White Paper
Measuring Maturity: The ITIL Maturity Model

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Michael Lane

Mike is a respected technology professional with nearly 20 years experience, having held senior manager positions in Information Technology, Communications and Consulting.

Over his career he has managed a vast number of Telecoms, IT, Business and Consulting projects and programmes, and the associated global cross functional teams, with a strong track record of results. Mike is a specialist in many aspects of information technology, including infrastructure, architecture, systems development, business processes, service management, policies and standards, leadership, governance and management.

Summary

When it comes to well-known business rhetoric and information technology (IT) adages, we've all heard the (infamous) quote: "If you can't measure it, you can't manage it". Despite the age old debate of who the quote can actually be attributed to, with popular opinion still seemingly split between Deming and Drucker, it's the message that's important and relevant. Organizations today are charged with creating and sustaining value, and to do this, they face the daunting challenge of needing to continually improve… But where and how can they improve?

In the IT world, and any domain really, one of the universally predominant and rewarding ways to improve, is to adopt industry leading, 'tried and tested' best practices. For the most part, organizations with substantial current implementations of recognized best practices, realize tangible benefits, from improved process efficiencies and effectiveness, to optimized costs and risks. And it isn't a case of only first time or once-off implementations which deliver results. Most contemporary Enterprises follow incremental best practice implementation approaches to derive initial benefits sooner and increase their levels of benefit over time as processes mature.

When we're talking IT specifically, you often hear of organizations wanting to do a 'refresh', be that of technology, products or services like hardware and software, processes like Incident Management, or even sometimes people. One thing's for sure though, whether you're contemplating your first best practice implementation, are part way through an implementation plan, or heading down the 'refresh' path,

being able to measure where you are now (as-is) and defining where you want to get to (to-be) is essential for not only determining success, but identifying, planning and managing future improvement too.

Within IT, in the IT Service Management (ITSM) domain, the IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL) 2011 from Axelos rarely needs any introduction. Being arguably the most widely accepted and in use best practice framework for IT service management on a global basis, ITIL's reputation and value tend to precede it. The question most organizations ask is not "What is ITIL?", but rather, "How do we measure up to this best practice?" Naturally, what typically follows are enquiries on whether there is any way or means to assess their organizational ITSM maturity against the ITIL best practice. The answer is yes, but it's a whole lot more than that, and measuring maturity is only the beginning.

Measuring ITIL Maturity

Maturity models have somewhat emerged from a time where the only one everybody knew about was the original Capability Maturity Model (CMM) from the Carnegie Mellon University, focused on software development processes. Today, there are a multitude of maturity models from Service Oriented Architecture (SOA) to IT to Enterprise Architecture (EA), but just about all of them follow the CMM model with five levels of maturity on a process (or similar) continuum. Leading IT best practice frameworks, like COBIT 5, the business framework for the governance and management of Enterprise IT, include a maturity model. COBIT 5's Process Assessment Model (PAM) combines ISO's process assessment standard – ISO/IEC 5504 – with its own process reference model to provide a methodology for assessing the capability of IT process by measuring the extent to which a given process achieves specific attributes relative to that process— 'process attributes'.
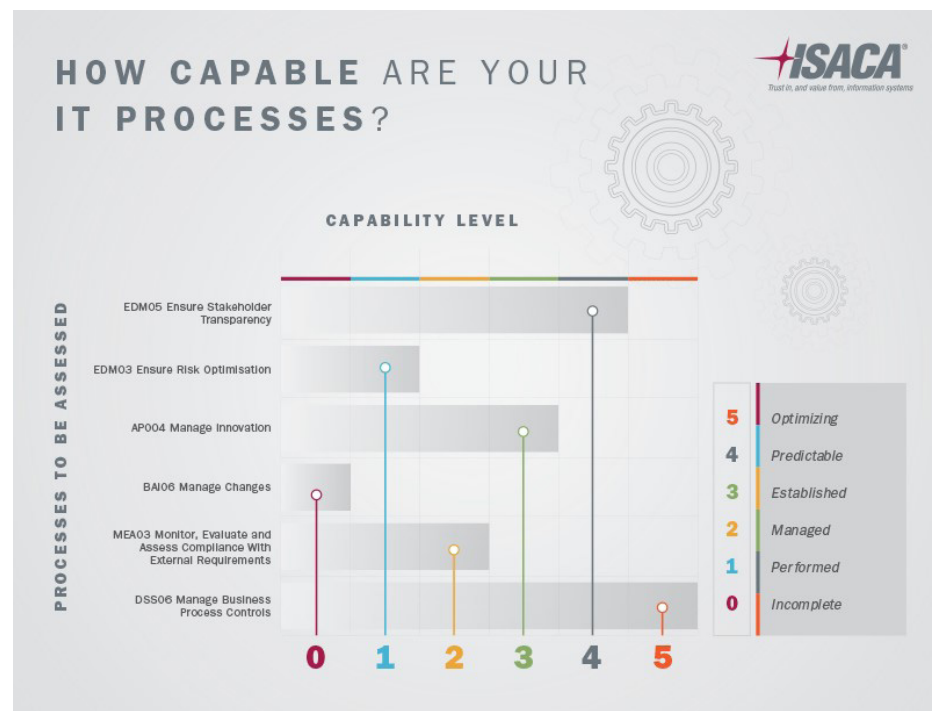
ITIL is no different. The Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMMI) says that:

Whether you want to develop the internal capability to understand and benchmark your performance, secure important business opportunities, or help your team accelerate performance, there are three things you need to understand:

- Are you good at what you do?
- Are you good at what matters?
- How do you know?

To thrive in a competitive global marketplace, organizations and individuals need to execute. But if you don't understand your capability, how can you know how you are executing?
CMMI offers guidance for diagnosing problems and accelerating performance across all areas of the organization. CMMI® provides guidance for efficient, effective improvement across multiple process disciplines in an organization.

(http://cmmiinstitute.com/improve-performance)

In the realm of ITSM, ITIL with its ITIL Maturity Model can certainly help your organization improve!

The ITIL Maturity Model comprises of five levels of maturity, each with its own definition aligned with both COBIT® and CMMI® definitions, and its own maturity level characteristics.

1. Maturity Level 1 = Initial (reactive)
- **Maturity Level Definition**
    - o Processes or functions are ad hoc, disorganized or chaotic. There is evidence that the organization has recognized that the issues exist and need to be addressed. There are, however, no standardized procedures or process/function management activity, and the process/function is regarded as of minor importance, with few resources allocated to it within the organization. There are instead ad hoc approaches that tend to be applied on an individual or case-by-case basis. The overall approach to management is disorganized.

- **Maturity Level Characteristics (Examples)**
    - o There is little management commitment.
    - o There are few, if any, documented procedures.
    - o There is no definition of process or functional roles.
    - o Performance of the activities varies according to who undertakes them.
    - o There is little, or no, automation of any activities.
    - o Performance of the activities is subject to no, or only basic, measures such as volume and failure rate.
    - o No stakeholder feedback is gathered or sought.

2. Maturity Level 2 = Repeatable (active)

- **Maturity Level Definition**
  - Processes or functions follow a regular pattern. They have developed to the stage where similar procedures are followed by different people undertaking the same task. Training is informal, there is no communication of standard procedures, and responsibility is left to the individual. There is a high degree of reliance on the knowledge of individuals and therefore errors are likely. In general, activities related to the process or function are uncoordinated, irregular and directed towards process or function efficiency.

- **Maturity Level Characteristics (Examples)**
  - Some management commitment exists.
  - Procedures exist but may not be fully documented.
  - Roles are recognized, even if they are not formally defined.
  - Performance is becoming more consistent but is still variable.
  - Some automation is starting to be used to improve efficiency.
  - Performance is measured and reported to at least internal stakeholders.
  - Some stakeholder feedback is provided and major issues are responded to on an ad hoc basis.

3. Maturity Level 3 = Defined (pro-active)

- **Maturity Level Definition**
  - The process or function has been recognized and procedures have been standardized, documented and communicated through training. The procedures themselves are not sophisticated but are the formalization of existing practices. It is, however, left to the individual to follow these procedures and deviations may occur. The process has a process owner, formal objectives and targets with allocated resources, and is focused on both efficiency and effectiveness. Activities are becoming more proactive and less reactive.

- **Maturity Level Characteristics (Examples)**
  - Management commitment is visible and evident.
  - Procedures and work instructions are documented and kept up to date.
  - Roles are formally recognized, defined and assigned.
  - Activities are carried out with a reasonable degree of consistency.
  - At least some of the activities are automated.
  - Performance is measured using a range of metrics.
  - Feedback from stakeholders is actively sought and acted on.

4. Maturity Level 4 = Managed (pre-emptive)

- **Maturity Level Definition**
    - The process or function has now been fully recognized and accepted throughout IT. It is service-focused and has objectives and targets that are aligned with business objectives and goals. It is fully defined, managed and is becoming pre-emptive, with documented and established interfaces and dependencies with other IT processes. Processes and functions are monitored and measured. Procedures are monitored and measured for compliance and action taken where processes or functions appear not to be working effectively. Processes or functions are under constant improvement and demonstrate good practice. Automation and tools are increasingly used to deliver efficient operations.

- **Maturity Level Characteristics (Examples)**
    - There is a single process owner responsible for all sites within the organization.
    - Process documentation is consistent (based on a standard process template) and includes the policy, purpose, objectives, procedures, roles and metrics.
    - Activities are performed in a highly consistent way with only rare exceptions.
    - Most activities that can be automated are automated.
    - Performance and activity are continuously measured and monitored.
    - Metrics and measurements are used to assess process performance against agreed process targets and objectives.
    - Regular process reviews are completed by the process owner and reviewed with stakeholders to validate continued effectiveness.

5. Maturity Level 5 = Optimized

- **Maturity Level Definition**
    - Leading practices are followed and automated. A self-contained continuous process of improvement is established, which has now resulted in a pre-emptive approach. IT is used in an integrated way to automate the workflow, providing tools to improve quality and effectiveness, making the organization quick to adapt. The process or function has strategic objectives and goals aligned with overall strategic business and IT goals. These have now become 'institutionalized' as part of the everyday activity for everyone involved with the process or function.

a. Maturity Level Characteristics (Examples)

    i. All activities are subject to management control, governance and leadership.

    ii. Activities are performed consistently and reliably across all areas of the organization in which they are used.

    iii. Process improvements are actively sought, registered, prioritized and implemented, based on the business value and a business case.

    iv. Metrics and measurements are used to assess the effectiveness and quality of the process outcomes, and stakeholders' requirements and expectations.

    v. Service governance including measures, roles and procedures span the entire supply chain to include inter-related and inter-dependent internal and third-party relationships.

    vi. Performance data and stakeholder feedback are retained and analyzed for trends and improvement potential.

    vii. There is regular communication between the service provider and its stakeholders to ensure that services and activities remain relevant and effective

Whilst there are five levels defined against which maturity is assessed, in the full or primary absence of any process or function, the pre-eminent state is defined as one of chaos or at a Level 0. In this state, even if there is a degree of process or function, it is characterized by being without any structure, defined responsibilities or consistency in terms of its operation. What is an important point to make about chaos, is that it can be both a state from which one matures up through levels 1 to 5, or a state that one descends into from levels 1-5, with the latter prospect highlighting the importance of continuous process improvement in the organization.

With an understanding of the ITIL Maturity Model, its five levels and their maturity characteristics, you are most likely asking how one embarks on conducting a maturity assessment in your enterprise. Let's first take a look at what exactly an assessment is. An ITIL Maturity self-assessment consists of completing a collection of questionnaires for each of the processes and functions spanning the ITIL Service Management Lifecycle. The questionnaires are made up of the following parts:

- Process/function demographic questions
- Process/function-generic attributes
- Process/function-specific attributes
- Process/function outcomes and outputs
- Interfaces and inputs

Other than the demographic questions, it's as simple as answering each question with a Yes or a No.

In terms of initiating the assessment, the ITIL Maturity Model and the associated self-assessment service have two options in this regard:

Option 1

- **High Level self-assessment**
    - This covers a reduced set of questions for each process and function. In total, each assessment consists of about 50 questions and is designed to provide an indicative maturity score to 0.5 of a decimal place.
    - What is of benefit to any organization, but particularly Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) is that this service is offered at no cost i.e. it is a free service.

Option 2

- **Full self-assessment**
    - This covers the full set of questions for each process and function. It contains more than 2,600 additional questions (compared to the high-level self-assessment) and is designed to give you a precise maturity score to one even decimal place.
    - As well as giving access to additional questions, the full self-assessment provides:
        i. A detailed breakdown of what your maturity score means, including a description of your maturity level, the characteristics of that maturity level, and how to improve your score
        ii. The ability to save your results and track your improvement
        iii. A benchmarking facility so that you can compare your score against other organizations
    - This service however does come at a cost to the organization i.e. it is a paid for service.

Conclusions

With the multitude of IT challenges to hand, many organizations today just don't know where to start when it comes to seeing how their ITSM processes stack up to the competition or best practices, and how to set about improving their status quo. In fact, many don't even know how well or badly they are doing at all. Ever heard someone say "We need to take it up a level", well, those words couldn't be more suited when referencing the ITIL Maturity Model.

The ITIL Maturity model can be seen as a tool that can not only tell you where you are now, and maybe provide a bit of an eye opener, but it can also show you where you need to get to next on the road to optimization. Most enterprises have been in a state of chaos at one time or another over their organizational lifecycle, but what often differentiates the successes from the failures, is the ability to draw a line in the sand, figure out the real state of affairs, refuse to accept it and focus on getting to the next level. More mature means more control, and in ITSM more control means more efficient, effective, consistent, reliable and predictable processes.

When it comes to measuring ITSM maturity, there's a lesson to be learned every time, and with that, equally, an opportunity to improve each and every time. You may find that even in the 21st century, where technology abounds, that all of your ITSM processes are still manual, and that you need to introduce a focus on automation to improve your service delivery. Perhaps you unearth that poor alignment between your IT (SM) and business processes is limiting your capability to achieve critical enterprise objectives. Maybe you don't have any benchmark or baseline information against which to evaluate your organization. Or you may discover that you actually don't know how your ITSM process or functions are performing, because there are no targets, metrics or measurements and no feedback is requested or received from stakeholders. From upping the quality of service delivery, to reducing incident resolution times, from highlighting your key strengths to identifying your weakest capabilities, from reducing costs to optimizing risks, the benefits of an ITIL Maturity Assessment are unlimited - all of the above and so much more.

For organizations to improve, and keep improving their ITSM and their business, they need to be able to understand just how they measure up and what they need to do to unlock their potential. I like to use the analogy of the stepladder, if you don't know which rung you're on, you'll never know how far you are from the top. Getting to the next level is never easy, but knowing where you are now and where you need to be is half the battle won. The only decision you should be making is whether to go with the high-level or full self-assessment. Measure it, manage it, and improve it – the ITIL Maturity model, isn't it time you take the next step?

Additional Reading:

www.axelos.com/best-practice-solutions/itil/itil-maturity-model

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