ITSM CAREER PATHS

Today, IT is one of the most lucrative career fields in the world. While other industries may see declines in positions and employment opportunities, almost anything in the IT sector shows not only steady job growth, but well-above-average compensation and salaries for employees.

Depending on your experience and expertise, you may be qualified for a position in IT service management. There are a wide variety of ITSM career paths, with opportunities continuing to increase and evolve each year. In this article, we're sharing some of the most common ITSM career paths, including specific jobs, what they entail, necessary skills, and additional resources.

Common ITSM Careers

ITSM Career Paths
Common careers in IT service management

Service Strategy

- Service Level Manager
- IT Architect
- Security Architect
- Cyber Resilience Consultant

Service Transition

- Release Manager
- Change Manager
- Configuration Manager

Service Operation

- Service Desk Technician
- Security Analyst
- Incident Manager
- IT Operations Manager

If you know what you're looking for, jump right into these career paths and positions:

Service Strategy & Design
Service Level Manager
IT Architect
Security Architect
Cyber Resilience Consultant
Service Transition
Release Manager
Change Manager
Configurations Manager
Service Operation
Service Desk Technician/Agent
Security Analyst
Incident Manager
IT Operations Manager
Additional resources

Service Strategy & Design

The ITSM field of service strategy and design determines the IT services your company delivers.

Roles in this category focus on creating value and defining services, assets, and ROI for your products.

Service Level Manager

Service Level Managers are effective negotiators who are responsible for connecting service levels and key performance indicators (KPIs). You'll document these in a set of service level agreements (SLAs) and contracts to ensure various IT support teams understand the capabilities they need to deliver. You'll also be responsible for monitoring and analyzing performance, managing contracts, and contributing to plans to improve services.

Common tasks & responsibilities

- Maintain an up-to-date catalogue of IT services
- Negotiate SLAs with business customers and OLAs with IT support teams
- Monitor and report performance against agreed targets and KPIs
- Carry out service reviews to review performance

Potential next steps
Business Relationship Manager, Supplier Relationship Manager, IT Service Operations Manager

Skills and abilities
The skills and abilities required for a Service Level Manager will vary greatly depending on the size and complexity of the IT organization and the maturity of its service level management process. In general, service level managers need to be effective communicators, negotiators, team players, and analytical thinkers. Some necessary skills for this position include:

- Service level management
- Relationship management
- Negotiation
- Contract management
- Communication and knowledge sharing
- Cyber resilience management

IT Architect

The IT Architect title encompasses a breadth of jobs that vary significantly in both scope and responsibilities. Overall, the Architect team develops, maintains, and governs information and communication technology solutions across the organization. IT Architects usually specialize in a specific technology and utilize this expertise to evaluate new solutions or technologies and lead the move towards it.

Common tasks & responsibilities

- Assess business and technical needs
- Conduct research and provide advice regarding selection and implementation of IT products
- Lead design of architecting and integrating new and upgraded ICT solutions
- Provide technical leadership to designers and developers

Potential next steps
IT Project Manager, IT Program Manager, Chief Technology Officer, Business Analyst

Skills and abilities

IT Architects must be experts in a specialized technology area. IT Architects are skilled at planning and communicating, as you'll often work in, lead teams, and attend meetings with key decision makers and stakeholders. Some necessary skills for this position include:

- Architecture design
- Component integration
- Technology trend monitoring
- Leadership and teamwork
- Communication and knowledge sharing
- Planning and organization
- Cyber resilience management

Security Architect

IT Security Architects are technical specialists responsible for designing cyber resilience solutions and are experts in security models, software, tools, and standards. You'll design, build, and oversee the implementation of network and computer security for an organization and ensure the company complies with best practices, governance, and regulatory mandates. You'll have to learn constantly to stay ahead of industry security trends and developments.

Common tasks & responsibilities

- Create and maintain the enterprise security architecture design
- Identify cyber risks specific to information systems
- Design and embed cyber resilience solutions to mitigate cyber risks
- Develop system capability for restoration after a catastrophic failure event
- Defines initiatives within the cyber resilience strategic roadmap
- Monitor technology and external developments

Potential next steps
Chief Information Security Officer

Skills and abilities
It is required that IT security architects have a strong technical background in systems and network security, and are comfortable being leaders. You must be willing and able to stay informed of security trends and understand all necessary government regulations in order to maintain compliance. Some necessary skills for this position include:

- Cyber resilience strategy
- Architecture design
- Application of best practice processes, methods, and tools
- Continuity management
- Leadership and teamwork
- Innovation and business improvement
- Communication and knowledge sharing
- Planning and organization

Cyber Resilience Consultant

Cyber resilience consultants typically have a variety of roles relating to cyber resilience and information security, sometimes working on strategy and framework development while also conducting cyber risk assessments to identify key areas of potential compromise. Collaborating with IT teams to mitigate those specific risks, you must be able to provide advice on which activities to prioritize in how to best address any risks for the business.

Common tasks & responsibilities

- Investigate and manage security incidents
- Perform or lead analysis of cyber risks
- Work with asset owners to assess risk impact
- Contribute to strategy and policy development
- Present options for mitigating cyber risks
- Support development of risk management documentation
- Promote cyber resilience learning and awareness

Potential next steps
Cyber Resilience Manager, IT Security Architect, Chief Information Security Officer (CISO)

Skills and abilities
Consultants need excellent communication and collaboration skills as you'll work closely with teams and clients. You'll also need strong analytical and problem-solving skills, continually training in order to stay up to date in a rapidly evolving security field. Some necessary skills for this position include:

- Information risk management
- Cyber resilience strategy and management
- Incident management
- Staff awareness and development
- Technology trend monitoring
- Communication and knowledge sharing
- Planning and organization

Service Transition

In ITSM, service transition refers to the implementing of new or updated changes, fixing or innovating your current services for an improved service. Sub-areas of service transition include release management, change management, and overall project and product management.

Release Manager

Release Managers specialize in planning and managing the release of new or changed software and hardware into test and live environments. You'll bring together the multiple project deliverables that are typically required for the release to occur and ensure that these work together in an integrated package. Release Managers own and plan the full release lifecycle, from defining the release plan through to testing and coordinating release activities.

Common tasks & responsibilities

- Schedule and communicate release details and timelines to the business after ensuring absence of conflicts
- Manage the process and tools used for software build
- Implement new versions in the live environment
- Record details of the configuration in the [configuration management database (CMDB)](#)
- Carry out back-out plans to remove the new version if necessary.

Potential next steps
IT Project Manager, IT Change Manager, IT Configuration Manager

Skills and abilities
A Release Manager needs to be able to interface and communicate effectively with test managers, development managers, and IT managers on a daily basis, as well as with those in higher positions. Along with a technical background, release managers need some project management experience in order to coordinate activities across teams. Some necessary skills for this position include:

- Release management
- IT change management
- Application of best practice processes, tools, and models
- Planning and organization
- Attention to detail
- Communication and knowledge sharing
- Leadership and teamwork

Change Manager

[Changes in the IT environment](#) are constant and can be highly disruptive if poorly managed. IT Change Managers are responsible for protecting the live environment by ensuring effective control and scheduling of software and hardware modifications. You'll also ensure all service levels and targets are met during change, and that any problems that might occur are resolved in a timely manner to minimize disruption.

Common tasks & responsibilities

- Log, schedule, and track changes to the IT environment
- Liaise with stakeholders to coordinate change
- Review change and maintain change log
- Establish and enhance change procedures

Potential next steps
Release Manager, IT Configuration Manager

Skills and abilities
Change managers can be expected to have strong organizational and planning skills along with strong attention to detail. Some necessary skills for this position include:

- Change management
- Best practice processes, tools, and methods
- Planning and organization
- Attention to detail
- Communication and knowledge sharing

- Leadership and teamwork

Configuration Manager

The IT Configuration Manager is responsible for the identification of all IT infrastructure (software, hardware, virtual machines, cloud services and mobile services) within the organization. You'll record the relationships between individual configuration items and business processes in order to provide actionable and useful information to the IT teams.

Common tasks & responsibilities

- Devise and implement processes and procedures for tracking assets (e.g. hardware, software, licenses, warranties, etc.)
- Populate and manage the CMDB (check-in, check-out, tagging, etc.)
- Track each asset in order to maintain warranty information, refresh, and renewal dates
- Identify savings opportunities for renewals and software licensing

Potential next steps
Release Manager, IT Change Manager

Skills and abilities
IT Configuration Managers must have great attention to detail as configuration items (CIs) are tracked through their full lifecycle, from requisition through to retirement. You'll also need a strong understanding of configuration concepts, organizational skills, and good communication. Some necessary skills for this position include:

- Configuration management
- Information and knowledge management
- Application of best practice processes, tools, and methods
- Planning and organization
- Attention to detail
- Communication and knowledge sharing
- Leadership and teamwork

Service Operation

ITSM professionals in service operation work to ensure the IT services you deliver work as intended, ensuring the right value for customers. Subtopics include operation management, event and incident management, and problem management and response.

Service Desk Technician/Agent

The Service Desk Technician, sometimes known as a Service Desk Agent, provides [technical support](#) to end-users who need assistance with computer software or hardware. A majority of the work is likely to be performed over the phone or by email, which makes clear and concise communication skills all the more necessary. This could be a good entry-level position for those with little IT experience or qualifications.

Common tasks & responsibilities

- Identify and diagnose issues and problems
- Advise users on action to take
- Categorize and record reported queries
- Escalate unresolved problems

Potential next steps

Service Desk Supervisor/Manager, Project Coordinator, Application Support Analyst

Skills and abilities

Service Desk Technicians must have excellent problem-solving and communication skills, as most of your work will be completed remotely. You must also be able to explain technical concepts or steps in easy-to-understand ways. Service desk techs must have some technical knowledge of the hardware, software, and networking systems the company supports. Some necessary skills for this position include:

- User support
- Incident management
- Service delivery
- Communication and knowledge sharing
- Attention to detail

Security Analyst

Security Analysts are crucial in preventing unauthorized access or deliberate cyber-attacks on both networks and information systems. You'll monitor network traffic and servers using diagnostics and automated software, looking for signs of any suspicious activity or intrusions. Security Analysts may also perform audits on your company's networks in order to better locate vulnerabilities and develop solutions.

Common tasks & responsibilities

- Monitor networks and information systems for signs of intrusion
- Perform security audits, [risk assessments](#), and analysis
- Investigate attempted breaches of security
- Provide technical validation of security tools
- Input to cyber resilience awareness learning and security training/briefings
- Contribute to definition of cyber resilience policies and standards

Potential next steps

Cyber Resilience Manager, Cyber Resilience Consultant, IT Security Architect, Cyber Resilience Auditor

Skills and abilities

As information security is a knowledge-intensive field, Security Analysts must stay abreast of the latest trends and developments, threats, and new solutions in this quickly evolving landscape. Some necessary skills for this position include:

- Cyber resilience management
- Information analysis
- Information risk management
- Communication and knowledge sharing

- Staff awareness and development

Incident Manager

Incident Managers establish the policies and systems of a high-quality incident management process, ensuring these are adopted and adhered to across the organization. You'll also be responsible for monitoring and reporting trends in any incidents or issues, implementing ITSM best practices, and responding to significant incidents swiftly.

Common tasks & responsibilities

- Coordinate activities to respond to major incidents and serve as an escalation point
- Direct support resources based on prioritization
- Escalate lack of progress with incidents

Skills and abilities

Incident Managers are proactive individuals with excellent communication skills and the ability to build relationships at all IT levels. Some necessary skills for this position include:

- Service management policy and procedure design
- Incident management
- Information analysis
- Process improvement
- Relationship management
- Communication and knowledge sharing
- Cyber resilience management

IT Operations Manager

The IT Operations Manager is responsible for effectively delivering live service operations that meet both the expectations and criteria agreed upon with customers. ITOps Managers often lead the service desk teams and might monitor and analyze service provision, plan processes for incident management, and manage IT change.

Common tasks & responsibilities

- Implementation and management of IT services using the principles and methods associated with industry best practices (e.g., ITIL®)
- Manage the provision of the service desk and problem resolution
- Monitoring and analysis of performance, problem trends and client feedback reports
- Build a network of experts
- Develop SLA templates and negotiate complex SLAs
- Track problems and escalate issues for user of IT infrastructure services
- Promote a culture that emphasizes service excellence and recommend continual improvement in service management strategy

Potential next steps
Business Relationship Manager, Chief Information Officer

Skills and Abilities
Service Operations Managers must have experience with supported technology and strong

leadership skills. You'll commit to delivering excellent customer service, and foster that culture within your team. Some necessary skills for this position include:

- Service delivery
- User support
- Problem management
- Best practice processes, tools, and methods
- Communication and knowledge sharing
- Leadership and teamwork
- Staff awareness and development
- Financial management and budgeting
- Cyber resilience management

Careers in ITSM

Choosing a role in the rapidly evolving IT service management field will provide a wide variety of career paths and positions, each one suitable to your goals and abilities. No matter which ITSM career you may consider, you will continue to see growth as IT demands change and increase.

Additional resources

For more information on ITSM professional opportunities and general IT careers, see these BMC Blogs:

- ITSM Certifications: A Beginner's Guide
- ITIL/ITSM Roles and Responsibilities

For IT careers in general, including Agile and DevOps, explore these articles:

- First 5 IT Roles in New Organizations
- Sysadmin: Role, Responsibilities, Job Description & Salary Trends
- What is a Technical Support Engineer? Explore Roles, Responsibilities & More
- Network Engineer vs Network Administrator: Roles, Responsibilities & Job Descriptions
- IT Infrastructure Manager Roles & Responsibilities
- Application Developer Roles and Responsibilities
- DevOps Job Titles, Roles & Responsibilities
- Agile Roles & Responsibilities