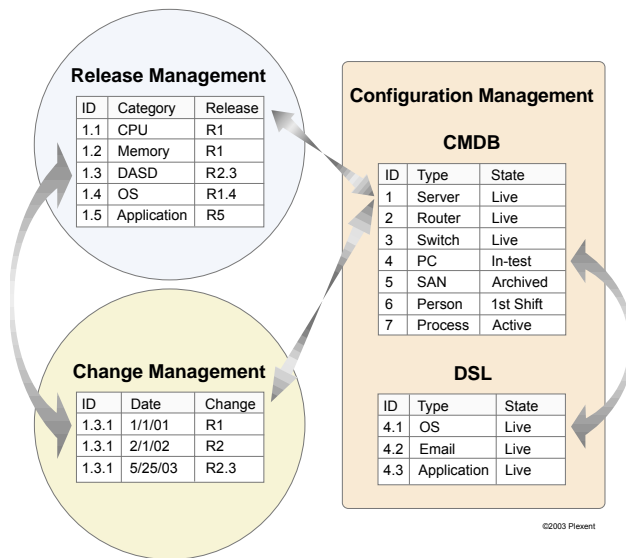


**What is Release Management?**

ITIL defines Release Management as:

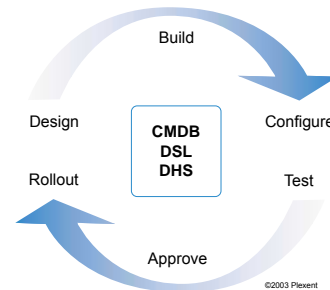
*... the planning, design, build, configuration and testing of hardware and software to create a set of Release components for a live environment... [and to protect]... the live environment and its services through the use of formal procedures and checks.*

While this definition provides some insight to the elements that comprise Release Management, it fails to capture its true value: Release Management improves Quality. Consider, for example, how an organization would fare without it. Given sufficiently robust Change and Configuration Management programs they could limp along with some level of inefficiency, dragging reduced productivity and profits behind them. Or they could recognize the important linkages to Change and Configuration Management (see diagram below) and leverage the quality improvements achievable with Release Management to propel their organization to a higher level of maturity.



Having set the stage, we can better evaluate some of the various Release Management aspects illustrated in the diagram below, that contribute to quality. First, there is the firm requirement for accurate and detailed record keeping represented by

placement of the Configuration Management Database (CMDB), Definitive Software Library (DSL), and Definitive Hardware Store (DHS) in the very center of the process. Quality is improved during Design because information for Configuration Items (CIs) within the environment can be queried to determine which CIs may be impacted by the anticipated release. Later, after Rollout, this information can be refreshed so that current data is always available for Release Management processes.



Second, although Test is represented as a single item, there is significant activity in this aspect that strongly influences not only the success or failure of the release, but the overall quality of the end result. Included are testing protocols designed for specific purposes such as: Performance, Security, Maintainability, Supportability, Reliability, Availability, and Functionality, as well as Integration and final user Acceptance testing. Finally, the Rollout can contribute to quality by accurately reflecting the guidance provided in the documented Release Policy and being executed within the organization's project management framework.

To properly implement Release Management requires planning and a thorough understanding of the CIs in your environment. If policy is not in place to guide the process then it should be created during the initial planning phase. Procedures for the

Development, Test, and Production environments as well as required sections in the Release Plan, such as Distribution and Installation should be addressed. Further, a clear understanding of what distinguishes major, minor, and emergency releases will assist in planning, as will general and release-specific back-out procedures. Back-out procedures are especially critical to avoid the consequences of a failed or partial release due to hardware, software, or schedule problems. To avoid the painful trial and error approach to Release Management, Plexent offers itDNA.

### The Plexent Approach

itDNA builds on the Release 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 Release Management you may need help with documenting the CIs in your environment. If you are already realizing the benefits of an integrated Release-Change-Configuration Management system you may need help understanding how best to implement a rollout in your complex, multi-tiered environment. Have you tested for peaceful coexistence? Should you use a dormant or phased release? What about staging servers? Whatever your Release 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 Release Management Elements:

- Technology Refresh
- Desktop Services
- Server Services
- Network Services
- Database Services
- Messaging Services

In addition to the quality improvements identified for planning, testing, and implementing new releases, other benefits of a mature Release Management program include:

- Increased productivity with less downtime
- Stable Production, Test, and Development environments
- Rollouts completed on time
- Infrequent need for back-outs
- Reduced risk of unauthorized, unlicensed, or infected CIs

Release Management allows you to keep pace with changing business needs by providing the ability to upgrade your hardware, software, and documentation while ensuring the integrity of your IT environment. Instituting Release Management also increases the effectiveness of other key Disciplines, such as Configuration and Change Management, making it possible to substantially improve the overall quality of services throughout your organization. To help get you started, Plexent provides assessment services. Leveraging the intelligence in our itDNA, we can evaluate where you are today, determine where you would like to go, and set you on the surest path to get there.

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