

The ITPI's Visible Ops: A Synopsis

Who is the ITPI?

The Information Technology Process Initiative (ITPI), a not for profit organization, is engaged in three principle areas of activity: research, benchmarking and the development of prescriptive guidance for practitioners and business executives. The ITPI has collaboration agreements in place with research organizations such as the Software Engineering Institute at Carnegie Mellon University and the Decision Sciences program at the University of Oregon. We are currently developing the necessary guidance that solves the common objectives of IT Security, Corporate Governance, Audit and Operations. Through research, development and benchmarking, the ITPI creates powerful measurement tools, prescriptive adoption methods, and control metrics to facilitate management by fact.

What is Visible Ops?

Visible Ops is a methodology designed to jumpstart implementation of controls and process improvement in IT organizations needing to increase service levels, security and Auditability while managing costs. Visible Ops is comprised of four prescriptive and self-fueling steps that take an organization from any starting point to a continually improving process.

What benefit does Visible Ops provide?

We developed the Visible Ops methodology because we could not find any satisfactory answer to the question: "I believe in the need for IT process improvement, but where do I start?" Although the Information Infrastructure Library (ITIL) provides a wealth of best practices, it lacks prescriptive guidance: What do you implement first, and how do you do it? Moreover, the ITIL books remain relatively expensive to distribute. Other information, publicly available from a variety of sources, is too general and vague to effectively aid organizations that need to start or enhance process improvement efforts. The Visible Ops booklet provides a prescriptive roadmap for organizations beginning or continuing their IT process improvement journey.

Synopsis of Visible Ops

Visible Ops is the result of more than three years of studying high-performing IT operations and security organizations by the ITPI. Visible Ops illustrates how interested organizations might replicate key processes of these high-performing organizations in just four steps. Each of these steps has the following characteristics:

- **Definitive Projects** – each step is a project, with a clearly defined objective and exit criteria.
- **Ordered** – each step is specifically designed to build upon the previous step.
- **Catalytic** – each step returns more resources to the organization than it consumed, thus fueling the next step.
- **Sustaining** – each step creates enough value to the organization that the processes developed remain in place, even if the initial driving forces behind its implementation disappear.
- **Auditable** – each step provides auditable evidence that preventive and detective controls are working and are effective.

The Four Visible Ops Steps

Each of the four ordered Visible Ops steps are described below.

1. **Stabilize Patient, Modify First Response** – Almost 80% of outages are self-inflicted. The first step is to control risky changes and reduce MTTR by addressing how changes are managed and how problems are resolved.
2. **Catch and Release, Find Fragile Artifacts** – Often, infrastructure exists that cannot be repeatedly replicated. In this step, we inventory assets, configurations and services, to identify those with the lowest change success rates, highest MTTR and highest business downtime costs.
3. **Establish Repeatable Build Library** – The highest return on investment is implementing effective release management processes. This step creates repeatable builds for the most critical assets and services, to make it “cheaper to rebuild than to repair.”
4. **Enable Continuous Improvement** – The previous steps have progressively built a closed-loop between the Release, Control and Resolution processes. This step implements metrics to allow continuous improvement of all of these process areas, to best ensure that business objectives are met.

Intended audience includes

Visible Ops is an intuitive methodology that both IT and business stakeholders can readily understand. Because IT is so pervasive and its controls are foundations upon which other controls are built, its effective management is critical to all stakeholders. We believe the audience for Visible Ops extends to include:

- IT Operations
- IT Security
- Management
- Customers
- Users
- Internal Audit
- External Audit

Testimonials

Some of the enthusiastic testimonials Visible Ops has received to date include:

“A frequent complaint of ITIL consultants is that not many ITIL implementation tools are publicly available. For the experienced IT Service Management practitioner, it sometimes seems we have to re-invent the wheel each time. Visible Ops fills a big part of that void. It provides a practical insight in how to kick-start an IT Service Management improvement effort. Its common sense approach and very readable style give this book a mandatory place in the library of any IT manager. Visible Ops is indeed comparable to the manual for an Emergency Room of a hospital. I particularly liked the fact it does not pretend to be an operational 'bible' for the phases beyond the ER.

“Visible Ops describes four steps to control an IT environment. The unassailable logic behind these steps is based on the practical experience of the authors, Gene Kim and Kevin Behr. These same steps can easily be mapped to any maturity model and Visible Ops hence describes a roadmap to maturity.

“The first two phases of Visible Ops help organizations control the infrastructure. The third Visible Ops phase helps organizations control the services, in the spirit of Service-Oriented Architectures and IT Service Management. The last phase of Visible Ops helps organizations control the strategic value, which provides an opportunity for IT to align itself with the business and to gradually maximize its 'bang for the buck'. The easy mapping between the Visible Ops phases and any maturity model validates the compelling logic of the book.”

Jan Vromant
ITSM Consultant

Website: www.itpi.org
Phone: 541-485-4051



“Visible Ops provides the IT practitioner at any level with a catalytic approach to improving operational controls. The Visible Ops toolset helps organizations find a toehold in spite of sheer cliffs of chaos. If you are looking to start or improve configuration management, champion a repeatable server provisioning process, and institute meaningful metrics that breed quality decisions, Visible Ops is the place to start. I recommend this to any IS Management, as well as any senior management with a technical background or IT staffers with management ambitions.”

Bill Shinn
Security Engineer

“Gene and Kevin have hit the preverbal ‘IT nail’ right on the head. When I educate customers on the benefits of documented and repeatable procedures such as ITIL and COBIT, they are always concerned about the complexity and where to start. Visible Ops creates a logical starting point and details the key ‘issues and indicators’. This handbook is a ‘must read’ for IT Managers and Directors who are implementing a mandate from their CIO or Board of Directors to become compliant for auditors and federal regulations.”

Henry E. Wojcik
Director, Enterprise Service Management
Network Data Systems, Inc

“The Visible Ops Handbook is the Rosetta Stone that the IT industry and its leadership have been seeking to allow them to communicate the value of ITIL to the business. Visible Ops is simple and clear, provides a roadmap of how to make an IT department not only perform better, but also to deliver more value back to the business. Without doubt, each of the four steps they outlined have value and are well supported.”

Daniel S. Waite
Senior Consultant
BMC Software