

IT-CMF

IT CAPABILITY
MATURITY FRAMEWORK™

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Conducting Detailed Assessments for SRP

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Introduction

The IT function sits across the largest productivity generator in business over the past century. Today IT provides and supports almost all facets of organisational life and performance. The increasing levels of organisational complexity make it more difficult to know how and where IT can generate real business value. With large investments, poor project success rates, and unforgiving maintenance costs, CIOs increasingly need to navigate conflicts concerning how best to raise more value from IT – often making strategic decisions based on anecdotal evidence or an incomplete view of the end-to-end performance of the IT resource.

Conversely, the IT directorate 'live' at the coalface of technology, people, and commercial challenges. The majority share of IT budgets is consumed by day-to-day maintenance, so IT managers are acutely conscious of the need to deliver more services with fewer resources. Due to accelerating response times, decisions are typically made locally – which empowers the IT work force to increasingly influence the complex environment; however the challenge is not to increase the speed at which decisions are made, but to ensure that decisions made locally take into consideration their impact across the organisation. CIOs also need to understand when and where to employ their scarce resources. A good starting point is an awareness of the need to have functioning core processes. However, awareness of the maturity of the IT function – in terms of both performance and alignment to strategic objectives – provides the CIO with a greater and better informed understanding of the IT organisation's capability.

One approach to significantly improve a CIO's view of end-to-end IT performance is to undergo a detailed ITCMF™ assessment. The ITCMF assessment process enables organisations to evaluate its maturity level in terms of IT capability – by assessing planned versus actual levels of performance in order to elicit vital information that identifies how critical IT processes are performing. This is done within the context of improving the *Business Value* of the IT function. The maturity setting and the resultant data collection process form the bedrock on which the IT management team can start to build an improvement roadmap that is specific to their organisation and based around *Business Value*.

In this *case study*, the authors describe an IT-CMF assessment (the Services Provisioning (SRP) critical process), and provide guidance for organisations that wish to gain a deeper understanding of their IT capability.

KEYWORDS: Business Value, decisions made locally, capability of the IT organisation, IT-Capability Maturity Framework™ (IT-CMF™), assessment, improvement roadmap, Service Provisioning (SRP)

What is a Service Provisioning (SRP) Detailed Assessment?

Within the context of the IT-Capability Maturity Framework (IT-CMF), Service Provisioning (SRP) is defined as:

'...providing IT services to customers. Services comprise a combination of people, processes and technology and, for each customer, are typically defined in a Service Level Agreement. SRP acts as a single point of contact (from the customer perspective) for in-scope activities and is a key enabler of the IT capability. IT services are based on the use of information technology and support the customer's business processes.'

Over a quarter of all IT staff within an organisation are typically involved in SRP-related activities, but this percentage can rise to more than half of total IT staff depending on the nature of the organisation and the services it provides. Consequently, SRP-related activities draw a significant level of resources, especially in terms of IT headcount. Identifying the most appropriate maturity levels for an organisation's SRP capability ensures the right resources are being applied in the right way to maximise the business value of IT. The authors believe that a detailed assessment is the most expedient and accurate means of obtaining the level of detail required to help CIOs understand how to maximise business value in the SRP domain, or indeed that of any critical process.

An IT-CMF assessment is a 'deep-dive' review of an organisation's capability around a given critical process (there is a separate assessment for each of the 33 critical processes that make up the IT-CMF). For SRP, the assessment consists of 26 questions and the complete assessment process takes approximately four hours for key client personnel to complete (see Figure 1).

Based on a five-level variance of maturity, differing practices, outcomes, and metrics are expected. These activities are investigated to ensure the current maturity level is accurate. Once the 'IS' maturity level is established, a series of recommendations can be made to support lagging capabilities and ensure the IT function moves collectively towards a higher level of returning business value.

Preparing for the Assessment

Preparing the organisation for the assessment is key to capturing valuable data, and developing an accurate understanding of the process maturity. To ensure the assessment process is successful in delivering insightful findings it is recommended that the following components be agreed and in place prior to the assessment:

Identified Assessment Champion:

A senior figure in the organisation who can articulate the motivation for the assessment and the participant's role in contributing to it. This ensures participants know why they are taking time out of their working day to participate in the assessment.

Communication Strategy

If individuals are going to participate in an assessment, they need to understand why it is important, and what the organisation intends to do with the findings. The quality of the assessment is dependent on the quality of the input from the individuals taking the assessment.

Representative Sample

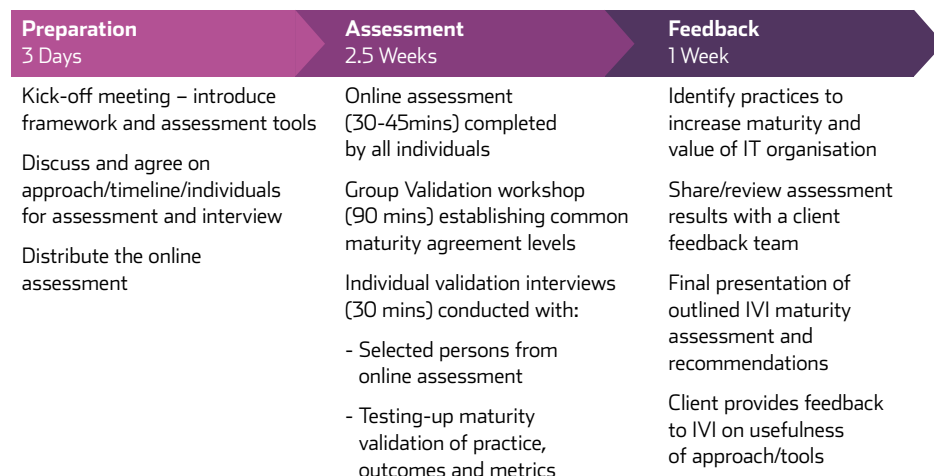
To attain an accurate overview of what is happening with the critical process, the individuals selected for assessment must be a representative sample of all employees associated with the process.

Execution Process

For successful execution, it is necessary to ensure the assessment process, where possible, is delivered in a way that is not disruptive to operational requirements. This prioritisation is central to the quality of the engagement for all participants and to the outcome of analysis and results.

Figure 1
Timeline for IT-CMF assessment process

Assessment conducted in 3 phases within 4 weeks



Execution Context

To get a clear picture of organisational performance, participants need to be reassured that they can be open and honest in their responses. If participants feel that their input may be used against them, their responses will not be accurate, which in turn will impact the validity of the assessment. Therefore, the distribution of results and analysis must be anonymised, and this should be made clear to participants from the initial kick-off meeting.

Detailed Analysis – Survey Process

The IT-CMF CP survey process (see Figure 1) consists of a series of activities:

- 1 An initial online self-assessment.
- 2 A group validation workshop
- 3 A series of individual interviews with selected participants confirming practices and outcomes.
- 4 Final validation and recommendation workshops.
- 5 Report presentation.

The online assessment tool generates an anonymised set of results, showing the average buildup and individual responses to the questionnaire. This is followed up with a group workshop, the purpose of which is to explore each maturity question in a group validation workshop. In the workshop the group test their understanding and perception of the assessed maturity level by reviewing each question in a short, timed (150-second) response period. This forestalls over-analysis, and motivates the group to achieve consensus quickly. Throughout the workshop the facilitator captures learning points that emerge from the group through discussion. The combination of the online assessment and the group workshop session form the inputs that provide a provisional assessed maturity – which at this point is largely self-defined by the client. This maturity level is then further tested through a series of face-to-face interviews. This entails taking a representative subset of the participants who completed the online assessment and validating individually the provisionally-assessed maturity responses against processes, outcomes, and metrics that are associated with the consensus position on the maturity level. This process enables a detailed profiling and validation of the organisation's maturity level, and in turn is used to generate a list of stronger and weaker performing process areas that are relevant to this specific maturity level.

Based on both the testing and validating the consensus on the maturity level of the critical processes, final maturity levels can be set and justified by the assessor group. Recommendations to drive *Business Value* are then generated, based upon on real context-specific evidence from IT management, front-line staff members, and business stakeholders.

Delivering the Final Report

The *final* report to the organisation contains a number of distinct sections; educational, survey process, assessment results, and recommendations. As such, this self-contained document enables the recipient (at all levels) to be aware of and to observe the survey process, and to understand the recommendations within the context of both the maturity level and the information gathered.

The output from the assessment, in terms of defining the current maturity levels with supporting comments, proves to be particularly interesting to all stakeholder groups. The assessment findings have been described by IT management teams as being 'acutely accurate' and '...driving clarity'; thus reinforcing the credibility of the maturity level of critical processes. These findings are also often considered supportive for other initiatives that are being promoted to senior level management.

With proper buildup of the analysis, the final report naturally leads the audience to attain an appreciation of the assessed maturity levels established within the critical process for their organisation. Having established this with a robust and sound assessment process, group focus naturally turns to recommendations that drive business value.

The use of maturity metrics encourages the group to review current initiatives within the context of "Does this add business value?". This typically generates the organisation's desire to reassess the level of maturities within a 9- to 12-month period.

Observations on Assessment Responses

Where possible, interviewees should be given a three-day period to complete the online questionnaire. This duration typically achieves the right balance between adequate time to consider responses, while remaining focused on the need to complete the assessment.

Group validation workshops provide an open forum for all participants to see, test and understand (from their own perspective and that of their colleagues) how the selected critical process performs. This may lead to corrections or re-interpretations of responses.

The individual interviews complement the existing arrived at maturity levels by testing the proposed practices against the expected outcomes and metrics associated with each maturity level. All in all, this is a robust method to achieve a broad consensus on the status of the processes maturity level.

The Outcomes – Next Steps

The presentation of the *final report* can lead to a number of follow-on actions:

Establishment of an Improvement Plan

A plan should be developed to ensure targets for improving maturity levels are realised. Such a plan will include recommendations in terms of identified milestones and defined metrics.

Planning a Follow-up Assessment

By establishing the current maturity of the critical process, the CIO will typically wish to see a target date for a follow-up assessment for the purpose of validating ongoing improvement efforts.

Understanding the Impact on Other Critical Processes

It is common for the assessed organisation to become interested in understanding the impact their change initiatives will have on the 'nearest-neighbouring' critical processes. With there being 33 critical processes in total, this follow-on action may result in the organisation initially assessing only the most relevant interdependent processes as a means of expanding the influence of the IT-CMF to other groups and areas.

IVI recommends that any organisation undertaking IT-CMF assessments considers exploring education and research programs to support the agreed improvement initiatives.

Hidden Benefits of Effective Assessments

An outcome of the condensed and focused nature of critical process assessments has been that frontline IT staff have found the process engaging and interesting. These individuals are typically inaccessible due to the nature of their positions and the demands made upon them as they run daily business operations. The compact nature of the assessment enables frontline IT staff to provide effective input into future roadmap and investment plans with a low demand on their time.

It is paramount that the assessment process is deployed in a manner that is perceived as transparent, balanced and fair. IVI believes that the approach outlined in this case study supports individual privacy (via the initial online assessment) but also allows participants to test their thinking in a collaborative forum environment. Individuals are also afforded the opportunity to have their views captured as part of a qualitative interview process. This ensures every opportunity is provided to capture from all stakeholders both quantitative and qualitative data concerning the performance of a critical processes performance.

In conclusion, an excellent level of understanding is achieved from a critical process assessment that requires less than 4 hours in terms of commitment and time from an organisation's staff.

Further Reading

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