank internet banking website running with IIS mechanism which is a component of Microsoft windows.IIS linked with an application and it based on some database Like SQL,IBM DB2,Oracle.All these are linked each other and end user will not be able to access an application until all are running without any issue. If user reports an issue this can be an issue at web server/Application /Database server /Cluster Mechanism or with windows server where database hosted.

In general the ticket will go to Platform team first and based on their update it will move to other support teams like Database team, web support team and network team to fix the issue. The isolation of the issue can be initiated as per the design of the application. In the given situation there is a chance that the database has an issue which is running on MS cluster. To fix the issue the windows server may needs reboot, but customer/user cannot wait for long time if we go through normal change process. So the required server reboots taken place without change and based on the result/Success it will be recorded in the change request for record/Auditing purpose.

VI. Risk involved in retrospective change?

Though we are doing this process for fixing the issue and restoring the service quickly to avail the business to customer/Stake builders, it is not giving the positive result always as expected. There is a chance that this may lead to serious issues some times. The –ve result of retrospective change may give some unexpected issues which will lead to the delayed resolution and will eliminate the isolation process of various stages.

Generally, All type of changes except retrospective change does have a defined overview, step by step implementation step, Approved downtime, Teams involving the activity, Test plan, Backout plan etc. All these things will help for better change implementation with 0% change failure. In worst case if something goes wrong we will be able to roll back the change to the previous stage by using the detailed plan.

In this Method, if something goes wrong at the time of implementation it will not allow to recover this easily as there was not defined method and nothing was recorded. Also the communication sent to the customer may be within limit but Top management may blame later based on the –ve result and business impact.

VII. Benefits and Demerits retrospective change

No Doubt that this method will help everyone in fixing the issue and restoring the services back to normal state by using the undefined mechanism. This may make customer happier with quick resolution. It reduces the time consumption on coordination with users/stake holders/Customers, TAB/CAB Meeting reviews, Approval Process and notification etc.

Things will go smooth and happier until everything is OK. But the question/problem comes in picture if something goes wrong while we implement the retrospective change. As this an undefined attempt without correct technical info or process flow engineers/technicians will not be able to isolate the issue after change implementation. Sometimes this may cause major issues and it will lead to delayed resolution to the issue.

Demerits of this type of change can be removed by using the effective method of process and also by involving experts, service management people from service provider and from customer.

VIII. Best Approach on retrospective change

In order to avoid further issues post retro change implementation it is better to have a minimal info about the infra, involving SMEs from all technical teams, Service delivery managers from users, vendor and service provider. And also notification can be done to all the stake holders with the activity plan and also explaining the need of this urgent activity as this is an only and last option. Both of this will help in recovering services, isolating the issue and avoid blaming from customer.

IX. Conclusion

As discussed this process is not preapproved and not defined one. In order to obtain the benefits it is better to use the best approaches as mentioned above. Also this needs to be engaged based on the situation and need.

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