

TECHNOLOGY BRIEF

Service Level Management Through an Automated Service Catalog | October 2010

implementing SLM: bridging cultural gaps and delivering business value through an automated service catalog

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executive summary

Challenge

Business profitability increasingly depends on the speed and value of the services that IT delivers—yet IT is consistently challenged to optimize and simplify service delivery and the service consumer experience. Organizations are looking to “best practices,” vendor methodologies and industry frameworks such as the Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL®) that address these challenges through Service Level Management (SLM).

SLM can be complex to achieve but it delivers continual value and return on investment. It involves broad-reaching processes for all levels of the organization, the consolidation of reporting metrics from a variety of systems and the systemic integration of IT and business management systems.

Opportunity

This paper focuses on how to reduce complexity of the IT-to-service consumer experience and increase the perceived value of IT to the business through the incremental development and maturity of an automated SLM solution. An automated solution is based on accurately defined services that are published in an actionable Service Catalog, requested by consumers in a self-service manner, delivered effectively by IT and measured for regular improvement.

A Service Catalog-based approach saves time and money and targets services that are most impacting service consumers and the business as a whole. Approached in a manageable and phased manner, a Service Catalog brings automation and transparency to an organization while improving time-to-value and productivity.

Benefits

A successful CA Service Catalog-based SLM implementation can help reduce enterprise complexity, bridges corporate cultures and enables a more nimble IT organization that is better suited to meet its customers’ needs. An automated CA Service Catalog bridges cultural divides by utilizing business language in the self-service consumer request processes, saving endless hours of resource time and expense for IT and business consumers. An effective CA Service Catalog implementation positions IT as a strategic business value provider streamlining the service consumer experience and better enabling business growth.

Starting an SLM journey with CA Service Catalog builds the foundation for an expanded SLM solution that can be enhanced through further automation, integration to other technologies and adoption of best practices.

Section 1: Challenge

Bridging the corporate divide through automation

IT responsibilities change from day-to-day and for business service consumers it is no different. New and changing job responsibilities often result in new service needs and obtaining these services can sometimes be a painful process. But what if you needed a new service to perform your job and could simply choose the service you need from a centralized system? Or, what if you are a manager bringing in a newly hired employee—wouldn't it be nice to electronically select the hardware and applications your new employee will require and submit your request for automated processing?

The challenge in realizing this ideal scenario is that most organizations employ individual silos of services, systems, processes and approval requirements that business associates and employees must wrestle with to procure the right services. This silo configuration is detrimental to information transparency and can lead to unmet performance expectations.

Would-be service consumers must endure lost productivity from research and follow-up while navigating bureaucracy in the pursuit of service approval and task requirements. Each must individually determine the language spoken by security, help desk, change management and application administrators, among others, to communicate their service needs and achieve the ability to move forward with their job responsibilities.

Depending on the results of each individual communication experience, some business associates and employees may end up with roles and permissions that either do not meet their job requirements or expose the business to unnecessary risk due to lack of IT governance of service request, approval processing and provisioning.

With business activities and profitability increasingly depending on technology, manual service provisioning is a drain on business efficiency and profitability. And with chronic increases in the need for more services being delivered by IT organizations, a Service Catalog that automates the service request, approval and fulfillment processes is a need that is growing dramatically.

Gaining Consensus

Yet like any initiative that spans an organization in the way that a Service Catalog does, it is necessary to have executive sponsorship, knowledgeable project leads and visionary champions to foster progress and adoption. ITIL provides guidance in these areas, and recommends that companies looking to embark on an SLM implementation project first secure executive involvement to facilitate success. An SLM initiative should start with a directive from a C-level person in a company interested in improving quality, reducing cost and risk, increasing efficiency and decreasing complexity. It could come as a reactive request to security exposures through user access provisioning or from compliance risks in tracking software licenses. Whatever the source of an SLM directive, IT managers must understand the marching orders. Yet even with executive buy-in, deployment can appear daunting for a variety of reasons:

- The possible solutions can appear endless and confusing.
- Executive ownership can be limited or disjointed in support.
- Pulling silos of services together, or even knowing what needs to be pulled together, seems impossible.
- The value of SLM and automated service requests, approval and provisioning are not well understood.

Unlocking communication channels

Another challenge to SLM adoption that enterprises face today is the differences caused by a cross-unit culture that makes communication—and overall business success—difficult. The language of business and IT is often different. Overcoming this challenge requires constant communication with standard terminology. ITIL introduces many of the standard SLM and Catalog Management terms for building a common vocabulary between the business and IT.

An auto parts customer who implemented a CA Service Catalog went from a one-week process of manually entering, tracking, and fulfilling handwritten requests to less than three hours to process the same request. Training and socialization during production rollout elicited early adopters to try the CA Service Catalog and word-of-mouth spread like wild fire. Organizationally, the IT department was suddenly perceived as delivering real value by making the lives of employees and service consumers easier. Line of business executives took note and clamored to have the IT department catalog their services. Project targets for CA Service Catalog shot from an original 60 to well over 180. IT had exceptionally aligned itself to the business and success was paramount. A strong foundation for SLM success was established.

Section 2: Opportunity

Getting to continuous return on investment through automation

The opportunity to bridge cultures, improve business efficiencies, automate manual processes, and strongly align IT to the business is achievable with the proper SLM implementation.

Most computer users understand a point-and-click experience of choosing from a list of available services. With SLM, the selection and delivery of services can be this easy. Automating the service request, approval and provisioning processes behind that user experience speeds business provisioning and the service consumer's ability to move forward with their business activities. Multiply this resource savings by each consumer requiring many services and the return on investment is enormous. The time-savings of IT resources in processing manual service requests is another layer of return on investment.

When IT provides an easier end-user experience and delivers business value in the process, those experiences significantly improve IT's relationship with the business. SLM delivers this type of benefit, but you cannot always achieve immediate success after implementation. Establishing consensus by communicating the proposed value of the solution helps to develop the required sponsorship. Next is the need for dedicated resources and a thoughtfully constructed solution and deployment blueprint that carefully identifies select pilot services for the initial deployment, workflow processes, organizational impact and more. A technical project team must be dedicated to building, testing, documenting and rolling out the solution according to plan and, throughout the entire process, status and communication must continue to socialize progress, production rollout and training for all user types.

The remainder of this section discusses what a well-defined SLM solution looks like and how to go about achieving one.

Service Catalog—the face of SLM

Running IT as a business has taken root in companies, and the role of a Service Catalog has grown to being essential to that success. The Service Catalog provides a means for managing the design, development and publishing of the services that will be offered to the business, methods for tracking and auditing the approvals of a request for service and automating the fulfillment of those requests. It defines and documents services using language understandable to the business, including corresponding costs and levels of service if applicable, and sets clear expectations of what the business will receive at the published cost.

The Service Catalog serves as a focal point for an entire organization to coalesce around more efficient ordering of IT services. Containing the organization's IT services, the catalog provides automated services and reinforces rules and regulations to help the enterprise function effectively. It provides a platform for IT and the business units to more effectively implement services that customers need and phases out services that are no longer required

For customers, the Service Catalog delivers only the services they request; business operations get the asset tracking, reporting and chargeback data; security has the assurance of appropriate roles and permissions processing; and compliance has auditing, software license compliance and process control through automation. The Service Catalog orchestrates the complex interaction between people, process and technology such as IT, business units, customers, asset management and other internal systems, purchasing, and finance. A Service Catalog is a launch point to supporting the management of administrative details about a service, that is, what is offered in the service and the process behind approving and fulfilling it. Figure A illustrates the role of the Service Catalog.

The role played by Service Catalog

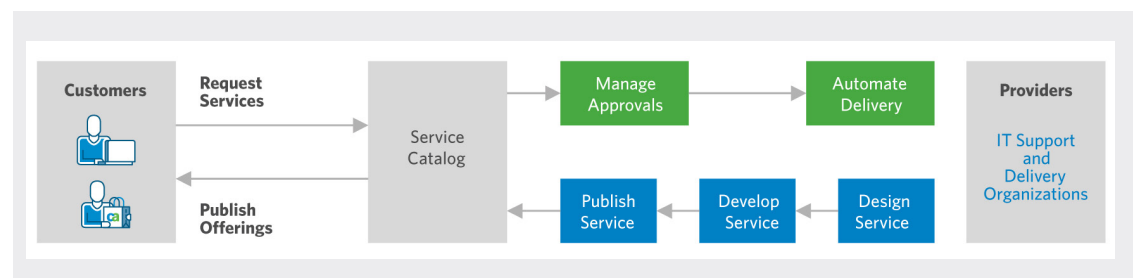


Figure A

The Service Catalog is used as a tool between the IT organization and its Customers permitting them to request published Service Offerings and automate the approval and fulfillment requirements of those offerings.

When implemented correctly, the Service Catalog:

- Simplifies requests for IT services and resources
- Aligns IT services to specific business requirements and goals
- Decreases time to completion by using automated workflow processes and system integrations to streamline service approval and fulfillment
- Sets expectations of what the business will receive at published costs with appropriate levels of service
- Increases productivity by speeding service delivery and improving tracking and reporting
- Transform the perception of IT to a proactive strategic business partner

In all, the Service Catalog helps enable organizations to operate IT as a business, simplify administration and management of IT services, and communicate value. But how does your organization get there?

A number of best practices can ease this navigation.

Recommended approach—how to achieve success with a Service Catalog deployment

It is best to think of a Service Catalog initiative as a journey and to take the following incremental steps:

1. Assess resource and organizational needs
2. Obtain organizational buy-in
3. Determine the Service Catalog architecture
4. Implement the solution
5. Cause adoption

Resource and organizational assessment

Assessments determine your business requirements, IT needs, the critical gaps between your requirements and current capabilities, and expectations that exist in the organization today. An assessment provides a starting point for building an approach that moves you to a desired future state. IT needs to understand what the business expects of it and the business needs to understand what services IT can deliver. The Service Catalog cannot be defined or be successful without business involvement. It's also important to define and document a clear understanding of what constitutes a service in your organization. The ITIL books (v2 and v3) can serve as a great reference for organizations that are looking at future state requirements and methods for defining their approach to these requirements.

One recommended approach is to conduct a requirements workshop with process-versed and technology-versed representatives from the appropriate business units—including human resources, legal, facilities, finance and the global divisions. A workshop is a good way to gather information, generate consensus and consider alignment and potential value. Each department draws on the services of a centralized IT operation and, as such, needs to buy-in during the assessment to facilitate success.

The primary questions of an assessment should be:

- What capabilities exist today that can be leveraged in the future state?
- What gaps in process, technology or people exist that need to be addressed to realize the benefits of the SLM solution?
- What are the requirements for the SLM future state and how will these requirements be fulfilled through the implementation of process and technology solutions?

Additional questions include:

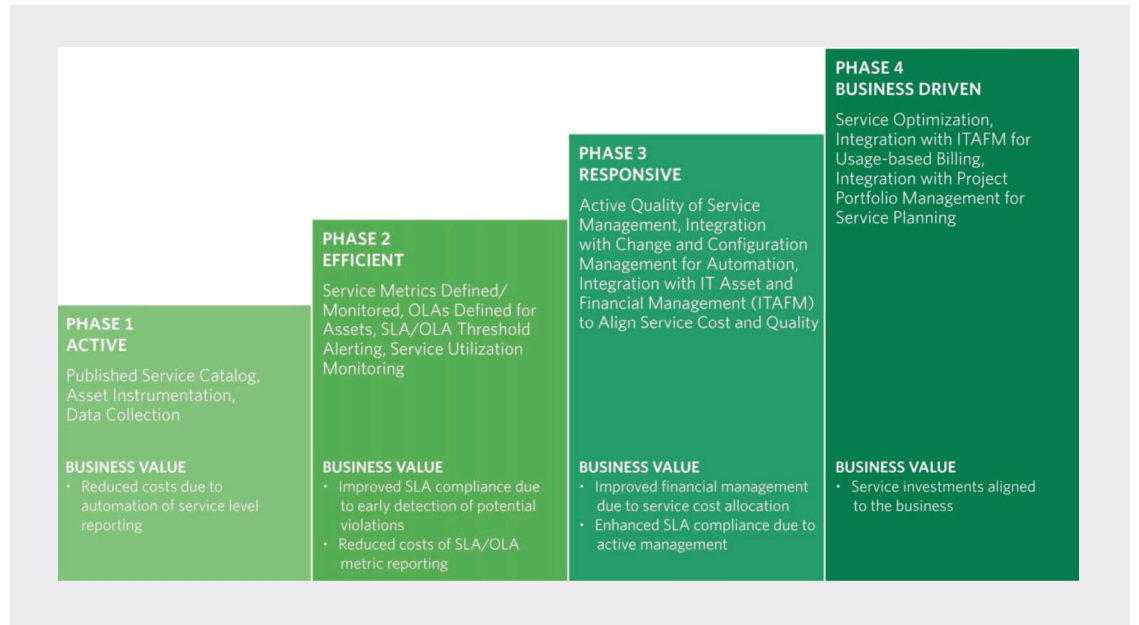
- Do managers have an idea of how IT aligns resources into services?
- Do they understand from an organization and process perspective how they enable and support those services?
- What do they do today that could cause resistance to change?
- Are they looking for more detailed data for better reports?

The assessment phase should leverage a maturity model when analyzing specific business goals and IT needs. A maturity model is used to define the essential framework of capabilities in each stage of SLM development to achieve a fully deployed, highly integrated, business-driven solution. A maturity model like the one shown in Figure B provides a benchmark of where an organization is today and a vision for what an organization can achieve with an SLM solution. As shown in Figure B and described throughout this paper, a published service catalog can serve as the starting point to launching a successful and mature SLM-focused organization.

CA Service Level Management maturity model

Figure B

The CA Service Level Management Maturity Model is the basis of a solution blueprint for achieving a higher state of service lifecycle effectiveness and SLM maturity.



Organizational buy-in

Launching an SLM initiative requires project sponsorship and executive support. A Service Catalog is typically an IT-sponsored solution that serves the business. Therefore, you need a champion who can bridge the communication gap between the business and IT to gather business requirements, formulate a business justification and document return on investment.

Service Catalog architecture

Once you have buy-in, work can begin on defining an implementation blueprint and adoption program. The architecture should be more than just the technology structure and configurations. Business processes, and possibly organizational changes, will be required to successfully deploy a Service Catalog. Architecture requires expertise and thought leadership, and any design should be periodically revisited. The architecture should detail the service definitions and business processes that will be published in the Service Catalog and organize the deployment of the full solution into project phases allowing the organization to realize value in short, deliberate steps. No solution that is as broad-reaching as an SLM solution should be developed in a single project that will take years to configure, test and deploy. With the amount of change that occurs in IT and business environments in a three-month period, even a one-year project is too large. This quick time-to-value approach will be the key to securing approval for further solution maturity and SLM success.

The architecture also needs to factor suitability requirements for early development phases, such as: the type of service (broad or narrow in scope), complexity of the service (number of roles and permissions, number of required and optional components, service dependencies, and overall approval, provisioning and fulfillment processes).

Key aspects of the architecture include:

- A maturity model
 - The maturity model referenced during assessment helps to define a high-level solution blueprint and establishes a solid solution foundation that can be extended incrementally as you develop the Service Catalog and a more complete SLM solution.
- Careful pilot service selection
 - This can make or break the initial success of a Service Catalog solution. The tendency is to pick the most complex services first—like new employee onboarding—because they are the most visible to the business and would therefore provide the most benefit to IT. However, they are usually the services with the least amount of ownership and accountability, and the highest risk for failure. Instead, select services that:
 - Are easily understood by the organization
 - Align to business objectives and goals
 - Add value to the organization
 - Have a small number of required and optional components
 - Are not dependent on the inclusion of other services
 - Have simple approval, provisioning, and/or fulfillment processes
 - Have minimal exception handling requirements

- A comprehensive implementation plan
 - Exactly what will need to be done to install, configure, document, and roll out your Service Catalog?
- Communication and training plans
 - Findings and reports from project managers should be communicated to the appropriate levels, such as to an internal IT governance board. This helps the sponsors who supported the organizational buy-in understand progress, challenges and have a sense of project fulfillment and value when they analyze the return on investment at the end of the project. A rollout communication and training plan also is important to:
 - Facilitate awareness and foster usage. A training plan for solution adoption is also critical.
 - Help IT staff administer and sustain the solution, or even grow the Service Catalog.
 - Enable users to learn how to adopt the solution into their work culture and deliver a return on investment.

Implementation

Project failure usually results when attempting to implement an entire suite of IT services at one time. A phased approach to implementation that rolls out small sets of services to consumers allows you to realize periodic benefits from an ongoing project and better control costs, expectations, communications, training and resources.

SLM allows an organization to prioritize its implementations and realize short-term successes that build toward additional investment, service rollouts, and long-term success.

As part of a phased approach, it's also important to carefully consider your existing technologies and new tool selections.

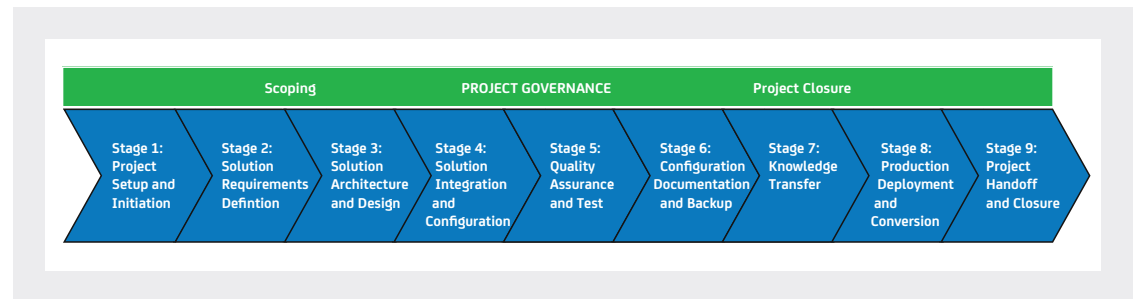
A variety of tools, with CA Service Catalog at the core, can simplify the process of negotiating, defining, managing and improving the quality of the IT services that you deliver—at an acceptable cost to the business. Core components to consider in any SLM implementation are:

- CA Service Catalog is the entry point, enabling you to define, publish, and measure services in business terms, and provide financial insight into consumption. Automate the delivery of services physical, virtual and cloud environments to help reduce operational costs and improve service quality
- CA Service Desk Manager that helps customers deliver IT services to users
- CA Oblicore Guarantee™ takes a top-down approach to SLM leveraging standard service descriptions to rapidly create IT-business agreements and obligations. The solution then aggregates and correlates operational data from your existing tools to monitor performance against business-relevant metrics.

Careful consideration of a company's IT strengths and weaknesses, acquiring executive support and a phased approach to implementation, such as the Nine-Stage Deployment Methodology shown in Figure C, can help provide a long-term approach for the IT department and the business units. Selecting services that are easily understood, align to business objectives, have a manageable number of components and a well-defined approval-to-fulfillment flow, among other considerations, and makes implementations highly effective. The benefits of such implementations then begin to present themselves in powerful ways.

Figure C
The CA Nine-Stage Deployment Methodology facilitates the delivery of SLM value quickly with less implementation and business risk.

CA Services Nine-Stage Deployment Methodology



Section 3: Benefit

Implementing a CA Service Catalog using a defined methodology

Implementing a CA Service Catalog and delivering automated services means evolving into a more nimble organization that is better suited to satisfy customers.

Using defined processes, such as the CA Technologies Nine-Stage Deployment Methodology, to plan, execute and roll out your solution helps ensure return on investment and deliver maximum value from an SLM implementation. The industry-defined ITIL helps speed implementation through its widely adopted set of best practices. Involving stakeholders in the assessment and design phases of implementation provides an accurate picture of an organization’s capabilities, sets expectations and fosters executive buy-in, which is crucial for success. Getting all business units in sync with IT also helps ensure that the SLM journey—as additional service improvements are rolled out in the future—will continue to be a smooth one.

Many organizations, for example, do not have documentation for their IT services and processes, or the documentation is outdated. The assessment phase of a CA Service Catalog implementation serves as a value-add to give companies coherent current IT documentation.

A phased approach to implementation sets the expectation that SLM is a process, not a singular goal. The benefits of this approach are the following

- Allows organizations to realize periodic benefits from an ongoing project by rolling out small sets of services to customers. In particular, a phased approach:
 - Decreases risk
 - Provides more digestible investments
 - Offers faster ROI

- Eases solution transitions to production
 - Manages organizational adoption
 - Creates flexibility to remap to evolving business needs
 - Provides visible benefit following a documented time-to-value framework
- Enhances time-to-value by delivering high value in quick incremental phases. Customers who tackle less complex implementations first can expect very rapid time-to-value results.
 - Improves customer support of the project as they see improved communication with IT, as well as faster time to complete their requests
 - Scales quickly, based on customer satisfaction and short-term to medium-term needs

A phased approach to implementation is vital to tackling the complexity of SLM within the enterprise. Measured steps, focusing on time-to-value that can show early proven results to managers are crucial for the long-term success of the SLM journey. This also makes it easier to adopt the solution, which when complete, provides customer satisfaction, enables more flexible organizations with greater visibility into their IT needs, and delivers financial administration control.

Section 4: Conclusions

Realizing more value with a Service Catalog approach to SLM

Implementing SLM is an exercise in managing IT economics, understanding and improving customer perceptions and building business relationships within organizations. This exercise often involves organizational and cultural change, since the IT organization needs to move from systems-based to services-based thinking.

As with all ITIL processes, SLM is a journey of continuous improvement, with the focus on regular reviews of the business validity of underpinning contracts, OLAs and SLAs. SLM helps enable operational and tactical processes (across both service support and service delivery) to be aligned with business needs. SLM is responsible for shaping the customer's perception of the IT organization, and is the only ITIL process that involves direct negotiation with customers. Internally, SLM will increase the flexibility of your IT operations and align better with business goals.

The process of implementing SLM can give an organization an accurate picture of its needs and delivers documentation for processes that will carry it forward into additional implementations over time.

Many clashing cultures may have, at their root, language issues. SLM implementation is about ending corporate culture clash by using effective processes to bridge the gap between the different languages of IT and the overall business.

Implementing SLM and, in the process, automating IT provisioning and processes serve two vital purposes in today's enterprise: cost management and improved customer satisfaction resulting from better service.

Throughout this paper, we have discussed concepts and methods for implementing an SLM solution (specifically starting with a Service Catalog to initiate your SLM program). CA Technologies offers a Service Catalog and overall SLM solution through our CA Service Level and Catalog Management (SLCM) solution. CA Technologies helps IT organizations define, track, manage, and control the services that they deliver with confidence through an automated SLCM solution. The SLCM solution can help you:

- Increase value by communicating service offerings in rich descriptive business language in a centralized Service Catalog
- Reduce risk by ensuring service delivery is aligned to service levels with metrics meaningful to customers and appropriate penalties and rewards
- Go agile by automating service delivery from request to approval to fulfillment processes and speed time to service provisioning
- Reduce costs by understanding the value of services consumed in financial terms and comparing rates to industry benchmarks

CA Service Level and Catalog Management consists of CA Service Catalog and CA Oblicore Guarantee™. For more information on these technology solutions, visit ca.com/slcm

Section 5

About the author

John C. Logan is a Principal Services Architect in the Virtualization and Service Automation Practice organization at CA Technologies and a lead Subject Matter Expert for CA Service Catalog. Following a successful career as a mainframe software developer, John has served in many customer-facing roles as a Trusted Technical Advisor, Project Manager, Architect, Business Analyst, and Consultant. With more than 30 years of experience as a technology leader, John has successfully driven many enterprise-wide service management, communications, database, distributed processing, application and systems development, storage, and security management projects in multiple vertical markets including banking, healthcare, manufacturing, media, and energy, government, telecommunications, and finance.

To learn more about the CA Service Level and Catalog Management architecture and technical approach, visit ca.com/services.

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