

TECHNOLOGY BRIEF: REQUEST FULFILLMENT

# Request Fulfillment: A CA Service Management Process Map

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# Executive Summary

## Challenge

Today's IT leaders must position the IT organization as the business's service provider of choice. To do this, IT must be competitive. It must understand the strategy and requirements of the business and then plan for the delivery of a service to meet the agreed needs, market and benchmark its services, be financially transparent, and charge for everything it does.

The Information Technology Infrastructure Library version 3 (ITIL® V3) process framework approaches IT Service Management (ITSM) in terms of the lifecycle of a service. The Service Lifecycle is an organization model providing insight into the way ITSM is structured, and embodies critical guidance for IT organizations seeking to improve service quality and align more closely with business goals to create value for the business and its customers. A key lifecycle phase, Service Operations, plays a fundamental role with its service delivery effort, and its Request Fulfillment process becomes a key optimizer of service demand's connection to received service supply.

But ITIL V3 best practice guidelines are complex and challenging to interpret. Many IT organizations consequently undertake an ITIL journey without a firm idea of the path to achieve their goals.

## Opportunity

Customer satisfaction with delivered services has a dramatic impact on the business support of the service provider. In turn, the provider is expected to manage the delivery economics across the full range of demands. Faced with this problem of economy of scope, the provider must find ways to optimize fulfillment, providing customer-defined quality at provider-friendly cost.

Best practice for Request Fulfillment may be unclear amongst the mixtures and demands of other service management efforts. We will explore best practice guidelines to illuminate how the provider meets demand for agreed services. CA's unique approach to representing the ITIL framework and its interdependent ITSM processes is in the form of an easy-to-use subway map. This map is an ideal starting point for understanding and communicating about ITIL in support of successful program planning and implementation.

## Benefits

The CA Request Fulfillment process map enables IT organizations to better organize and optimize its supply capabilities, as automated, standardized, customer-driven deliveries. The map shows a repeatable process that IT uses to incrementally expand its coverage of service requests without risk of losing the support of, and agreement with, the business. Following the Release Fulfillment map provides guidance to:

- Create a service driven culture strengthening the view of the IT organization as a service provider
- Reduce bureaucracy in service provisioning
- Increase customer satisfaction with the level of IT service applied to their needs
- Providing a source of reliable information to manage capacity, risk, and improvement
- Unifying and simplifying service delivery planning for business growth
- Improve business process capabilities
- Effectively upgrade the IT infrastructure in timely alignment with business needs

*CA ITSM Process Maps illustrate at a high level how best to navigate a journey of continual service improvement guided by strategic controls throughout the service lifecycle. Each map describes the relevant ITIL processes and activities you'll need to work with to reach your goals.*

## Simplifying ITIL

The ITIL V3 process framework focuses on the service lifecycle and the way that service management components are structured and linked. It embodies critical guidance for IT organizations that are seeking to improve service quality and align more closely with business goals.

But, the ITIL V3 best-practice guidelines across the five phases of the service lifecycle are complex and challenging to interpret. Moreover, they are not designed to provide definitive advice about implementing IT Service Management (ITSM) processes. Many IT organizations consequently undertake an ITIL journey without a firm idea of their goals and the path to achieve those goals.

CA has developed a unique approach to charting the ITIL journey through a visual representation of the ITIL framework and its interdependent ITSM processes modeled after an urban subway system. This three-part map (Figure A) presents an easy-to-navigate, high-level view of the ITIL terrain. IT executives, strategists and implementers can use these Service Management process maps along with the family of CA Service Management process map technology briefs that expand on them. The maps and technology briefs provide a common reference point for understanding and communicating about ITIL and help you with program planning and implementation.

### How to Use the CA Service Management Process Maps

CA's Service Management process maps (Figure A) illustrate every process (or track), each activity (or station) and the key relationships that are relevant to navigating continuous IT service improvement. The ITIL quality cycle takes the form of a "circle" with each Plan-Do-Check-Act (P-D-C-A) step as a process integration point (junction) on the line. Junctions serve both as reference points when assessing process maturity, and as a means to consider the implications of implementing a process in isolation.

Strategic controls (Service Portfolio Management, Demand Management and Financial Management) are needed to reduce risk and optimize integration across the service lifecycle, as illustrated on the three points of the triangle centered in the P-D-C-A quality circle (seen more easily in Figure B). These strategic controls help in evaluating, prioritizing and assuring the appropriate levels of financial and human resources for existing and new services.

This paper is part of a series of Service Management Process Map technology briefs. Each brief explains how to navigate a particular ITIL process journey, reviewing each process activity that must be addressed in order to achieve process objectives. Along each journey careful attention is paid to how technology plays a critical role in both integrating ITIL processes and automating ITIL process activities.

FIGURE A

CA has developed three maps: Service Design, Service Transition and Service Operation since most ITSM discussions focus on these critical ITIL disciplines.

THREE MAPS

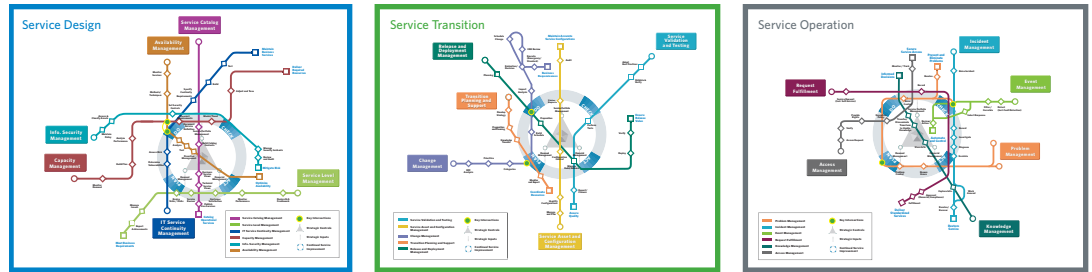
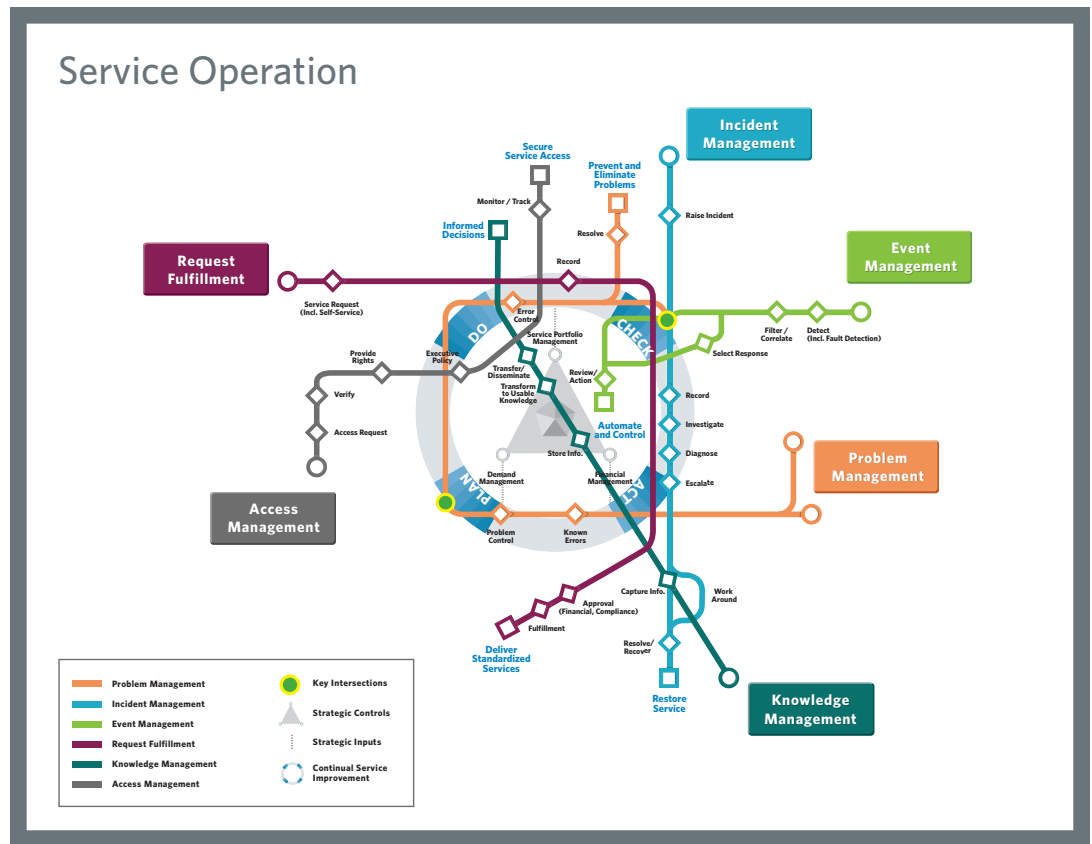


FIGURE B

The Service Operations map represents a journey of improving day-to-day IT service support operations processes that lay the operational foundation needed upon which to build business value.

SERVICE OPERATIONS MAP



## Request Fulfillment

Formalized Request Fulfillment has an interesting recent history in two regards.

First, IT organizations have been advised more and more to “run like a business”, and the ensuing concern with “customers” has highlighted the differing challenges of managing demand versus managing supply.

Second: best practices in Service Management have been most strongly guided by ITIL v2, but now the thinking about service management is represented mainly by the new ITIL v3. ITIL v2 did not call out request fulfillment in a clear way, but ITIL v3 makes the effort both explicit and distinctive from its two closest relatives, Incident and Change management.

Because of this evolution, it is worth taking a brief step back to see how an organization working in the ITIL v2 perspective would conceptually transition to the ITIL v3 point of view. Simply put, v2 conceptually offered “delivery” and “support”, whereas v3 offers “supply” and “demand”.

Within the supply/demand perspective, the main issues become:

- How do customers know what they can get and how to get it (demand management); and,
- How does IT know how to supply the right thing for fulfilling the demand (supply management)?

In the demand issue, ITIL promotes a Service Catalog, in which services are advertised and predefined in terms most meaningful to customers, so that they can efficiently identify, evaluate and ask for their options for receiving assistance from IT. These services may be small or large, and simple or complex, but from the user’s point of view they all have high importance when they are needed. Case in point: classic examples of catalogued services include password resets; equipment additions, moves or replacements; and providing complete, fully activated workplace setups for new employees.

In the supply issue, ITIL promotes Request Fulfillment, in which efficient mechanisms for providing the requested assistance are already associated with the different types of requests and are authorized to be used. ITIL v3 positions this effort within the Service Operation phase of the service lifecycle.

Focusing more on the supply side, requests are made in some consistent fashion. Otherwise it is not reasonable to expect that standardized mechanisms for fulfillment will match up well with the various types of requests. In this regard, the Service Catalog is truly a critical success factor of fulfillment’s ability to satisfactorily provide for customers.

*Satisfactory fulfillment is not determined only on the customer's side. For example, where the customer sees pricing in a service catalog, the provider must see costs per type of service. And where the customer sees a warranty of service quality, the provider must see efficient and secure supply procedures.*

Satisfactory fulfillment is not determined only on the customer's side. For example, where the customer sees pricing in a service catalog, the provider must see costs per type of service. And where the customer sees a warranty of service quality, the provider must see efficient and secure supply procedures. Thinking along these lines, it becomes clear that Request Fulfillment involves a variety of important dependencies between the demand side and supply side. They include the following, among others:

- Service publication in a catalog/type and scope definition of the service
- Pricing/cost per service type
- User's request interface/single point of contact and self-service functions
- Requirements for ordering a service/procedure automation
- Backlogs/monitoring

Taking these dependencies seriously will cause management to develop fulfillment mechanisms that have a high level of accountability. In most organizations, this kind of attention leads to prescribed workflows and enforced policies for approval and authorization. In IT, most of the operational experience with that is in Change Management. Within the Change Management discipline, certain types of low-risk recurring modifications and repeated work flows are categorized as "standard" changes that are mostly pre-designed and pre-approved. Because their frequency and low risk has led to high familiarity and automation with these changes, a standard change has readily been identified as a good way to respond effectively to many types of service requests.

Typically, a service request is a request from a user (customer) for information, or advice, or access to an IT/business service, or for a standard change. Another interesting characteristic of a service request is that it usually asks for something that the user did not already have, as opposed to seeking help with a break or abnormality of an existing resource/service that the user already has.

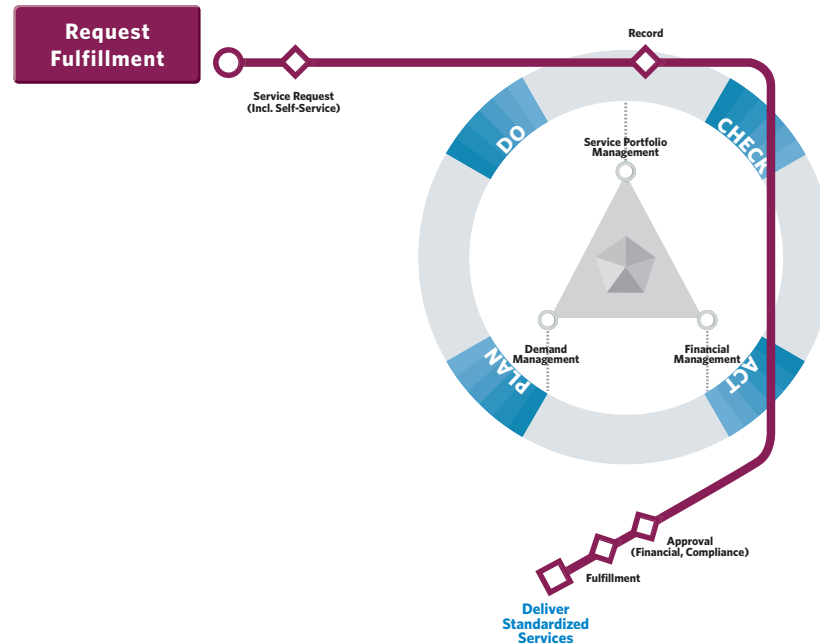
The goal of Request Fulfillment is to fulfill requests with standardized services. Request Fulfillment is responsible for ensuring that fulfillment of a service request is expedient, effective, and evaluated. Accordingly, the journey from the customer's need to the final delivery has several distinctive activities, or "stations", which address and validate the alignment of the fulfillment to the request. As seen in the subway map below, these stations are:

- Offer the customer a selection of predefined services to request
- Record the customer's request
- Validate financial approval and compliance
- Oversee actual service provision, and review the effort for possible improvement

FIGURE C

The Request Fulfillment track guides managers in proactively establishing efficiency and security of service provision, whereby managers explicitly associate standardized fulfillment mechanisms to a known range of request types advertised to service users. The standardization gives service users consistency and predictability, and the consistency makes measurements easier to do and compare, for detecting compliance, risks and viable fulfillment alternatives.

### REQUEST FULFILLMENT TRACK



#### Service Request (including self-service)

The first station along the journey concerns the interface that IT provides to the users, in order to capture the user's request. While the Service Catalog holds and advertises the services that IT wants to offer, Request Fulfillment is more concerned with making sure that the user's access to the catalog is not a challenge. This means that the user must find the catalog easy to locate, and using the catalog should not require technical or administrative assistance. Request Fulfillment will be very attentive to establishing the availability of the catalog as the single point of contact (SPOC) necessary for making a request. At the end of the journey, Request Fulfillment will examine how effective the catalog contents are in guiding the user to the correct services. The findings from this examination will feed back to the Service Design effort that generally defines the services in the catalog, including their names, granularity, and components and underlying agreements.

To assure that customers consult only the appropriate catalog from wherever they are, the catalog is centrally managed but then published to the web with a selected degree of access security granted to users.

It must also be noted, however, that in the absence of a catalog, users will contact a Service Desk directly. The Service Desk (which is an organizational function, not a management process) will have a first tier of support agents who will identify the request, match it to an appropriate category, and take the next steps to have it routed to an appropriate fulfillment area where standard procedures are assigned, executed and maintained. In this case, the service desk agent effectively does the interpretive work that a catalog otherwise allows the user to do for themselves.

## Record

A service request has the distinction of being something that, unlike an unexpected incident or problem, is initially planned. By creating and tracking specific records of service requests, Request Fulfillment maintains the reference information that describes and explains the circumstances of need and approval that trigger the assignment of procedures and resources used in a standard service delivery.

Before the delivery, the request record is key to decision support for the providers; after delivery, the request record is key to validation of delivery requirements, and it supplies data for analyzing improvement opportunities or barriers. When the request is recorded, it categorizes the customer need and indicates the correct set of activities needed from the providers.

An important aspect of records maintenance here is the fact that a request can lead to a complex fulfillment procedure wherein changes or other events, and assets or other resources, must be incorporated to produce the fulfillment. In these cases of extended efforts, the business justification for them is essentially the details of the original service request record to which they are related and by which they may be partially or wholly governed in terms of budgets, regulations or policies. Typically, this is supported with a relational database that can accept the cross-referencing and record links between the different repositories of activity histories and business objects like documents, assets and Configuration Items (CIs).

A critically important aspect of separately recording service requests is that they are distinguished from incidents, problems, and non-standard changes. Management statistics for those three areas will not be distorted by the volume of service requests; their information is about the time and cost of maintaining the integrity of the existing IT services, while service request information generally is not.

## Approval

A major advantage of standardized services is that the burden they impose on the supply side of operations is already well understood. Thus, when correlated with requests from the catalog, the standardization simplifies the trending and estimation of resource capacity.

Resource utilization policies are important on both the customer side and provider side, and as part of the fulfillment process a service request should be bought with an approval to charge the provision against the customer's account; meanwhile the provider wants to authorize expenditure of resources at a level appropriate for the terms of satisfactory service delivery as set in the service definition.

The distinction between the customer's approval and the provider's authorization does not put them at odds with each other. Instead, the successful pairing of approvals and authorizations validates the service catalog. It tells the whole organization that the service catalog is a reliable indicator that the IT organization is justifiably a preferred provider, both in terms of capacity and range of services, to cover business needs.

A standardized service is pre-associated with IT's criteria for accepting responsibility for the agreed level of service. However, on the customer side, the customer's approval indicates that the request has sufficient priority in the business operations to warrant a certain level of attention from the provider.

With both approvals and authorizations, the key is to involve all of the stakeholders who are designated as mandatory for the type of service request. This is normally handled through workflow automation that keeps up the speed and consistency of communications amongst the right persons, expressing the criteria, timing, and status of approvals and authorizations.

### Fulfillment

At this station in the journey, Request Fulfillment takes responsibility for ensuring that the necessary components of the requested service are supplied and used. For example, IT service components may be licenses, software media, certified information, hardware, or other service assets and CIs. Fulfillment can do this both proactively (by evaluating service orders before delivery and possibly offering alternatives), and reactively (by operating a staging checkpoint of deliverables before service delivery).

During the fulfillment effort, both customers and providers are interested in keeping track of the delivery progress status, so this information may be published as well to the user and managers by a dashboard, query or status-triggered notification message.

Another important outcome of that visibility is detection of deviations from the standards, which informs performance assessment as well as indicating both risks and alternatives that should be considered for the next use of the service delivery mechanism.

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## SECTION 3: BENEFITS

### Benefits

Request Fulfillment is a process that offers a distinct opportunity to economically expedite service provision and optimize service resources. This is especially important where the business need is to enhance both productivity and flexibility.

The service catalog provides a view of the services delivered, ensuring that all areas of the business can have an accurate picture of the available services, their details and their status. With that “front-end”, Request Fulfillment ensures that the maximum number of customer support instances is addressed with standardized, optimized and automated procedures.

A special characteristic of any service is that the service consumer is functionally enabled by the service yet does not have to be responsible for the risk or cost of making the service available and reliable. The consumer’s acceptance of the service therefore relies on the provider’s success at the “back-end”, and in IT the back-end of course involves management of the technology infrastructure, composed of IT services and CIs. Standardized fulfillments leverage the quality of the infrastructure to drive value to the business user. This relationship of infrastructure management to service provision is one of the most important representations of how business operations and IT operations converge.

Additionally, services are not restricted to IT. The strategy of using standardized fulfillment extends itself to requests that, as noted earlier, are for information, advice, access to an IT/business service, or a standard change. What enables fulfillment to extend beyond IT is the methodology of designing standard operating procedures. These procedures, using workflow automation completely typical of a standard change, can reach out to call for different kinds of providers and coordinate or bundle their capabilities in a final single delivery. These other providers may be from areas such as procurement and inventory, knowledge management, facilities, personnel, and pre-approved external third parties.

Finally, Request Fulfillment can be implemented incrementally, taking on only the number of issues and type of customer that has the right level of priority and manageability at the current time. Additional coverage can be added over time, without the need to re-engineer the underlying processes and procedures that make Request Fulfillment work well. Consequently, the classic ITIL advice of “adopt and adapt” applies here and helps to protect the cost effectiveness of the overall effort right from the beginning.

The benefits of taking the Request Fulfillment journey in line with ITIL best practices include:

- A service driven culture strengthening the view of the IT organization as a Service Provider
- Reduced bureaucracy in service provision
- Increasing customer satisfaction with the level of IT service applied to their needs
- Adding more business value to other involved service management processes and providers
- Providing a source of reliable information to manage capacity, risk, and improvement
- Unifying and simplifying delivery planning for business growth

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## SECTION 4: CONCLUSIONS

### Conclusions

The Request Fulfillment process is responsible for directing and evaluating the alignment of service provision to fulfillment standards for business needs. As part of the Service Operation phase in the service lifecycle, the process organizes and monitors the flow of procedures that provide the service on demand. By covering needs outside of the maintenance of infrastructure and IT services, Request Fulfillment broadens the business value of providers, while also providing IT itself with standard services and collaborating on IT’s own service delivery. Strategically connected to a catalog of services and to self-service tools, Request Fulfillment helps to rationally balance service supply and service demand.

Technology can play a critical role in optimizing the Request Fulfillment process, by automating the actual process activities themselves and by accessing the outputs from other related processes. Integration such as shared workflows with other processes (especially Service Catalog Management, Service Asset and Configuration Management and Change Management) is vitally important to ensure that delivery of standardized services is kept relevant, reliable, and preferred by the business.

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## SECTION 5: ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### About the Author

Malcolm Ryder has over 25 years experience in the IT industry, with expertise in the areas of service delivery and support and IT strategy. For the last 15 years, Malcolm has worked in consulting and solution strategy roles with a heavy emphasis on service management systems, with vendors, service providers and end-user customers. Malcolm has been a co-developer of multiple market-leading commercial ITSM solutions since the mid '80s.

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