

Cognitive Diagnosis: Find the Root

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RPR is a problem diagnosis method specifically designed to determine the root cause of IT problems.

Overview

RPR (Rapid Problem Resolution) deals with failures, incorrect output and performance issues, and its particular strengths are in the diagnosis of ongoing & recurring grey problems. The method comprises:

Core Process

Supporting Techniques

The Core Process defines a step-by-step approach to problem diagnosis and has three phases:

Discover

Gather & review existing information

Reach an agreed understanding

Investigate

Create & execute a diagnostic data capture plan

Analyse the results & iterate if necessary

Identify Root Cause

Fix

Translate diagnostic data

Determine & implement fix

Confirm Root Cause addressed

The Supporting Techniques detail how the objectives of the Core Process steps are achieved, and cite examples using tools and techniques that are available in every business.

Standards alignment

RPR has been fully aligned with ITIL v3 since RPR 2.01 was released in April 2008. RPR fits directly into the ITIL v3 Problem Management Process as a sub-process. Some organisations handle ongoing recurring problems within Incident Management, and RPR also fits into the ITIL v3 Incident Management Process as a sub-process.

COBIT also defines a Problem Management Process (DS10) with key activity of Perform root

cause analysis. RPR is a superset of this step in that it defines a process that covers all of the activities needed to perform Problem investigation & diagnosis, including Root Cause identification.

Limitations

RPR has some limitations and considerations, including:

RPR deals with a single symptom at a time

RPR is not a forensic technique and so historical data alone is rarely sufficient

The Investigate phase requires the user to experience the problem one more time

History

The method was originally developed by Advance7 in 1990 as the Rapid Problem Resolution Method, with the first fully documented version produced in 1995. Early versions included problem management guidance but this was removed over time as the method became more closely aligned to ITIL. RPR is now focused on Problem Diagnosis based on Root Cause Identification. Due to the highly practical nature of the Supporting Techniques and the ever changing IT landscape, Advance7 continues to develop RPR to keep it relevant to current IT environments.

Until November 2007 Advance7 made the RPR material available to its employees only, although a limited number of other IT professionals had been trained in the use of the method. In late 2007 the company announced its intention to make RPR training and material more widely available.

In March 2009 the TSO added a significant amount of RPR information to the ITIL Best Practice Live website within the areas dealing with Problem Management.