Dimensions of IT Support Professionalism

About Noel Bruton

- UK consultant, trainer, bestselling author
- Specialising in IT Support
- In industry since 1979, consultant since 1991
- Originator of much of what we call ‘IT Support’
- Quoted in press & academic theses
- Contributor to ITIL
- Required or recommended reading for IT management qualifications
IT Support professionalism means doing, not just enough, but the best we can for those who hired us to provide a service for them.

IT Support is a mass-media joke
...and 16 years of formal IT services frameworks have not really helped.

An IT Services model that presumes IT Support stops at the Service Desk?

We can do better than that.
Support comes from all over IT

- All must be able to handle it
- But departmental priorities delay fixes
- Organisational model needed
- Support, without impeding projects
- Workload measurement, anticipation

Customer service in IT – an unrecognised, lowly-paid skillset with few career opportunities?

We can do better than that.
Upside-Down IT Support

• Cheapest people on the front line?
  – Where they can do most damage?
• Slightest 1L improvement can save £Ks
  – Higher FLF means fewer 2L staff needed
  – And better service for users
• Time-of-Day flexibility
  – Most valuable staff multi-skilled, not best technicians

IT support fixes that take days rather than minutes?
We can do better than that.
Unmanaged IT Support Productivity

• Why do fixes take days?
• 2L are 35% less productive than a decade ago
  – Means 3 staff to do work of 2
• Excellent support can be factors more effective
• Typical desktop MTTF; 23 to 37 minutes
  – Yet no. fixes per 2L FTE per day ~ 5.5
  – Where does half the day go?

IT Technical “managers” who don’t manage, but just continue to act as more highly-paid technicians?

We can do better than that.
The Non-Managing Manager

• Ineffective
  – Without improvement, investment not returned

• Divisive
  – “I could do that – why does he get paid more?”
  – Licence to cherry-pick

• Stagnating
  – No change, in the face of change elsewhere
  – Encourages backlogs

IT Support staffing levels based on reaction and guesswork rather than science?

We can do better than that.
Is Your IT Support understaffed?

Possibly
Backlog seems out of control, but could be:
• Misaligned resources
• Absence of productivity targets
• Interruptions allowed
• Caveat - can be caused by overstaffing

Probably not
Trended input largely equals output
• Workload under control
• By happenstance?
• Small productivity change would make big difference
• Could be absence of backlog strategy

IT Support priorities decided on the basis of ‘He Who Shouts Loudest’?

We can do better than that.
**IT Support Priorities**

- Should be a business matter, not IT
- Agree who should come first at business level
- Premium service for most important user groups
- Complainants have to convince the business, not you
- VIP service – if you do it, formalize it

---

IT Services departments believing that mere software will solve all their procedural problems?

*We can do better than that.*
ITSM Software Underwhelms

• A tool is not an alternative for a strategy
• Universally inadequate reporting – data in, data out
• Measuring wrong things to be helpful
  – Silly, arbitrary ‘Service Level Targets’
  – Should be throughput, not output
• Should be more instructional
  – “What decisions do I need to be able to make?”

IT Support quality so random that it depends almost entirely on who takes your call?

We can do better than that.
Skillsets are Crucial

- Skillsets – a commodity to be managed
- Use a skills matrix and targeted improvements
- Eradicate SPoFs by duplicating skillsets
- We don’t need experts – this is IT Production
- We need most people to know most common requests

Absolute absence of a Cost-Benefit Analysis for justifying IT Support investment?

We can do better than that.
IT Support Cost-Benefit Analysis

- Business output is staff productivity
- Employee productivity relies on IT
- Thus, IT Support = Business continuity & success
- Can be rendered as equation ‘Lost User-Productivity’
- Financially proves value of IT Support
- “Shall I invest in IT Support – or thus incur cost elsewhere?”

An IT Service Management model that puts its own bureaucracy ahead of the service to the users? We can do better than that.
When ‘Process’ Confuses Means With End

- Service Level confusion
  - Is a ‘four hour fix’ what the users need?
  - Or just a procedural convenience?
- Users don’t measure by service levels
  - But by their own expectation
- Valuing tech over ability to translate into service
- IT Support needs customer management strategy

IT Support professionalism is essentially the difference between you owning your job and your job owning you. Take control.
Required Skills Are Available

Career-spanning, accredited certification in IT Support professionalism for both internal (ITSM) and external (ECSM, channel) support providers.

Dimensions of IT Support Professionalism

IT Strategy and Digital Forum
International
Brno, May 2018