

# **SO YOU WANT TO BE SMART! ORGANISATIONS NEED TO BEGIN WITH A MAJOR SHIFT IN ATTITUDE**

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## **Introduction**

Define Smart! in an organisational context. There is only one way, and that is against an organisations maturity framework based in metrics, allowing performance measurement against both standards and peer organisations.

If that is the case, smart organisations are at Level 3, with consistency of behaviour consolidated as the organisational systemizes and progresses to Level 4. These organisations then improve performance measurement, metrics, lessons learnt, and dash ahead to Level 5, where continuous improvement cycles regularly upgrade delivery mechanisms and underpinning processes. Sadly, there is not a lot of dashing ahead, because while success rates are improving, more often organisations (whether they measure it or not) get to or close to Level 3 and regress.

Why? Is it so hard to finish the journey? And why set out if there is no will to achieve the objective? Fundamentally the problem lies with capturing results that reflect improvement, to enable decision makers to approve effort in risk / cost vs value terms. This is benefits tracking and realization, involving project performance measurement metrics that are a feature of Level 4 mature organisations. A pity that the initiators of project management improvement initiatives are grappling with a Level 2 environment, requiring Level 4 techniques to support their climb out of the pit.

Of course there is always a solution. It is based in the knowledge that climbing from Level 1 through Level 3 is behavioural. It is people's behaviour, formed in attitudes to both organisational roles in projects delivery, and reform of project management practice, that needs to change, to allow consolidation of practices before these can be systemized at Level 4 then 5.

The objective is to address behaviour and attitudes to project management from two perspectives: everybody in the organisation in project delivery roles and responsibilities terms, and then just senior management from a change initiative responsibility perspective. So after a little background on what is happening in organisational project management (portfolio project management, enterprise project management, management-by-projects, etc) within Industry, we will discuss an integrated solution, a 'big-bang' approach to force our way through to better practice, highlighting the need for change in people.

## Background

The issues organisations across 14 industry sectors are facing tend to be the same:

- uncertainty in roles / responsibilities
- poor understanding of process
- portfolio / sponsor roles not practiced
- inconsistent planning
- poor tracking, reporting
- stress, overworked personnel
- poor project initiation process
- poor application of project management functions.

These issues are the catalyst for change, and initiate preliminary activity in two areas. In both of these (benchmarking and audit / project management reviews), however, it is surprising the difference that emerges regarding opinions of how effectively the organisation as a whole delivers projects. Depending on whether you are talking to managers, portfolio managers, project managers, team members or operational (technical expert) support, views vary dramatically regarding effectiveness in 16 key areas of measurement. For example, simply comparing management and project management opinion, the range between one group and the other is as large as one to two levels of maturity, anything from 'we are excellent in how we (the organisation) handle scope management' from project managers to 'we are abysmal in how we handle scope management' from managers. In the next key measurement area the roles may reverse, with a rosy picture painted by management and a more sombre cross-section of opinion from project management.

On delving deeper, we find the differences stem from prevailing attitudes as to who does what in project management, or more pertinently who does not do what in project management. Because roles and responsibilities depicted in duty statements and the like, do not include project delivery tasks along with primary operational roles, all project management duties devolve to the project manager. When things go wrong, BLAME is apportioned, and this usually settles on those directly involved in project management. The attitude of others, proponents of ideas, sales, bid managers, commercial managers, operations personnel, etc, is often that the fault could not possibly be theirs, since they are not 'project managers'. And the executive too is blameless. It is not they who are slow to respond to projects communications, shut ears to early advice on pre-planned risk treatments, nor they who are oblivious to the many infrastructure and internal barriers to success. Not all organisations, but some, have significant attitude problems when it comes to project management, and it begins with perceptions of project management as something 'they' do.

## Roles and Responsibilities

One of five aspects of changing for the better, just who does what in project management will need to be addressed first, because this institutionalized abrogation of responsibility is a Level 2 Maturity trait, and must be resolved for the other four aspects to lift.

The first thing to understand is project managers do not deliver projects; organisations deliver projects. The project manager has a key role, a project integration management role in fact, pulling together the contribution of many players. Those other participants must have their **expectations of contribution** formalized so that there is no misunderstanding when tasks are allocated, assistance sought, approvals by dates requested; no retorts of 'not my problem'. Formalisation means specifying projects delivery tasks in a skills framework at five levels:

- Manager (various)
- Portfolio Manager
- Project Manager
- Team Member
- Technical Specialist.

Before progressing I should stress I am not advocating a five level qualification framework. Three is sufficient, and there are times I think one would do, for portfolio and project managers, but I keep this aberrant thought to myself. However, as more organisations seek to redefine projects delivery duties across the organisation, and translate this to role / duty statements, and define expectations in performance measurement terms, and remunerate accordingly, the five levels do need to be defined in a projects management skills framework, and then customised to the job descriptors of each organisation.

Once people know what is expected of them, they will perform accordingly, and the blame mentality will dissipate across all levels and roles. This is key to improved projects delivery performance and therefore organisational maturity, but is still only one of five elements of an improvement initiative.

### The Other Elements for Success

Five elements of success:

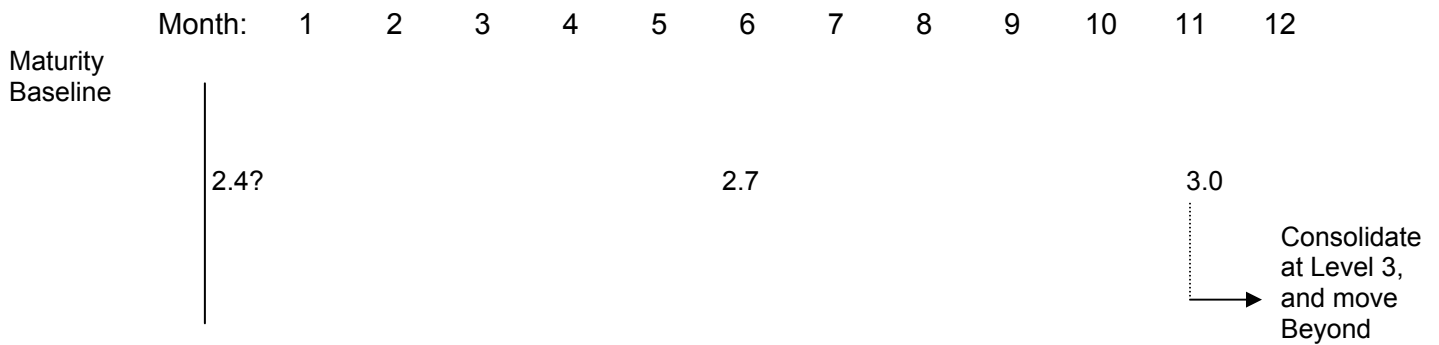
- a) Will
- b) Process
- c) Skills
- d) Coaching, Support in b) and c)
- e) Tools.

b) and c) should be developed, then d) = behaviour change  
 e) consolidates behaviour = integrated delivery, consistency.

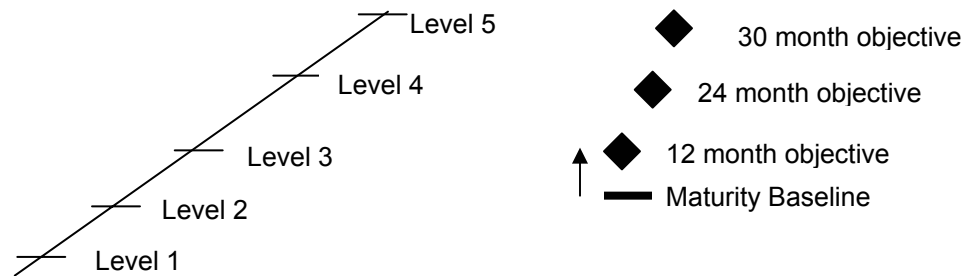
Look at this as a time chart:

Month:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	a		b	c	d	—————				d		e

Or put another way:



Or put another way:



## Impediments to Progress

The impediments to progress are:

- People
- Planning
- Performance

People at a) Management

People at c) All personnel in Projects Delivery Skills Framework, described above.

Planning – Lack thereof, particularly in Return on Investment terms

Performance – Measure improvement: Need metrics capture disciplines. Catch 22 – organisations at Level 2 or 3 are not capturing metrics.

In many ways it comes down to Management:

- Declared initiative
- Will to see through improvement to measured outcomes
- Plan
- Performance Measurement (Benefits Tracking)
- Related to productivity / bottom-line
- Compared with and tracked to returns for other initiatives / projects.

## The Way Ahead

How to get Level 2.3 striving for Level 3 people to adapt Level 4 maturity performance characteristics for this particular initiative? Very hard.

Need management / champion to think / act Level 4 in a less-achieving organisation, drive through the transition program and persevere until the objective is achieved.

Do these people exist? Yes, but they lost heart.

Solution?

Commit to the whole plot, or don't start:

- process > Quality Management System
- skills framework > performance measurement at individual level
- coaching, mentoring, training program for five categories
- get portfolio project management tools in to help the consolidation, start with management views, portfolio views and resource views; without disrupting project personnel.

Challenge? Yes.

Worthwhile? Yes.

- \$\$
- gains
- reduced stress
- better results.

Becoming a Smart Projects Delivery Organisation:

Where does it start?

- Understand the problems
- Define the solution
- Plan
- Can do Attitude.

## Conclusion

A structured approach to multiple projects management for measured organisational success is not difficult. It requires a plan, performance metrics, a realistic improvement timetable, commitment, and people with clout and an entrenched interest in seeing it through. What often happens is improvement, then regression, and this regression is behavioural:

- wait it out (seen these reforms before)
- back to the comfort zone
- 11<sup>th</sup> hour activity is easier
- do it my way (it's better)
- white knight syndrome.

all reflective of resistance to change, rugged individuality, clinging to old ways, an inability to see the common good inherent in consistency of approach; combining to

prevent the breakthrough from behaviour-driven to systemized, from Level 3 to Level 4 maturity.

To break through this barrier:

- recognize the problem (attitudes / behaviour)
- force the issues (confront people with the fact it will happen)
- shorten the change delivery schedule (make 30 months 12)
- parallel activity (all ingredients of change at once)
- for people that will not change, change the people
- demand a Return on Investment for the initiative, and measure success.

Fundamentally it is a business project to change the bottom line for the better. As such it requires a business champion to recognize and quantify the benefits; realize a project management system (process, skills framework, tools) might cost one tenth of other initiatives (eg: upgrade of FMS) but could bring double the benefits faster; adopt a we will succeed attitude; and make it happen!