



Taking You Beyond ITIL BS15000 – The New Certification

An Axios Systems White Paper
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"The release of the British Standard for IT Service Management (BS15000) marks the first step toward the delivery of IT services becoming much more consistent across organizational and national borders."

Gartner



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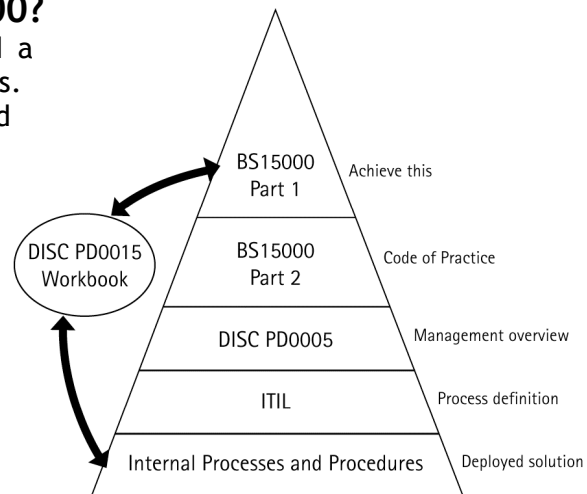
BS15000 - Where did this suddenly come from?

Those of us who pay attention when we see “IT Service Management” in an article, have noticed the increasing appearance of ‘BS15000’ alongside, or even instead of, the familiar term ‘ITIL’. Does this mean that we now have to choose which Best Practice to follow? No it does not. BS15000 is not a competitor, but instead a vital and necessary formalization of the key elements of IT Service Management Best Practice. The appearance of and adoption of this formal standard is a long anticipated step to helping an organization demonstrate that they follow industry accepted practices. It has been written by industry experts, many of whom are directly involved in the development and maintenance of ITIL, and with support from OGC.¹

¹ OGC, the UK’s Office of Government Commerce, own the ITIL guidance.

So what exactly is BS15000?

The heart of BS15000 is some six and a half pages of carefully chosen words. These words set out to define and delineate what things an organization must do in order to deliver and support IT services for its customers, be they internal or external customers. It was developed by the British Standards Institution (BSi), initially in 2000, and has now been revamped and released as part of a larger integrated family of IT Service Management publications. The consistency and integration of the guidance from BSi, OGC and itSMF, together with ISEB and EXIN's qualifications and the new Institute of Service Managers (IoSM), delivers immense strength and credibility to the professionalism and status of IT Service Management. This is strongly reinforced by the ever increasing number of household names around the world adopting this integrated approach - whether they have come initially from the ITIL, BSi or qualifications route, the result is the same - better Service Management processes. The diagram gives an indication as to how the various relevant Best Practice publications, from BSi and OGC fit together to form an integrated whole. BS15000 consists of two parts:



Part 1 is the formal standard. This sets out what an organization is required to do for compliance and to achieve certification against that standard. It covers compliance requirements for:

- ▶ Management Systems
- ▶ Service Planning
- ▶ Process Relationships
- ▶ Service Delivery
- ▶ Control
- ▶ Release

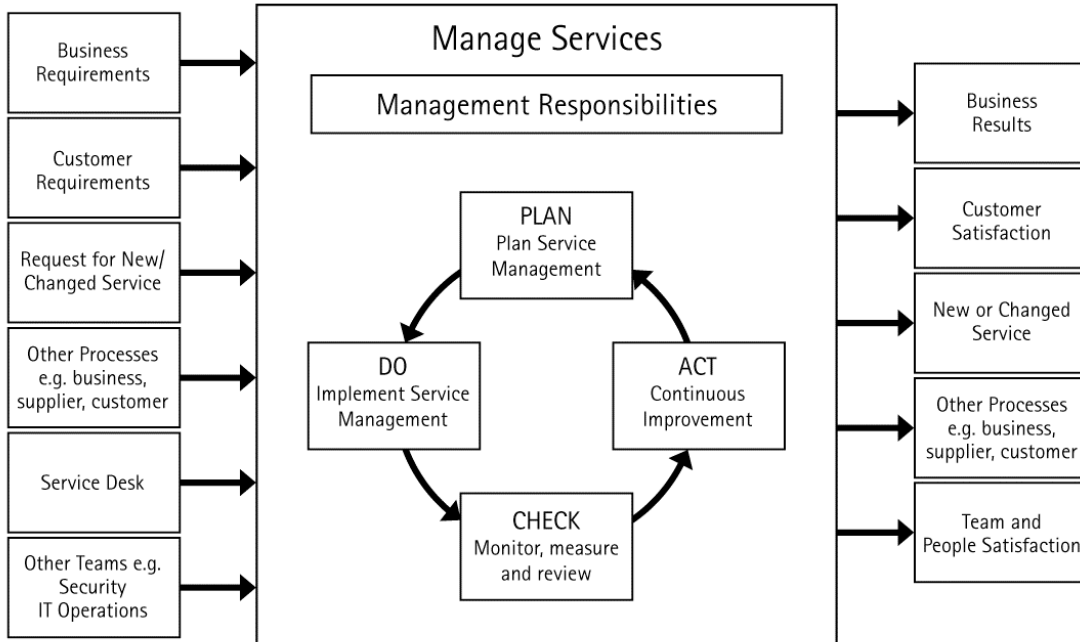
Part 2, known as the 'Code of Practice' expands upon the bare requirement, offering expansion and guidance to service providers who wish to achieve the standard. It follows the same base structure as Part 1 but in less formal terminology, expanding where appropriate.

Should BS15000 matter to your organization?

Yes. As organizations come to understand that supporting processes are vital to their business success, they seek reassurance from the suppliers of those services that the processes are capable of delivering the necessary level of business support. This applies irrespective of whether the supplier is internal or external to the business that depends upon them. Demonstrable compliance to an accepted and respected standard has long been recognized as the answer to this conundrum. This reliance on standards can be easily seen both in the domestic environment, where we rely on the quality of electrical appliances and toys that carry certified adherence to standards, and in the manufacturing industry, where standards have long been the basic measure of a product's quality and conformance. With respect to IT service processes, the reassurance that the processes are appropriate is demonstrable by conformance with the contents of BS15000.

"BS15000 provides a baseline against which the internal IS organization can demonstrate to the business that its service delivery processes represent Best Practice and are performing well". Gartner

We are an ISO9000 (or ISO17799) organization - do we need BS15000?



If your work area concentrates exclusively on IT Service Management, then BS15000 will cover what you need to do. But BS15000 has been developed to fit in with the ISO9000 family, specifically including the 'Plan, Do, Check, Act' approach detailed in ISO9000:2000. So, if you hold or are seeking ISO9000 accreditation for a wider section of your organization, then a BS15000 based audit of your IT Service Management processes should form a part of your overall ISO9000 assessment.

Of course, none of this prevents BS15000 being a valuable product in its own right. Many organizations are not aiming for corporate wide ISO9000 certification, but still wish to ensure that their IT Service Management is as good as it should be. BS15000 has been designed to deliver against those requirements, with no need to refer to other standards.

How popular is BS15000?

Although BS15000 is relatively new, purchasers in the IT Service Management market are already including mention of BS15000 in RFIs and RFPs or ITTs, and this trend is increasing. Gartner sees a bright future for the standard, predicting a significant proportion of end-user IT organizations will seek conformance by 2008. Gartner further expects an ISO version by 2006. Within the public sector things may move even faster, with the UK's Office of Government Commerce exploring the suitability of BS15000 as a requirement for those seeking to supply IT Service Management into Government organizations.

Our processes are mature and working well. What can BS15000 add?

You may believe that your processes are sound, you may even have customers who believe this, but how much better could you be? What might you be missing out on? Common sense tells you to check that what you are doing is relevant and comprehensive. We do this in most elements of our work - we certainly would expect our accounts to be audited, and our safety practices to be inspected. The health of modern companies rests upon the quality and availability of the IT services supporting the business processes. Surely then organizations will want to be certain that these processes are healthy and conform to industry norms. This is what comparison against IT Service Management Best Practice can do and conformance with BS15000 can confirm. This is also what customers look for in their IT service providers, just as they do for the products they buy.

As comfortable as you may be about your own processes, how much harder is it to be sure that your external suppliers are going to be able to deliver the level and quality of service that your business needs to flourish? Your IT service quality is measured in the customer's eyes and is not differentiated by whether it is internal or externally supplied. You could inspect their practices, which can be costly, time consuming and disruptive, or you could require them to demonstrate it. The easiest way to demonstrate is to show compliance with the accepted 'best way' - once again the relevant standards. Here BS15000 takes its place along with its friends and fellow travelers - having been designed to fit in with the ISO9000 family, and to complement ISO17799.

Is there an impact of not considering BS15000?

The environment within which IT services are provided is evolving, and that environment is likely, quite soon, to oblige many organizations to obtain formal certification against BS15000. Reasons include:

- ▶ Your customers are likely to require it, for example, the UK government may well restrict their consideration to those suppliers who comply with BS15000.
- ▶ Because your competitors are likely to be doing it, and that might well give them a marketing edge over organizations who can not demonstrate conformance.

And of course there are other drivers, not mandatory, but certainly common sense, because you will:

- ▶ Want to be sure your suppliers are competent in what they are doing.
- ▶ Be paying a lot of money for your staff and for your IT equipment - it makes sense to get the best use from them, and that is likely to be by working in the way that BS15000 requires.
- ▶ Want to have processes based on practical experience and the working practices of successful organizations.

So how do you demonstrate BS15000 conformance?

The simple answer is to have an external auditor come into your organization, check your processes and issue a certificate. But all organizations are likely to require some (probably considerable) preliminary work before reaching that happy stage.



What can help you be a BS15000 organization?

There are no silver bullets, no one thing that will transform your organization. No piece of wonder software, consultancy exercise, or staff training will make things better. These all help, and we will explore how and why, but the real impetus for successful change has to be from within. An organization must want to improve.

That said, there are some things that you would expect to find in place in any BS15000 conformant organization. The absence of these would ring a warning bell in any organization that sets out to seek improvements and certification against standards for their IT Service Management activities.

Attitudes and enthusiasm of staff (and Management)

The standard, and indeed all Best Practice guidance, concentrates on processes, but in real life we have to deliver those processes using people. Even more important than staff's knowledge, skills and abilities is their attitude to the work. Do they understand the need to be customer focused? Are they suggesting improvements or reluctant adopters of innovation? Are they happy or are they searching the job postings?

Is there a blame culture within the organization? Many of the IT Service Management processes work badly, if at all, in a severe blame culture. At the heart of BS15000 is the Service Improvement Program, and in Service Management, as in the rest of life, we tend to learn more from mistakes (ours and others) than from anything else. If mistakes are made a thing to be ashamed of, or punished for, then the consequential learning will be lost, along with the consequential improvements! And, of course, there will be more mistakes made as people try and hide earlier ones!

Software and other tools

While the introduction of a sophisticated software tool will not make things right if good processes are lacking, it is conversely, difficult to visualize a BS15000 conformant organization that relied on manual procedures to control the processes. So it is important to take seriously the enabling tools required, not just software of course but also the basic necessities of modern business life, PC's, telephone systems, communication facilities. BS15000 specifically requires many things that are easier with appropriate supporting software.

An excellent example of such supporting software is **assyst** from Axios Systems. Developed from inception around Best Practice philosophies, **assyst** embraces all disciplines of BS15000 in one integrated solution around a single core database.

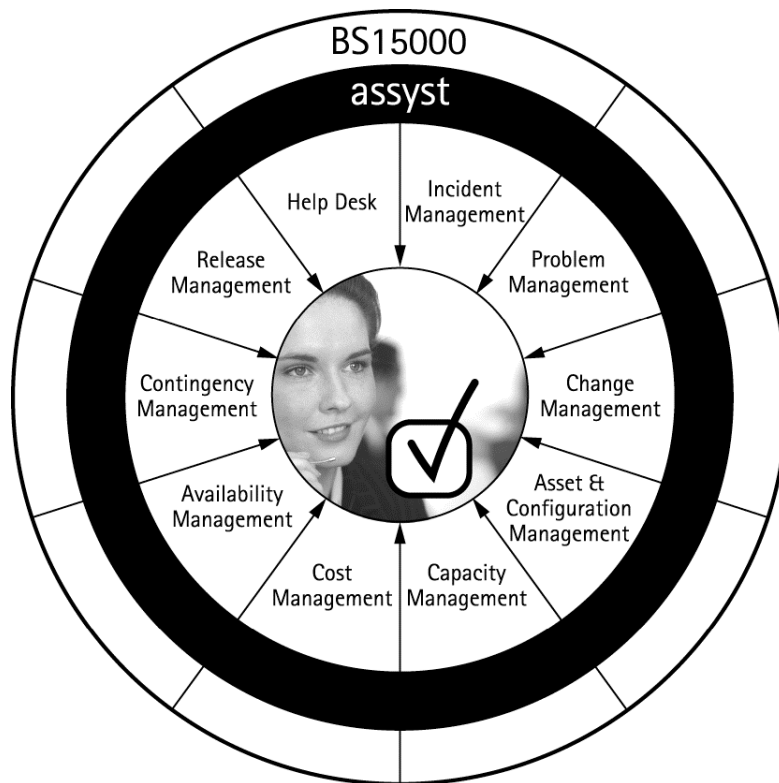
Examples of areas in BS15000 where a conformant software solution could be key:

Configuration Management - the standard requires that *"All configuration items shall be uniquely identifiable and recorded in a CMDB"*, and that *"a baseline of the appropriate configuration items shall be taken before a release to the live environment"*. In practice it is hard to see how this could be done, not only without good software, but also without having set the software up properly.

Change Management - Here a BS15000 conforming organization needs to ensure that *“Requests for change shall be assessed for their risk, impact and business benefit”*. You may get the business benefit from your customers, but for risk and impact you need to know what you have, where it is and how it is joined together. And without a well-structured and populated tool, it is hard to see how that would be possible.

Incident Management - requires, quite simply, that *“All incidents are recorded”*. So unless incidents are rare in your organization, a system for fast and accurate recording is going to be a great help, and probably the difference between complying and not, especially on those days when the network fails and most users call in. Once they are recorded, in order to deal with them, it is required that *“All staff involved within Incident Management shall have access to relevant information such as known errors, problem resolutions and the CMDB”*. Perhaps the hardest word in that requirement is ‘relevant’, for to deliver that means up-to-date information presented in a way that staff dealing with everyday incidents can use.

In practice, therefore, appropriate software, such as **assyst** from Axios Systems, properly installed and populated, and with well-maintained data, can be a great help, not only in doing the tasks required, but also in demonstrating to an auditor that they are being done.



Staff training and qualifications

What really matters, of course, is that your staff know their jobs and deliver what the processes require of them. That, of itself, does not depend on formal training nor on them holding professional qualifications. But here again, staff who have been trained, and who therefore understand the reasons behind their jobs, i.e. to use acknowledged Best Practice processes to deliver the support that the business customers require, are more likely to 'get it right'. And when it comes to explaining to an auditor what they do, if both staff and auditor use the same terminology then the right message stands much more chance of delivery.

So, when checking to see if aspects of IT Service Management are addressed for compliance, an auditor is likely to look for a traditional approach, such as software tools or staff training etc.



What do I do now?

This White Paper is designed to serve as an introduction to BS15000. For further information on how BS15000 certification can help drive your IT Service Management future, please contact Axios Systems for further information.

Coming soon, the second BS15000 White Paper from Axios Systems. This White Paper will directly address how BS15000 can work in practice. It will address how software tools such as **assyst**, but also assessment tools (such as BSi's PD0015 workbook), training and consultancy can help you be right and be ready.

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