

The *Online* ITIL® Expert Program Case Study

From Foundation to ITIL Expert in 7 Months

One Program Member's Personal Experience



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Forward

This case study reflects the personal experiences of one of our Online ITIL Expert Program Members, Alvin Bedgood from the United States.

Alvin works as a Quality Manager within a very large US corporate organization and is responsible for training and development within his organization.

Alvin has kindly agreed to share ‘what worked for him’ and many personal insights into how he progressed from ITIL Foundation to ITIL Expert in just seven months – studying flexibly and leveraging the many benefits of the Online ITIL Expert Program from ITSM Zone.

All of the text that follows was written and approved for release by Alvin himself and it has not been changed for this case study.

We wish to thank Alvin for taking the time to document his valuable insights and we hope that these will provide real benefit to both current and prospective ITIL Expert Program Members – or indeed to anyone who is deciding to take the journey to ITIL Expert!

If you are not a member of the Program right now, and you would like further information, please visit our [Online ITIL Expert Program](#) overview - or send me an email.

Wishing you service success!

Dave

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>> Click to Visit: [The Online ITIL Expert Program](#)



Introduction by Alvin Bedgood

Hello. My name is Al Bedgood and I decided to join the Online ITIL Expert Program – from ITSM Zone – when first announced in 2009.

This Case Study reflects my own experiences and my personal opinions. I ask that you forgive any grammatical or typographical errors - as this was written “off the cuff” in response to Robin’s initial inquiry.

When the original “100 ITIL Experts” program was announced in late 2009, I applied at once.

I decided that the Program offered by ITSM Zone was right for me because it afforded me the opportunity to study ITIL, work towards certification and obtain my certification, even while I was on the road or working at various customer facilities.

I chose the ITIL Lifecycle Stream in order to better serve my customers, to include my students, peers and employer.

I believe I needed this level of understanding (ITIL Expert) in order to successfully plan, organize and implement IT Service Management in concert with the strategic and tactical needs of my customers.

In this case study I start out by providing an overview of my own journey to ITIL Expert and then cover some points about ‘getting started’ - which I hope you’ll find useful.

Next, I’ll progress onto what I consider are the two critical areas: ‘effective online studying’ and ‘effective exam techniques’. These insights really helped me to leverage the program’s benefits and progress to ITIL Expert.

I hope that you will benefit from my experiences and that you will find these insights useful.

I wish each of you great success on your own journey to ITIL Expert - as well as your journey in life!

Allow me to start off with a summary of my journey...

My Journey to ITIL® Expert

I started the first of five ITIL Lifecycles Courses with the Service Operation course on 19 Feb 2010, progressing through the program as indicated in the table below. I finished my 5th Lifecycle course, Continual Service Improvement, on 17 Sep 2010.

I then started the final course, ‘Managing Across the Lifecycle’, on 18 Sep 2010, passing that Exam on 27 Sep 2010.

As you will note, I had an extended break (13 weeks) between the end of the Service Strategy course and my eventual passing of the exam on 10 Sep 2010. This break was due to my extensive travel schedule. I did use this time to my advantage by reading and re-reading the Core Volumes and the Key Element Guides.

My apparent “rush to finish” in September reflects my ability to take advantage of an opportunity offered by my employer in order to meet a new business requirement. Fortune favors the prepared!

Here’s a summary of my seven month journey: -

Course Name	Date Started	Date Completed	Certified On
Service Operation (SO)	19 Feb 2010	23 Feb 2010	01 Mar 2010
Service Transition (ST)	26 Mar 2010	02 Apr 2010	08 Apr 2010
Service Design (SD)	30 Apr 2010	11 May 2010	13 May 2010
Service Strategy (SS)	10 Jun 2010	14 Jun 2010	10 Sep 2010
Continual Service Improvement (CSI)	11 Sep 2010	17 Sep 2010	20 Sep 2010
Managing Across the Lifecycle (MALC)	18 Sep 2010	24 Sep 2010	27 Sep 2010

My journey to ITIL Expert was a very interesting - sometimes even enjoyable – trip!

Getting Started

*Before you begin your ITIL Expert journey, take some time to document what you are trying to achieve and **why** it is important to you.*

Write down the reason(s) you are taking the course, what you hope to accomplish and by when.

In short, write down your: **Vision, Mission, Strategic Goal, Tactical Goals and Objectives.**

When you find yourself lagging, or bogged down, you can refer to them to help keep you motivated.

I have listed mine below:

Vision: To become the first “pure” ITIL Expert in my company [vice the V2 to V3 Managers Bridge] - in order to provide insightful, effective and efficient IT service management leadership and support for my customers.

Mission: To obtain the ITIL Expert certification to provide appropriate support my customers.

Strategic Goal: To obtain the ITIL Expert certification not later than 15th November 2010.
[Achieved on 27 September 2010]

Tactical Goals: To complete each Lifecycle course and exam within 30 days of the course activation.

Objectives:

- (1) Approach each course as if it is an in residence course.
- (2) Complete each Lifecycle course within five days of actual course start.
- (3) Complete MALC within seven days of actual course start.
- (4) Take each course certification exam within three days of course completion.
- (5) Pass each exam on the first attempt.

The above all reflect my approach to obtaining the ITIL Expert Certification. You may find it useful to use these, or something similar, or maybe develop your own unique approach.

The journey to ITIL Expert is definitely not a race against time.

Remember, you will need to be able to *apply* what you learn in the real world. I wrote the above to help me keep on track. You must do that which works best for you.

As an instructor and ITIL trainer myself, I do have one more item to add to the list.

It is something I ask my students to do at the start of each class, especially our developers and engineers, for in my experience; they seem to have the hardest time: -

Check your "Personal Reality Hat at the Door"

This means: -

>> Keeping an open mind during the course and accept that the 'ITIL way' may be completely different from your past experiences.

>> Because each of us brings a set of experiences, capabilities, limitations and preconceived ideas with us as we journey through our personal and professional lives.

Checking your **"Personal Reality Hat at the Door"** is intended to remind you that you are here to learn and to expand your understanding of ITIL.

I tell my students - you are here to expand your knowledge, transform your thinking and ultimately, your actions.

Disagreement with the definitions and the concepts based on your past experience, or the terms used in other frameworks, models and standards is counterproductive. It will limit your ability to do well.

Accept and embrace the ITIL Framework's definitions, concepts and terminology. Focus on the ITIL way during the course and the exam, then adapt and adopt what works for you and your customer in the realm of your own personal reality.

Effective Online Studying

These are the things that really worked for me - your results may vary: -

>> Set aside a time and a place to study - away from distractions

Set a specific time and place to study. Leave the electronic distractions behind: This includes the television, iPod, your social media, etc... focus on the task at hand. I did all my course work in the same place, but did my readings, the core volumes, etc... while traveling. You may find it useful to do your exercise assignments in a different location from your online study area. Sometimes a change of view affords new insights - as well as new vistas.

>> Select a study style that works for you

Complete one online Study Lesson and then read the associated Study Guide notes for that lesson; or, complete all of the Study Lessons for the course and then read all of the review notes. You may have to experiment a bit to find the approach that works best for you.

>> Understand your own learning style and methods

Do you learn best by reading, hearing or doing?

If it helps you: Watch the video tutorials and listen to the lessons more than once; read the Study Guide notes again, write your own notes, make some flash cards, draw mind maps and diagrams, etc... remember - study to your own strengths!

>> Think about when you are at your best

Do you do your best work in the morning, afternoon or evening?

Try to study during the time of day when you are at your best. For me that was in the afternoon and also the late evening/early morning hours.

>> Set GOALS for yourself (SMART ones of course) and stick to them

Set a date for the exam and plan your study time accordingly.

Personally, I “backwards planned” from my target certification date, set intermediate objective dates and allowed for some "management reserve time" as well - to account for unexpected interruptions (or unexpected results – such as failing an exam).

Remember, I had to accept a 13 week “break” and one exam failure on my journey.

While I was not happy at the time, neither challenge was fatal. In fact, the 13 weeks gave me the time I needed to read and reflect upon all the contents of the core ITIL volumes.

>> Complete all of the course exercises and quizzes - and read all of the materials

This will include; the syllabus, the study guides and the appendices in the ITIL Core Volumes. Reading the Core Volumes for comprehension (not simply skimming them) is well worth the effort.

A high level of personal investment during the course will prepare you for the exam, and most importantly, the expectations of your peers, customers and employer once certified.

>> Allow yourself time to think and reflect upon what you have learned

Before you move on - replay a section of the video tutorials (several times if necessary). Read and re-read the summary notes if necessary to ensure your understanding of the material.

The advantage of this learning method is your ability to, in effect “turn back time.” Take full advantage. Also take time to think about what you have learned, about what it means and about how you will use it.

>> Take a break when you need to

Stop. Get up. Stretch, go get something to eat or drink every two hours and/or at the end of each lesson or module.

Even if you are planning on spending the entire day studying, take a 10 - 15 minute break every two to three hours.

>> When you have completed a course - go do something fun!!

Your brain needs time to organize what you have studied. Before you attempt the practice exams go do something completely different (relax, catch a movie, take a walk...).

Personally, I watched a movie or a football game - this gave me time to allow my mind to work the concepts and the problems (a technique Einstein recommended, if memory serves).

>> When taking the sample exams, do them one at a time

Study the answers and understand the “WHY” of the best answers.

Read and understand all of the official Examiner’s Answer Rationales (provided as part of each course) especially for the ‘five point’ and ‘three point’ answers. Review the course materials to re-address any areas of weakness.

>> Don’t Panic!

If you do not meet a target date, or do not pass an exam on the first attempt, do not let it throw you off course. Stop. Re-group. Move on.

Take some time to analyze the situation and apply the appropriate corrective actions. Make the appropriate adjustments and then continue on to your goal.

For your interest, there was one exam that I did not pass on my first attempt. I had to take the Service Strategy exam more than once in order to pass. I was pressed for time due to my work schedule and tried to “rush” through that course. It did not work out and I failed the exam. It took me some time to review and understand the “WHY” of the exam results.

Once I knew and understood the error of my ways, it was simply a matter of revision and re-testing. The lessons learned from that experience helped me throughout the rest of the course.

>> Invest in your reference library and your future

With the Online ITIL Expert Program - you have online access to a wide range of materials you’ll need to pass the courses (video tutorials, PDF study guides, exercises, practice exam papers etc...). Use all of these resources to your best advantage.

I also recommend that you invest in purchasing the core ITIL Key Element Guides and the ITIL Core volumes – and then read them cover to cover - at least once [twice is better!] because it’s really important.

In my opinion, the hard copy versions of the books are easier to read and you can take them with you when you travel. You will also find these books to be very useful references once you embark on your new ITIL Expert career.

>> Study to Sustain - Study to Improve

If you are not taking an exam within 24 – 48 hours of completing a course, you should plan to set aside two hours of study/review time for each day between the end of the course and the exam date.

Two hours is typically the minimum number of study hours you need to sustain what you have learned in the course.

If you wish to improve your understanding of the material, you will need to study for three hours each night.

In all cases, try to complete the exam within five to seven days of your course completion.

Effective Web Based ITIL Exam Techniques

(as it relates to the Online ITIL Expert Program)

Here, I wanted to share some insights into what worked well in approaching and taking both the ITIL practice exams (that come with the Program) and the real, final ITIL exams.

>> Approach the Practice Exams as you would the real thing

As part of your Program materials, you are provided with several practice exam papers for each of the six courses.

Do not take the practice exams lightly. Use them as practice for the real thing.

Take the exam in a place different from your study area, keep the area clear of all study materials and time the exam as if it were real (have a friend/family member serve as exam proctor).

Watch your time. To ensure I had adequate time for the real exam I limited my time to nine minutes per question on the practice exam. [Studies indicate that the average person reads about 20% - 25% slower on a computer monitor, as compared to the printed page].

Once you complete the practice exam take a break before you review the results. Allow at least a day for review between each practice exam attempt.

>> Review the Practice Exam Answers

As part of your Program materials, you are also provided with the answers for each exam question and Examiner's "rationale" for those answers.

Review your answer for each question and compare your results with the exam score rationale for every question.

Take the time to research and understand the rationale for the recommended answer ratings (5 points, 3 points, 1 point...) and why you chose the answer you did.

Try to focus on understanding the best answers (5 points and 3 points) for each question.

Review your study materials, especially the areas you scored the lowest on, before you attempt the second practice exam.

Allow at least a full day between taking the first exam and your attempt at the second exam.

>> Schedule Your Final Exam

This seems obvious, but many people delay until the last minute.

Schedule your exam for as soon as practical after your course completion. In most cases the longer the delay between course completion and the exam, the more challenging the exam will become, as you will begin to forget what you have learned, unless you are prepared to implement a sustained study/review regime (see above).

Ideally, I believe the test should be taken within one to three days of course completion, -- five days at the most.

>> Prep for the Exam

Once you have confirmed your exam date and time, plan sufficient review/revision time to ensure you are both well prepared and well rested for the exam.

Allow two to three hours for study the night before the exam, and another two hours the day of the exam (assuming your exam is at 1000 or later in the day).

Remember, you cannot possibly “cram” for the exam effectively, so I recommend reviewing the practice exam answer rationale, mind map and the “Key Element Guide” (if purchased).

Get plenty of rest, visualize yourself scoring 100% on the exam.

As I tell my students, the Goal is 100% on the exam; the Objective is to pass the exam. Focus on the goal, so you may achieve the Objective.

>> At the Exam

Arrive early and prepared. Prepare yourself mentally and physically before you sit for the exam (go to the facilities, drink some water, shout [inside voice], do push-ups, etc... Get your game face on before you sit down.

Once you start the exam you have 90 minutes to complete it (unless English is not your first language – in which case you get extra time).

When you begin... read each Case Study carefully, take note if it will be used for more than one question (you may wish to check the notice at the top of the question to ensure you have the right Case Study for the question at hand).

- > Take note of key points, words and/or concepts in the Case Study.
- > When you read the scenarios and the questions - read them very carefully.
- > Break them down into smaller parts. Ask yourself, “What are they asking here?”
- > Make mental notes about the question BEFORE you read the four answers.
- > Read ALL of the options before you *eliminate* any of them from consideration.
- > If you find yourself “locking in” on a particular answer, then start at “D” and read back up to “A”.
- > Once you have read all of the possible choices - look for the one that BEST supports the Question being asked.

If you find yourself running out of time, skip that question and move on to the next one. You can easily review any questions you’ve skipped on the Online Exam Screen.

Key point - once you select an answer, be very sure before you change it!

Remember, unless you have a “Eureka” moment, you are probably more likely to change your answer from “right to wrong”, or even “wrong to wrong” - if you make a change.

>> After the Exam

With web based exams, you will know your exam results within a few seconds of clicking ‘Submit’ (If you are taking a paper based exam, it may take several weeks before you know your results. Use that interval to move forward.).

When you see your result on the screen and you have **PASSED** - celebrate, do a happy dance (at least mentally!) and revel in the moment – obviously without disturbing others.

Ensure you have turned in all of the materials to the Test Proctor/Monitor, obtain your score report print out and go celebrate!

If for some reason, you did not pass, take note of the results, and make some notes as to where you scored poorly (while the info is fresh in your mind) as this will help you review for your retest.

If you are going to have to take a re-test, then allow three to ten days between the exam attempts, depending upon how you scored on the initial exam. Allow yourself ample time to study and prepare for the re-test.

Do not allow yourself to be disheartened by the situation. As is oft noted, “Life Happens.” it is our reaction to adversity, our ability to adapt to, and overcome a setback, that mark us as true professionals.

When you do pass the exam...CELEBRATE! You have achieved an important objective in your professional career. Ensure you take some time to enjoy your accomplishment and once the celebration has ended, it is time to move on to the next objective on your journey to ITIL Expert.

While the journey to ITIL Expert is not an easy one, it is one well worth making. Once you have earned your ITIL Expert lapel pin, wear it with pride. You should be proud of your achievement and the capabilities you have developed on your journey to ITIL Expert.

Becoming an ITIL Expert is both an end and a beginning. It is the end of your “Quest for the Pin” and the beginning of your new role as an advocate and champion for effective IT Service Management.

In Summary...

I do hope that you found this information useful, even though it has come from the guy who finished second in becoming this Program's first ITIL Expert!! 😊

I believe that much, if not all, of what is contained in ITIL is useful in both our professional and personal lives. Use the components of ITIL to help you set a clear path towards success. Study ALL of the Program's materials and read the Core Volumes!

Think about how you would apply the concepts, as it is your ability to interpret and apply ITIL that will be tested on the Intermediate exams and in real life.

My best advice to you is to always remember the end game. You chose this path to certification for a reason. Keep that reason in mind as you progress through the program and you will be successful.

As to my advice and my opinions as expressed in this Case Study...Feel free to use what works for you and to discard the rest.

In effect, as with the ITIL Framework and much else in life: adapt, adopt and overcome!

I look forward to you achieving your ITIL Expert!

Sincerely,



Alvin J. Bedgood

EdS, CBM, PMP, ITIL Expert
ISO/IEC 20000 Consultant Manager
Certified in the Governance of Enterprise IT
Principal Quality Management Systems Auditor

>> Review [The Online ITIL Expert Program](#)

