

ITSM Best Practices Should Not Require a Consultant Every Time

Pre-configured ITSM workflows change the economics of going live. Incident, problem, change, and service catalog built before day one.



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The average enterprise ITSM implementation takes between six and eighteen months.^[2] In that time, the implementation team documents current-state processes, designs future-state workflows, configures the platform, tests with users, trains the organization, and eventually goes live. At which point the platform is handed back to the IT team to operate on their own.

Most of that time is not spent on things unique to the organization. It is spent rebuilding the same incident management workflow, the same change advisory board process, the same service catalog structure that hundreds of organizations have already built, documented, and proven.

That is the implementation problem. Not that it is hard. That it starts from scratch every time.

What best practices actually mean

ITIL exists precisely because IT service management has common patterns.^[1] Incidents need to be triaged, classified, assigned, escalated, and resolved. Changes need to be assessed for risk, approved, implemented, and verified. Problems need to be linked to their underlying incidents and tracked through root cause analysis.

These are not unique organizational requirements. They are structured processes with well-understood designs. The configuration decisions that consume most of a traditional implementation have been answered before. Many times. By many organizations that look a lot like yours.

What Pre-Configured Means

Pre-configured ITSM workflows are production-ready process designs based on ITIL best practices, adapted to the organization during onboarding rather than designed from scratch. The Onboard Drive is an adaptation exercise, not a design exercise. The difference is weeks versus months.

The economics of starting from scratch

When an implementation starts from scratch, every decision takes time. What should the incident priority matrix look like? How many assignment groups do you need? What fields are required on the change request form?

Each of these questions has a well-established answer. But in a traditional implementation, they are treated as open questions, generating workshops, stakeholder reviews, documentation cycles, and revisions. The clock runs while the organization debates process design that has already been refined over decades of ITIL practice.

- **55 days** Average ClickUp onboarding time before L5 applied Drive discipline and pre-built patterns.
- **7 days** Average onboarding time after. Same platform. Different starting point.

- **1 Drive** One use case per Drive. Done is defined before it begins. No open-ended scope.

What this looks like in practice: the LifeStance implementation

The LifeStance Health Group implementation shows what pre-configured ITSM looks like in a real mid-market environment. LifeStance had 175 IT agents plus 50 to 60 across HR, compliance, safety, and legal. Their incumbent platform, ManageEngine, was limited to basic ticket tracking with no AI, no automation, and no proactive reporting.

The implementation plan L5 designed had a defined output for each month before the first line of configuration was written.

- **Month 1 (Onboard)**

Core ITSM live. Incident management, service request catalog, and knowledge base deployed. ManageEngine parity achieved. Workday, Teams, Jira, and Entra ID integrated. Clinical Apps and Compliance workflows active.

- **Month 2 (Operate begins)**

Major incident management, change management workflows, problem management, ITAM, and SLA framework deployed. AI chatbot trained on Month 1 ticket data. Advanced reporting dashboards live.

- **Month 3 onwards**

Continuous AI agent tuning, new agent deployment, knowledge base optimization, weekly Drive execution. Go-live is the starting line, not the finish line.

"We have a pre-configured package for you out of the box for ITSM. Incident, problem, change, release, configuration. It is all built out. That comes as part of our service offering when you buy the L5 Zendesk offering."

Ron Mechling, CRO, L5

Adapt, not design

The right framing for ITSM implementation is adaptation, not design. An organization's incident management process does not need to be invented. It needs to be adapted to the team's language, the organization's escalation structure, the tools already in place, and the edge cases that are genuinely unique to the environment.

That adaptation takes a week, not six months. The workflow design is already done. The configuration patterns are already tested. What remains is the last mile: naming things correctly, wiring the right integrations, training the team, and confirming the outputs match what the organization actually needs.

Go-live is the starting line

The most important reframe in the pre-configured approach is what go-live means. In the traditional model, go-live is the deliverable. The implementation team has done its job. The platform is handed back.

In the L5 model, go-live is the beginning of Operate. The Drive that delivered the first use case is immediately followed by the next Drive. The AI agents deployed at go-live are tuned in week two based on real ticket data. The knowledge base is updated in week three based on deflection results. The system does not coast on its launch configuration. It compounds.^[3]

Why consultants keep rebuilding the same thing

The traditional implementation model is not designed around the client's time. It is designed around the consulting model. Discovery workshops, requirements documentation, design reviews, and configuration cycles are all billable. Starting from a pre-configured baseline reduces billable hours. That is a direct conflict of interest between the implementation partner's revenue model and the client's time to value.

L5's model is the opposite. The faster the first use case is live, the faster the client moves to the Operate subscription. Speed to production is in L5's interest because it is in yours.

One contract. One partner.

L5's smart license bundle covers the Zendesk platform and the operating model together. No separate implementation contract that ends at go-live. A Drive every week, with a new capability or improvement as the output.

Sources

1. Axelos. *ITIL 4 Foundation*. TSO, 2019. ITIL v4 defines 34 management practices across four dimensions.
2. Forrester Research. "Total Economic Impact" studies on enterprise ITSM platforms consistently show 6-18 month implementation timelines.
3. L5. *Modern ITSM for Mid-Market Organizations* (White Paper). 2026.