

A photograph of four business professionals walking past a modern glass building at night. They are all wearing face masks. The woman on the left is wearing a yellow top and black pants. The man next to her is wearing a dark suit. The man next to him is wearing a dark suit and a white face mask. The man on the right is wearing a blue and white plaid jacket and a white face mask. The building has large glass windows and doors, and the interior lights are visible. The ground is paved with light-colored tiles.

How COVID-19 highlighted the importance of
Service Resilience in making sure organisations
remained operational throughout the pandemic

The world is how we shape it

sopra  steria

Introduction

Service Management has always been a mainstay of private and public sector organisations; underpinning key business operations, enabling business delivery and making sure if things did go wrong relevant contingency plans were in place.

The role of Service Management has never been more vital and in evidence than now, during the COVID-19 pandemic. In many organisations the Service Management team are often hidden heroes, keeping the business running, so well that they go almost unnoticed, allowing the rest of the organisation to focus on achieving its operational, financial and strategic objectives. To be able to provide services to customers, staff and other key stakeholders, every organisation needs a Service Management team who can provide secure stable services it can depend on through robust and effective service management principles and processes, driving proactive service resilience.

The role of Service Management has never been more vital and in evidence than now, during the COVID-19 pandemic.



What do we mean by Service Resilience?

At Sopra Steria we believe good Service Management is the provision of services which are aligned to an organisations needs and actively supports the business in achieving its desired outcomes. From a service resilience perspective this includes services that are:

- **Available and perform in line with business needs** - Smooth running with minimum disruptions that could lead to loss of business hours, additional business costs and lost business opportunities through strong controls, processes and service capability. With in-built resilience to manage and minimise disruptions – from incidents to crises such as COVID-19.
- **Secure and protected** - From risk of damaging cyber security attacks, potentially leading to business disruption, loss of data and assets, financial loss and reputational damage through proactive enterprise-wide cyber resilience.
- **Responsive and agile** - Enabling changes needed to support business development whilst avoiding impacts to service stability, achieved through effective management of change and the risks associated with change implementation; responding to changes in demand to support business events, alongside flexible scalable resourcing to support changing patterns of work.
- **Customer focused** - Reliable and trusted by business users, customers and consumers, delivering exceptional levels of customer satisfaction and customer experience, regardless of circumstances, delivered through a customer-centric culture, whilst leveraging digital channels, automation and AI to deliver a consistently high quality responsive service.



- **Proactively monitored** - Across all aspects of the service to prevent disruptions before they can occur, and to identify risks and improvements opportunities to drive increased efficiency, cost-effectiveness, quality, controls and resilience. Achieved through a comprehensive integrated framework of controls and MI underpinned by service management tooling.
- **Value for money** - Enabling the business to operate and grow to meet its goals, by optimising use of technology (existing and new), robust processes and controls, alongside effective service teams, to deliver a cost-effective reliable, secure and responsive service.

Key operational resiliency practices within a service management eco-system

To drive successful operational resiliency within an organisation Service Management cannot exist on its own. The activities and the role Service Management plays needs to be embedded throughout. Activities the Service Management team undertake need to work together to provide services that are not only exactly what the organisation needs, when the organisation needs them, but also cost-effective and value for money.

Working in collaboration with the wider organisation is essential to gaining a clear understanding of the services required to realise the required operational, financial and strategic outcomes. This means Service Management teams can ensure the services provided meet these needs, including the right levels of performance, resilience, availability and capacity, and specifically provide clarity and a common understanding of the business critical services and their needs. This enables an enhanced service provision to ensure appropriate operational performance, capability, support and recovery aligned to criticality.

For example, during COVID-19 Sopra Steria demonstrated the benefits of good service resiliency across a range of different organisations:

Focus on keeping client services operational

Sopra Steria was able to successfully initiate an immediate response to changing business needs for their services. A key element of this was relocation of their own staff (both onshore and offshore) to remote working within 5 working days. This was alongside supporting client staff relocations, leading to a short-term significant increase in their workload which focused on supporting client staff adapting to working from home, whilst simultaneously keeping client services operational, especially for critical business operations.

Ensuring key public services remained available

We were able to make sure a flexible Service Management model was focused on our clients including making sure vital services remained available to the public and key workers received the support they needed. Examples included making sure nearly half a million NHS employees were paid on time and enabling the NHS to move £608 million of supplier payments to where it was needed to support frontline efforts against COVID-19.

Making sure UK government had access to the right information

We supported the Cabinet Office by making changes to the Standard Operating Platform (SOP), providing them with critical sickness data for use in decision making and modelling at COBRA meetings in relation to COVID-19 reporting.

Enabling store operations throughout the pandemic

At one of Britain's largest supermarkets we put in place a Christmas service support model, that would normally take over 12 weeks to prepare in under 4 weeks. Making sure essential items were available in stores across the UK for its customers.

Initiating international restaurant re-openings

We enabled the staged re-opening of Restaurants for one of the world's largest fast food chains across 50 countries making sure we complied with different government guidelines in each country.

The key to these successful examples was making sure open working relationships with each organisation were in place. By having trusted, open and honest relationships with these public and private sector organisations, Service Management teams were able to identify changes in business plans, the impact on services provided, and how any changes may affect staff, suppliers, customers or patients.

Additionally, the Service Management teams were able to model different scenarios and see what the impact would be in terms of services required by each organisation as the pandemic unfolded.

Putting the fundamentals in place

These examples support the notion of proactive service planning to prepare services to be ready to meet organisational needs, e.g. appropriate service capability, capacity and resilience to maintain levels of operational stability. Additionally, it provides opportunity for joint learning from past experiences, leading to improvements to make sure the organisation is better prepared for any future business impacting events or changes.

Most organisations have increasingly complex IT estates, from vital legacy platforms through to cloud services. Cohesive orchestration across the infrastructure, software and tooling is essential to provide an integrated seamless end-to-end service to the business. Today, this invariably includes a multitude of suppliers, each with varying degrees of significance, depending on the level of criticality the business has on their products or services. It is key that management of these suppliers includes assuring the right level of service integrity, performance, availability and resilience.

Underpinning all organisations are some key business operations, such as Payroll, HR, Stock Control or Logistics. It is essential these key business operations, run smoothly regardless of changes or events – internal or external to the business. It requires effective integrated Service Management processes and controls to deliver robust operational services ‘to keep the lights on’ at all times. This is becoming ever more important and



challenging across increasingly multi-layered IT, distributed geographies and extensive supply chains.

An often overlooked fundamental of good service management is the proactive monitoring of ‘service health’. Monitoring of each individual’s service ranges from early detection of potential operational issues with initiation of corrective actions (often automated) to address prior to any service disruption. Then identifying key insights such as performance analytics providing status, trends and key performance metrics enabling service planning to avoid future operational impacts; alongside checks to identify potential compliance management issues for management attention and avoidance.

By having the right service health check in place organisations can optimise operational stability and continual improvement of service resilience through monitoring and analysis of aspects such as security, vulnerabilities, single points of failure, key dependencies, performance, capacity, throughputs, hot spots and bottlenecks.

Technology is a service enabler

Technology is constantly evolving and Service Management teams need to leverage technology to make sure they deliver on time and to a high standard for the organisation they are delivering for. To do this they need to both exploit existing technology and leverage new innovative technology for increased efficiency, quality, consistency, cost-effective services which result in reduced vulnerabilities, and improved resilience and service continuity. This applies across the full breadth of the Service Management discipline. For example a multi-channel service desk, automated workflows to deliver business processes, intelligent automation for routine queries and service requests, monitoring tools to provide advance alerts with enhanced dashboards – all leading to smoother running, stable, robust services.

However, a service cannot run on technology alone and service teams are the lifeblood of any service that is delivered for an organisation. This means workforce management is key. It ensures there is the right capacity, with the training, skills and competencies to support the services, combined with the organisational knowledge to understand the contribution the service makes to each operation. This understanding of the organisation, and especially the organisations' critical processes, ensures an appropriate level of response and support when issues and disruptions do arise. This results in a response which is appropriate to the impact to the organisation and the individual, minimising that impact and driving restoration of normal service as quickly as possible.



Service Management teams need to both exploit existing technology and leverage new innovative technology for increased efficiency, quality, consistency, cost-effective services which result in reduced vulnerabilities, and improved resilience and service continuity.



Customers are the core of any service

A customer-centric service culture puts people and the business at the heart of the service. This drives an ethos where customers and their issues are real. Encouraging service staff to understand and support their needs in the best way possible and developing a culture where they want to provide an outstanding service. The focus should always be on customer service excellence, which is a win-win for the business, the individual customer and the service delivery team. This leads to higher levels of customer satisfaction and an improved customer experience at every touchpoint.

Customer experience (CX) for business consumers has become a key business differentiator during the COVID-19 pandemic, but the opposite is also true. With technology taking many businesses direct to the consumer, where consequences of service disruptions used to be contained and only visible internally within the business, now any poor service or service unavailability is immediately noticeable. This combined with today's digital and social platforms where users and customers share their views and experiences world-wide in an instant, means that these consequences can have significantly more impact on the business in terms of their brand reputation, customer satisfaction measures and ultimately their revenue streams. Because of real time 'customer critics' this places an even higher priority on ensuring service stability and availability.

Nevertheless, issues and events will occur. When incidents of poor service do happen an appropriate, timely and measured response (especially in a crisis) is essential. This requires a good understanding of business impacts, effective controls to manage the situation, and strong communication and stakeholder management skills. All underpinned by pre-prepared continuity planning to minimise business impact and optimise operational and security resilience.



Lessons learnt from COVID-19

With COVID-19, organisations have been forced to adopt new service delivery models supported by robust operational management principles and processes. Service Management teams have required change agility, underpinned with strong controls, processes, tools and capabilities, as services have moved to a highly remote delivery model.

Furthermore, since change is inevitable, as the world recovers from the impacts of COVID-19, organisations must be ready to meet pent-up demand. For example, to support change backlogs to enable business growth or new regulatory/compliance updates such as Brexit, alongside increased consumer demand for products and services.

With this accelerated level of change, and recognising the instabilities of recent months, organisations will need to have confidence that their services are fully resilient. This will enable them to realise the benefits of urgently needed change without impact and disruption to existing services.

Moving forward it is important to recognise that COVID-19 has been a significant disruptor and organisations need to reframe their thinking for their service ecosystems. They need to determine how they will continue to operate, perform and grow effectively in this new service landscape.

Organisations should review how they performed during the pandemic, learn from their experiences and also evaluate their service provider capabilities. They should consider:

- How have existing service providers supported business operations and plans to date?
- How effective was the Service Management team in responding to the impacts of COVID-19?
- Was the Service Management team able to respond quickly to effectively reshape the service model to operate under the restrictions of lockdown?
- Did they deliver a secure, resilient and stable service?
- Did the service(s) they were contracted to supply meet the operational business demands during this period?
- Have they presented lessons learned and improvement opportunities to benefit the organisation in the future?

Lessons learnt from COVID-19

Additionally, organisations must look ahead to understand what they will need from any future service provision. They need to ask themselves:

- What are the future needs and demands for services across the organisation?
- How should these services be delivered in-house or outsourced to a specialist provider?
- How should they shape their future ways of working, not only as lockdowns continue to evolve, but also to leverage any effective new working practices realised through COVID-19?
- What impact does this have on the organisation's needs for technology, skills and capabilities, to enable it to deliver the organisation's current and future needs with agility and security?
- Can reliable and safe services which are in existence today adapt to changing organisational requirements?

Conclusions from these questions will allow organisations to drive change and improvement to their core operational services. This will enable them to be ready for the future, with change agility, whilst continuing to be resilient and secure.



More Information

Sopra Steria have over 40+ years' experience in delivering world class service management programmes across a range of public and private sector organisations. We have been commended by many of our clients for our responsiveness and agility throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The services we provide across IT, HR, Payroll, Cloud, Finance and Accounting and Systems Integration have supported our clients changing demands in an ever changing and uncertain world.

If you would like to find out more about the services we provide and evaluate how mature your organisations service management model is against leaders in your industry, please contact: pscomms@soprasteria.com and one of our Service Management experts will be in touch.

We look forward to working with you.



The world is how we shape it

sopra  steria