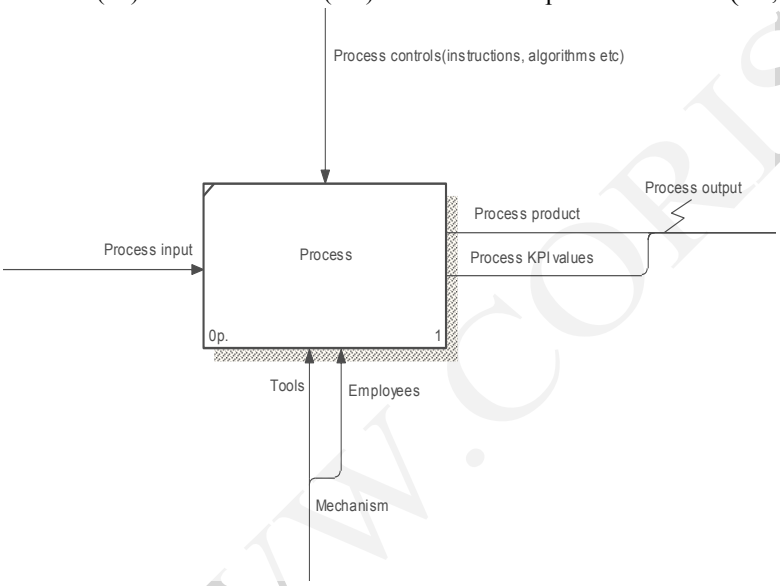
“CSI in ITIL®”

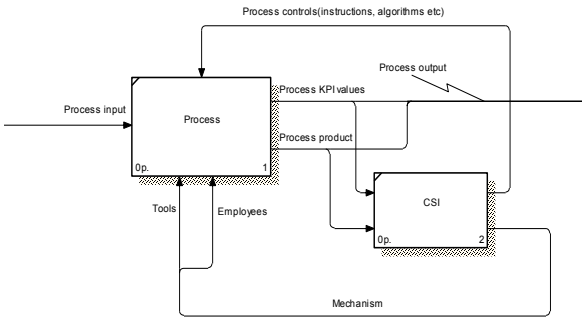
CSI is a quite new idea for ITIL® and the community members offer different interpretations for it. Some of them use analogues to explain their ideas, for instance Crime Scene Investigation. I also would like to offer an analogue for CSI but start with Service Management as a whole. For me IT Service Management is very similar to industrial production where IT service is a product. Like any other product IT service has customer view with quality attributes (SLA) and production view with technology attributes(OLAs and Service resource models), IT infrastructure is manufacturing infrastructure and ITIL® processes are technology processes to produce IT services. Similar to common industries all processes must in one way or another be linked to the final product. If a link from process to IT service can not be traced then the process is odd in your model.

Back to CSI (Continual Service Improvement), the main question for me: what is it – improve service? Using proposed analogue with common industry this means improving quality and cost parameters of the product - IT service. And here some notes are needed for the term improvement. Usually it is used for existing entities cause you can improve only something that exists. This approach puts initial service design, design from scratch, out of CSI scope. I think it is not correct. If we assume that all ITIL® process are relevant to production of IT services than processes from Service design as well as Service Strategy phases should also be taken in consideration. And we can conclude that quality and cost parameters of IT service are formed as output of all ITIL® processes. So we can assume that Continual Service(product) Improvement(CSI) should mean improvement of all processes relevant to service production – from strategy to support.

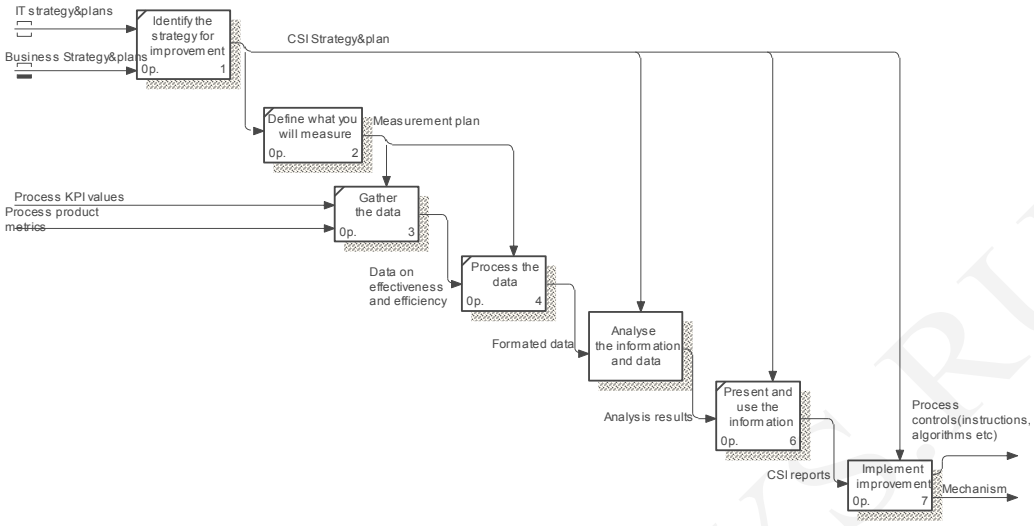
Now the next question is: what does it mean – to improve process? It means making changes that would provide desired process output. Process output contains product resulting from process execution, and process KPI values reflecting process efficiency(in short – process should produce product of desired quality and volume with minimal cost which is evaluated with KPIs). In it's turn process output(P_{out}) is function of process input (P_i), process controls (P_c) and mechanisms(P_m) used to run the process: $P_{out}=F(P_i, P_c, P_m)$.



In most cases we can not manage input (P_i) and thus we have only controls (P_c) and mechanisms (P_m) to alter for improving a process. So we can state that CSI should use the process output (product and KPI) as input, evaluate it and produce new controls and mechanisms to improve the process.

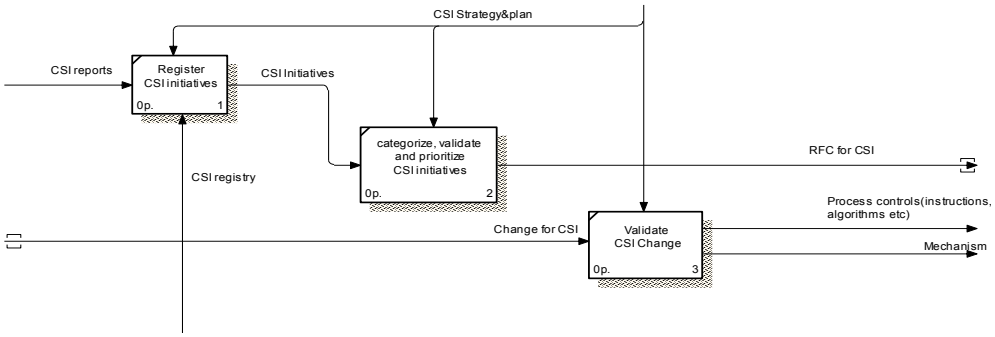


The Library defines seven steps/activities for CSI process: Identify the strategy for improvement, define what you will measure, gather the data, process the data, analyse the information and data, present and use the information, implement improvement.



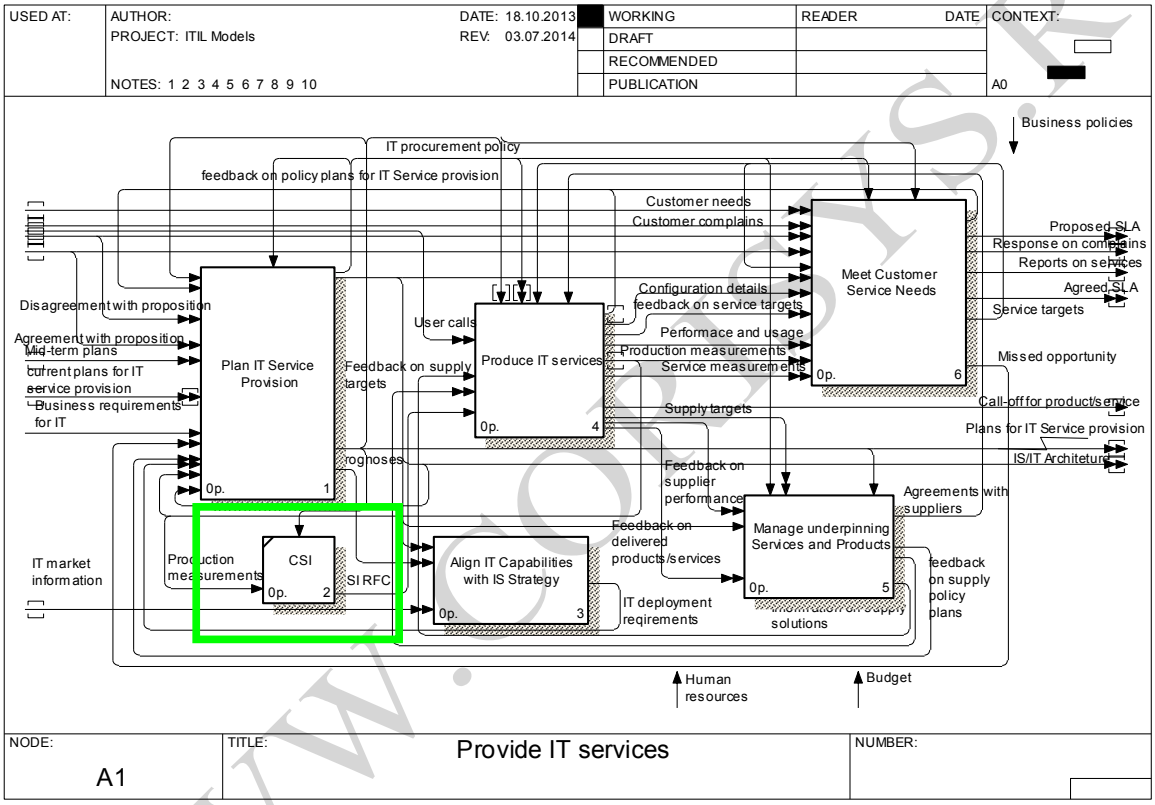
It seems that only the last three activities are in CSI process. Improvement strategy should be a part of global IT strategy and it is quite natural to put “Identify the strategy for improvement” activity in “Service strategy”. As well as “Gather data” and “Process data” are more common activities for monitoring. One should be an outstanding CSI zealot to arrange a separate CSI dedicated monitoring process. So for CSI we have “Analyse the information and data”, “Present and use the information” and “Implement improvement” activities left. Most important here seems to be “Analyse”. This activity defines what happens next, should there be any changes(improvements) or no. And that is why the role for running this activity has specific requirements to personnel. To do this job is needed somebody with appropriate level of qualification, experience and understanding of process context to reveal root case of the problem and offer a choice of changes for improvement to select from. To my mind the best candidate for this role is the manager of the process to be improved. And here is another one question – should every analysis result with proposal for improvement? With my personal experience I would definitely answer NO. I prefer not to disturb things that work properly. But it may happen that KPIs for CSI will motivate the personnel to initiate improvements for improvement's sake. But deviation of process output from desired values is not the only trigger for improvement. New technologies and methodologies may add to the process value even in case when output analysis results show that everything is Ok. That is why not only monitoring data should be analysed at this step. Information on new initiatives should also be taken into consideration. And again, the process manager is the most appropriate person to evaluate the initiatives and propose changes for improvement.

The last activity in CSI is “Implement improvement”. But does this activity is run totally in CSI boundaries? Suppose no, cause improvement is actually a change and inside CSI process only improvement initiative is formed and registered. It can be done in form of recording change initiatives in CSI registry which is used for categorization, validation and prioritization of initiatives to generate RFCs. And RFCs for new controls and mechanisms should be produced by change management process in place to follow the adopted policies, strategies and so on. Recommended changes may be quite primitive when it turned out that the employee used in the process doesn't comply with the role requirements. In this case the improvement will result in requesting HR to substitute employee with the one complying with requirements. But in most cases the improvement will need changes in procedures(process algorithms), tools and appropriate employee training and these changes need the change management process to be



involved. Back in CSI the implemented change/improvement can be finally validated and approved.

In ITIL® process model CSI should be placed at the top level cause it cannot be defined as a part of existing processes.



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