

## **Article: ITIL and the Seven Dwarves**

**(Printed in ITSMF Australia Bulletin Spring 2006)**

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## ***ITIL and the Seven Dwarves***

Once upon a time there lived a princess named ITIL. Her wicked stepmother, the queen of systemic bad practice, feared that one day ITIL's popularity would surpass her own. She used to manage IT departments by stealth, kept management direction towards staff under veils, hired unlimited numbers of staff and contractors to cover up issues, purchased silver bullets (called software tools) and kept her cards close to her chest. Each day the queen consulted her magic mirror, 'mirror mirror on the wall, who is the most popular one of all?'...and as long as no real and compelling questions were asked about cost and measurable quality of IT services, the mirror answered: 'you, my queen, are the most popular of all.'

ITIL was safe from the queen, though was kept in rags.

Some years ago, the call for cost justification and service level achievements had become too strong to be glossed over. The magic mirror had to admit that there was someone else other than the Queen who was the most popular in the land.

The mirror said: 'grand is thy popularity, majesty. But behold, a lovely best practice I see. A slightly boring read cannot hide her gentle features. She'll first see some more years of evangelising and generation of hope amongst IT practitioners, followed by the easy bit: the production of strategic papers and a multitude of process documents across the land, then some tool alignment and ultimately brave implementation, management and continuous improvement by warrior managers. She now holds that promise. Alas, she is more popular than thee.

To the wicked queen's horror, her worst fear was confirmed. She realised the mirror had described ITIL.

She initially ordered an evil plan to be executed by her huntsmen: 'Dress ITIL up, tell the people that she doesn't apply to this land and our culture, tell the people that she is like ISO, that she will pass, tell them that she will not work, take her into a dark forest and then kill her.' But the huntsmen hadn't the ticker nor the skills to thwart the IT Management practitioners across the land and, while they tried to, couldn't murder ITIL.

ITIL's popularity grew and grew. As the mirror had predicted, ITIL initially went through an evangelising phase. Multitudes of IT practitioners were converted. ITIL held a promise for many and already fulfilled the promise for some. For those 'lucky' people, ITIL resulted in improved service levels, improved cost control, improved management control, improved customer satisfaction and improved IT employee satisfaction. But even amongst the success stories, organisations mainly focused on incident management and change management. Only very few early warrior managers managed to take her beyond and make her really work. It was hard to know at face value who these warrior managers were. At conferences, so many people truly appeared to be one. Yet, how to recognise one's ability to walk the talk in the thick of the fight, where powerpoint slides with flash versions of process models alone were no longer sufficient armour?

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ITIL had found her place in the IT Management forest and she happily entertained the seven dwarfs:

- Doc, the global ITIL guru from overseas, who had an offer that the IT Market couldn't refuse and was leading the pack, but who was a little out of practice.
- Happy, who loved ITIL, revelled in strategic planning activities and scored 40 out of 40 in his ITIL Essentials exam, knew each page of each ITIL book by heart, but first wanted to study a bit more before taking on the Service Manager exam and possibly becoming a consultant or simply implementing ITIL in his own organisation along with some quality management processes.
- Bashful, who was a senior IT Manager and needed to quickly implement some ITIL as everyone was talking about it, even at Gartner, and beside, he had made promises about her and she represented a tick in his performance checklist. Obviously he wanted to achieve his maximum bonus, but didn't have time to get personally involved in the ITIL implementation.
- Sneezzy, who was a tool provider with a subjective ITIL stamp, claiming to have a compliant tool, but failing to support his customers with real solutions after a sale had been completed and not working with his customer after the 'fool tender uhhh tool vendor' (as Doc so eloquently stated) process to ensure that tools are truly configured in line with their process based specifications.
- Sleepy, who was an IT Manager who had done the ITIL course, had hired a consultant to implement ITIL and was now process owner, yet simply didn't feel the plan-do-check-act cycle in his heart and therefore never really achieved improvements.
- Grumpy, a silver bullet vendor who claimed that ITIL implementations have proven to not work and claimed that all of us should forget about the warrior manager and instead purchase one of his jack in the box solutions.
- Dopey, who had been an ITIL consultant for years and had gone with many customer flows, happily hopping on each new customer's bandwagon, especially focusing on telling fairy tales and tailoring his standard set of process documents with even more impressive workflow structures whilst popping a green and a yellow OGC batch in his eyes for pearls, but failing to assist his customer with the most important challenges, usually in the people, management and leadership space.

'High-Ho, High-Ho, It's home from work we go.  
High-Ho, High-Ho, High-Ho, High-Ho,  
It's home from work we go.'

Unlike warriors, they had no ultimate goals that go beyond 'a tick in the box', 'a tool to be sold', 'a document to be written', 'being seen to be really clever' or 'money to be made that day'.

Slowly but surely, they have all contributed over the years to the queen's poison apple. In several environments ITIL has taken a few bites by now and is sick. In some environments in this land ITIL already appears to have died.

The heartbroken dwarfs place the lifeless body of ITIL in a coffin of glass and gold, and keep eternal vigil at her side. She is so beautiful, even in death, that the dwarfs can not find it in their hearts to bury her. She remains there for several years, as the dwarfs stand around her grieving.

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Finally, a Prince on a horse comes galloping towards the scene. Another figure, younger, with finer features and on a smaller horse follows him closely. The Prince gently kisses ITIL's lips. She arises, jumps on the back of his horse and the three of them take off.

A whisper sounds amongst the dwarfs. One says 'Who was that?'. Another recognises the Prince: 'He's the warrior Prince, with his page, Prince2. Prince-2 used to be asleep, and was awoken by the warrior Prince'. The dwarfs were in awe, but did not (want to) realise that it has always been in their own hands to awaken ITIL themselves should they have chosen to do so. The warrior Prince is the IT Manager, the consultant or the tool vendor, who embodies the plan-do-check-act cycle, truly focuses on people, on leadership on proactively managing activities, processes, people, addresses roadblocks, issues, vendors communication, a true master of his trade, a leader that is able to liaise with kings and queens, but also understands and can work with the peasants working the fields.

The warrior Prince, Prince2 and ITIL disappear into the distance towards the setting sun of real improvements, especially the people ones. They may come back to convert a willing dwarf or two, but leave most dwarfs to their devices. In any case, they live happily ever after.

Source of the snow white components: <http://www.filmsite.org/snow.html>

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