In Search of the Effective Service Manager
Research on a Management Development Program for the Required Competencies

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As I have been in the field of IT Service Management for a long time and have trained many IT Service Managers in the competencies they need, it is my personal conviction that currently no appropriate management development program exists in the market, nor do organisations have a clear view on the competencies that should be developed internally.

This is remarkable, since the function of the IT Service Manager is crucial in IT organisations which claim to deliver reliable, high quality IT services to their customers ("The Business"). And it is even more remarkable if you look at the competencies and standards that IT Service Managers are required to master (as will follow from this research); it seems that everybody is looking for the sheep with five legs.

Keywords: IT Service Manager, Management Development Program, Effective Behaviour, Function Profile, Organisational Context, Critical Situations, Competencies, Personality

Summary

This research will study the required behaviour of IT Service Managers in situations that are critical for success; situations in which ‘being effective’ makes the difference between a good and less good IT Service Manager.

Based on the above objective, the following research question was formulated:

‘Which are the competencies an IT Service Manager needs to have in order to be effective in his function and how should a management development program for those competencies look like?’

In order to answer this question, the first step was to get a good understanding about the function profile (description and tasks), the organisational context and the critical situations related to the function of the IT Service Manager.

By means of a questionnaire sent to 125 relations (31 respondents) and a workshop with a focus group (5 persons) this information was obtained.

Also by use of a questionnaire the required competencies (both expertise and behavioural) and the status of management development programs for IT Service Managers in organisations has been investigated.

Overall conclusions of the research program are that:

a) the level of required competencies is very high, particularly for the behavioural ones;

b) there are almost no official management development programs in organisations and in the market;

c) the programs that exist merely focus on expertise, instead of behavioural competencies and/or are very fragmented in their approach.

If you directly want to see the required competencies, please skip to tables 7 and 8 on pages 18 and 19.

Background

Current Situation

The management of IT organisations is confronted with the following problems or challenges: growing remoteness from their (end) customers, i.e. ‘The Business’, insufficient alignment of Business and IT, high cost of IT (on at least hard to explain), unavailability of IT systems, overrun (of time and money) of IT projects regarding new or maintained IT systems, etc.

On the other hand, IT is currently subject to rapid change. It is becoming more and more important for businesses; more service-orientation is required and costs must be reduced. This is the situation in which IT managers have to work and be successful.

Many managers of IT organisations have a technical background as well as a technological focus. In the past they often were operators or developers themselves. They have strong analytical
and problem-solving skills, etc. However, the competencies required for technical support or development of IT systems are fundamentally different than those required to be a manager.

This not only applies to the line managers of IT organisations but even more so to the many functions which bear the title of manager, but which have to do with the responsibility for a process, a product or service, etc. Hence their names: process manager, product manager, service manager, etc.

They have a position in a matrix organisation, have high responsibilities, but their authorities are often not formally acknowledged. They are like a spider in a web, have many parties with whom they have to communicate and motivate to get things done: customers, line managers, specialists, suppliers, etc. It is particularly this group of people that forms the focus for this management project.

For ‘traditional’ (line) managers and leaders, much research has been done on the competencies that are required. In many organisations management development programs exist to develop those required competencies.

Process managers, product managers, service managers, etc. are often excluded from such programs. And this is remarkable considering the importance of their roles in delivering reliable, high quality IT services to the business.

**IT Service Manager**

Given the importance of the IT Service Manager in IT organisations - whose activities are aimed at delivering reliable, high quality IT services to the business -, this research focuses on improving the effectiveness of these managers within the IT organisation.

The choice for this function is not a random one. It is a function with many responsibilities. It also requires many competencies, both personal (behavioural) as technical (expertise). And finally, the difference in being successful or not has great impact on the quality of the services an IT organisation provides.

What makes a person a good and successful IT Service Manager? What makes such a person effective in critical situations? What are his competencies that make him successful in building good relationships with customers or communicating with technical specialists in a constructive way? And more importantly, how can we develop these competencies? What kind of management development program is required to improve the effectiveness of an IT Service Manager?

**Literature**

Figure 1 shows the components that have an effect on succesfull behaviour. Each of those components will be discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs.

![Figure 1: Overview of Effective Behaviour Components](image-url)

**Function Profile**

What exactly is an IT Service Manager? In this regard, I quote from an article from Droog (2004): ‘The group of persons that can be called (or call themselves) IT Service Manager is quite divers and the content of their functions is very wide. The IT Service Manager can be seen as a generic description of a group of functions.’

‘For IT Service Managers, the same applies as for e.g. politicians or construction workers; these are also generic descriptions of a group of functions. A politician can have functions like member of the city council or the parliament, being a minister or a mayor. And within the group of construction workers you can find plumbers, carpenters, masons, etc. In the group of IT Service Managers you could find consultants, service level managers, process managers, etc.’

In order to scope my research I needed a clear function profile with a description and tasks in...
order to define the required competencies that will lead to effective behaviour. I took the function profile from Op de Coul (2001) as a starting point for my research:

‘The IT Service Manager is from within the IT organisation responsible for the delivery of the IT services to the end-user organisation (the business) in line with the agreed service levels, preferably documented in Service Level Agreements (SLAs). The IT Service Manager is directly involved in and responsible for the specification of the requirements of the end-users for IT services and other support from the IT organisation. The IT Service Manager manages the delivery process, monitors if the delivery is in line with the agreements and takes corrective action if necessary. The IT Service Manager is the primary point of contact for management of the end-user organisation.’

Appendix A shows the function profile for the IT Service Manager as defined by Op de Coul (2001), including the tasks that fit within the function. The list of tasks has been reduced a bit, for reasons that will be explained later. The reasons for choosing this function profile are:

a) the function is put down with many responsibilities. The IT Service Manager in this function profile plays important roles, both towards the customer organisation as towards the internal/external delivery organisation. In my experience it reflects the actual situation in many organisations.

b) the work of Op de Coul (2001) is the most recent work done on functions, tasks and competencies in IT. There is no other work of this thoroughness found and it therefore makes it a perfect basis for my research.

Therefore my first research question has to do with checking the validity and usefulness of the function profile from Op de Coul (2001) in daily practice:

Research question 1: ‘Is it possible to define a generic function profile of an IT Service Manager and what would this function profile look like?’

By means of a questionnaire, people have been asked if they recognised this function in their organisation and to comment on the description and tasks.

The result of this question will have to be a function description and a list that contains all tasks that are relevant for the function of IT Service Manager.

This will be input to the management development program of IT Service Managers. It will also allow me to look at the critical situations belonging with the tasks in the function and the competencies that are required to deal with those situations by showing effective behaviour.

Role Positioning

Since the organisations participating in this research might have organised the IT Function differently, there is a chance that they would position the IT Service Manager in different roles in their organisation. Figure 2 shows various ways of organising the IT Function.

The leftmost column shows the situation in which an internal IT department deals with all or most aspects of IT (functional, application and technical management). The function of IT Service Manager does exist in the internal IT department.

In the middle column the internal IT department is delivering services to the user organisation. The IT Service Manager is at the interface between the IT department and the user organisation and is responsible for delivery of the IT services. In the user organisation a specific group/department might be present for dealing with functional management of IT systems.

If the (technical) management of part of the IT infrastructure is outsourced to an external IT provider, the necessity for managing the delivery of those services also becomes important. This means that the function of IT Service Manager
will be created at the external service provider as well and within the internal IT department the function of Contract Manager or Service Delivery Manager evolves.

Finally in the rightmost column, most of the IT Function (application and technical) is outsourced to an external IT provider and the Demand/Supply Organisation in the user organisation has grown mature. Now the function of IT Service Manager starts to evolve also within this user organisation, with the primary focus on managing the external IT Providers.

Organisational Context
A function will in general be carried out in a particular organisational context. What is meant by the term organisational context can be a study by itself. Let alone what the effect of this organisational context is on the effective behaviour of an IT Service Manager.

However, it will be good to have some feeling of the organisational situation an IT Service Manager is in. Therefore I will formulate the following research question to investigate the organisational context:

Research question 2: ‘What is the organisational context of an IT Service Manager in which he has to carry out his function?’

In his work, Appelbaum et al. (2000) define ‘opportunity to participate’ as one of the three components of a High Performance Work System (HPWS) which, when put in place correctly, will lead to ‘effective discretionary behaviour’ by employees. And this in turn will contribute to the performance of the organisation.

Core of this component is the level of which employees have the opportunity to have influence and take decisions on topics related to their work and the organisation. It contains aspects like: autonomy at decision making, membership of a self steering team, membership of an off-line team, work meetings, communication, etc. An other important aspect is also the level in which the managers create the opportunity for influence and autonomy.

I will again use the work of Op de Coul (2001) to define the aspects of the organisational context that I will investigate. He defines the following elements of context:

1. Organisational scope in which the task is performed
   a) The part of the organisation (e.g. own workplace, department, business unit, etc.)
   b) The level in the organisation (e.g. operational, national or international general management, etc.)
   c) The type and amount of influence (e.g. indirect with low impact versus direct with high impact)
   d) Other aspects such as culture, objectives (e.g. profit versus non-profit), type of business (e.g. production, trade, retail, etc.)

2. Level of execution at which the task is performed
   a) Freedom of thinking and acting (e.g. performing tasks with clear and detailed instructions or with a more global assignment)
   b) Complexity of the tasks (e.g. one defined subject with only one aspect or point of view or several subjects with more aspects and/or view points)

3. Required knowledge of the environment (e.g. of the organisation and its business processes, the branch/sector, etc.)

4. Methods, techniques and tools with which the task is performed

Based on these elements, I will formulate a number of questions that will help in getting a better, but basic understanding of the organisational context. This understanding makes it possible to design more realistic assessment and/or training situations and it will help in determining the required competencies of the IT Service Manager.

Critical Situations

Sign versus Sample Approach

In the beginning of the previous century, the human being was seen as a collection of characteristics independent of the situation he was in. If you knew what characteristics (e.g. IQ of 115, over average extravert, low mathematical skills, very careful) a person had and you knew what was required for the function, you could easily match the two (person and function). This is also
called the ‘sign approach’ (Breed, 1996; Visser, 1997).

It was only in the middle of the previous century that psychologists realised that there was a second dimension. Behaviour is on the one hand determined by the nature of the person itself (its characteristics), but on the other hand by the situation he is in. The importance of the situation should not be underestimated. Sometimes someone can become a whole different person when he is in a different situation. This is also called the ‘sample approach’ (Breed, 1996; Visser, 1997).

Accordingly it is not enough to have a picture of the behaviour a person should demonstrate in general and the characteristics that support this behaviour. It is also important to look at specific situations (critical incidents), relevant to the function of the person. This is what happens in assessment centres in case of selection procedures when people have to perform a small role play (Visser, 1997).

**Critical Incident Technique**

One of the earliest publications on the Critical Incident Method is from Flanagan (1954). He describes in his article “The Critical Incident Technique” the development of this method, including the fundamental basic rules. It is a set of procedures with which direct observations of human behaviour can be collected. The technique can be used to determine ineffective or effective behaviour.

An ‘incident’, according to Flanagan, is an activity that is clearly defined and allows for predictions about the person that performs the activity. A ‘critical incident’ is an incident of which the consequences are clear enough, such that there is no doubt about the effects of the incident.

After Flanagan (1954), also others have recognised the importance of the situation on the behaviour of persons. Kok & De Jongh (2004) mention the STAR method is often being used in assessment centres. STAR stands for situation, task, action and result. Spencer & Spencer (1993) describe their Behavioural Event Interview as a powerful method for predicting superior or effective job performance.

In my research, the Critical Incident Method will be used to come up with a number of situations that are relevant, characteristic and critical for an IT Service Manager. In those situations one is likely to see the difference between an effective and ineffective IT Service Manager. Hence the following research question:

**Research question 3a: ‘What are the critical situations during the work of an IT Service Manager?’**

Having a number of those situations (see Appendix B), the next step is to observe behaviour in those critical situations (either by direct observation or by interviews) and try to determine the difference between effective and ineffective behaviour in those situations (determining behavioural criteria).

Once knowing the critical situations and the behavioural criteria, this information can be used to develop training situations, based on the critical situations for the management development program of the IT Service Manager.

**Effective Behaviour**

A person is in a situation, because of his function and the tasks he carries out. It is a situation that matters, a critical situation, things happen. This requires behaviour (note: there cannot be no behaviour, even doing nothing is behaviour). But what is effective behaviour in this situation?

**Goal Expectancy**

Behaviour (in our case of an IT Service Manager) is considered effective if – in a specific critical situation – it leads to the required outcomes. This suggests:

- that the required outcome should be clear to the IT Service Manager, in order to demonstrate the behaviour that will lead to this outcome.
- that the relationship between the required outcome and the behaviour to be demonstrated is clear.

The required outcome in a specific critical situation does not stand by itself. The outcome is part of higher goals and eventually of the strategic goals of the company. So there is a ‘goal hierarchy’ of which effective persons should be aware.
Often this is called ‘role expectancy’. Effective persons should be aware of what is expected of them in their role (or function). Perhaps a better word would be ‘goal expectancy’. ‘Role’ suggests that you know what to do, whilst ‘goal’ suggests that you know what to achieve.

But, is there only one type of behaviour possible, leading to the required outcome? Or is there room for an individual or personal style? And is this personal style just a matter of preference? Or do small changes in the situation require a person to change his style?

Cultural Differences

In some cultures, the individual behaviour of people is not something you talk about. Commenting individual behaviour is regarded inappropriate. In such cultures, a lot of behaviour, specifically inter-personal behaviour, is pre-determined and prescribed. The culture does not allow for many differences in behaviour. Often there is one “correct” way of behaviour for a certain situation and are all other ways of behaving considered to be “wrong”.

In a sense, “effective behaviour” in these cultures is doing the thing that the culture prescribes, whether it is truly effective or not. Examples of these cultures are the Japanese management culture and the army.

For my research I will use the following definition: “behaviour is considered effective if – in a specific critical situation – it leads to the required outcomes”.

The IT Service Manager should know these required outcomes and can use his own behavioural style to reach these outcomes, being able to adjust when the specific situation asks for this.

This means that for each critical situation I have to investigate both the required outcomes and the behaviour that will lead to these outcomes, bearing in mind that there might not be only one right answer. This leads to the following research question:

Research question 3b: ‘What are the required outcomes from the given critical situations and which behaviour is considered effective?’

Once we know the most effective behaviour, what are the factors that determine this behaviour? Are these factors mainly internal (characteristics of the person) or also external (determined by the organisation and/or situation)? And how can these factors be changed? The next paragraph will try to answer these questions.

Determining Factors

Many research has been performed (and is still performed) in order to investigate the factors that determine or influence (effective) behaviour. This starts with the various psychological theories that exist.

Behaviourist Theory

According to the behaviourist theory (Pavlov, Skinner), all behaviour is learned, it is the result of conditioning (stimulus and response). Behaviour in organisations is determined by punishment and reward.

Talking about the spirit, consciousness, character, etc. does not make sense. The mind is a black box and only studying visible behaviour as result of external stimuli is interesting for research.

The psychoanalytic theory (Freud) distinguishes between the conscious and unconscious part of the human mind. The majority of the causes of our behaviour are instinctive and unconscious. The conflicts and tension between ‘id’, ‘ego’ and ‘superego’ determine most of our behaviour.

Cognitivist Theory

Whilst in the behaviourist theory, the response follows the external stimulus directly (there is no interest in knowing what happens in the mind); in the cognitive psychology one believes that the ‘flow’ is as follows:

\[
\text{Stimulus} \rightarrow \text{Choice (Internal Processes)} \rightarrow \text{Response (= Behaviour)}
\]

This theory starts from the idea that people have a choice; they can choose how to react to certain external stimuli. And this choice is based on internal processes.
Depending on the theory, many terminology is used: cognitions, subjective experience, mental models, etc. Each of them is referring to those internal processes of thoughts, beliefs, ideas, opinions, feelings, emotions, motives, intentions, etc.), lying at the basis of effective or ineffective behaviour.

It would be interesting to go on this path of psychology to get more understanding of those internal processes and how they influence behaviour. In the end, I believe that this is the level where personal development of IT Service Managers should be. But for this management project this is a step too far in the psychological arena and I choose to stay away from this for now.

**Ability, Motivation & Opportunity**

In studies of Appelbaum et al. (2000) on how to design a High Performance Work System (HPWS), such that attitude and behaviour of employees have the right effect on the performance of the organisation, the 'AMO Model' is used.

In this model ‘Ability’, ‘Motivation’ and ‘Opportunity’ are seen as the components of a HPWS. When – via HRM instruments – these components are put in place correctly, it will lead to ‘effective discretionary behaviour’ by employees. And this in turn will contribute to the performance of the organisation.

People perform well when they have the ‘knowledge and skills’ or are able to develop these (ability), they get the right ‘stimuli and rewards’ (motivation) and when they have the ‘opportunity to participate’. Or by putting it in a formula:

\[
\text{Performance} = \text{Function of (Ability, Motivation, Opportunity)}
\]

\[
\text{Ability} = \text{Cognitive, Physical & Emotional}
\]

Of the three factors that are mentioned (Ability, Motivation and Opportunity), I will elaborate on the Ability part. The subject is too broad in relation with the scope of this thesis to do all three.

However, it would be a nice subject for further research to look at the influence of motivation and opportunity – and also of the other theories mentioned (e.g. cognitions, subjective experiences, mental models) – on the effective behaviour of IT Service Managers.

**Competencies**

In the area of learning and working, both in business as in education, the concept of competencies is becoming more and more popular. The fact that it is used in many organisations, however, does not mean that the effect of competence management is always clear and visible.

In order to be able to use competence management in an effective way, it is important to have a good understanding of what competencies are and from what elements they are built up. In literature, a lot of different terminology is used, although they also have a lot in common. A definition of competencies which is often used in literature is that of Spencer & Spencer (1993):

A competency is an underlying characteristic of an individual that is causally related to criterion referenced effective and/or superior performance in a job or situation.

This is still an abstract definition of a competency. It tells us that a competency is something that will lead to effective behaviour in a particular situation. And that it is a characteristic of an individual. But it does not tell us how this characteristic is built up. Boyatsis (1982) says that:

Competencies are characteristics of people in terms of Knowledge, Skills and Attitude. Behaviour is the usage of those competencies, that will lead to effective and superior execution of tasks.

There are also three elements in the 'Ability' component of the AMO Model of Appelbaum et al. (2000), being: Cognitive, Physical and Emotional. Spencer & Spencer (1993) and also Hoekstra & Van Sluis (2001) have a different structure for looking at Competencies. According to them, competencies are determined by two groups of elements:

- Elements that are related to a particular job area, the tasks to perform, the problems to be solved, etc. These are the elements of Knowledge, Experience and Insight. These are a person's “Problem Related Resources”.
- Elements that are related to the environment or the situation in which the above problems occur. That is
why they call the elements: **Attitude**, **Attention** and **Emotion** a person’s "Situation Related Resources".

Is it possible for someone with only knowledge, experience and insight (Hoekstra & Van Sluis call this expertise) to achieve good results? The answer is no. Besides this expertise a person also needs to ‘fine-tune’ his behaviour to the specific situation he is in.

This means that effective behaviour is only possible when someone is capable of adjusting his expertise to the situation. This adjusting requires qualities of a person in terms of attitude, attention and emotional control. These qualities determine the way someone handles a problem, picks up a task, communicates with people, etc. Hoekstra & Van Sluis (2001) call this set of qualities: behavioural repertoire.

So for a competency, both elements are required: expertise and behavioural repertoire. Put into a simple formula, one could say:

\[
\text{Effectiveness (in a particular situation)} = (\text{knowledge + experience + insight}) \times (\text{attitude + attention + emotion})
\]

These definitions express the difference between fixed and variable elements of a particular situation. On the one hand, tasks and problems have intrinsic characteristics that are always the same and of which knowledge can be built up. On the other hand, when executing a task, there will always be changing conditions and unexpected circumstances that will influence the outcome.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem Related Resources</th>
<th>Situation Related Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>Attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insight</td>
<td>Emotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expertise</td>
<td>Behavioural</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3: Competence structure (simple)**

One can anticipate, handle, control those conditions and circumstances to a certain extent, but that is not done through knowledge, but by a behavioural repertoire (based on a lot of effort and practice) that can be used in an improvising way.

Based on the above I will choose for the competence structure of Spencer & Spencer (1993) and Hoekstra & Van Sluis (2001) and will make a distinction between expertise and behavioural repertoire. This leads to the following research question:

*Research question 4: ‘Which competencies (both expertise and behavioural) does an IT Service Manager need to have in order to be effective?’*

Literature research shows that there are many competence frameworks available on the market. Each assessment centre that takes itself seriously, has its own framework.

The most important ones I found (in The Netherlands) are:

- GITP
- LTP
- NGI (WFBI)

I have decided to use the NGI (WFBI) framework (used by Op de Coul) for two reasons:

a) It is in line with theory about competencies I like to use (expertise and behavioural competencies);

b) It has seven levels of behavioural examples that I can easily use in the questionnaire. In appendices 5 and 6, both parts of the competence framework can be found.

A valid question is to what extent competencies can really be developed and trained; particularly with regard to the behavioural repertoire. Everyone knows situations where someone’s “nature” does not change and probably never will, despite all good efforts.

**Temper, Intelligence & Personality**

According to Hoekstra & Van Sluis (2001) not every desired development of the behavioural repertoire is possible. People can develop competencies, but only to a certain level. The limitations that are put to this development are determined by one’s **temper**, **intelligence** and **personality**. These limitations differ from person to person. One person will be able to develop a much broader and varying repertoire of competencies than another.

The existence of competencies starts at the set of gene’s that a person has been given by his par-
ents. Characteristics in the area of temper, intelligence and personality are largely genetically determined.

When temper, intelligence and personality determine the boundaries of someone’s development, it seems like a good idea to measure them as part of the management development program.

This is exactly what happens in assessment centres as part of a selection procedure. There are tests for both measuring someone’s intelligence quotient (IQ) and to determine someone’s personality (temper is often considered part of it).

It goes beyond the scope of this research to determine per competency how the behavioural repertoire belonging to that competency is limited by the boundaries of one’s characteristics. But this could be a good topic for further research.

Methodology

General

In order to answer the various research questions in this management project, three different research methods have been used:

- Questionnaire
- Focus Group
- Web Search

The questionnaire has been used to answer most of the research questions, except the question about the current existence of development programs in the market. That one has been done by searching the web. So the questionnaire is by far the most important method of research.

The focus group was only used to get a more in-depth view on the critical situations in which the IT Service Manager is involved and the behaviour he has to show in order to be effective. It showed from the questionnaires that this question was not answered at the level of detail required.

The web search was used for research on existing (commercial) management development programs for IT Service Managers in the market.

Procedure

Questionnaire

The questionnaire has been sent - by personal email, kindly asking if they would participate - to 125 known relations of Suerte. From all sent questionnaires, 31 have been returned. This is about 25% response. Basically we can divide the function of people responding to the questionnaire in three different groups:

- IT (Team) Managers; these are people that are end responsible for an IT organisation, either as an internal or external service provider to the customer organisation (13 respondents, 42%).
- IT Service Managers; these are people that actually carry out the function (or part of it) themselves, although the function sometimes has a different name, i.e. contract manager (6 respondents, 19%).
- Consultants; these are the people who advise about IT Service Management in general and also particularly about this function to organisations (12 respondents, 39%).

Some of the respondents worked for an interim management organisation, but when answering the questions, they took the role of manager within one of their customer organisations. Since most of the time these interim assignments take more than half a year, it is likely to assume that they could place themselves well enough in the customer situation to give a realistic response.

Looking at the sectors the respondents came from, we see a great diversity: banking and insurance (6 respondents), government (4 respondents), retail (4 respondents), engineering and construction (1 respondent), energy (1 respondent) are a number of sectors in which the companies of the respondents are active. With 9 respondents (29%) IT consultancy is the largest sector.

The size of the organisations also shows a great diversity. Out of 31 respondents, 13 of them work in an organisation where the IT function consists of more than 1.000 employees. For 6 respondents the IT function is between 100 and 1.000 employees and the remaining 12 respondents work in organisations with less than 100 employees in IT.
Focus Group

The focus group consisted of 5 IT Service Managers of one organisation that had followed an ITIL Service Manager course from Suerte Consultancy & Training and now participated in an on-the-job coaching and intervision program.

The objective of this program was learn how to deal better with certain situations in their work and to become more effective. As part of the program they were asked to describe those situations, reflect on them and ask feedback from the group about their shown behaviour.

Web Search

The web search simple consisted of myself behind a computer, using a search engine and some keywords to find out what is available on the Internet.

Research Questions

In this paragraph the 6 research questions are presented and discussed briefly.

Function Profile

The first research question has to do with checking the validity and usefulness of the function profile from Op de Coul (2001) in daily practice:

*Research question 1: ‘Is it possible to define a generic function profile of an IT Service Manager and what would this function profile look like?’*

By means of a questionnaire, people where asked a number of questions that had to do with recognising this function in their organisation and to comment on the description and tasks.

The original list of tasks presented by Op de Coul (2001) is very extensive. Presenting the whole list to the respondents of the questionnaire would ask a lot of time from them. It would probably also raise a lot of questions, since at first glance some tasks are very generic and not all tasks have the same relevance for the function.

Therefore I have reduced the list to a smaller one. This is done in co-operation with 5 specialists from Suerte. These specialists all have more than 10 years experience in the area of IT Service Management, both as trainer/consultant, as well as interim IT Service Manager. This made it for them not too difficult to reduce the list to a more meaningful subset.

We have decided to focus on some general tasks (code AA), the service tasks (code SA) and the commercial tasks (code CA). All others have been left out because they are either too technical (dealing with servers, networks, etc) or too general (e.g. determining priority).

This reduced list has been used in the questionnaire. In order to integrate a correction facility, I have given the respondents the opportunity to add missing tasks, by adding the following question.

Organisational Context

The second research question is about getting a better understanding of the organisational context an IT Service Manager is working in.

*Research question 2: ‘What is the organisational context of an IT Service Manager in which he has to carry out his function?’*

This question is also answered by means of the questionnaire. People were asked a number of questions about the context, based on the model of Op de Coul (2001).

Critical Situations

The third research question (part a and b) is about getting a list of the most important critical situations during the work of an IT Service Manager and to obtain the required outcomes and behavioural criteria for those critical situations.

*Research question 3a: ‘What are the critical situations during the work of an IT Service Manager?’*

*Research question 3b: ‘What are the required outcomes from the given critical situations and which behaviour is considered effective?’*

In the questionnaire I have asked questions to get insight in the critical situations of the IT Service Manager. I have asked to come up with as many of those situations as possible. People could use their own free text to describe the situation, but were guided by the following questions:
• Describe the moment; When and where is it? Who are there in this situation (customer, supplier, colleagues, managers, etc.)?
• What is the problem? Which performance, result, service is at stake?
• What is the desired outcome of this situation? What result needs to be achieved?
• What is the behaviour that makes the IT Service Manager effective in this situation?

Since this is a very difficult question to answer in sufficient detail, even with the four questions, I have asked those questions in more detail during a workshop with the focus group.

Competencies

The fourth research question is about the competencies an IT Service Manager need to have in order to be effective.

Research question 4: 'Which competencies (both expertise and behavioural) does an IT Service Manager need to have in order to be effective?’

In the questionnaire people are given both parts of the NGI (WFBI) competence framework: the expertise related competencies (see Appendix C) and the behaviour related competencies (see Appendix D). For each of those two parts they are asked to indicate what level of competency is required for an IT Service Manager.

For the expertise related competencies, there are five levels, based on Bloom’s Taxonomy (1956), which was explained in the questionnaire itself. For the behaviour related competencies, per competency people were given seven levels of behavioural examples (criteria) as a basis to choose from (see Appendix E). This should make a rather abstract competency like e.g. customer focus a little more specific.

For both parts of the framework people are given the opportunity to add competencies if they feel that something is missing.

Development Program

The fifth research question is about the current status of IT Service Managers for IT Service Managers in organisations and in the market.

Results

Research Question 1

Recognition of the description

All of the 31 respondents recognised in the function description a function with more or less the same content as in their own organisation. In 11 cases it is also called IT Service Manager. Other titles that are used in daily practice are: IT (Line) Manager (6), Service Delivery Manager (5), Customer Service Manager (3), Service Level Manager (2), Service Coordinator (2), Contract Manager (2).

From this list two titles have particular interest. First it seems that in smaller IT organisations (max. 40-50 employees), the IT Manager or one of the team leaders sometimes carries out this function (or better: role, since it is only part of the tasks and responsibilities).

Secondly, in those organisations that apparently have adopted CMM (Capability Maturity Model) as best practice process framework, the presented function has been split into two functions: Customer Service Manager (focus on customer) and Service Delivery Manager (focus on provider).

Number of people in this function

Regarding the number of people having this function, it is difficult to draw conclusions. It is hard to believe that particularly in case of the large organisations (number of people working in IT > 1.000) these figures are correct. There are
no numbers filled in, only a few people have this function or many people have this function.

An explanation for the above could be that in large organisations it is difficult for a person to know what exactly is the function of all his colleagues. He probably knows it for his department or unit, but not for the whole organisation. Whereas the total number of people working in IT is a figure that most people can much easier reproduce.

In smaller organisations (number of people working in IT < 100) the figures seem to make more sense. It looks like 1 out of 25 people has the function of IT Service Manager.

Comments on the description

When asking people about their comments on the function description, 11 respondents did not have any comments. They agreed in the description provided. By the other respondents, the following comments were given:

• 5 respondents indicated that in their organisation the tasks were spread over more than one function. This was particularly the case in larger organisations or where they have implemented CMM (Customer Service Manager and Service Delivery Manager).

• 4 respondents stated the opposite. In their organisation the IT Service Manager has more tasks than the ones stated in the description. I will go into those specific tasks when discussing the results of the next question (relevance of tasks). These respondents often came from smaller organisations who had also indicated at a previous question that the function did not always exist and that tasks were carried out by the IT Manager.

• 2 respondents see the IT Service Manager as the ‘line manager’ of the (ITIL) process managers, or even as a process manager. This places him more ‘internal’ in the delivery organisation, making sure operational and tactical processes for delivery are in place.

• 3 respondents thought the function of IT Service Manager was a more operational one, dealing with keeping the operation of IT running. Changing existing services and implementing new services was not primarily the responsibility of the IT Service Manager, but more of Information Managers, Project Managers, etc.

• 2 respondents do not see the IT Service Manager as a serious counterpart for both Customer Managers as IT Managers. Important agreements about IT service provision are apparently made on a different organisational level. This may also have to do with the more operational role of the IT Service Manager (see previous bullet).

• Finally, 2 respondents indicated that they saw the function of IT Service Manager more and more appear at the side of the customer, in the department of Information Management, managing the external IT Provider.

Most of these comments are in line with a) the size of the organisation and b) the way the IT Function is organized. Smaller organisations tend to combine more tasks in the function and larger organisations tend to split the function in several different ones. When outsourcing all or part of the IT Function to external IT Providers, new/other interfaces are created that must be managed.

Relevance of the presented tasks

Table 1 shows how the presented tasks were scored in relation to their relevance for the function of the IT Service Manager. For each of the tasks the average, median and skew have been calculated. The table is sorted descending on average.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Avg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SA-4</td>
<td>Monitor service delivery</td>
<td>4,47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA-3</td>
<td>Draw up IT service agreements</td>
<td>4,45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA-1</td>
<td>Draw up IT service catalogue</td>
<td>4,35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA-1</td>
<td>Maintain relationships with clients</td>
<td>4,30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA-2</td>
<td>Formulate requirements for IT service delivery</td>
<td>4,10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA-3</td>
<td>Maintain relationships with suppliers</td>
<td>3,64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA-4</td>
<td>Put assignments, purchases out to tender</td>
<td>3,32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA-5</td>
<td>Execute commercial tasks</td>
<td>3,27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AA-14</td>
<td>Organise a function to provide information</td>
<td>3,17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AA-13</td>
<td>Research automation developments</td>
<td>2,81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA-2</td>
<td>Determine budget transfer taxonomy</td>
<td>2,80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1: Relevance of the presented tasks

It is clear that those tasks that were originally coded as 'service tasks' (code SA) in the list of Op de Coul (2001), are considered to be most relevant. The more commercial (CA) and general (AA) tasks are less relevant in the opinion of the respondents. But none of the tasks is scored very low on relevance. The lowest still has an average of 2.80 and a median of 3. All of the tasks could therefore well belong to the function of the IT Service Manager.

Additions to the tasks

Asking the respondents if there were tasks missing from the list and if they had any additions to make, 16 of the respondents did not add any tasks. Of all the tasks that were added, they were only mentioned by one respondent, using his own words to describe the missing task.

This made it difficult to process them and see if they were in fact a new task that should be added to the list (either a completely new task or a task already existing on the original list of Op de Coul (2001)) or that it simply was a matter of interpretation of the presented tasks.

A number of additions could be placed into existing tasks. They can be added to the description of the tasks in Appendix A. This goes for the following additions:

- Continuous improvement, adjusting processes when they do not function, making proposals for improvement → add to AA-14
- Determining the consequences of business plans on existing SLAs → add to SA-3
- Investigating the perception of the customer regarding the quality of the services → add to SA-4
- Reporting to management and the customers about the delivered services → add to SA-4
- Discussing possibly relevant innovations with the customers → add to CA-1
- Matching of service levels in external contracts with internal SLAs → add to CA-4
- Being responsible for all procurement and licensing contracts → add to CA-4

Other additions could not easily be added to existing tasks on the reduced list, but did fit in existing tasks in the original list of Op de Coul (2001). This goes for the following additions:

- Various tasks in relation to financial management, budget definition and control, correctness of the invoice, volume and cost registration, etc. → add tasks FA-1, FA-2 and FA-3.

Some additions did not fit into any existing description. A new task (and code) should be created. This goes for the following additions:

- Internal marketing, communication, taking care of optimal information provision;
- Operational tasks, creating customer information reports after high priority incidents, escalations, guarding customer interests in times of a crisis;
- Being functionally responsible for process management.

And finally some tasks simply do not fit into the function profile of an IT Service Manager, in my humble opinion, but were only mentioned because the roles of IT Service Manager and IT Manager were combined by the respondent. Of course there is room for discussion here.

- Strategic IT Management
- Project Portfolio Management
- Project Management

Taking all the above additions into account and incorporate them in the function profile in Appendix A, an adjusted list of tasks with hopefully a better function profile will be the end result.

Research Question 2

Organisational scope

Table 2 shows how the respondents think about the part of the organisation in which the tasks of the IT Service Manager are performed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The own working place</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The department of functional area he is in</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An organizational unit with several functional areas</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A layered organisation with several functional areas</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A complex organisation, such as a matrix organisation</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;did not answer this question&gt;</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most of the respondents chose a complex organisation, such as a matrix organisation as the workfield of the IT Service Manager. An organisation unit with several functional areas is a good second choice. Both are expected answers as the whole idea of a function like that of an IT Service Manager is that it crosses the boundaries of departments (services are also crossing department boundaries).

Table 3 shows how the respondents think about the level in the organisation at which the tasks of the IT Service Manager are performed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual people with operational tasks</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business units, departments, etc.</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National general (business) management</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International general (business) management</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;did not answer this question&gt;</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding the level of the organisation there is a clear preference for business units, departments, etc. Some respondents also chose (inter)national general (business) management, but apparently the IT Service Manager does not often operate at that level of the organisation.

Table 4 shows how the respondents think about the type and amount of influence of the IT Service Manager in the organisation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indirect influence with little impact on work of others</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared influence with little impact on work of others</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct influence with little impact on work of others</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared influence with large impact on work of others</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct influence with large impact on work of others</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;did not answer this question&gt;</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most respondents think the IT Service Manager has a large impact on the work of others, although he shares this influence with others.

Level of execution

Table 5 shows how the respondents think about the freedom of thinking and acting of the IT Service Manager in the organisation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With a clear and detailed scope</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With detailed working instructions</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With global guidelines</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without any fixed boundaries</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;did not answer this question&gt;</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Apparently there is no clear and detailed scope, nor are there detailed work instructions that determine how an IT Service Manager should do his work.

Table 6 shows how the respondents think about the complexity of the tasks of the IT Service Manager in the organisation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One subject, aspect or point of view</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One subject with several aspects or points of view</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several subjects with one aspect or point of view</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several subjects with several aspects or points of view</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;did not answer this question&gt;</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most respondents think the tasks of an IT Service Manager deal with several subjects that also have several different aspects or points of view to consider.

Required knowledge (about the environment)

The question about the required knowledge about the environment was an open question. Hence, many different answers were given. Here are the most frequently given answers:

- 26 respondents indicated that knowledge about the business processes in the organisation, which are supported by IT services, is required and even crucial;
• 11 respondents extended this by saying that also knowledge about the organisation in general (strategy, structure, culture) and about the contact persons is important;
• 8 respondents mentioned business administration and financial management as important knowledge to be present;
• 8 respondents thought it was also important to have knowledge about the information systems and IT infrastructure of the IT services.

Finally the following list of items were all mentioned once or twice: account and relationship management, commercial skills, change management, knowledge about people (psychology), negotiating skills, diplomacy, sensitivity, sense of urgency, coaching, mediation.

As this question preceded the structured list of expertise (problem related resources), there were many answers that fit within the structured list. This means that in a later stage I can use the above answers to cross check the structured list.

*Used methods, techniques and tools*

The question about the required methods, techniques and tools was also an open question. So again many different answers were given:

• 22 respondents mentioned IT service management and process management best practices like ITIL, ASL, BISL, ISO20000, ISPL, etc. as the used method;
• 15 respondents came up with tools for service and workflow management that they used (but also systems for contract registration, invoicing and financial management were once mentioned);
• 8 respondents named communication / negotiating / presentation skills and techniques as important;
• 4 respondents mentioned Project Management (Prince2);
• 4 respondents came up with techniques for reporting, budgeting and business case analysis;
• 2 respondents indicated a good SLA structure as required and used tool/technique
• 1 respondent came up with sales tools and techniques like presentations and service descriptions that were used.

The above list of methods, techniques and tools can be used in two ways. Either as aspects that should be mastered by an IT Service Manager. He should have knowledge about them and know how to use them. But also, these methods, techniques and tools should be present and implemented in the organisation in order to allow the IT Service Manager to do his work.

**Research Question 3**

The combination of both research methods (questionnaire and focus group) resulted in a total of 62 critical situations being reported. Appendix B shows these situations, doubles removed and linked to the relevant tasks from the function profile. This shows a number of things:

• The respondents were in most of the cases unable to describe the critical situations in a sufficient level of detail. They described more generally what the problem is, but didn’t make it specific enough in the situation (where, when, with whom?), were often unable to specify the required outcomes, same as the required behaviour.

• Most of the critical situations can be linked to a few of the tasks in the function profile (AA-14, SA-3 and SA-4). No critical situations were reported for the other tasks. Do they not exist, or don’t the respondents see them as relevant, critical enough?

In order to be really useful, the critical situations need to be described in more detail. It is the question what the best method is for doing this.

**Research Question 4**

Table 7 shows how the expertise competencies were scored on a scale of 1 to 5, based on Bloom’s Taxonomy (1956). For each competence the average, median and skew have been calculated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expertise Competence</th>
<th>Avg.</th>
<th>Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>2,94</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation management</td>
<td>2,94</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative organisation</td>
<td>2,90</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods and techniques for internal control</td>
<td>2,57</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods and techniques for security</td>
<td>2,33</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation oriented analysis methods and</td>
<td>2,60</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>techniques</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results show at first glance a logical situation, where the IT Service Manager should have ‘Understanding’ of more technical competencies, he should have knowledge about them, be able to explain basic principles, etc.

For competencies that are on a more tactical and functional level, closer to ‘The Business’ he should be at ‘Application’ level, meaning that he is able to use this knowledge to solve problems in those areas.

And for those competencies that are directly related to the tasks he has to perform or the product/services he is responsible for, the level should be ‘Analysis’, meaning that he is able to really use this knowledge in daily practice.

Table 8 shows how the behavioural competencies were scored on a scale of 1 to 7, based on the behavioural criteria in Appendix E. For each competence the average, median and skew have been calculated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavioural Competency</th>
<th>Avg.</th>
<th>Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>5,06</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity, empathy</td>
<td>5,71</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication skills (written and/or oral)</td>
<td>6,39</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperate as a team</td>
<td>5,45</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>5,35</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>5,81</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immunity to stress</td>
<td>5,65</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>6,19</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handling of conflicts</td>
<td>5,74</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client orientation</td>
<td>6,26</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didactical skills</td>
<td>4,68</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical power</td>
<td>5,00</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judgement</td>
<td>5,32</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power to abstract</td>
<td>4,97</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>5,02</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation consciousness</td>
<td>5,84</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of other disciplines</td>
<td>4,90</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic vision</td>
<td>4,74</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial understanding</td>
<td>4,90</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Expertise competencies
Table 8: Behavioural competencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independency</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determination</td>
<td>5.52</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perseverance</td>
<td>5.68</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power to convince</td>
<td>5.84</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiation skills</td>
<td>5.97</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work methodologically</td>
<td>4.77</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan and organise</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Looking at these results, the first remarkable thing is that all competencies should at least be mastered at a level of 5. None of them has a lower score. All competencies that score 6 or 7 are in the competence groups ‘inter personal’ and ‘dynamics, decisiveness’.

It is clear that this function requires persons with very high behavioural competencies, much more than expertise (although, this aspect also had reasonably high scores). A person that is able to adjust himself in each situation in order to reach the required outcomes.

Research Question 5

Development Program

Table 9 shows how the respondents think about the existence of an official management development program for IT Service Managers in the organisation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, an official development program exists</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, an official development program does not exist</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;did not answer this question&gt;</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Official development program

It is clear from this answer that there are not many companies with an official development program. From those companies who do have an official program, only two organisations provided me with the program they use. The main elements in these programs were:

- ITIL Service Manager (Manager Certificate)
- Business Process Modelling
- Administrative Organisation
- Organisational Change
- Negotiation techniques/skills
- Conflict handling techniques/skills
- Consultancy techniques/skills
- Facilitation techniques/skills
- Coaching techniques/skills
- Personal effectiveness

The respondents that indicated that there was no official program listed the individual training courses that where mostly followed as part of the second question. Most commonly followed courses were:

- ITIL, ASL and/or BiSL (Foundation, Practitioner or Manager) by 17 respondents
- Project Management (Prince2) by 5 respondents
- Basic IT Knowledge (AMBI) by 2 respondents

Besides these commonly followed training courses, there is a long list of courses that were only mentioned once. The list below is intended to give a general idea about these courses:

- Stakeholder management
- Influencing techniques/skills
- Negotiation techniques/skills
- Conflict handling techniques/skills
- Conversation techniques/skills
- Communication techniques/skills
- Presentation techniques/skills
- Consultancy techniques/skills
- Management techniques/skills
- Personal (soft) techniques/skills

One respondent mentioned that their new IT Service Manager temporarily participated in the various operational processes to get a better insight in the service that was delivered. It is unclear if this was from a customer perspective (business processes) or provider perspective (delivery processes).

Using Assessments

Table 10 shows how the respondents think about the use of assessments for determining the cur-
rent level of competencies of IT Service Managers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, but only during the process of selection and hiring of new employees</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, both for selection and hiring and for specification of the development program</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, an assessment is never used</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;did not answer this question&gt;</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 10: Using assessments*

Using assessments for selection and hiring of IT Service Managers is clearly not a common practise, let alone as a tool for specifying a management development program.

**Using Company Specific Cases**

Table 11 shows how the respondents think about the use of company specific cases and situations from daily practice during the management development program for IT Service Managers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, company specific cases and situations from daily practice are always used</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, company specific cases and situations from daily practice are sometimes used</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, company specific cases and situations from daily practice are never used</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;did not answer this question&gt;</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 11: Using company specific cases*

Again, using company specific cases and situations from daily practice is clearly not a common practice during management development programs of IT Service Managers.

**Using Coaching & Intervision**

Table 12 shows how the respondents think about the use of coaching and intervision during the management development program for IT Service Managers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, coaching and intervision are always used</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, coaching and intervision are sometimes used</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, coaching and intervision are never used</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;did not answer this question&gt;</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 12: Using coaching & intervision*

It looks like coaching and intervision are not a completely new phenomenon in management development programs of IT Service Managers.

**Commercial Programs**

Searching the web with the indicated keywords (see chapter 4), I found 3 organisations offering some form of management development program for IT Service Managers:

- EXIN International offers an Academy Track (Foundation, Advanced & Expert) for IT Service Management;
- Hogeschool NOVI offers a Kopstudie HBO IT Service Management;
- Dirksen Opleidingen also offers a Kopstudie IT Service Management.

All three programs are at ‘bachelor level’ and are accredited by the Dutch government as official bachelor programs. The programs last about 3 years and the students have to write a thesis at the end of their study.

However, looking at the content of the program, the curriculum, it immediately shows that it is very much focussing on expertise competencies. Some attention is given to communication and presentation techniques/skills, but that is it.

**Requirements**

During the literature study in chapter 3 I have selected a competence structure and framework and formulated the research question for determining the required competencies of an IT Service Manager. I have also touched upon the possible limitations of temper, intelligence and personality on the development of those competencies.

In this chapter I would like to look at what the requirements are for a successful IT Service Manager and what the best way is to learn and to develop competencies.

Since my approach is to develop the competencies that are found to be important during this research, a first step is to look at the value of competence management. According to Hoekstra & Van Sluis (2001), competence management – the development of competencies – has only added value when:
• **Competencies** are clearly and unambiguously defined and behavioural terminology is used. Often competencies are too vague and general (e.g. organisational sensitivity, persuasion power);

• **Competencies** are linked to clear and unambiguous ‘performance indicators’, the results that someone needs to accomplish in a certain function; competencies need to be linked to the goals of the function and the organisation;

• Development is adjusted to the underlying characteristics of persons (temper, intelligence and personality), so individual differences can be taken into account.

• Besides ‘ability’ (the competencies), there also needs to be attention to ‘motivation’ and ‘opportunity (to participate)’.

• Training is tailored to the specific content and context of a particular competency. For example: for each function the competency ‘customer focussed’ needs to be made operational in clear, specific, measurable results.

The above requirements for successful competence management refer to the setup or preparation phase of a management development program. Or put differently: ‘The first step in developing competencies is a diagnosis of both the function and of the person’:

• What is the specific function about? What are critical incidents? What competencies are required in those situations? What results need to be achieved and how are those results linked to the goals of the organisation?

• Which of the required competencies are missing in a particular person? Which of those competencies can be developed (and which of them can not)? What about the motivation of this person?

A good diagnosis of a person can be obtained by using assessment centres. By placing the candidate in a number of situations - that resemble the critical incident situation of the function – and observing him, one can get a good understanding of the competencies that are missing. Other methods of diagnosis of a person might be a self assessment or 360 degrees feedback on the list of competencies.

After the diagnosis, the actual learning phase, in which certain competencies will be improved, can start. From experience with these trajecto-

ries, Hoekstra & Van Sluis (2001) are convinced that there need to be a number of prerequisites:

• It must be able to develop the relevant competencies, that is to say: temper, intelligence and personality should not be a limit to the level that one wants to reach. Intelligence particularly puts boundaries to the amount of expertise that one can obtain, but also to some extend to the ability to learn new behaviour. Temper and personality particularly put boundaries to the amount and level of behavioural repertoire.

• The person needs to be motivated to improve the relevant competencies. Particularly if someone’s experiences until now do not completely fit the competencies that need to be developed, a lot of motivation and persistence is needed to eventually reach the required level.

• The best environment for development of competencies is the daily practice of work itself. This applies both to learning new behaviour and building and using new expertise. Working according dedicated assignments, guided by a coach, is a much better approach than learning in an artificial or isolated environment. Of course, following classical courses for obtaining new expertise is alright and often necessary, but the best environment for trying out and improving competencies is daily practice.

• A good starting point for development of a particular competency is taking a real life problem or task from daily practice and putting this central. By doing so, not a particular solution (behaviour as a ‘trick’) is central, but a particular situation and the challenge to find the appropriate behaviour to deal with the situation.

• This also fits a normal working situation: only behaviour that is functionally required will develop. The goal must not be to learn fixed predefined behaviour, but to find out (through tips, suggestions from trainers/coaches) which behaviour is effective in a particular situation and then to reinforce that behaviour.

• Competencies do not develop in days, rather in months. The basic set of expertise that is required can often quickly and easily be obtained. The development of new behaviour requires a lot of practise in daily life. One learns to deal with difficult situations and the speed of development depends on the number of occasions that the particular situation occurs. A course with a medium intensity and a medi-
um speed is preferred over a "pressure cooker" course.

- Although learning is primarily a way of discovering by the person itself, reflection about the learning process with an experienced coach or mentor will improve the development of competencies. The recognition, stimulation and giving of meaning can have a motivating and reinforcing effect on the process.


- During the first step of ‘Discovering’, getting a good insight in the current level of the student is the central theme. Within competence oriented training courses, it is important to determine the required outcome of the training, the level at which the competency should be mastered;

- The second step of ‘Learning’, requires that the student tries to develop a deeper insight by studying the material. It means preparing yourself on the subject that will be covered during the training;

- In step 3 (Analysing) Quinn describes how useful and non-useful behavioural patterns need to be investigated. In relation to Competencies this is primarily about giving examples, by which good and bad expressions of Competencies can be compared.

- At ‘Practice’ level (step 4) the student will be given the opportunity to practise the competency in a training environment, in which giving and receiving of feedback is of utmost importance.

- Finally, in step 5 (Applying) the learning process is being transferred to real-life situations. The trainer no longer has a direct influence. In this phase it is important that the student directly receives feedback on both positive and negative behaviour at the working place.

During each competence oriented training, it is important to pay attention to coaching at the working place. Participants will learn how they can give feedback to each other on demonstrated behaviour and to which learned knowledge and skills they can refer when negative behaviour is shown. This way they support each other during the development of competencies.

Also, each training needs to be followed by an evaluation cycle, by which the trainer is involved in the transfer of the competencies learned into daily practice. When new knowledge and skills need to be taught or when someone is ready to act on a higher level of competency, the cycle starts again.

Quinn’s theory about the learning process determines how a training needs to be designed. An answer to the question: ‘What needs to be trained?’ is given by Bloom’s Taxonomy (1956). For the research question of this management project I am happy for now and leave it to further research to go into depth into the actual training program.

**Discussions**

**Research Question**

This management project is about research on the required behaviour of IT Service Managers in situations that are critical for success; situations in which ‘being effective’ makes the difference between a good and less good IT Service Manager.

Using the results of this research, a management development program for IT Service Managers will be developed. Based on the above objective, the following research question was formulated:

"Which are the competencies an IT Service Manager needs to have in order to be effective in his function and how should a management development program for those competencies look like?"

The choice for this research question lies in my personal conviction that a) the function of the IT Service Manager is quite crucial in IT organisations that deliver reliable, high quality IT services to their customers and b) when you look at the competencies and the level that we require IT Service Managers to master them, it seems that everybody is looking for the sheep with five legs, c) there currently does not exist an appropriate management development program in the market and d) few organisations have a clear view on how to develop those competencies.
Line of Research

The main line of research that I followed, in order to answer this question, was that I needed a clear function profile with a description and tasks that was recognised in the market and would form the basis for further research. I wanted to find an existing function profile of the IT Service Manager and check that in the field.

I also recognised that the organisational context in which the function of the IT Service Manager has to be performed would be of significant importance to effective behaviour, but was in the beginning not sure about how to incorporate this in my research. The influence of the organisational context seemed a area of research by itself.

After doing some literature study I decided not to investigate the effect of the organisational context on the behaviour, but only research the context in order to get an idea for the scope and the level in the organisation, the type and amount of influence and the freedom of thinking and acting. To me this is important information for designing of realistic training situations.

From literature study I also found out that it is important to link behaviour and competencies to specific situations that are critical for success of the function. It is in those situations that you can assess effective behaviour. I therefore decided to investigate the critical situations during the work of the IT Service Manager. What are the critical situations, what are the required outcomes from the given critical situations and which behaviour is considered effective?

The next step would be to choose a competence framework and to use that to research the competencies (both expertise and behavioural) an IT Service Manager need to have in order to be effective. The set of competencies found from this research would then be the ones that need to be trained in the management development program.

Final step of the research was to look at some requirements for a successful IT Service Manager. These requirements could be found by literature study. But also to look at the current status of management development programs for IT Service Managers in both organisations and in the market.

Based on the information obtained, both from literature study and field research, it should be able to design and develop the management development program. I would have list of competencies (both expertise and behavioural) that are useful to use at the basis of a development program. And also the most important requirements for such a program should be clear.

Some Reflections

Looking back at the research question, the line of reasoning and the obtained results, some reflections can be made. I will do this, following the same line of research as above. But before doing this I like to reflect on the main method or research (the questionnaire) itself.

Questionnaire

Using a questionnaire to get the required answers was a good choice for most of the questions, except for an in depth answer on the critical situations. The respondents came up with a lot of situations that can be seen as critical, but their answers were too short and superficial for getting a good view on required outcomes and effective behaviour. I will say more about this in a little while when reflecting on the results of the critical situations in particular.

Sending out 125 questionnaires and getting a response from 31 respondents is sufficient to draw some careful conclusions. However, some remarks need to be made:

- The questionnaires were send to relations in the network of Suerte. There might be a certain bias in this. Respondents know people from Suerte, know their view on IT Service Management, might share the same view, etc. Better would be to also send the questionnaire to people who do not know Suerte, e.g. by using branch organisations like ITSMF of BITA for distribution of the questionnaire to their members.

- Although the spread of the respondents above over the three groups of IT (Team) Managers, IT Service Managers and Consultants is nice and prevents from a too much single sighted view of the situation, to
my opinion, two important groups of respondents are missing:

- Customer Managers; these are the people that are the receivers of the IT services (i.e. the ones that sign the contracts and pay the invoices). Since the IT Service Manager is the primary point of contact for management of the end-user organisation, it would be interesting to hear the view of these customer managers.

- HR Managers; these people are dealing with function profiles, competencies and management development programs in an organisation. They might have a different view on what is required and what is already available.

As a suggestion for further research it might be a good idea to pick only 5 to 10 organisations and perform some sort of 360 degrees investigation, including all ‘stakeholders’ of the IT Service Manager in this research.

Function Profile

Taking the function profile from Op de Coul (2001) was a good choice. It formed a good basis for checking if the function was recognised and for refining the list of tasks. To my opinion, the list, that was created based upon the results of the questionnaire, is perfectly usable for further research, as input for the development program and other practical usage in the field. Two small suggestions for improvement might be:

- To check existing function profiles with the one created during this management project. Some profiles were sent, but were not used during this research;
- To investigate if there are differences in the function profile, based on the positioning in the IT Function, e.g. compare a customer oriented function versus a delivery oriented function.

Particularly for this part of the research, more contacts with HR Managers would have improved the view on what function profiles exist, how they are placed in the ‘function house’ and how many employees have this function.

Organisational Context

The organisational context is a topic where this management project only carefully touched upon. As already written in chapter 2, this is a field of research by itself. There might be several ways to approach this.

One could try to answer the question: ‘What effect has the organisational context on the effectiveness of an IT Service Manager. With this approach you look at various aspects of the organisation (e.g. culture, systems, leadership style, etc) and try to determine how they directly influence the effective behaviour of the IT Service Manager.

The approach chosen in this management project is more to find out what the organisation context is, in order to take this into account when determining the required competencies and designing the training situations during the IT Service Manager. This way, the context is taken as a given fact, with which the IT Service Manager has to deal with.

Both, I guess, are valid approaches and interesting to investigate in more depth. To investigate all organisational aspects might however take quite some time and effort. An interesting aspect to me would be to look at the interaction between line manager and service managers. In many cases these two groups work in a sort of matrix organisation, where the exact authorisations and responsibilities of both groups are either not defined, not clear/know or not followed.

For the approach chosen in this research, the question remains: ‘to what extend should we know about the context and to what extend does it need to be incorporated in the training situations?’ and ‘to what extend will competencies be different when the context is different?’.

Critical Situations

The respondents came up with more than 60 examples of critical situations. This is a good result in the sense that it gives a good overview of what is considered to be a critical situation. Although, there is one question to ask: ‘most critical situations are during specific tasks. Is this really the case or should we look for other situations during other tasks as well?’.

But the biggest problem of the results from the questionnaire is that the critical situations have not been described sufficiently. The context of
the situation could have been described more specific (where, when, with whom, etc.), the required outcomes are most of the time missing, as well as the required effective behaviour.

Apparently, a questionnaire is not the right research method to get these in depth answers. Or the questionnaire maybe should have been designed more specifically to get these answers. It also would require quite some time from a respondent to answer those type of questions. He should be stimulated to do so and not be allowed to quickly to stop.

To have really usable results, this part of the research needs to be done more profound. This detailed information about the critical situations is required to design a good management development program. My suggestion would be to take a set of the example critical situations (a set that covers the whole range of tasks) and by using interviews and focus groups try to get to the required depth.

**Competencies**

From the results of the questionnaire, a good set of competencies can be determined. These competencies can perfectly be used to design the IT Service Manager. However, also this part of the research has some open questions:

- From literature I have learned that one should look at the required competencies for a certain function, based on critical situations. Whilst answering the questionnaire, the respondents were able to come up with a set of those situations, but were unable to define the required outcomes and required effective behaviour. To what extend is their list of competencies now based on a general picture of the function instead of critical situations?

- When we would complete the research on critical situations and came up with required effective behaviour in those situations, would the required competencies then be different (or a more selective group) than those we have now defined?

- The scoring of the expertise competencies was based on a 5 point scale based on Bloom’s Taxonomy (reduced from 6 to 5 levels). This taxonomy was explained to the respondents in the questionnaire. But have they really used this explanation? Did they understand the different levels? Or did they just used the scale as a relative scale? And would this make any difference?

Again, the obtained set of competencies can be used very well. Therefore a good result. But when I look forward to the actual designing of the management development program, some questions still remain:

- How in detail should training modules be designed in order to improve a specific competency? Or more in general: how do you improve a competency? How do people become good in e.g. ‘customer orientation’? How does someone move from behavioural criteria level 3 to 7? This is really about how people learn.

- How do we determine what the effect is of someone’s temper, intelligence and Personality on the boundaries of developing a competency? Is there useful literature on this? Should we per competency determine how the development of that competency is limited by the boundaries of one’s characteristics? How can an assessment centre help with this?

Two final suggestions for further research are to extend the research to similar functions, e.g. process, product, account or project manager and to look into leadership theories to see if they could be applied to the position and function of the IT Service Manager.

**Conclusions**

**The Overall Result**

Before I like to present the conclusions that can be drawn based on the research done, I like to look at the overall result of the management project. Therefore I start with repeating the overall research question.

‘Which are the competencies an IT Service Manager needs to have in order to be effective in his function and how should a management development program for those competencies look like?’

I will get into the competencies and requirements for the IT Service Manager in detail in a little while, but the conclusion can be that both parts of the question have been investigated and answered. There is now a lot of information to form a good basis for the actual design of the management development program.
Of course there are also still many discussions (see previous chapter) and many suggestions for improving and extending this research. Reactions on the questionnaire showed that there is quite some interest in research focussing on the ‘soft’ aspects of IT Service Management in general and effective behaviour of IT personnel in particular. Research therefore will be continued.

Research Conclusions

When looking at the direct conclusions that can be drawn from the research, I like to discuss them per research subject. After having done this, I will draw some overall conclusions.

Function Profile

- The function description presented by Op de Coul (2001) is very well recognised in the field. All of the 31 respondents recognised in the function description with more or less the same content as in their own organisation.
- There is no uniformity in the function name. The name of IT Service Manager is most used, but names like Service Delivery Manager, Customer Service Manager and Service Level Manager are also often used.
- Particularly in larger organisations, the tasks are often spread over more than one function. The common way of splitting is in a function with a ‘customer focus’ and a function with a ‘delivery focus’.
- The opposite occurs in smaller organisations. There the tasks of the IT Service Manager are combined with an other function, most with the function of the IT Manager.
- In some cases (but to many to ignore) the function of IT Service Manager currently is seen as much more operational than the function profile presented. The IT Service Manager is also not seen as a serious counterpart for both Customer Managers as IT Managers.
- Based on the indicated relevance of the tasks, we can conclude that the resulting list of tasks in the function profile can be very well used as a basis for further research, for designing the management development program or even as a standard in the field.

Organisational Context

- The organisation scope of the function of IT Service Manager can be considered wide (across business units and departments, often in a matrix organisation) and with large impact on the work of others.
- The level of execution of the function of IT Service Manager is characterised by a great freedom of thinking and acting (only based on global guidelines) and high complexity of tasks (several subjects with each several aspects or points of view).
- Knowledge about the environment in terms of the business processes in the organisation, that are supported by IT services is considered crucial as is also knowledge about the organisation in general (strategy, structure, culture) and the contact persons. Knowledge about business administration and financial management has a good third place.
- Methods and techniques that were considered most important to be in place are IT service management and process management best practices like ITIL, ASL, BiSL, etc. Second came tools for service and workflow management.

Critical Situations

- The critical situations that are reported do not tend to cover all the tasks in the function profile. It is unclear what this means. Many critical situations that are reported have to do with major incidents and disasters, showing a role for the IT Service Manager in daily practise.

Competencies

- The required expertise competencies (knowledge, insight, experience) for an IT Service Manager are clearly in the fields of ‘business administration’, ‘management’, ‘commercial’ and ‘support of information systems’.
- Of these, the ‘management’ areas of quality, risk and project management score highest, as also do the ‘commercial’ area’s of cost calculations and products/services offered.
- All the behavioural competencies presented in the competence framework are considered important, given the high scores (at least 5 on a 7-point scale). Most required competencies are in the competence groups ‘inter personal’ and ‘dynamics, decisiveness’,
with communicational skills (both written and oral) and client orientation as top scorers.

- Based on the outcomes of the research we can conclude that this function requires persons with very high behavioural competencies, much more than expertise. A person that is able to adjust himself in each situation in order to reach the required outcomes.

**Development Program**

- In most organisations of the respondents an official management development program for IT Service Managers does not exist.

- Most of the individual training courses that are followed are ITIL, ASL and/or BiSL (Foundation, Practitioner or Manager), as well as Project Management (Prince2).

- Using assessments for selection and hiring of IT Service Managers is not a common practise, let alone as a tool for specifying a management development program.

- Using company specific cases and situations from daily practice is clearly not a common practise during management development programs for IT Service Managers.

- Coaching and intervision are used sometimes or always in two third of the organisations during management development programs for IT Service Managers.

- Only three commercial management development programs are found in the market. All three programs are at 'bachelor level' and are accredited by the Dutch government as official bachelor programs.

- Looking at the content of the program, the curriculum, it immediately shows that it is very much focussing on expertise competencies. Some attention is given to communication and presentation techniques/skills, but that is it.

**Overall Conclusion**

Based on the research conclusions above I like to draw an overall conclusion. There is a slight risk in doing so, since the number of 31 respondents gives quite a good idea about what the situation is in the field, but in order to draw solid conclusions, more research and more respondents are required.

Overall conclusion is that a) the level of required competencies is very high, particularly for the behavioural ones, b) there are almost no official management development programs in organisations and in the market and c) the programs that exist merely focus on expertise, instead of behavioural competencies and/or are very fragmented in their approach.

**Bibliography**


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