M4.2 Report on the gSLM ITSM Tutorial session, EGI Technical Forum 2011, Lyon, France

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# Introduction

This short report fulfils one of the obligations of the memorandum of understanding (MoU) between EGI.eu and the gSLM project. It discusses the tutorial session on IT Service Management (ITSM) that was requested by EGI in the context of the MoU.

# Background to the tutorial

The gSLM project is intended to improve understanding of Service Level Management and other IT Service Management topics in the Grid community. It achieves this through bringing experts in the Grid and ITSM communities together to discuss the challenges of Grid service provision and bringing expertise from traditional, commercial ITSM to the Grid. As such the gSLM team includes experts on commercial ITSM techniques, frameworks and standards.

As the EGI community matures and Grid services become both more mission critical and increasingly needing to compete or at least be comparable to commercial services, ITSM becomes ever more relevant to Grid computing. Service Level Management (SLM) is a crucial aspect of ITSM, allowing for the creation of Service Level Agreements (SLAs), but in fact many aspects of ITSM are relevant to the Grid. As a result gSLM provided a tutorial on ITSM topics at EGI’s annual meeting, the Technical Forum, in Lyon, France, on September 22nd, 2011.

# Content of the tutorial

Dr. Thomas Schaaf, gSLM project director and an expert in IT Service Management, gave the tutorial. Dr. Schaaf is an ITSM instructor, auditor and consultant and holds numerous certifications in ITIL, ISO/IEC 20000, ISO/IEC 27000 and COBIT. He is also a member of the community behind the IEEE International Workshop series on Business-driven IT Management, and was co-chair of the last edition of the event.

The tutorial began with an introduction to the basic concepts of ITSM. This introduced the idea of a process-based model for service management, and defined the value of a service as the combination of its utility and its warranty. It also explained what ITSM is *not*, such as just marketing or an implementation of some particular tool.

A stratification of ITSM was provided: Policies occur at a definition level, generally from top management within an organisation. These are translated in a control level, where processes with inputs and outputs are defined. These lead to procedures, which are acted upon at an operational level by people, sometimes supported by technological tools. Different ITSM frameworks and methods operate at different levels in this stratified view, depending on their purpose.

The tutorial continued with a view on three important conceptual systems in ITSM: the frameworks ITIL and COBIT and the international standard ISO/IEC 20000. Each one was introduced with some information on its background and origins. Advice on how to use them was given, as well as a glimpse of how they look. Dr. Schaaf used the Incident Management process in each case to show how each of the three approaches deals with this fairly fundamental process.

ITIL was explained as a lengthy set of best practices, which gave guidance on broadly what processes and structures should be in place without actually identifying a specific implementation of them. It was pointed out that many leading organisations may only implement between 15 and 30% of ITIL, yet still being considered successful in ITSM implementation. ISO/IEC 20000 was introduced as a condensed form of the same broad content as ITIL, going from some 1,500 pages of ITIL content into a 24-page standard. ISO/IEC 20000 therefore provides minimum requirements for ITSM rather than comprehensive best practice. Finally COBIT was introduced, a framework for high level IT Governance that sits very much at the policy -based definition level, and does not go far into the control or operational levels.

Concluding, the tutorial looked at common mistakes and misunderstandings about ITSM, such as that it automatically reduces costs or necessitates new flashy tools. Rather the talk stressed that ITSM frameworks were guidelines or recommendations on how to adequately and effectively manage a service to the benefit of both provider and customer.

A version of the slides presented at the event (less slides with copyright content) is available online at http:// <http://gslm.eu/files/2011-09-22_Tutorial_Service_Management_EGI-TF.pdf> .

# Reception and Outcomes

The session was very well attended, with around 50 conference attendees in the audience. Interest was such that some sat on the floor to be able to attend. The response of the attendees also seemed to be good, perhaps catalyzed by discussions within the EGI community of the importance of ITSM and similar topics, and the workshop on sustainability and business models earlier in the week. Following the tutorial, Dr. Schaaf answered questions from the audience, several of whom stayed after the event to continue discussions at more length.

In combination with the gSLM workshop, also held during the Technical Forum (and where EGI’s chief operations officer spoke), the tutorial catalyzed discussion between gSLM and EGI on how gSLM could assist EGI in developing their ITSM practices.

This assistance is likely to be partly within the scope of gSLM, but discussions also brought up the need for some assistance that may be outside the scope of gSLM in terms of the effort required and also the content, going beyond the SLM remit of gSLM into other aspects of ITSM. For work within the scope of gSLM, a meeting is being discussed between the two groups to set out more precisely the needs of EGI and what gSLM can offer. The gSLM project is also taking the information and feedback received during the technical forum in planning the content of their second year deliverables, to ensure their key outputs are compatible with the needs and interested of EGI.

Outside the context of gSLM, the team behind the project is in discussions on a future project proposal more targeted to implementing changes rather than providing advice. EGI.eu has been invited to join this consortium through its formal process for project participation. Ideally such a proposal will be submitted to a relevant EC call later this year.

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