

**What is Availability Management?**

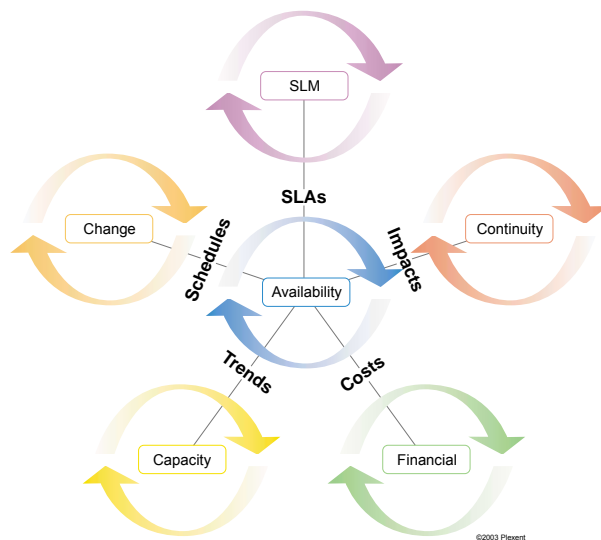
ITIL defines Availability Management as:

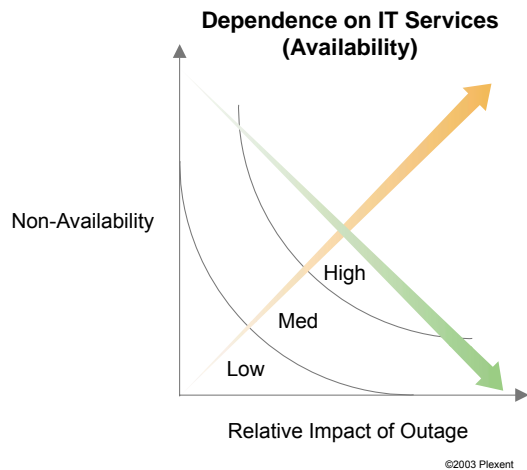
*[Optimizing] the capability of the IT Infrastructure, services and supporting organisation to deliver a cost effective and sustained level of [functionality] that enables the business to satisfy its business objectives.*

While drawing this Discipline with broad strokes, the definition fails to convey its true essence: Availability Management is all about measurement, reporting and tuning. Measurement is important because you cannot manage what cannot be measured. Reporting is important because it drives behavior. From this perspective, Availability Management is vital to the success of IT Service Management because of its responsibility for metrics development and results presentation. If focused on the wrong indicators, availability can appear high while user satisfaction is in fact, low. Similarly, reporting based on factors that do not contribute to the success of Vital Business Functions (VBF) can skew perceptions about the effectiveness of Availability Management and several other Disciplines, as depicted below.

Often times the processes that comprise the various Disciplines are shown in linear arrangement to highlight their interaction as part of a serial or repetitive process. The diagram above, however, shows the unique bidirectional nature of Availability Management's interaction with five other Disciplines; examples appear between the pairs. Selecting an obvious example, costs, we see the bidirectional relationship between Availability and Financial Management. Availability Management provides cost data to Financial Management on the system uptime required to achieve a redundant solution to support VBFs; Financial Management returns the cost of staff and tools to monitor the proposed infrastructure changes. A less obvious example is the interplay between Availability and Change Management with regard to scheduled downtime. Availability Management provides the service and maintenance requirements necessary to achieve Service Level Agreement (SLA) targets for uptime; Change Management returns schedules for downtime to satisfy the requirements. Of course downtime impacts availability which must be tolerated or availability will ultimately suffer due to system failure for lack of maintenance.

This "pay me now or pay me more, later" aspect to Availability Management is an interesting phenomenon and worth exploring. While each Discipline has a cost associated with its implementation, the cost of not implementing is generally obscured and indirect. This is not the case with Availability Management, however, as the direct costs of non-availability speak louder, and are often a better measure of effectiveness, than availability. To clarify, consider the diagram on the following page.





The reliance of business on IT Services and hence the relative importance of availability, has steadily increased over time. Consider how the expanding pervasiveness of the Internet has changed business over the last decade. Not only has the speed of business quickened as the barriers of time and space evaporated in a 24 hour, global marketplace, but new concepts such as ecommerce have placed greater importance on IT services as a business enabler. As companies progressed through the bands on the chart above from areas of low to high reliance on technology there has been good news and bad. The good news (depicted by the green line) is that improvements in reliability and resilience have steadily reduced the amount of IT non-availability. The bad news (depicted in red) is that while the total time for outages may have been reduced, our dependence on IT services has increased to such a high degree that even a small amount of non-availability can have a huge impact on the bottom line.

So, beyond the issues associated with deciding not to implement any particular Discipline, there is a strong downside for failure to properly implement Availability Management. Fortunately, Plexent understands the nuances surrounding successful implementation of Availability Management and can show you how to overcome poorly defined service levels, system instability, and unclear cost justifications. Incidents will occur and Plexent can help you prepare.

### The Plexent Approach

itDNA builds on the Availability Management concepts outlined in the ITIL standard and, by leveraging our framework, Plexent can apply ITIL to your organization. If you are just getting

started with Availability Management you may need help laying the ground work by defining terms that both business and IT can agree on, along with meaningful metrics and reporting. If you already have experience with this Discipline, maybe you would like to leverage the bidirectional interaction with other IT Service Management functions by adopting a holistic approach from the user and business perspectives. Whatever your Availability Management maturity, Plexent can take you to the next level by bringing all of the pieces together.

Much more than just a framework, itDNA brings real-world tools and techniques to bear on your concerns. Backed up by itDNA's maturity models and rich, intellectual property knowledge base, Plexent's project management combines with proven policies and procedures to provide standardized services within the following Availability Management Elements:

- Performance Tuning
- Outage Analysis
- Fault Tree Analysis

Understanding that availability is not primarily a technical issue is the first step to leveraging the many tools associated with this Discipline. At that point applying Component Failure Impact Analysis, Risk Analysis, and the Statistical Probability calculations necessary to determine serial and parallel reliability can yield immediate results. Other benefits of a mature Availability Management program include:

- Increased user satisfaction and productivity
- Improved service quality
- Less need for problem support
- Maintenance and down time reduced
- More detailed information available for service level negotiations

Business today is more complex than it was just a decade ago. Absolute dependence on reliable, resilient, quality IT services has become the norm rather than the exception. Within ITIL, Availability Management provides the key to ensuring you have what you need, when you need it, for as long as you need it. Implementation and correct application of the various tools and techniques, however, can be a daunting task. To get you started Plexent provides assessment services. Leveraging the intelligence in our itDNA, we can help you evaluate where you are today, where you would like to take your organization, and the surest path to get there.

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