



The Three Qualities & Customers Of The IT Service Catalog

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Have you ever stopped to consider that ITIL® is a Service Management Framework?

This sounds pretty basic and you may be wondering what is meant by this obvious statement.

Consider that if ITIL is a Service Management framework, this means that all of the processes have only one goal: to plan for, deliver and support IT services!

This being the case, then perhaps the Service Catalog is much more than an a la carte menu for the business customer. Rather, the Service Catalog is the cornerstone or foundation for any ITSM initiative!

To understand this critical element of IT success, it is necessary to fully comprehend the nature and purpose of a Service Catalog. To begin this discussion, let's examine what a Service Catalog is not. It is a common misunderstanding that the Service Catalog is no more and no less than a marketing brochure for IT and as such is a 'nice to have' option. While the Service Catalog may be used for the basis of creating a marketing tool, this is an auxiliary output of the catalog and certainly not its central purpose.

To gain a complete perspective on the use and purpose of the IT Service Catalog, one needs to understand that there are three core qualities of the Service Catalog which in turn have three target customer groups.

Three Qualities of the Service Catalog

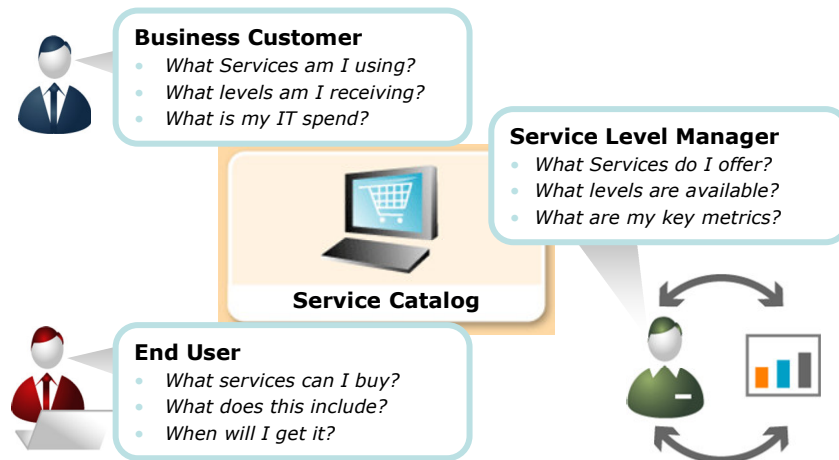
- 1. Constitutive:** First and foremost, the Service Catalog is constitutive, in that it defines what IT does and does not do, and on what terms. As the constitution of a country lays down the guiding principles of how the society will operate, the Service Catalog clearly articulates for both IT and its customers the guiding principles as well as the details of what, how and to who services are delivered.

By its constitutive nature, the Service Catalog is used as a starting point in support of open discussion and dialog on how IT can support the needs of its business customers.

- 2. Actionable:** In order for the Service Catalog to be of use on an ongoing basis to the customer community, it must do more than provide a platform for publishing information about IT Services. Research shows that unless the IT Service Catalog enables and automates the IT request and order fulfillment processes, the chances of its ongoing adoption as a useful and meaningful tool is less than 4%. In short, the Service Catalog is best understood as an online tool for browsing and ordering IT Services.
- 3. Governing:** As suggested by ITIL best practices, the Service Catalog documents the details of how and when IT services are delivered based on business requirements established by Service Level Management. By the nature of these documented service attributes, the Service Catalog provides a governing function that ensures IT services are designed, delivered and audited against the key terms, conditions and controls that are agreed upon, e.g.: entitlement, support, authorization, control, costing and charging.

Three Customers of the Service Catalog

Just as there are three qualities of the Service Catalog, it is also important to understand that it is a tool used by three separate roles, each with a separate objective and perhaps view of the data presented in the catalog.



1. **Business Customer:** For the business customer, the Service Catalog represents a tool to assist with annual planning and budgeting activities. Information is presented to this role at a level that supports the estimation of how IT services are used as it relates to a business customer's subscription to a collection of service offerings. This bundling of service offerings into a portfolio view provides a clear understanding of the planned IT spend.
2. **End User:** Based on agreements made at the Business Customer level of the catalog, the user is presented with a set of day to day transactional IT services that support ongoing business operations. The information that is presented out of the catalog for the user is filtered based on established agreements and role based entitlements. For the user the service catalog is a shopping cart and a key entry point to the organizations Request Management Processes.
3. **Service Level Manager:** From an IT perspective, the Service Catalog is also a tool to clearly document the detailed technical attributes of service delivery, such as Availability, Security, IT Service Continuity, etc. It is this detailed information that is used for governing the delivery of IT services and is a primary source of information of how services are delivered. The Service Level Manager working with a customer contact and an IT service owner agree upon the levels of services documented in the catalog and how they are referenced in the customer facing Service Level Agreements (SLAs) as well as the IT facing Operational Level Agreements (OLAs) and Underpinning Contracts (UCs).

In summary, to fully comprehend the importance and scope of a Service Catalog, it is important to understand its three qualities and three key customer groups. These subjects are fully explored in the Pink Elephant book, *How To Define IT Success Through The Service Catalog*, available from Van Haren publishing (www.vanharen.net).