Information technology service management models applied to medium and small organizations: A systematic literature review

Karin Melendez a, Abraham Dávila a,⁎, Marcelo Pessoa b

a Departamento de Ingeniería, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Lima, Perú
b Polytechnic School, University of Sao Paulo, Sao Paulo, Brazil

ABSTRACT

The main responsibility of the Information Technology Service Management (ITSM) as an organization is to provide services in high level quality. That implies that the services will be an appropriate service and it will ensure continuity. In this context, the organization needs to adopt the best practices in service management to be more efficient and competitive. Some ITSM models collect the best practices of recognized organizations. These models are mainly applied by large organizations. The objective of this study is to gather experiences in the application of ITSM models in small organizations. (METHODS) To achieve this objective a systematic literature review was performed. (RESULTS) We found primary studies applied to IT areas from some large and medium companies but there is a few in small companies’ context. (CONCLUSION) During the SLR we have identified some improvements and difficulties in many organizations, we have founded when applying ITSM models. The principal difficulty was the lack of knowledge of its personnel and consultants have, for adopting a model. On the other hand, companies who succeeded in the application of an ITSM model, had founded some benefits, such as processes improvement, higher user satisfaction, and service cost and time reduction.

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⁎ Corresponding author.
E-mail addresses: kmelendez@pucp.edu.pe (K. Melendez), abraham.davila@pucp.edu.pe (A. Dávila), mpessoa@usp.br (M. Pessoa).
1. Introduction

Since the last decades – since the early 80s to the present – the use of Information Technology (IT) became the most important support for business, regardless of the company size or sector it belongs [1].

In pursuit of return on investment and the use of IT in business, the measurement of the services provides managers with strategic information to make a decision [11]. The mass use of IT systems and the increasing reliance of enterprises on these systems, result in the need for greater quality, reliability and safety. Large organizations created internal complex structures for operations and some activities were outsourced. On the other hand, small and medium organizations cannot maintain a similar infrastructure because it’s expensive.

In recent years, opportunities for IT providers have grown. In this context, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) become an important element to offer IT services [42], the same situation happens in very small organization (e.g., IT area).

There are many definitions of the size of enterprises. A very small organization and a very small entity “is defined as a company, unit, area, department or project up to 25 people” [17]. In addition to this, the European Union is defined as a small business, including a software company, that has “less than 20 employees” and the medium-sized software company count is “between 20 and 100 employees” [40].

Some studies of service management in SMEs mention that there is a gap between the knowledge of ITSM frameworks and their implementation [12] [23] [30]. Kuller’s study mentions that 52% of European SMEs know ITSM frameworks but only 10% applies a model. For some authors [12] [15] [23] [29] [30] the main problems are: the complexity of the models and the lack of knowledge and guidelines for the adoption of models.

The ITSM claims to align IT efforts with business needs and manage provision of IT services with effectiveness [5]. In recent years, process models for ITSM and their application in organizations have grown significantly. There are several models and standards that represent the best practices for ITSM, like the IT Infrastructure Library® (ITIL®2011)

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![Fig. 1. Stages of systematic literature review, Kitchenham, adapted from [22].](image)