An overview to Organizational Project Management maturity assessment

Organizations spend considerable effort and funds in upgrading the project management skills of their managers. The outcome of this gets demonstrated in how effectively projects get executed and the maturity of consistent and repeatable delivery.

A critical determinant of this maturity is top management commitment to excellence. We have noted that in quite a few organizations, huge sums are invested in skills upgradation, which do not show up in the delivery execution. We have also noted that few other organisations, the accent is more on team development and transforming the ways the teams work together (as in an agile environment), when the results are much better. The people, process and technology perspectives converge together to enable superior delivery excellence in such organizations.

We herein give a brief overview on organizational project management maturity and how this can be assessed based on the characteristics exhibited. There are few maturity models, including OPM3 from PMI, P3M3 from AXELOS and proprietary frameworks are available. However, we propose a holistic description of the project management maturity – which could be used along-with other proprietary models. These descriptions are based on our experience and all the characteristics noted herein may not align with what is noted in other frameworks.

Level	Typical characteristics of this level	Pointers on how to move further up in maturity level
1: 'Ad-hoc'	• There is an awareness that projects ought to be run differently from ongoing operations (also termed as 'Business as usual' (BAU)). However, no systematic effort is directed towards this objective • Little or no standardization of processes. No tracking systems exist for project performance monitoring – including its scope, schedule and cost. No documented processes for robust project management exist • Accountability and governance systems lacking or deficient	• Fundamental understanding by the top management that projects ought to be run differently than BAU. • An overall assessment of schedule overruns and losses on account of 'ad-hocism'. • Commitment to invest for improvements, along-with a conviction that 'things cannot stay as they are' in project management • Change in Organizational culture to recognize and nurture 'star performers' in project management

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2: 'Personalized'	• Execution of projects becomes 'person-dependent'. 'People' perspective becomes predominant here • Few early 'stars' emerge as project managers and project delivery success is contingent upon these managers executing the projects • Delivery excellence residing in 'pockets' – with very little coordination or sharing of good practices. Lack of delivery consistency and repeatability- though some understanding of the extent of wastages etc begins to appear	• Knowledge sharing by 'star performers' – so that others can also imbibe and deploy • Organizational commitment and investments for process rationalization • Key processes for scope/schedule/ cost/ risk / quality management getting standardized. • Use of consistent terminology for project related communications • Project governance mechanisms getting strengthened – with focus on business case viability assessment for the initiation of the projects and change control mechanisms • Roles and responsibilities getting clearly defined for the project management lifecycle • Stakeholder engagement and communications management systems getting institutionalized • Investments in tools, technology and management information/ progress reporting systems – especially in a distributed environment • Investments in building of skillsets, PM related trainings and understanding of best practices • Investment to setup or re-energize the project management office (PMO)

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3: 'Centralized'	• Centrally defined processes exist for project management at the organizational level. Individual projects can customize these processes to suit project specific requirements • Process perspective comes into forefront, along with 'people' dimension. • Guidances are available for robust initiation, planning, execution, control and closure of projects along with their governance mechanisms	• Systematic processes and techniques to capture and analyze the project performance data • Investments in predictive performance modeling systems to identify opportunities for improvements • Scaling up of investments to cover different locations and diverse types of projects to get comprehensive data-points for analysis • Commitment from senior management for independent assurance, assessment of continued viability of the projects and tighter integration with program management (including for dependency management) • Specific focus on Skillset enhancement, PM roles succession planning, PM lifecycle refinement • PMO becomes the process champion and repository for knowledge and data management

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4: 'Quantitative'	• Data-points are collected and analyzed on project performance parameters – including cost and schedule overruns, scope fulfillment and customer satisfaction • Project performance is predicated based on past performance metrics. Here tools and technology (for instance – Monte –Carlo Simulation) gain prominence • Projects are managed based on predictive performance models and institution of robust quality management systems	• Quality management focusing on assurance and predictive delivery based on causal analysis and actions • Leadership support and investments are oriented towards building excellence in delivery and its sustainment • Extended deployment of robust PM practices across different functions of the organization

Level	Typical characteristics of this level	Pointers on how to go further up in maturity level
5: 'Self-sustained'	• The PM processes get continuously refined to predict and facilitate consistent and repeatable delivery • People, process and technology facilitators blend together to ensure a 'fail-proof' project delivery • Self managed communities of knowledge management flourish, exchanging best practices	• Communities of practice to enable project performance improvement as a virtuous cycle • Focus on sustaining excellence and not slipping back in delivery performance. Robust project management culture gets embedded in the organization • The focus will be on predictive project delivery, rather than proactive management. Slippages are detected early and quickly brought under control through collective team efforts • Innovative ideas and feedback loops are encouraged and put in place for continuous improvement

Projects exist along-with programs and portfolios in an organizational ecosystem. An organization can be assessed for program and portfolio management maturity as well. The parameters for such assessments will be quite different as compared to project management.

For instance benefits and governance become predominant while assessing organisational program management maturity, whereas value and alignment become critical parameters during portfolio management maturity assessment.

'Self assessment' checklists are available for some of the frameworks to assess these maturity levels. However, unbiased assessments and guidance on how to go further can best be obtained by commissioning experienced external PM consultants, who can work along with organizational practitioners. Such unbiased assessments are also facilitated by structured processes the Consultants follow.

From GRT Consulting, we use robust organizational project maturity assessment models, integrated with our solution framework pmelevate. This framework includes a three step model – including assessment of 'as-is' PM maturity level, providing a roadmap to achieve the targeted level of maturity and actual solution implementation/ deployment.

Pl. write to info@grt-consulting.com for more information on this consulting framework and how it can assist your organization.