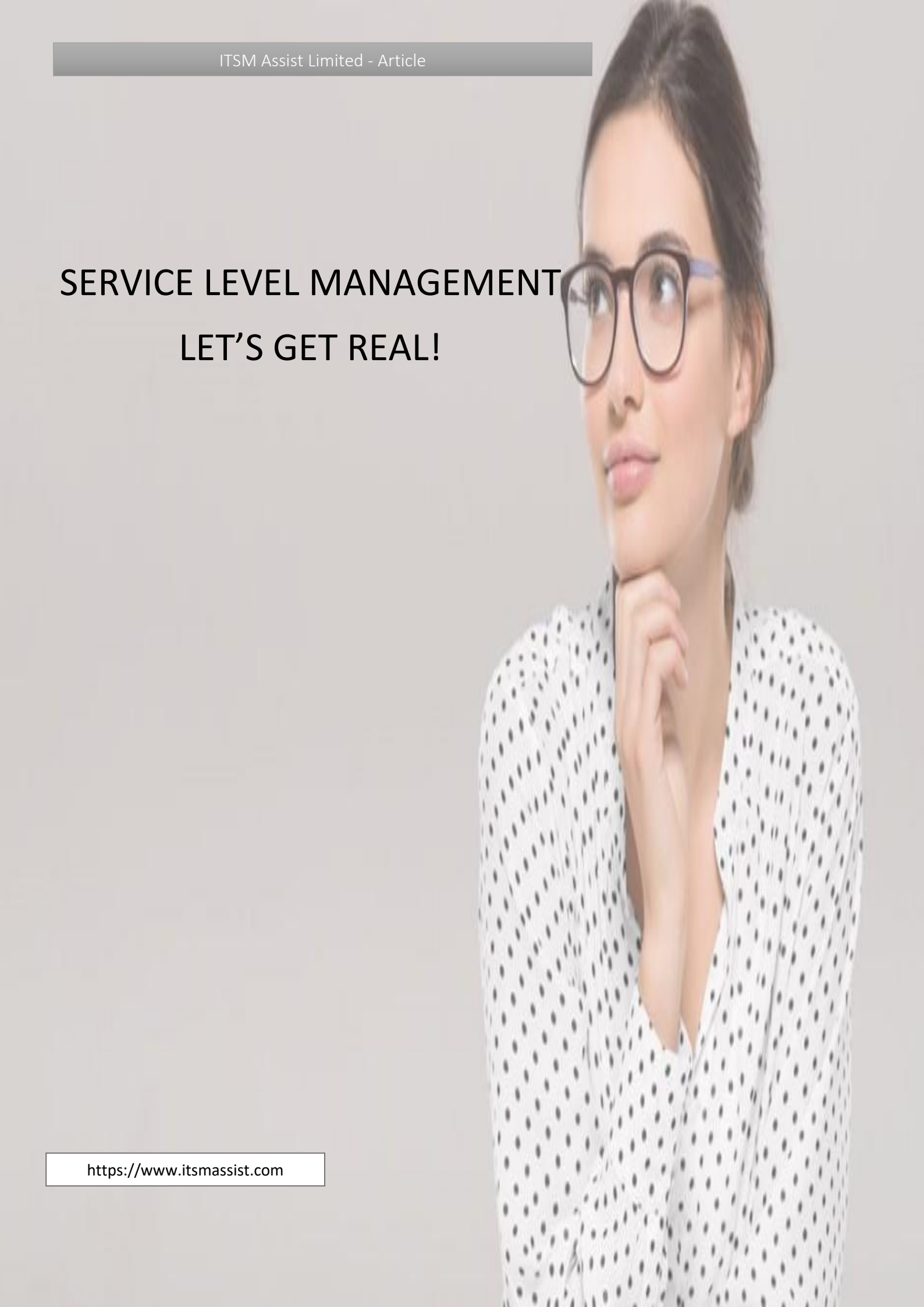
SERVICE LEVEL MANAGEMENT

LET'S GET REAL!



Service level management – let's get real!

I mentioned in a previous article of mine that in my opinion, whilst ITIL® 3 served a purpose and clearly motivated through setting a standard (or more accurately de-facto standard), ITIL 3 did not focus on the practical side, whereas ITIL 4 clearly does take a more practical approach.

Something that is practical is music to my ears., and do I like truthfulness – absolutely! And do I NOT like claims of achievement based on superficial, meaningless targets!

ITIL 4 service level management recognises the need to engage and listen to the requirements, issues, concerns, and daily needs of customers along with recognising the "watermelon SLA effect". This is something that I myself always ranted on about well before ITIL 4, i.e., when delivering ITIL 3 courses, so ITIL 4 has become my best friend.

Students who have attended my training courses will clearly recall that I often raise such points in class.

For example, service desk/incident management teams who claim that they have achieved their performance targets, e.g., demonstrating that 95% of incidents were closed within the agreed service target resolution time this month. However, when we take a closer look, we find that these related to the clock being wrong on the desktop, "well it must be tough at the top, how do we sleep at night?"

So, what about the 5% that we failed to close within the agreed target resolution time? To learn that the 5% we failed to close had significant impact on the business. What we have here is intrinsic (e.g., built-in) goals confused with contextual (relative) goals.

There is no surprise when the customer becomes extremely frustrated and understandably annoyed when they see the IT producing meaningless metrics, e.g., although a system availability of say 99% appears to be impressive, it is not impressive in the eyes of the customer if during the unavailability period the business were attempting to run key transactions. This being the case the customer is going to become extremely dissatisfied. I wonder how the IT provider would feel if during this unavailability period the finance department was trying to run payroll for the IT staff but were unable to - would IT still believe they have achieved their goal this month?

So, in conclusion, if the IT provider thinks they are doing a great job (e.g., the reports are all green) and their customers are dissatisfied with the service received when the IT provider doesn't notice this, this is known as the "watermelon" effect, e.g., its green on the outside and red inside. Metrics and measures should be a truthful reflection of the customer's actual experience and satisfaction of the service as a whole and not in part.

In fact, IT as a whole (i.e., the teams within the IT organisation) should operate on the basis of either succeeding together or failing together, not in parts!

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