The Integral Service Management Model

By Dolf van der Haven, Powerful Answers

Introduction

This document introduces an extended model for IT Service Management, based on principles of Integral Psychology and embedded in the ISO/IEC 20000 standard for service management. This Integral Service Management Model (ISMM), as I call it, has as its aim to extend classic ITSM with human factors such as attitude, behaviour, culture and cooperation. It creates a much broader context for ITSM than a framework such as ITIL or a standard such as ISO 20000 does and therefore hopes to provide new perspectives on the role of service management with the IT enabled services industry.

Necessarily, this only touches on the surface of a full service management system. If you are interested in going into more depth, feel free to contact the author.

Dolf van der Haven

dolf.vanderhaven@powerfulanswers.eu

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Introduction

ISO/IEC 20000, ITIL and IT Service Management in general are in the letter mostly process and organization-oriented. What misses in these approaches, but are important factors in the implementation of any ITSM framework, are the perspectives on the influence of organizational culture and communication as well as the individual's attitude, motivation, emotional state and behaviour on a successful ITSM implementation.

These aspects can be added to ITSM by integrating it into the model used in Integral Psychology. Integral Psychology bases itself on a model that states there are four basic perspectives on any phenomenon in the world. After explaining this theory, the application thereof to ITSM will be developed.

Ken Wilber's Integral System comes down to splitting up phenomena in the world into four aspects, based on whether you talk about an individual person, the group that person belongs to or whether you look at things from an internal perspective or from an external one. This results in the so-called four Quadrants, depicted as follows:
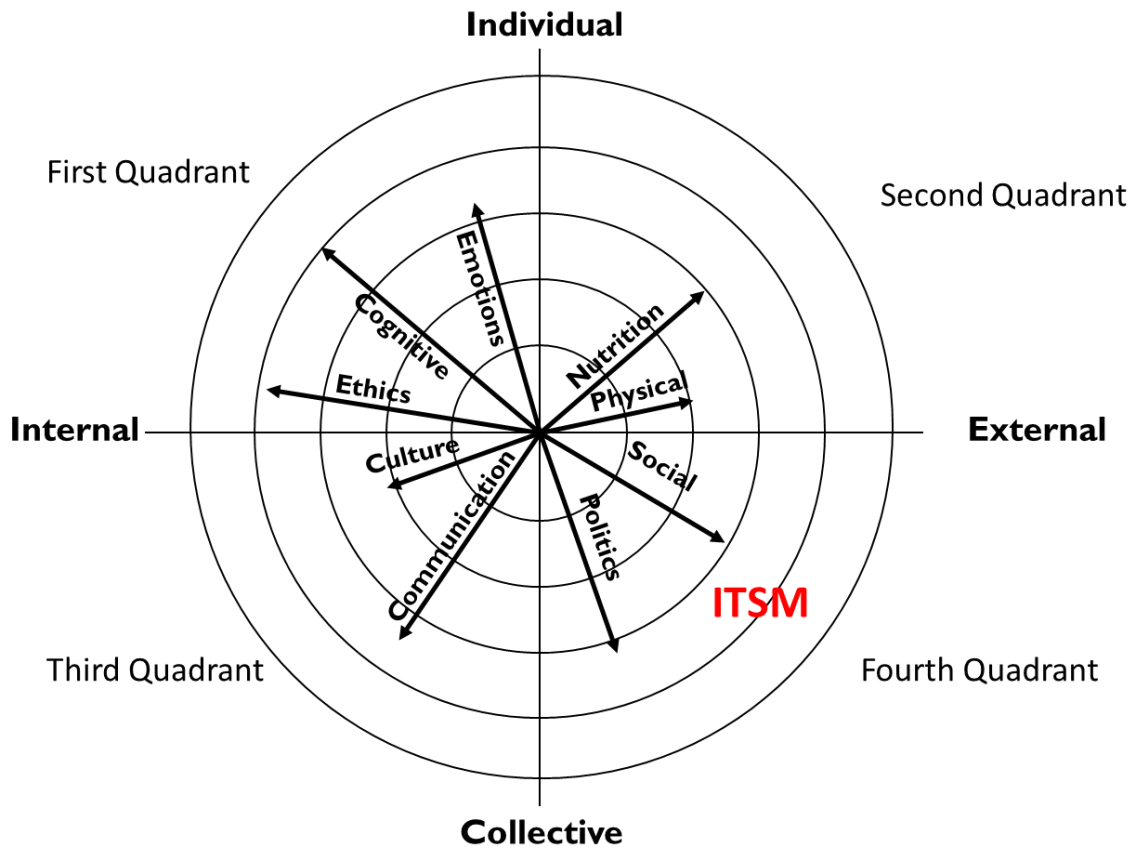

Figure 1. Ken Wilber's Integral Model and the place of ITSM in it.

1. The *first quadrant* on the upper left contains internal individual aspects such as knowledge, emotions, morality, etc.

2. The *second quadrant* on the upper right contains external individual aspects such as the physical body, health and behaviour.
3. The *third quadrant* on the lower left contains internal aspects of the group (a company, society, etc.), such as communication and culture.
4. The *fourth quadrant* looks at the group from the outside, involving things like organization, politics, processes.

In each of the quadrants, there are possibilities for *growth or development* in various aspects, indicated by the arrows in the picture.

The term "Integral" implies that for a full perspective on any phenomenon, you need to be able to view it from each of the four quadrants, taking into account all possible levels of growth in each of them. Only then do you get a full picture of it.

Given that IT Service Management today mostly focusses on the processes, organizational structure and procedural aspects of providing services to customers, this puts ITSM into the fourth quadrant. The premise of this theoretical part is that we can improve ITSM by adding more aspects from the other quadrants to it.

We will discuss the influence of the other quadrants on ITSM first, starting with the lower-left or third quadrant, then following the Integral Model clockwise to end up in the lower-right or fourth quadrant.

Third Quadrant Aspects

The Third, lower-left, Quadrant in the Integral Model contains the internal perspective of a group - in this context an organization that implements or improves their IT Service Management practices. The internal perspective of this organization mainly contains the *culture* of that group of people as well as the interaction among them, viz. *communication*. Every organization, no matter how large or small, has a certain common culture, which is built from the cultures of the individual members thereof, as well as from an imposed corporate culture that is determined by the general way of working in a company and, by extension, in a country. Looking at individual companies and organizations within those companies, cultural differences can be observed. These differences can be discerned as differences in work attitude: eagerness to jump onto new opportunities and developments, flexibility in working times, and so forth. Finally, one can also speak about an individual's culture - this is covered by "attitude" and belongs in the First Quadrant.

Culture impacts IT Service Management, which is mostly concerned with implementing a structured organization and processes in order to provide services to customers in an efficient manner. Processes need to be embedded in the culture of the organization they need to function in. This means that one implementation of e.g. an incident management process cannot be identical to another implementation. In one cultural environment, it may be acceptable to have longer repair times than elsewhere. KPIs may be stricter or more relaxed depending on the cultural (rather than IT) environment.

Culture also influences how easily new or changed processes are accepted by the organization: is there a general aversion against change or are people in general happy to adapt to a new environment? The answer to this question not only depends on the culture of

the organization, but also on the way in which changes are introduced, which, in turn, depends mostly on *communication*, the second aspect from the third quadrant.

There are two aspects of communication that have an impact on IT Service Management: the communication during implementation or improvement of processes and the communication set up to support individual processes.

Proper communication about the implementation of change in an organization consists of a number of activities: analysing the stakeholders; involving people in the preparation; communicating relevant information to stakeholders at the appropriate time; continual communication; finding the right communication methods.

Communication should mostly consist of listening and acting on feedback. It is vital to the success of communication to listen to feedback from the audience and act on it. People want to be taken seriously, hence should feel they are being listened to in the first place.

A process is often not something that lives in a single department only: the great majority of ITSM processes run across multiple departments and information needs to be transferred from one group to the other and cooperation is needed to jointly fix an issue. All this hinges on correct ways of communication between the involved people. Tools, such as a CMDB or SKMS, help, but a tool is only there to support the process, it cannot replace proper communication between people. Similarly so, the method of communication need to be selected carefully in order to support the process rather than disrupting it by taking an inefficient way of communication.

First Quadrant Aspects

The First Quadrant in the Integral Model is about the internal perspective of an individual: it covers knowledge, emotions, but also motivation, ethics and attitude. All these aspects have a reflection on the behaviour of a person, which itself is part of the Second Quadrant.

The impact of the First Quadrant on IT Service Management can be observed in a person's behaviour: this is a result of whether this person is actually motivated to follow the ITSM framework that he needs to work in, whether he has enough knowledge of it to understand what the importance is of following a Release and Deployment process or whether he feels dumbed down by having to follow a procedure rather than doing things his own way. All this is embedded in a person's *attitude* towards the organization and the processes in it.

Attitude is influenced by an aspect from the third quadrant, viz. communication. In the previous section the relevance of setting up an effective communication plan was indicated. Communication needs to take place at various levels; also at a personal level. Individuals are unique people with each their own perspective on life, work and how they want to function. It therefore requires an individual approach for people to pull them across the line to be able to work within the framework that has been decided for them.

People may have all sorts of objections to the way of working within a company. These may be based on knowledge, emotions, ethical considerations or motivational issues, to name the main ones. Communication is needed in all these areas.

Knowledge: a cognitive understanding of ITSM and its role in the organization is a first step towards acceptance of it.

Emotions: emotions need to be taken seriously, in particular when organizational change is being implemented. In no case should emotions be ignored, for they often convey the most direct response to what is being dealt with.

Ethics: there may be a conflict between corporate ethical standards and an individual's sense of morality. In this case, if an individual has issues with the company's level of ethics, it is up to that person to comply with the company's level or choose another place to work. Compromise is sometimes hard to find, but the company cannot likely adapt to an individual's moral standards.

Motivation: similar to what was said under "knowledge," the emphasis should be on the "why" of the implementation of ITSM in a company. The benefits to the company, the customers, but also to the individual employees must be made clear.

All these elements should lead to an attitude of individual employees that supports behaviour in line with what is needed in the framework of an IT Service Management environment.

Second Quadrant Aspects

The second quadrant is about externally observable aspects of the individual: physical development, health, but in the context of ITSM it is mostly about behaviour. Behaviour is the externally observable reflection of a person's attitude.

Desired behavior of individuals in a company should not be about compliance to rules, processes and procedures. Rather, it should be about the willingness of those individuals to work within a Service Management System that has been set up to facilitate their activities. This willingness is closely related to the individual's attitude as well as to the communication discussed previously.

People will only willingly comply with the use of systems or the application of processes if they see the *value* of these for themselves. Value denotes whether someone sees the relevance of a system or process to what their everyday job is. It is the value of a Service Management System (SMS) for people's work activities that needs to be made clear to them. This comes back to the relevance of communication during the implementation or change of an SMS, but also ongoing during the use of it. Feedback from end-users needs to be collected to assess whether an implementation actually provides value for them or not.

The right *behavior* (second quadrant) therefore depends on how the *attitude* (first quadrant) of the individuals gets influenced by the proper communication (third quadrant) and acceptance of the value of (part of) an SMS (fourth quadrant). This is an example where all four quadrants in the Integral Model are linked to and influence each other.

Fourth Quadrant Aspects

As indicated earlier, the majority of what constitutes ITSM fits in this fourth quadrant, which looks at the structure of an organization, including its setup and processes. The importance of this quadrant for ITSM is the fact that an SMS does not exist in isolation, but must be embedded within the existing organizational structure. Most likely, the existing organizational structure will need to be adapted to the requirements of the SMS as well. This involves

organizing teams in such a way that the most effective use can be made of the people who need to be performing the processes described in the SMS..

Similarly so, there are existing processes in companies that a new or changed SMS needs to be working with: a procurement process that needs to interact with a Change Management process which calls for the introduction of new hardware in an environment. There needs to be a logical interaction between these two processes to come to an integrated workflow that allows this change to be implemented smoothly.

Tools also have a place in this quadrant. There are many tools supporting ITSM in the market and some companies also develop their own. Tools should be there to *support* the processes; they are not *defining* the processes. It does happen often that the choice of tools actually limits the flexibility of the process, which ultimately reduces efficiency and gives ITSM a bad name. Moreover, in the case of a multi-customer service provider, interaction of the provider's tools with those of the customer for e.g. data exchange may make the processes more efficient, but at the same time may reduce efficiency if the interaction is not designed well or cannot be made efficient due to the tools' limitations.

Development in All Quadrants

Referring back to Figure 1, the Integral Model not only consists of four quadrants, but also indicates *growth* or *development* in each of those. In the context of IT Service Management, this can be interpreted as *maturity*.

Maturity of ITSM processes can be measured using methods such as CMMI-SVC [16], COBIT5 [7] or ISO 15504 [8], where a number of consecutive stages of *process* maturity are defined. These levels can be used to assess the maturity and effectiveness of an ITSM implementation by looking at the various processes, but do not take into account other relevant aspects such as the maturity of communication, cultural context, motivation and behavior of people and organizational maturity. It is these aspects that need to be added to a maturity assessment of an (integral) ITSM implementation.

Maturity in the fourth quadrant looks at how well an organization is set up to support the Service Management System: is there top management support, is the hierarchy structured in such a way that it is optimal for the performance of the processes, are the best tools in place to support the processes and is there enough integration with other processes in the company?

Maturity in the third quadrant looks at how well communication is set up and how well it is functioning in the organization. It also looks at cultural maturity in the sense of receptiveness of the organization to having ITSM processes introduced in it.

At an individual level, there are levels of maturity in attitude, motivation, ethics and emotions in the first quadrant that ultimately determine the maturity of behavior in the second quadrant.

Note that all these definitions of maturity are not independent from each other. Similar to how in Figure 1 the levels of development are indicated as circles that cross all quadrants do all aspects of IT Service Management that have been described in this chapter interact with

each other. A mature ITSM implementation requires a mature organization with mature individuals in it.

Value

Looking again at figure 1, there is an aspect that is not so obvious, but definitely present. In his theory about the Integral Model, Ken Wilber also refers to what he calls "the paper on which the model is drawn." In his case, he states that the Integral Model is embedded in and originates from "Spirituality." In the context of ITSM, that is quite intangible and not very useful, so I prefer to replace that with something more concrete (yet still intangible), viz. *Value*. Therefore, my statement would be that the Integral Service Management Model exists only in the context of value creation and also originates from value creation. The paper on which the Integral Service Management Model is drawn is therefore value.

The question then arises what value exactly is. We have the traditional ITIL definition of value as warranty and utility, which I found on the one hand confusing (I keep mixing the two up because the two words have no intrinsic meaning for me) and on the other hand lacking practical application (how do you measure these two parameters as a function of what the customer considers value?). ISO 20000-1 uses the word "value" four times without defining what it is.

Value ultimately is determined by what the customer believes he gets from the service provided. You can therefore only ask the customer what a service's value consists of exactly, but likely it is part of the following list:

- Reduces costs

- Increases revenue

- High Quality

- Always available

- Easy to use

- Good relationship with the service provider

- Easy access to the service provider in case of issues

- Quick responsiveness of the service provider

…and so on and so forth.

Asking the customer is part of customer satisfaction surveys, which classically consists of endless numbers of questions about different aspects of the service that the service provider believes are important. These may or may not match the items that the customers find important and therefore I always find the answers to free-form questions (e.g. "What else do you want to let us know?") most interesting, as they will convey the true aspects of what value customers expect from a service.

In terms of the Integral Service Management Model, value is what all aspects from all quadrants in all their development lines should strive for. Value is also the reason why the

services and the service provider exist, which is why the complete model originates from the wish to provide value and at the same time strives for the attainment of true value. In this sense, the model's origin and end are the same.

The combination of ISO 20000 with the Integral Model's four quadrants and overall development embedded in value completes the theory of the Integral IT Service Management Model.

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What is most important to us is seeing your business improve by implementing the proper service management processes. We strongly believe that IT Service Management is the key to a successful business that so strongly depends on IT.

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