ActioNews

Turning **VISION** into **ACTION**®

Strategic Planning at ActioNet

By Michael L. Genebach, SVP & CSO

Charting the course for ActioNet to remain competitive and relevant in our industry, requires annually reviewing our historical performance, our current business posture, and laying out the path forward and how best to 'travel that path'. Those ActioNeters who attended the company's recent All Hands meeting in July heard about our new ActioNet 2020 initiative. ActioNet 2020 is a major goal for our firm – to double in size by the end of 2020. Setting the company goals is one of the key actions in ActioNet's strategic planning process.

Strategic planning is really a matter of continuously evolving and refreshing the firm's business plan. This cyclical process often includes tweaking or revising our business model. During our annual planning cycle, we take a hard look at our current state, develop our target state, and then analyze and document how we get to there from here.

Figure 1 – The Strategic Planning Cycle

As depicted in **Figure 1**, the main actions of the strategic planning process cycle are:

- Formulate Strategy
- Develop Plan
- Implement & Execute
- Review & Measure
- Learn & Adjust

1. Setting the Overarching Goals for the Firm – for both offerings and financial performance
2. Reviewing our profile as it stands now, and describing our desired profile in 3 years
3. Analyzing what it will take, i.e. changes in capabilities, investments, etc., to hit the 3-year target
4. Developing a plan, or roadmap, to go from now to then
5. Reviewing progress as we move through each year, and making adjustments as necessary

As you can probably infer from the above, strategic planning isn't an 'event', it is a sequence of activities requiring diligence and discipline. But success demands each and every ActioNeter's participation and contribution in order to achieve our collective goals. For all of us here at ActioNet, our 18-year history of double-digit, organic annual growth, as shown in **Figure 2**, demonstrates the successful results of our planning, and importantly, ActioNeters' amazing efforts, and ability to execute!

Figure 2 – Performance Success from Strategic Planning

GROWTH — 1998 2003 2008 2013 2016
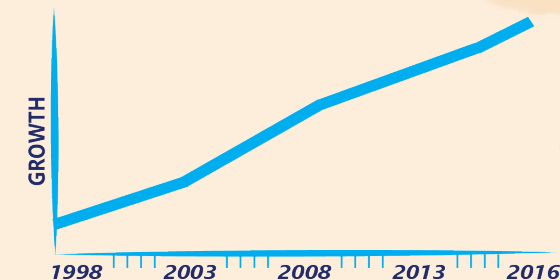
Steps in Our Planning Process

In determining the Strategic Plan's focus interval, ActioNet's senior leadership determined we would employ a 'rolling' 3-year plan. ActioNet selected a 3-year focus interval primarily so we remain nimble in the ever changing world of Information Technology (IT).

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Some firms, however, employ a 5-year focus interval. The term 'interval' here doesn't mean we develop a plan every 3-years. In this context, 'focus interval' simply means our plan lays out a strategy from now to 3 years out.

This 3-year view is actually updated and refreshed annually, in a 'rolling' fashion. Sometimes the plan revisions are minor, at other times there are major modifications. The updates depend on internal or external factors, such as organizational restructures, fluctuations in market needs, technology adaptations, or enhanced methods of service delivery. We measure our plan's execution progress through monthly performance and status reviews for the company and each business unit (BU). We also hold a semi-annual in-depth strategic plan review, allowing us to course correct accordingly. To better understand the process and the leadership attention required to the strategic planning cycle, the annual timeline we follow, at a high-level, is shown in **Figure 3** below.

Figure 3 – The Planning and Review Cycle Timeline

- Aug-Nov Finalize Rolling 3-Yr Plan
- Nov-Dec Finalize Next Yr Plan
- Jan-Dec Monthly Perf. Reviews
- Apr-May In-Depth Plan Reviews
- Jun-Jul Apply Adjustments

Feed Plan and Results into Next Cycle

While developing the plan, we review and establish the company's and each business unit's goals and objectives. We start by focusing on the customer market needs - i.e. the requirements of the Federal Government sectors in the Civilian, Health and Defense spaces. As we identify the specific pursuit targets within each sector, we also look at what capabilities are needed in order to achieve the planned market penetration. Crucially, we review our leadership structure to ascertain whether we have the best knowledge, skills and experience to drive the company forward. We also verify and validate our current set of offerings, assessing our services and solutions to see how effective and efficient we have been. Then we note any gaps in our offerings compared to what's needed to meet the market's future needs, and develop a strategy to evolve, expand and improve our capabilities.

Growth benefits all ActioNeters, expanding opportunities for each of us, and providing the stability a larger company offers. Regardless of size, what makes ActioNet unique – staying adaptive, responsive, and free of unnecessary bureaucracy – will continue to be an integral part of our culture.

After target states are defined for the company and each BU, a roadmap is drafted, i.e. we develop an operations plan. The operations plan includes the contract execution, capture management and quality assurance actions we need in order to operate effectively. The operations plan also covers back-office functions, like contract, subcontract, financial and accounting management which enable the company to successfully support our delivery teams.

Finally, but importantly, we produce 3-year financial models for the company and each BU. The current and next year models undergo a high level of scrutiny. The current year analysis is performed to determine what worked, and what didn't, so we can make adjustments prior to the next year. The next year's financial model basically forms that year's budget. Therefore we look deeply into the composition of the numbers to make certain we have a reasonable, attainable, and growth-oriented goal. The financial models also encompass any potential investments that may be required to expand our capabilities and footprint in the market, either organically or via acquisitions.

Summary

Strategic planning is a process, with a continuous cycle of actions. At ActioNet, we take the planning and our roles in implementing the plan very seriously. We have superior results to show that our planning and execution efforts continue to bear fruit. As an ActioNeter and senior leader, it's my duty to help drive the company's success. And we all share in the rewards. Every employee's participation and contribution in the company's achievements is both necessary and appreciated. I will close by adding that we welcome all ideas and suggestions as to how we might further innovate, adjust, improve and expand as we 'travel the path forward' together.

Photo captions (left column):

ActioNet Donates Laptops to Fairfax County Public Schools, 9/2/2016

ActioNet HQ 6th Floor Office Warming Party, 8/25/2016

ActioNet Donates School Supplies to the Keiki of Hawaii, 8/12/2016

"When services meet the needs of the business we are delivering Quality."

Service Delivery and Quality

By Kim Morrison, Quality Manager

Quality is defined as a service provider's ability to deliver services of value to the customer as determined by the customer. ActioNet has successfully grown our business every year because of our focus on quality management and service delivery and quality is a vital part of our culture. We take pride in our ISO 9000, ISO 20000, ISO27000 and SEI CMMI Level 3 certifications.

Our programs rely on IT Service Management practices to deliver consistent, high value services to our customers. These services must not only meet their business needs but also coordinate with other industry certifications and standards like ISO and CMMI in order for ActioNet to remain competitive and continue successful growth.

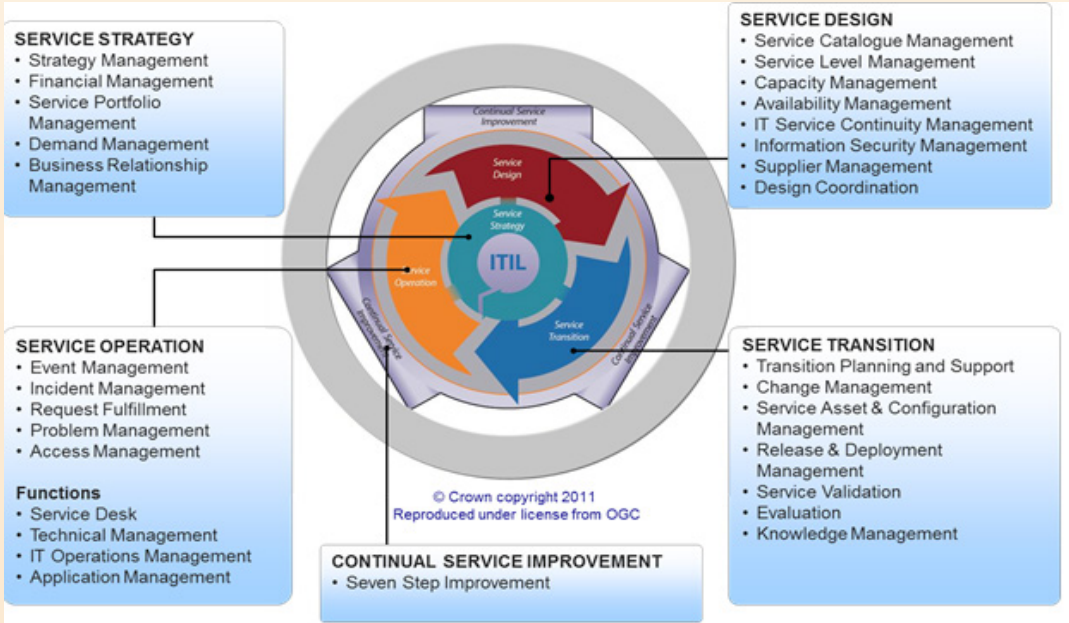## How does ActioNet Ensure High Quality Service Management?

Figure 1- ITIL 5 Lifecycles

To deliver top notch IT Services to our customers we follow ITIL (Information Technology Infrastructure Library) recommended best practices. These practices focus on the alignment of IT Services with our customers' business needs. When services meet the needs of the business we are delivering Quality. Using the five ITIL lifecycles shown in **Figure 1** - Service Strategy, Service Design, Service Transition, Service Operation and Continual Service Improvement (CSI) - we are able to meet or exceed customer expectations.

In the Service Strategy lifecycle we ask questions that help us to identify the future needs of the business. What services will need to be added, retired or replaced? What are our current capabilities and resources? How can we modify them to ensure successful growth? Is there new Governance or regulations that require infrastructure change? We also answer these questions by developing a business case to document the impacts, risk and recommended solutions. Key process areas include Business Relationship Management (BRM), Financial Management and Service Portfolio Management. BRM develops a close relationship with the customer in order to understand their business needs and over time. Financial Management ensures funding is available to cover design, development and delivery of services. The Service Portfolio Management is the source for all service offerings, past, present and proposed.

In Service Design we look at the design and development of recommendations approved during the Service Strategy lifecycle. Successful design of a new, changed or retired service will require resources. Those resources are known as the 4P's of Service Management; people, process, partners (suppliers) and products. A service design package documents the business alignment, resource demands, schedules, key performance metrics including service level agreements, technology needs and standard process. This package becomes the input for the next lifecycle, Service Transition.

The key process areas of this lifecycle include; Service Level Management (SLM), Service Catalog Management (SCM), Availability Management and Information Security Management (ISM). The purpose of SLM is to define, document, agree to, monitor, measure and report the performance levels achieved. SCM is responsible for providing a consistent source of active and soon to be available service offerings. Availability Management ensures that services and resources (the call center for example) meet the agreed to availability requirements. ISM objective is to keep information secure while ensuring the confidentiality requirements are met and data integrity is achieved.

Service Transition manages how we test and implement change. The key processes of this lifecycle include Change Management, Service Asset and Configuration Management (SACM), Release and Deployment, Transition Planning and Support and Knowledge Management. Change Management is the process that controls all changes to the environment, regardless of impact, to ensure that minimal disruption to delivered services occur. SACM is the process area that manages all Configuration Items (CI's) needed to deliver the changed services are documented, available and controlled. Release and Deployment works to ensure that the implementation of change occurs at time that meets the customers' needs and maintains the integrity of current services. Coordination of the resources identified in the 4P's of Service Design is managed by Transition Planning and Support and all information required to support the changed service is documented following Knowledge Management processes. The main purpose of Knowledge Management is to ensure the right people have access to the right information at the right time.

The Service Operation Lifecycle is the heartbeat of Service Management. In this lifecycle we validate that services meet or exceed service levels defined by SLM and Process owners in the Service Design. We also ensure that services remain available and service interruptions are restored promptly and documented correctly.

Requests are fulfilled and Root Cause Analysis (RCAs) are also performed as required. Key process areas include; Event Management, Incident Management, Problem Management and Request Fulfillment.

Event Management is the process of monitoring and managing changes of state that impact the environment. Events often lead to Incidents. The purpose of Incident Management is to restore normal service as quickly as possible while minimizing the overall impact on the business. Problem Management is used to identify root causes and patterns of incidents and is responsible for the documentation of Known Errors in the environment. The Request Fulfillment process handles requests for information, comments, complaints and a process to control standard customer requests with a predefined and preauthorized process (for example a new standard device).

Continual Service Improvement (CSI) is the final ITIL lifecycle. This lifecycle provides guidance on creating and maintaining value to the business. The CSI lifecycle recommends following Quality Management practices including the 7 step improvement process to identify improvement opportunities in all ITIL lifecycles. Understanding the baseline and the different types of metrics that can be used to measure successful improvement are key activities in CSI.

All ITIL lifecycles interact with the other lifecycles in various ways. Correct implementation and application of ITIL Best Practices helps to ensure ActioNet continues to deliver Quality to our customers, maintaining our reputation as an industry leader and attracting new customers to grow our business.

Already have ITIL Foundations? Then why not keep the momentum going by enrolling in an intermediate level ITIL offering? **Figure 2** depicts the levels of ITIL certification, from Foundation to Master. Strive for Master!
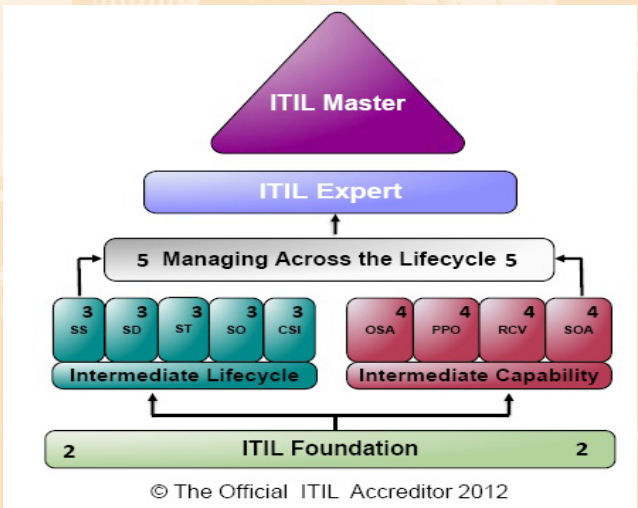

Figure 2- ITIL Course Offerings

LEGEND

LIFECYCLE MODULES

SS – Service Strategy
SD – Service Design
ST – Service Transition
SO – Service Operations
CSI – Continual Service Improvement

CAPABILITY MODULES

OSA – Operation Support and Analysis
PPO – Planning, Protection and Optimization
RCV – Release Control and Validation
SOA – Service Offerings and Agreements

"Best Practices helps to ensure ActioNet continues to deliver Quality to our customers, maintaining our reputation as an industry leader ...."