

ITIL[®] 4 DIRECT, PLAN AND IMPROVE (DPI)

YOUR COMPANION TO THE ITIL 4 MANAGING PROFESSIONAL AND
STRATEGIC LEADER DPI CERTIFICATION

Claire Agutter



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INTRODUCTION

How to use this book

The majority of this book is based on the *ITIL® 4 Strategist – Direct, Plan & Improve (DPI)* publication and the associated DPI Strategist syllabus. DPI is the only one of the ITIL 4 advanced level courses that contributes to both Managing Professional (MP) and Strategic Leader (SL) status.

In addition to helping you prepare for your certification, I also want to give you some advice and guidance that will lead to you using this book once your training and exam are over. I've added some of my own practical experience to this book and given you advice and some points to think about along the way. My goal is for you to refer back to this book in years to come, not just put it away once you've passed your exam. With this additional content, you'll find this book is an excellent supplement to any training course and a useful tool in your ongoing career.

As you read the book, assume that all the content is related to the syllabus unless it is highlighted in one of two ways:

Introduction



Something for you: a small exercise for you to complete to apply the ITIL 4 concepts in your own role, or a point for you to think about. This content is not examinable.



Practical experiences: any content marked with this image is based on my own experiences and is not examinable.

The content highlighted as something for you or practical experiences might also refer to the Banksbest case study you can find in the Appendix. I'll use the case study to give an example of how something would work in the real world, or to help you apply what you're reading about. Case studies can really help to bring abstract concepts to life. The case study is not examinable but using it will help you get a deeper understanding of the DPI concepts you are learning. Let's start with something for you now:

Introduction



Why not read the case study and make a note of your first impressions of the Banksbest organisation and its plans before you study the DPI content in this book?

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CHAPTER 1: DIRECT, PLAN AND IMPROVE KEY CONCEPTS

This chapter introduces the DPI key concepts that underpin the rest of the DPI content. These include:

- DPI key terms;
- Differentiating between key concepts, including:
 - Vision and mission;
 - Strategy, tactics, operations;
 - Governance, compliance, management; and
 - Policies, controls, guidelines.
- Value, outcomes, costs and risks in a DPI context.

The ITIL 4 DPI manual is intended to support practitioners at all levels:

“Regardless of organizational role, everyone has authority, even if it is limited to personal direction. Everyone should plan. And everyone should be contributing to, if not leading, improvement. The publication explores and explains principles, methods, and techniques that can be universally used to direct, plan, and improve. We have also included tools and templates that can be used to implement the guidance.”

The key themes within DPI are the focus of the DPI course, and of this publication.

Direction

The definition of direction is:

1: Direct, plan and improve key concepts

“Leading, conducting, or guiding someone, or ordering something. This includes setting and communicating the vision, purpose, objectives, and guiding principles for an organization or team. It may also include leading or guiding the organization or team towards its objectives.”

Having clear direction in an organisation helps to clarify what outcomes are expected and what principles should be followed. Effective direction relies on a defined mission, respect for the abilities of those being directed, and good two-way communication. Changes in direction need to be communicated so that team members can adapt to them.

The people who give direction may have been given authority formally (for example, they hold a senior role such as a chief technology officer) or informally (for example, an enthusiastic champion for a new initiative). **Evaluate, direct and monitor** (EDM) is a common construct for providing direction. EDM allows performance to be monitored to ensure direction is having some effect.

Planning

Planning is defined in ITIL 4 as the *“value chain activity that ensures a shared understanding of the vision, current status, and improvement direction for all four dimensions and all products and services across an organization”*.

Once direction is set and provides an objective, a plan can be used to define how to move towards the desired state. Plans help to avoid waste and reduce risk and are particularly important in large organisations where more coordination is needed.

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Plans can range from very simple to very complicated. Planning too much or too little creates problems; for example:

- Too much planning means actual execution can be delayed;
- Too much faith in detailed plans leads to paralysis when something unexpected happens; and
- Work starts without sufficient planning, leading to rework or waste.

The amount of planning undertaken should be proportionate to the work that is being carried out. Planning is helpful, but it's important to remember that plans may need to evolve once work begins or as requirements change. Planning should be seen as an iterative activity that continues alongside the work being carried out, rather than a one-off exercise.



“Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth”
(Mike Tyson).

In the year that I wrote this book, a pandemic crippled economies around the world and changed every aspect of daily life. Planning is a vital capability, but we must also build resilient organisations that can adapt and change when circumstances deviate from the plan.

Improvement

Improvement is defined as *“a deliberately introduced change that results in increased value for one or more stakeholders”*.

Very few organisations start with a completely blank canvas. If we are dealing with existing people, processes or technology, our activities are improvement activities. To measure whether an improvement has been effective, we must understand our start point and whether the change has made things ‘better’. Improvement can apply to any part of the ITIL service value system.

Improvement takes place at every level of an organisation – strategic, tactical and operational. If operational staff are empowered to identify and (where appropriate) implement improvements, organisations can see real gains in their services and the user experience that they offer. Different levels of the organisation might have a different role to play in improvement, with direction set at the strategic level, planning and coordination taking place at the tactical level, and implementation taking place at the operational level. It is important to remember that the staff who are closest to the customer may be best placed to identify improvements.

Measurement and reporting help us understand our position before, during and after improvement activities. Objective data means there should be no argument about whether something is ‘better’ or not. Measurement and reporting can also help predict the results of improvement actions, for example how many more website sales would be generated with an improved checkout process?

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One of the advantages of starting something in a ‘greenfield environment’ (i.e. one where nothing is already in place) is the complete freedom from constraints and past experience. When we approach improvement activities, we need to build a plan that incorporates past experiences, culture, existing technology, and so on. This can create challenges that need to be part of our improvement plans. For example, in the case study in the Appendix you read about the rebrand from HW Banking to Banksbest. If Banksbest were launched as a brand-new organisation, it would be easier for it to communicate its ‘digital first’ message. Because Banksbest is an ‘improved’ brand compared to HW Banking, it must consider the existing customer base and their perception of the old and new brands.

Operating model

An operating model is *“a conceptual and/or visual representation of how an organization co-creates value with its customers and other stakeholders, as well as how the organization runs itself”*.

The ITIL service value chain is an operating model for the creation, delivery and management of products and services. Operating models show complex systems divided into sub-systems, allowing them to be examined and managed more easily.

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Methods

A method is *“a way, technique, or process for doing something. Methods are structured and systematic.”*

Methods are used for structured, systematic work. Some organisations provide guidance about which methods to use, and others allow teams carrying out work to choose their own method. For example, some organisations will work in a waterfall way, whereas others use Agile methods. Waterfall or Agile could be mandatory for teams, or teams might be allowed to choose their own ways of working.

Risks

Risk is *“a possible event that could cause harm or loss or make it more difficult to achieve objectives. Risk can also be defined as uncertainty of outcome and can be used in the context of measuring the probability of positive outcomes as well as negative outcomes.”*

Every organisation will experience risk. From a DPI perspective, risk management is a way of balancing maximum results against minimum harm or loss. Once risks are understood, they need to be managed. Risk management is important because risks can cause projects, products and services to fail or deliver sub-standard results. If team members are aware of risks that are being ignored, this can affect their behaviour and morale. Ultimately, organisations need to understand their current risk levels to drive improvement activities. Risks cannot be managed until they are understood.

Controls

A control is *“the means of managing a risk, ensuring that a business objective is achieved, or that a process is followed”*.

1: Direct, plan and improve key concepts

Controls are used as safeguards or countermeasures. Control categories include:

- **Organisational/procedural controls:** These controls include policies, organisation, training, ownership and processes.
- **Logical/technical controls:** These include elements like required fields, scripting and automated workflows.
- **Physical controls:** These include badge or code entry systems, fencing, locks and guards.

Controls need to be measured to assess their effectiveness. They form part of ‘direction’ from a DPI perspective as they can be used to enforce directives.

Scope of control

Scope of control is a term that defines the “*area(s) or activities over which a person has the authority to direct the actions of others or define the required outcomes*”.

The ITIL 4 DPI guidance is relevant for anyone at any level of an organisation but needs to be understood through the lens of their own ‘scope of control’. An individual’s scope of control might only include themselves and their own activities, or it might incorporate a whole organisation. The scope of control is different to someone’s ‘scope of influence’, which can allow them to create change in areas where they don’t have formal control. Influencing and cooperation can be more effective than formal direction.

1: Direct, plan and improve key concepts



One UK government organisation that I worked with outsourced its IT operations to an external service provider. During the outsourcing exercise, trade union representatives fought to minimise the number of tasks and the level of responsibility that was transferred away from the government staff currently in post. Poor transition management led to a situation where the external service provider was contractually required to deliver agreed IT outcomes but was hindered in its role by the government department's own staff. If the external service provider missed one of its targets, it would usually avoid any penalties due to mitigating circumstances related to the actions of government staff. The scope of control had been defined for an ideal world, which then led to problems when it was implemented in the real world. The external service provider was in the difficult position of trying to deliver outcomes in an ecosystem it did not have control over. The government staff experienced low morale and a lack of clarity about their own roles and responsibilities.

Over time, the 'scope of influence' became much more important to successful service provision for this contract. Better working relationships developed between the external service provider's staff and the government staff. Informal agreements were reached, and work began to happen much more smoothly.

1: Direct, plan and improve key concepts

Vision and mission

You need to understand the definitions of vision and mission, as well as the differences between them.

A vision is a “*defined aspiration of what an organization would like to become in the future*”. Visions are used to show employees what the future could look like. This helps them buy into the vision, maintain their motivation and understand why certain actions are taken.

A mission is a “*short but complete description of the overall purpose and intentions of an organization*”.

Many organisations have formal ‘mission statements’ that are published inside and outside the organisation. Teams will work towards the mission, so it is good practice to define initiatives and activities that will help them do this.



Do you know the vision of the organisation you work for, or the one you have worked for most recently? Can you think of any famous examples of visions that inspired you? How about this, from 1980?

“A computer on every desk and in every home.”

– Bill Gates, Microsoft® chairman and chief executive officer, 1980

1: Direct, plan and improve key concepts

- Evaluating, directing and monitoring organisational activities (including those of service management).



What policies exist in your organisation? Are you aware of them? Are policies followed, or circumvented?

For those working in the operational levels of an organisation, the governing body may seem very remote and disconnected from day-to-day work. It's essential for everyone in the organisation to understand its overall direction. Every decision that is made must ultimately help the organisation get to where it needs to be.

For example, imagine you're dealing with a very unhappy customer who wants a refund. What decisions are you allowed to make? How much autonomy do you have? What does your company value more: the customer's goodwill, or their payment? Without knowing the answer to these questions, you can't respond appropriately in this situation.

Compliance is *“both the act and result of ensuring that a standard or set of guidelines is followed, or that proper, consistent accounting or other practices are being employed”*. Effective governance includes compliance with applicable laws and regulations. Governance mechanisms ensure compliance with established policies.

1: Direct, plan and improve key concepts

which has three months before its next decision point relating to funding.

Lucy reports to the CDO and is working on a project related to the digital transformation programme. She will also be aware that the CFO is not a champion of her project. The CFO has expectations related to cost management, not investment. Conflicting signals from the board will make Lucy's job more challenging and will make it harder for her to prioritise what needs to be done.

Guidelines provide guidance or recommendations but are not usually mandatory. A guideline is *“a recommended practice that allows some discretion in its interpretation, implementation or use”*. They can help staff understand how to behave in different situations, or when no particular policy applies.



Rigid, control-based organisations often try to create a policy or control for every situation. Everything is documented, for every scenario: “If the customer does xx, you do yy. If the customer says zz, you say bb.”

This removes autonomy from the people actually carrying out the work and can reduce staff morale. It can also lead to frustrated customers who feel they are dealing with an automaton, not a person. Some of the most successful organisations I've worked with are the ones that give their

1: Direct, plan and improve key concepts

staff guidelines to work within, with clearly defined outcomes. Telling staff that you want them to do whatever is in their power to make the customer happy allows them to get creative, and to work with the customer to reach a shared solution. Sometimes the best solution is counterintuitive. For example, one organisation had a service level agreement (SLA) that said that an engineer would be on site to address a printer failure within 24 hours. In one instance, although the repair was urgent, the customer wasn't going to be available, so extending the target and arranging the visit after 48 hours delivered a much better outcome. The happy customer was worth more to the service provider than unthinkingly following the SLA.

Controls are *“the means of managing a risk, ensuring that a business objective is achieved, or that a process is followed”*. Organisations will use policies, controls and guidelines to help them deliver their desired outcomes and co-create value with customers.

Value, outcomes, costs and risks

ITIL 4 describes how value calculations need to include outcomes, costs and risks. Service providers help consumers achieve desired outcomes by deploying their resources and taking on some of the costs and risks of service provision. Service consumers assess what costs and risks are removed and added by using a product or service.

Each service provider organisation will define its desired outcomes and analyse the costs and risks associated with them. These outcomes are then achieved through clear

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7: DPI, value streams and practices

Little's Law provides some considerations for process design:

- Minimise how often work is transferred.
- Throughput may not be under the service provider's control.
- Wait time can be expressed as a function of cycle time.
- Cycle time can be assumed to be fixed.
- WIP can be limited to stabilise cycle time.

Theory of constraints

The theory of constraints provides another perspective on process flows; we mentioned this earlier when we studied local optimisation. There is a five-step process to apply this theory:

- Identify the process's constraints.
- Decide how best to exploit the process's constraints.
- Subordinate everything else to the above decisions.
- Evaluate the process's constraints.
- Remove the constraints and re-evaluate the process.



The Theory of Constraints was introduced in *The Goal*, a business novel by Eliyahu M. Goldratt and Jeff Cox. Put simply, the Theory of Constraints recognises that every

7: DPI, value streams and practices

when they are ready for it and people to work collaboratively to improve flow.

A basic Kanban board has columns for To Do, In Progress and Done.

- **To Do:** Kanban makes work visible. Teams can see what needs to be done and pull work when they have the capacity to do it.
- **In Progress:** Work in progress, or WIP, needs to be limited to the capacity of the resources available. Too much WIP can lead to overburden. You might experience this yourself on a personal level. Some days there seems to be so much to do, it's hard to start anything. Kanban helps to visualise and manage workflow.
- **Done:** Kanban can be used to measure velocity – the quantity of work completed in an iteration or sprint. Lead time and cycle time can be measured using the boards. Kanban doesn't have to be complex to implement. It can be as simple as sticky notes on a wall, or a whiteboard.

8: Exam preparation

performance in the live exam. Your sample exam may highlight areas for further study before you take your final exam.



Here are some good practices for taking multiple-choice exams:

Manage your time: if you're stuck on a question, mark it and go back to it later. It's easy to spend too long staring at one question, but there may be easier marks to be picked up further on in the paper.

Have a technique: I like to go through an exam and complete all the questions I feel confident about. That allows me to see how many of the more challenging ones I need to get right to have a successful result.

Trust your instinct: one of the most common bits of exam feedback is candidates who wish they had not changed their answer at the last minute. It's fine to check over what you've done, but be very wary about making changes in those last few seconds.

Use the process of elimination: each question has four possible answers – if you can discount one or two of them then you've dramatically increased your odds of picking the right answer.

Don't panic!: if your mind goes blank, move on, and look at another question – you can do this with online and paper

8: Exam preparation

exams. Your subconscious mind will work away even when you're answering a different question.

Read the question carefully: if you're not careful, you will answer the question you **think** you see, not the one that's actually there.



And that's all from me! I hope you've enjoyed the book, and that the extra content I've provided along the way will help you to start using ITIL 4 DPI concepts in your own role. You can find me on LinkedIn and Twitter – I'd love to hear if you've enjoyed the book and how your studies and exam help you in your career.

APPENDIX: BANKSBEST CASE STUDY

Company overview

Banksbest was originally HW Banking. It was founded in 1953 in the UK and has branches in most major UK cities. It focuses mainly on business clients, but it also has a mortgage department that offers residential mortgages to aspiring homeowners and buy-to-let mortgages to landlords.

The Banksbest board of directors initiated a digital transformation programme in 2017. At the same time, a new CEO and CIO were recruited. A Chief Digital Officer (CDO) role has also been established. As part of the digital transformation programme, the bank rebranded from HW Banking to Banksbest, which was seen as a more customer-focused brand.

Banksbest has defined these strategic goals:

- To be the tenth largest provider of business banking services in the UK (growing its customer base by approximately 25%).
- To grow its residential mortgage business by 50%.
- To build a reputation as a ‘digital first’ banking provider.

There is some conflict during board meetings, as the CFO is not fully convinced about the value of the CDO role and the digital transformation programme. She would prefer to focus on cost management.

The head office and data centre for Banksbest are in Manchester. The customer service centre is in Reading. There is also an agreement with a business process

Appendix: Banksbest case study

outsourcing company in Bulgaria, Employeez on Demand, which provides additional customer service resources during peak times. The customer service centre operates 7 days a week, between 8:00 am and 6:00 pm, and support is also available via the bank's website on a 24x7 basis.

Banksbest's 50 branches are open Monday to Saturday, between 9:00 am and 5:00 pm.

Banksbest has a good reputation in a competitive field. However, the rebrand has confused some customers, and the digital transformation programme has not delivered many measurable results yet. Banksbest needs to improve its online services and embed its new brand in order to grow.

Company structure

Banksbest employs 700 staff. 400 work in the bank's branches, 100 in the call centre, and 200 in the head office and support functions. Additional staff are supplied by Employeez on Demand during peak times.

Banksbest is split into divisions:

- Central Operations – provides support services for all departments. Operations includes HR, Finance, Marketing and IT. The IT department has 50 staff.
- Customer Services – this department includes the staff who work in and manage the customer service centre, as well as some technical specialists who work on the systems used in the CS centre.
- Branches – this department is responsible for the branches providing face-to-face banking services. The branches are expensive to maintain but offer a face-to-face service that some Banksbest customers value.

Appendix: Banksbest case study

The digital transformation programme is being run by a digital team that operates outside the existing divisions.

Future plans

To achieve its goals, Banksbest and the digital transformation programme team are working on a number of different initiatives. These include the flagship ‘My Way’ project, which will allow business banking customers to access services however suits them best. Commissioned by the CDO and led by a product owner, My Way will allow business banking customers to use a range of devices to manage their accounts and move seamlessly between branch-based and online transactions. The current plans include:

- Testing biometrics including fingerprint and voice login to support My Way;
- My Deposit My Way, allowing cheques to be paid in using the camera on a mobile phone; and
- Monitoring of customer feedback, levels of demand and which products are most popular.

After three months, the product owner will report back to the CDO. At this point, the project will either be allocated additional funding, will pivot, or will be closed down. My Way is being measured on both governance and compliance and customer satisfaction outcomes.

IT services

All the IT services are run from the head office and the Manchester data centre. Since the digital transformation programme started, more services are Cloud hosted by external providers. The main IT services are:

Appendix: Banksbest case study

Bizbank – the banking system used in the branches and customer service centre. This system contains customer account information and history, including current and savings accounts. Bizbank is hosted in the Manchester data centre, but there are plans to move it to a Cloud hosting service to improve its resilience. Bizbank incidents sometimes take a long time to resolve because the original developers have left, and documentation is poor.

Mortbank – the mortgage system used in branches and the customer service centre. As well as tracking existing mortgages, Mortbank has a credit-checking facility that supports mortgage approvals. Mortbank was developed by MortSys, which provides ongoing support and maintenance. MortSys is a small organisation and doesn't always respond within its agreed target times.

Mibank – an online self-service portal being developed as part of the My Way project. Mibank allows customers to check their accounts, move money between accounts, pay bills and receive cheques. The functionality of Mibank will expand as the My Way project progresses.

Banksec – Banksec is an identity-checking utility that is used by Bizbank, Mortbank and Mibank. Banksec uses two-factor authentication, and biometric capabilities are in development.

IT department

The IT department includes 50 staff split into 4 departments, under the CIO:

- Strategic Planning and Business Relationship Management.
- Service Management.

Appendix: Banksbest case study

- Development.
- Operations (including Service Desk).

IT has a good reputation generally, but business staff see the IT department as responsible for day-to-day operations and fixing things. The IT department's development role is less well understood. There is also some friction between the digital transformation programme staff and IT staff.

IT service management

Service management does not have a high profile in Banksbest.

The CIO holds a position at board level, and likes to be seen as dynamic and responsive, rather than process driven and bureaucratic. However, some recent service outages have led to a level of interest in service management best practices, as well as assessment of other ways of working including DevOps, Agile and Lean.

There are some culture issues in the IT department, including an 'us and them' attitude that means developers and operations staff don't always work well together.

Sample employee biographies

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Lucy Jones | Lucy joined Banksbest as a graduate trainee five years ago. As part of her training, she spent six months in each of the major departments: Central Operations, Branches and Customer Services. During her time in Central Operations, she spent two months in Finance, two months in HR and two months in IT, including working on the Service Desk. |
|-------------------|---|

Appendix: Banksbest case study

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| | <p>Following completion of her graduate trainee programme, Lucy was offered a job in HR, and worked there for three years. She was then offered a newly created role of Product Owner and is responsible for the ‘My Way’ project. Lucy has a good understanding of the Banksbest business units and the IT services that support them.</p> |
| Doug Range | <p>Doug has worked for Banksbest for 20 years since it was HW Banking. He started work as counter staff in one of the branches and worked his way up to branch manager. Some years ago, his branch was chosen to be one of the pilot locations for the rollout of Bizbank, and for two years he acted as a super-user for this system, logging the queries he handled on the service desk system. He has recently been promoted to a head office role, including training the customer service centre staff.</p> <p>Doug is working with Lucy on the My Way project, helping to provide customer intelligence, and ensuring the customer service centre staff are kept up to date.</p> |

FURTHER READING

IT Governance Publishing (ITGP) is the world's leading publisher for governance and compliance. Our industry-leading pocket guides, books, training resources and toolkits are written by real-world practitioners and thought leaders. They are used globally by audiences of all levels, from students to C-suite executives.

Our high-quality publications cover all IT governance, risk and compliance frameworks and are available in a range of formats. This ensures our customers can access the information they need in the way they need it.

Other resources you may find useful include:

- *ITIL® Foundation Essentials ITIL 4 Edition – The ultimate revision guide, second edition* by Claire Agutter,
www.itgovernancepublishing.co.uk/product/itil-foundation-essentials-itil-4-edition-the-ultimate-revision-guide-second-edition
- *ITIL® 4 Essentials – Your essential guide for the ITIL 4 Foundation exam and beyond, second edition* by Claire Agutter,
www.itgovernancepublishing.co.uk/product/itil-4-essentials-your-essential-guide-for-the-itil-4-foundation-exam-and-beyond-second-edition
- *ITSM, ITIL® 4 & ISO 20000 Toolkit* published by ITGP,
www.itgovernance.co.uk/shop/product/itsm-itil-4-iso-20000-toolkit