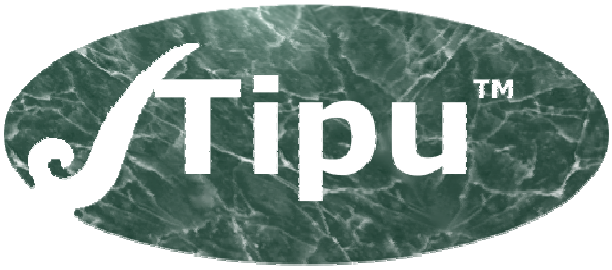
# WHY




# ?

**Rob England**

© Two Hills Ltd 2011

Created and published by Two Hills

letterbox@twohills.co.nz

www.twohills.co.nz

PO Box 57-150, Mana

Porirua 5247

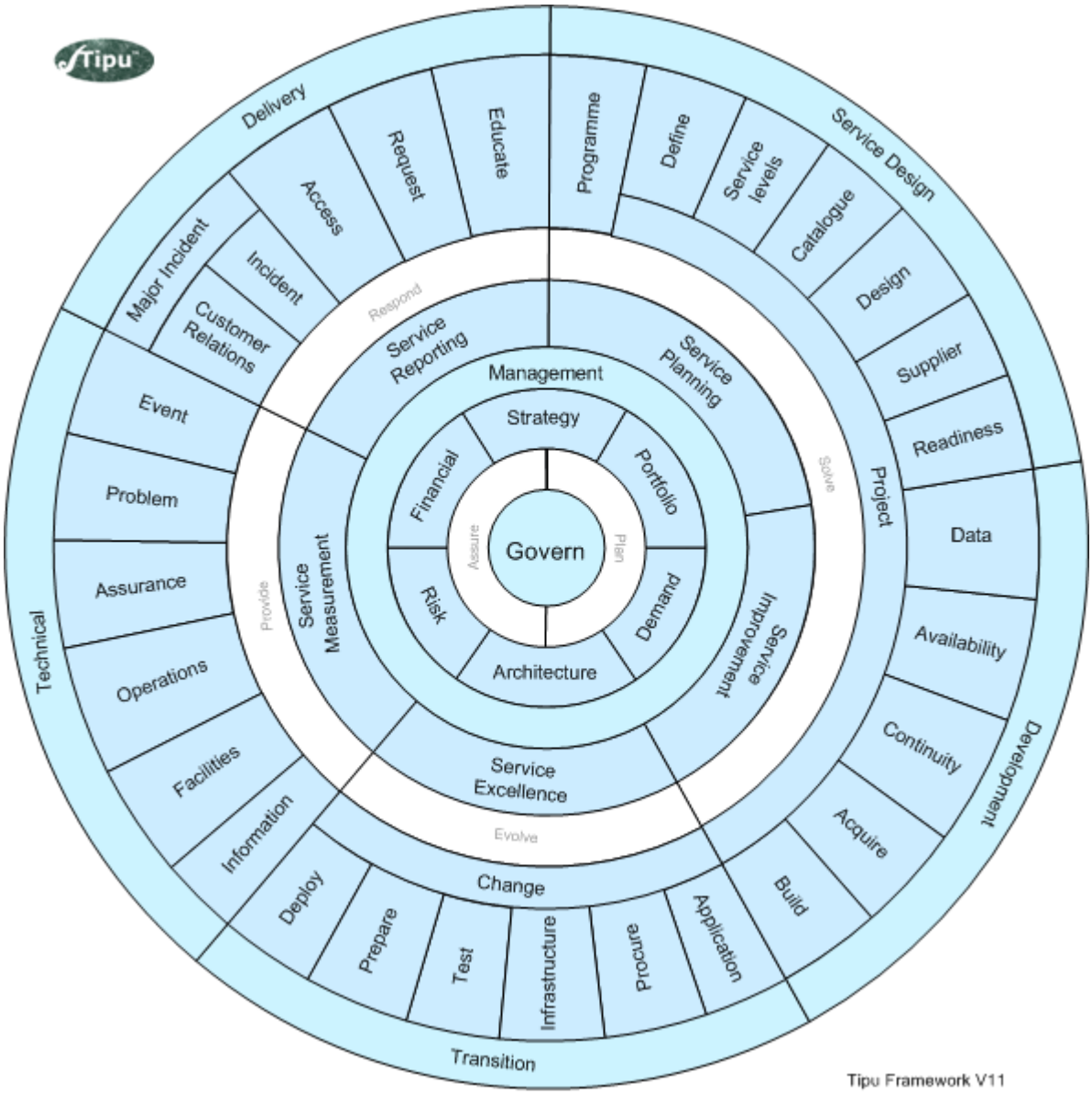
New Zealand

This work by Two Hills Ltd is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License. Content must be attributed to "Two Hills Ltd www.twohills.co.nz".

The Two Hills logo, “Tipu” and the Tipu logo are trademarks of Two Hills Ltd.

**Tipu™ is a "relaxed" approach to planning and executing service improvement. Why does Tipu take the approach that it does? Why would you benefit from Tipu?**

Here is the Tipu Framework, a description of just about all of the essential components of service management best practice. Look at it now – you can find out more about the Framework in other documents if you want to understand the detail.




The Tipu Framework is a synthesis of concepts from multiple sources, along with a number of original concepts, to provide a broader framework that gives a complete picture of service management. The sources were IT-specific, but the framework is intended to be industry-agnostic – i.e. relevant to service management anywhere.

Take another look: which of these practices and functions do not need to be performed (implicitly or explicitly, somewhere in the organisation) for services to be delivered well? **None of these practices and functions are optional**. If *any one* of these is not being performed, or not to an adequate level of capability, then there is a risk to delivery of services.

Now ask yourself another question: which of these practices and functions require some improvement in your organisation? It might be easier to list those that *do not* require any improvement, and in most organisations that would be a short list. **There is a lot to consider when improving services**.

How then to cover everything that needs to be looked at? The key word there is "needs". We should understand what are our business goals for service, and derive from those goals what are the required outcomes from service delivery, then **focus on improvements that deliver those required outcomes** … and nothing else.

One way to improve focus is to work on **smaller units than a whole practice**. A major shortcoming of many ITSM projects is that they take the ITIL "processes" as the building blocks of the programme. "We will do Incident first". "We can't do Change until we have done Configuration". Even some of the official ITIL books promote this thinking. Tipu decomposes the ITSM practices into smaller, more achievable units of work, called "mahi". The approach goes like this:

> The value we are asked (or propose) to produce is A.
>
> Therefore the business goals are B.
>
> Therefore the IT outcomes required are C.
>
> Therefore the outputs to be produced are D.
>
> These outputs come from ~~processes~~ practices E F and G,
>
> Specifically they come from the following bits of those practices....

By breaking it down into *only* the bits that compose a solution to deliver to a customer-focused business value, rather than working on a whole practice for its own sake, we are starting on the outside and drilling in, focus on demonstrable value.

For example:

> Incident Management is broken down into separate implementable mahi:

- Incident tracking
- Incident impact assessment
- Incident escalation
- Incident resolution

- Incident reviews and reporting
- Incident matching

Some of these have dependencies on others. In other cases, they can be implemented independently.

These mahi don't attempt to be a complete description of Incident Management. There will be other pieces of work later.

This helps us to shortlist improvements and to narrow the scope of work.

But frequently the business goals are general: "improve quality", "cut costs", "retain customers"… It is often the case that our "shortlist" is still overwhelming. How to address everything? We don't.

**Every organisation carries risk – we live with it, we manage it**. Usually, the ideal state is unachievable - a realistic compromise must be found. This hinges around an acceptable level of known risk from unaddressed requirements. It is better to manage a known risk caused by an improvement being left to later, than to have an unknown and unmanaged risk resulting from it being neglected. Leaving work to later does not mean these improvements are any less important. All selected improvements are important. A reality check says that they can't all be done in the near future, so we have to defer something. We all defer work anyway: Tipu manages it and makes it a known risk instead of turning a blind eye.

**This is the first "relaxed" aspect of Tipu: learning to live with the risk of unaddressed requirements.**

When we look at the list of improvements that absolutely must be done and cannot be left for later, how should we approach them?

We could form a project or projects to make the improvements. A project approach is structured and controlled, and carefully estimates the resource commitment before starting. A project approach also considers the best solution and ensures it is a complete one. **Experience shows that improvement projects rapidly grow large**. **Improvement work also struggles to show a compelling business case**, even when we have aligned it back to business requirements. Partly this is because a good solution is expensive, and partly because much improvement is seen as "housekeeping": non-strategic, non-transformational.

So Tipu (mostly) doesn't use formal funded projects to improve services.

Where else can we source the resources to make the improvements? From "business as usual" (BAU). Improvement is normal behaviour for professionals: it is part of our job to **devote a certain percentage of our time to improving the**

**systems we work with**. We should all expect that things will be better next year; that we will make a difference and leave systems better than we found them. Improvement is business as usual. We need to make this commitment.

It is better to commit most staff for a proportion of their time rather than a few staff dedicated fulltime to the programme of work. This promotes buy-in, by involving all those affected. In a highly critical initiative, 10% of resource should be allocated. For most situations, 5% is more realistic, i.e. about 2 hours a week – on average - from everyone.

**Tipu takes an agile approach**. It operates in cycles or "sprints". Within each cycle, it creates small teams and asks them to look at one or two improvements at a time, determine what can be improved, and make the improvements. The people who use the practices know best how to improve them. Tipu empowers staff to design and implement their own solutions. (Note: The Kanban method is being considered as a more fluid alternative to the cyclic Sprint approach).

**We manage all these assignments as a portfolio using Programme Management methods**, but we do not manage the individual assignments as projects. If we subjected each team to project management by breaking down the assignment into tasks, then estimating, resourcing and tracking each task, the management overhead would swamp us.

(Note: when using Tipu, we do spin off work into projects sometimes, where we recognise that the work

- will create a capital asset
- needs additional resources
- and/or is sufficiently complex that it is too risky without project management

Also there is nothing to stop us managing other assignments using project management methods if we feel the need.)

As well as putting Programme Management in place, we also **maintain a central plan and a central architecture** of how our practices should hang together, to ensure everyone is heading in the same direction. A Service Architect role works with every team to make sure their solutions fit.

Nevertheless, each assignment carries a risk of failure because:

- We manage loosely
- We empower staff to define and find their own solution
- Assignments are time bound and usually resource constrained (competing with BAU)

Inevitably some teams will not fully deliver. It is important team members understand there is no shame or censure so long as everybody did their best – it is recognised that there is a risk.

So **we are looking at the aggregate**: what percentage of assignments was successful in each sprint? 70% - 90% are good targets, depending on the criticality of the programme. And of course we look for a rising percentage with each sprint.

**This is the second "relaxed" aspect of Tipu: learning to live with the risk of empowered teams and no compulsory project management.**

The Tipu cycles or "sprints" are typically three months long. Two to three months is a good manageable duration. Too short and work is not achievable. Too long and it isn't a sprint any more. Those familiar with the Agile method of software development will be surprised to see the term "sprint" applied to a cycle measured in months. Software can be changed in days or weeks, but human behaviour takes longer. Cycles measured in months are definitely fast when it comes to cultural improvement.

Make no mistake: **service improvement is cultural improvement**. There is a growing awareness that people-change (also known as culture change, or Tipu prefers "culture improvement") is at least as important as changing practices and technology. Better practices alone don't fix anything (just as technology on its own doesn't either). Improvements to practices only work if the behaviours of those affected change to adopt the new practices. This is the Tipu approach:

- refine the practices (using best practice frameworks for reference as appropriate)
- improve the technology to support them if necessary (often not)
- and most of all change the behaviours of the people involved in order to adopt the new practices.

A Sprint is **a short time when it comes to improving practices and changing behaviours**. There is only so much that can be achieved by a small number of people devoting 5% of their time for a few weeks. Assignment teams must look for **pragmatic outcomes that address the most urgent needs and/or the low-hanging fruit**.

**This is the third "relaxed" aspect of Tipu: learning to live with incomplete solutions.**

Some progress is better than nothing. If we try to take a formalised project-managed approach to service improvement, the outcome for the few aspects addressed by the projects will be a good complete solution… eventually, when the projects end. Unfortunately, the outcome for the many aspects of service delivery not included in the projects' scope is likely to be nothing. Most organisations don't have enough funds, people or time to do a formal project-based improvement of every aspect of

service management.  Tipu aims to address a wider scope than projects can - done less formally, less completely, and less perfectly than a project would.

Tipu prefers to accept that in many situations "best" is overspending: "good enough" will do ("copper not gold"). And for many - perhaps most - organisations, it is all very well for the experts to go on about "have to" and "must" but there is only so much resource available and we work within the bounds we have imposed on us. The ideal gives us something to aim for but we should accept when we cannot achieve it. **We do what we can with what we have where we are**. And we manage only as much as we need to.  This is Tipu's relaxed approach:

- Unaddressed requirements
- Empowered teams loosely managed
- Incomplete solutions

We mitigate these risks through:

- Making risks known and prioritised
- Small units of work
- Managing bodies: a Board, a Programme Manager, a Service Architect, a cultural change team
- Accepting a certain level of error and measuring the aggregate results
- Focus on cultural change: ensuring improvements are accepted and adopted
- Focus on delivering to required outcomes

The Tipu approach yields multiple benefits

- Improvement is funded from within business as usual
- Improvement is managed holistically as a programme of work
- Improvement is established as a permanent part of normal activities
- A wide range of areas get attention
- Results begin early
- Scope of improvement is constrained to pragmatic outcomes within the existing constraints on time and resources
- Executive support is not essential (though useful).  Staff can "find their own 5%" as part of their professional responsibilities
- All staff are included and empowered
- Change is incremental and at a human pace

Tipu is a product of Two Hills Ltd, a New Zealand consulting company. Core components of Tipu are available in the public domain under Creative Commons licence from http://www.basicsm.com/tipu. Other portions are or will be available for purchase from the website.

Tipu is in a pilot phase for general release in 2012.