HDI®

FIVE FOCUS AREAS FOR **IMPROVING IT MATURITY**

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About This Toolkit

This HDI Tool Kit is a series of practical "how-to" instructive job aids designed with the IT service management practitioner in mind. Each area of focus can be studied and used by itself, or as part of the whole. The Tool Kit will help clarify IT maturity, as well as the steps necessary to achieve it in your organization.

Introduction: What is IT Maturity and Why Does It Matter?

Maturity, as it pertains to IT and IT service management, means the state of people, processes and technology in the organization, and the achievement of improvement goals based on accepted measurements. Generally, a model is chosen (two are discussed below), and assessments are performed, either by the organization itself (self-assessment), or by an auditor from an external organization.

Maturity matters because it shows the capability of IT and IT service management organization to serve as a ready, willing, and able partner to achieve business or organizational goals in a stable and predictable way.

In general, states of maturity move from the chaotic or *ad hoc* to the optimized in defined steps according to the model. According to CMMI, "Each maturity level provides a layer in the foundation for continuous process improvement."

Generally, stages of maturity move from the unorganized and reactive to the organized, managed, measured, and proactive. The similarities between these two maturity models should be evident: The terms Initial, Defined, and Managed appear in each. The most mature state in each is about optimization.

Two maturity models:

ITIL® Maturity Model has five levels of maturity:

- **Initial:** Disorganized, reactive. Things are done on case-by-case basis, ad hoc.
- **Repeatable:** Procedures are followed, but individual knowledge is depended upon.
- **Defined:** Procedures are documented and standard. Becoming more proactive.
- **Managed:** Objectives and targets are aligned with business goals. Monitoring and measurement occur and action is taken to ensure compliance.
- **Optimized:** Practices are followed and automated wherever possible. There is continuous improvement.

CCMI – Capability Maturity Model Integration

- **Initial:** Unpredictable and poorly controlled.
- **Managed:** Process characterized for fixed-length projects, and reactive.
- **Defined:** Process characterized for the organization and proactive.
- **Quantitatively Managed:** Measured and controlled.
- **Optimizing:** Focus on continuous improvement.

The similarities are rather striking: In each model, order is being brought to chaos, and the movement is from reactive to proactive. Measurement is introduced, and the objectives are focused more toward the organization as a whole than at specific projects.

HDI research tells us that about 6 percent of support centers use CMMI. While ITIL is the framework of choice in at least 50 percent of organizations, how many of those organizations assess their maturity using the ITIL model is unknown.

If you choose to use a maturity model (and these are only two of many), you will need to consider which one is right for your organization. One way to assess that is to get to know organizations that are similar to your yours and ask them which maturity model they use, and why. Great ways to find answers to these questions include asking in LinkedIn groups, in-person at local or national industry events, or in dedicated community groups such as HDIConnect.

Focus Area 1 - The self-assessment: Why, when, and how often

Self-assessments are most useful for organizations who seek to undertake improvement programs, but do not have a clear idea of their current state. Many self-assessments are available for low or no cost, and can help establish the needs of the organization for improvement, including specific deficiencies and strengths.

Organizations tend to either overestimate or underestimate their own maturity level, and so self-assessments should be taken with some caution. If the assessments are well-designed, the questions will produce a far more accurate view of the organization than would just making an internal statement (a guess). Be honest in your evaluation of where you are.

Self-assessments provide a questionnaire of some length, asking about very specific aspects of the IT organization and at least some about the organization as a whole. The responses are scored in some fashion, and a report is delivered back to the assessment-taker with the results. Self-assessments should not be considered definitive, but they do give the organization a snapshot of the current state of maturity, and can be used in building a business case for having a professional assessment done.

Professional assessments are done by certified third parties who have no interest in making your organization look better than it is. Self-assessments are not comparable to full, professional assessments.

It is best to make a decision about which maturity model is best for your organization before taking any self-assessments, since each assessment is based on a specific model. Your organization should not assume that, if a self-assessment under the CMMI model says you are at Level 4, that you are at Level 4 in all maturity models. Specifics vary, as will the results of your self-assessment.

Because they are comparatively low in cost, self-assessments can be taken often, and may serve as mileposts in between professional assessments.

In summary:

- Choose a self-assessment that suits your organization
- Be honest
- Don't confuse self-assessment results with a professional assessment

Focus Area 2 - Measurement: Measuring what matters

Collecting metrics and measurements is easy; deciding which ones are important and useful is more difficult. This in itself is part of maturity: Understanding what matters to the organization as a whole, and measuring in ways that illuminate that understanding. Unless performance is measured, it is impossible to gauge whether it has improved. Therefore, measurements form part of the foundation of maturity.

The metric is not the goal. The metric is a milepost to measure progress toward the goal

Metrics can be measured and applied at the operational, tactical, or strategic level. A classic error in the world of service and support is mistaking operational metrics for strategic ones, and reporting them up to executives who are looking for something quite different.

- As maturity increases, metrics are increasingly aligned to key performance indicators which are more organizationally-aligned (see below).
- Consistency, repeatability, and predictability are increased through the considered collection and analysis of metrics.
- Metrics should increasingly focus on quality over quantity, and outcomes over activities
    - Activity-based metrics are the most widely quoted and used in the literature of the support center. Call or contact volume, handle time, speed to answer and the like are all based on the activities of support, not on business outcomes. The activities of support are mostly reactive: Something broke, someone contacted support, and that particular incident was resolved, for example. These metgrics can be "gamed" quite easily.

      Example: First contact resolution – User calls unable to access an application. Support analyst resets the user password and marks the case resolved. Ten minutes later the user contacts the support center again because that did not work. A new ticket is opened and resolved on first contact. Result: Two tickets are scored as FCR when there was only one.

    - Outcomes-based metrics are more tactical and sometimes strategic. As a result of a changed support process or technology, the sales team was able to convert more potential orders, or the marketing team had a higher response rate, for example. These metrics are aligned with the organization's goals as opposed to the goals of the support center alone. These metrics are harder to "game." The example used by the Open Customer Metrics Framework (PDF) is the Customer Effort Score, which measures how easy or difficult it was for a customer to obtain and benefit from support.

Focus Area 3 - Technologies: Choosing the right tools and using the right tools

The purchase process

It's not an IT decision; it's a business decision

Too often IT—or even just the support center—makes a decision about which tools to buy without considering that their institution is spending money and expects certain benefits from that expenditure. If, for example, the tool is expected to serve the organization for three to five years, it is important to know what the business has planned for that time period. Will service management be expanding into other areas, such as Facilities and HR? If yes, then the range of tools under consideration may change to suit the anticipated needs of the broader organization.

Benefits, not features

In business as well as in our own personal lives, we often make purchase decisions based on a feature set rather than the specific benefits we will derive from the purchase. A particular car may have a great set of features that appeal to us, but if the back seat is too small to accommodate our children, the features are of no use. Likewise, a tool that is built to be compatible with 22 ITIL® processes is over-featured for your desired five processes, and may lack the reporting capability required for your desktop support group.

Building a business case

The first question a business partner will ask likely ask about a new tool purchase is, "What problem(s) does it solve?" Before investing a substantial sum of money in a new tool, ask:

- Does the capability to do this already exist anywhere in the organization?
- What, specifically, will be made better as a result of this purchase?

What is the return on investment for this tool?

There are several ways to calculate return on investment (ROI), and your organization may have a preferred method. Work with your financial department to determine the best and most compatible way to calculate this. It may be difficult to articulate the expected return, since IT and/or support often do not charge for services. The financial benefit is often derives indirectly, such as from time saved.

Identifying stakeholders

Perform an inventory of stakeholders to make sure that you are including all of them when you plan to purchase a tool or technology. The example above of desktop support lacking reporting capabilities is one consequence of overlooking a stakeholder. Another might be that your organization is considering a knowledge management group (not just for IT), and may be planning to unify knowledge management in the next two years. If the tool you are looking at lacks the capability to expand, it will be a poor decision.

Consider:

- Who will use the tool or technology most?
- Who else in the organization might be looking for a similar tool or one that has some of the benefits?
- Is another group or unit willing to share the expense of a more fully-featured tool because it has functionality they want?
- What were the considerations when your current tool was purchased, and what was overlooked then that has you looking at a purchase now?

If you don't use it, it's not a benefit

Implementation considerations

Implementation can be expensive and complicated. How many procedures or processes will have to be changed? How much of the implementation work can be done by existing staff, and how much will need to be contracted out with the tool developer or a third party?
How will it be done?

- **Phased approach:** The tool or technology is brought into the organization in modules, or rolled out in a planned way over a specified time period. This approach can work if there are aspects of the new tool or technology that are mostly compatible with the way things are done now, and can be integrated into the current rocess flow.
- **"Band Aid" approach:** The do it all at once or "rip off the Band Aid" approach may be the best way to go about implementation if there are technical migrations—such as user data—involved, or if there is a window of time available for major changes, such as summer vacations.

Getting the results needed and expected

The best tool and the best tool implementation in the world will not yield the desired results if the use of the tool or technology is not optimized. Will training be needed for users as well as support staff? How much organizational change must be managed in order to get things to work and keep them working in the new system? Technical change requires people change as well.

Focus Area 4 - Frameworks and methodologies: There is no one magic formula

The watchwords of frameworks and methodologies are *adopt* and adapt. It is not necessary to choose one "right way" to guide an organization; elements of several frameworks and/or methodologies can be used together. Many articles, blogs, and white papers have been published on the topic of integrating different frameworks and methodologies, so do not let anyone convince you that you have to have "an ITIL shop" or a "DevOps shop." There is not reason you cannot use both sets of guidance—and add more if your organization needs them or decides they will help.

Examples:

- ITIL and KCS
- ITIL and COBIT
- DevOps and IT service management

General guidance on adopting and adapting

Adopting and adapting does not mean that you can simply choose bits and pieces of one framework and bits and pieces of another framework and cobble them together. It does mean that you should carefully consider how your organization will get the best out of a framework in light of your current state and your future plans. As AXELOS' Phil Hearsum says about ITIL, "The principle of adopt and adapt works with your existing systems as well as being flexible enough to handle any new developments your business introduces."

Some general guidance

- Make sure you understand both your organization's current state and desired future state before adopting one or more frameworks.
- Consider the objectives of the frameworks (process improvement, production velocity, standardization) before choosing one or more. How do they fit your organization, based on what you know?

The key is not to become bound by an ideology rather than taking the ideas various frameworks have to teach you and building upon them for your organization's future.

Focus Area 5 - How to continually improve

Why measurement is key to improvement

There is an old adage, often erroneously attributed to W. Edwards Deming, that if you can't measure it, you can't manage it. Perhaps it is more true to say, "If you don't measure it, you cannot improve it." If you don't know how you are doing now, how will you know when you are doing it better? Refer back to Focus Areas 1 and 2 and make sure that you can determine where you are now—both in terms of maturity and performance—before you embark on a formal improvement initiative.

Improvement is not a project

Projects, by definition, have an end. Something is completed or accomplished, and the project is ended. Improvement does not have an end date. It is ongoing and continual. Your performance is only ever as good as your last interaction or achievement.

Don't forget the people part

Almost any change requires people to change. Behavior, expectations, actions—something or some things must change. Organizational change is required, and often overlooked. Your organization probably has a preferred method for organizational change—there are many—and the preferred one (provided it has been successful in the past) should be followed.

The steps do not have to be big, but must be taken

The Japanese business philosophy of kaizen espouses continual improvement but recognizes that changes may be small, incremental steps. Large steps are often disruptive and problematic. Plan for a future of continuously introducing small improvements, and your progress will soon become evident.

Set the bar for performance a little above where you have it now. Perhaps raising your commitments under your service level agreement (SLA) by one percent per quarter will do it. Year-over-year, that performance will begin to show great results.

About HDI

In 1989, **HDI** became the first professional association created for the technical support industry. Since then, HDI has remained the source for professional development by offering resources to promote organization-wide success through exceptional customer service. We do this by:

- Facilitating collaboration and networking
- Hosting acclaimed conferences and events
- Producing renowned publications and research
- Certifying and training thousands of professionals each year

Our mission is to elevate the customer experience through the development of the technical support industry.

About TeamDynamix

Service & Project Portfolio Management designed specifically for Higher Ed, K12, State & Local Governments and Non-Profit organizations. A single platform bringing together IT Service Management extending to Facilities, Marketing, Legal, HR and more – with Project Portfolio Management.

- Fully Integrated Cloud Platform
- Integration Services
- Managed Application Services
- Process Consulting
- Custom Client Portal Design