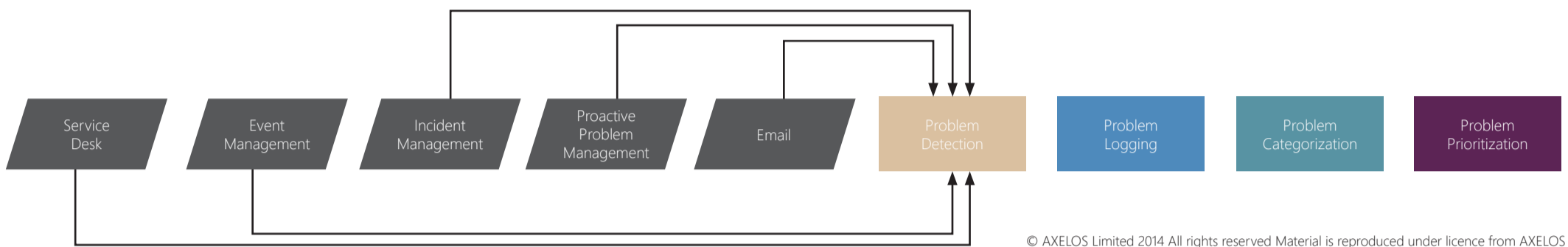# ITIL®

Problem Management Process *(Part 1 of 3)*
Problem Detection, Logging, Categorization, and Prioritization

The problem management process flow contains the following 10 steps. In many ways the problem management process flow is similar to the Incident process. Remember, during this time, service may have been restored (and thus the Incident is over) but Incidents may be recurring. The problem is detected, logged and categorized.

| Service Desk | Event Management | Incident Management | Proactive Problem Management | Email | Problem Detection | Problem Logging | Problem Categorization | Problem Prioritization |

The first step in the process is to identify that a problem exists. Problems may be raised either reactively (in reaction to incidents or proactively), in addition to the triggers identified earlier or as a result of alerts received (as part of event management). The event monitoring tools may identify a fault before it becomes apparent to users and may automatically raise an incident in response.

Step 1
Detecting Problems

Step 4
Prioritizing Problems

Step 2
Logging Problems

Step 3
Categorizing Problems

As with incidents, the priority of a problem should be based on the impact to the business of the incidents that it is causing and the urgency with which it needs to be resolved. The impact to the business must always be considered, so factors such as the cost of resolving the incident, and the time this is likely to take, will be relevant when assessing priority.
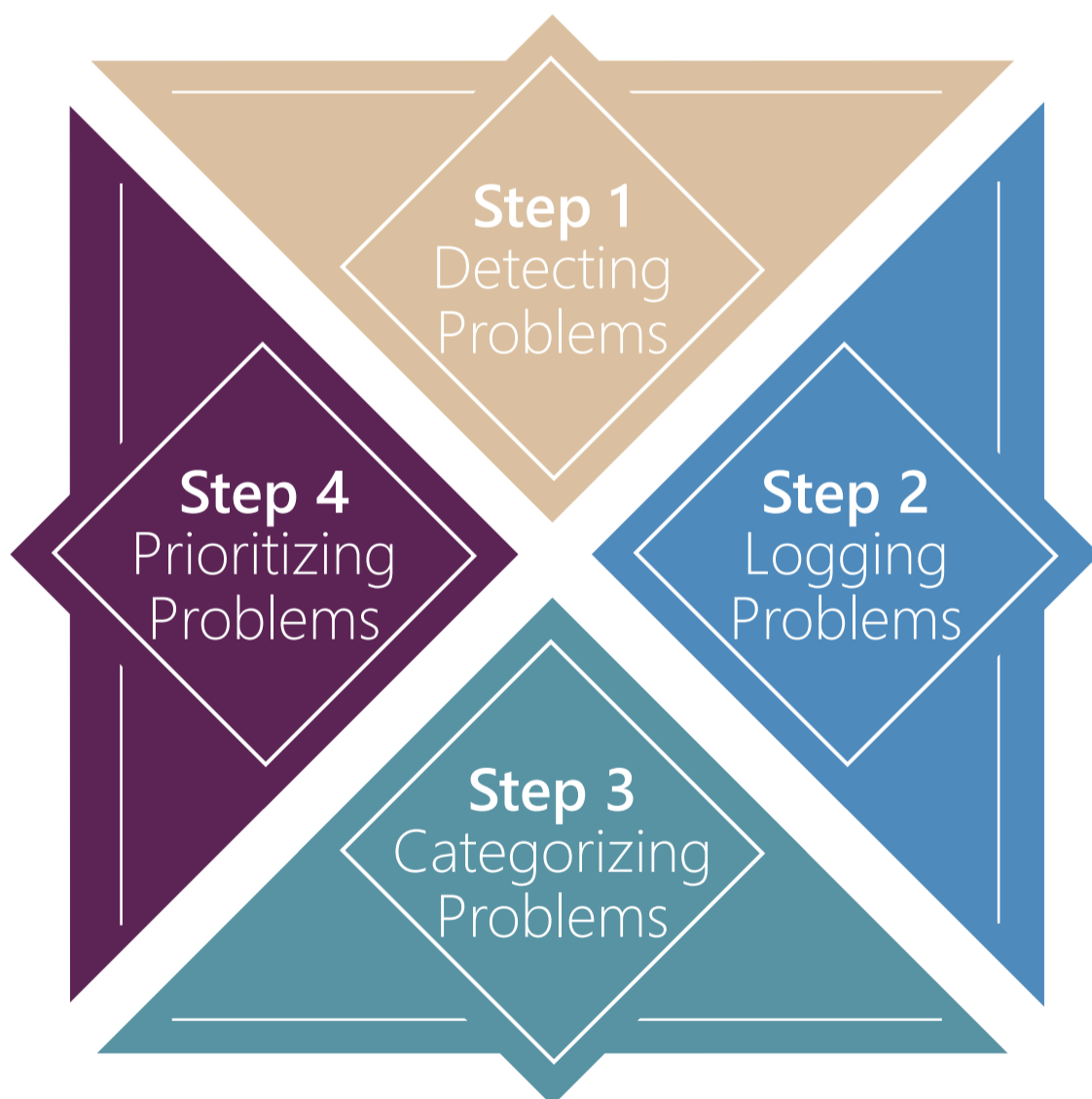
Having identified that a problem exists, a problem record should be logged. The problem record must contain all the relevant information, time-stamped to provide a complete picture. Wherever possible, the service management tool should be used to link problem records with the associated incident records. Incident details need to be copied into the problem record. Some tool sets enable the creation of a problem record from an incident, with automatic linking between the two. This can be very useful and saves a lot of time cutting and pasting details from one record to another. Remember though, the incident has not "become" a problem; the incident must continue to be managed to resolution whether the problem is resolved or not.

Typical details entered in a problem record and copied from the incident would include details of who reported it and when, details of the service and equipment used, and a description of the incident and actions taken. The incident record number, priority and category would also be required.

Problems should be categorized in the same way as incidents, and using the same categorization scheme will make linking incidents and related problems together much easier.

An essential prerequisite for identifying trends in incidents is the accurate and consistent categorization of incidents. If every service desk analyst logs the same fault differently, it will be impossible to discern a trend. The example of poor response could be logged as a user complaint, a network issue, an application issue, or even "miscellaneous" or "other". The problem manager should emphasize the importance of accurate categorization to the service desk. The use of incident models can be very helpful here because they standardize the way common incidents are recorded. Enforcing categorization on incident resolution, as mentioned earlier, will also help ensure incident categories are accurate.