The Value and Quality of Maturity Models

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1. SUMMARY

This session opens up for a discussion about the value and quality of using maturity models. Different aspects will be highlighted and scenarios will be reviewed.

The maturity model frameworks provides a structure to help organize when developing business areas. We use the maturity model as an enabler when benchmarking with other organizations. But how are we supposed to communicate and ensure the quality of the maturity model used and the result. The objective must be to provide a structured approach that ensures quality.

Lesson learned and outcome will provide the context for a discussion with the audience.

2. ABSTRACT

Maturity models has been on the market for a long time and they have been questioned but also helpful for setting up goals developing business areas. Using maturity models has become more common in our sector over the last years and involving different areas and organizations rises some questions for me. I feel that the approach to how they are being used varies between users. For example I experienced a gap between the ones building the model and the teams answering/using the model. Sometimes, depending on the different levels of knowledge in the subject. Actually, how mature are we when it comes to using maturity models.

I had a discussion with a college from another university explaining how we worked with our disaster recovery planning process. He was reflecting and said that he thought that on a maturity level we were a 4 or a 5 and they were a 2 still having some work to do. I think that we both had the same picture when it comes to maturity levels and that we actually understood each other.
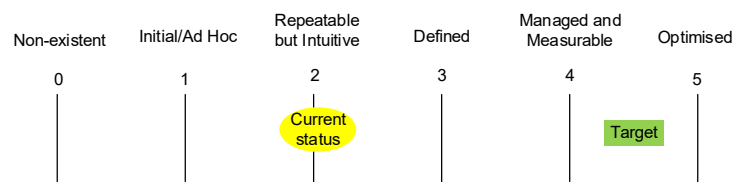
Figure 1 Level of maturity for a process or service

But often the case is that the teams are not that familiar with using maturity models. When we developed our Service Desk I used the maturity model COBIT 4 supported. And when we implemented a framework for our Enterprise Architecture I used NASCIO maturity model moving from strategy to target.

Introducing the models to the teams raised some questions. One team found it difficult to land the attributes to an output level. They wanted to plot it in all levels. I can understand that – but it's important to find a level to start from moving to the next step. A group of managers responsible for one business area marked their organizations on the same level without even questioning the attributes on the different levels. Okay, everyone is a 4, do we have anything to improve. I felt that

we missed the quality in the result. It's normally expensive to keep a process between 4 or 5 and the organization has to decide which processes are the most important ones. Often level 3 to 4 is good enough. All universities in Sweden has answered a survey covering nine dimensions. The maturity model included 7 levels and, according to me, the description for each level opened up for misunderstandings and made it difficult to get a good quality in the result.
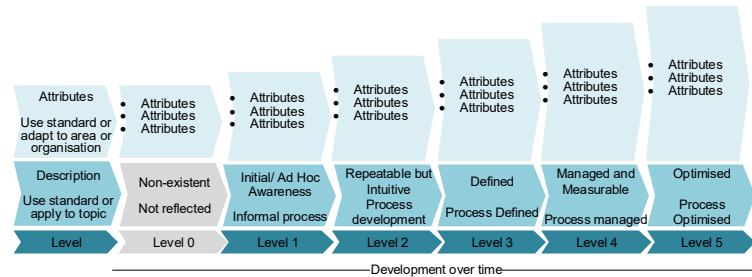

Figure 2 Maturity model framework

On the market there a standard models such as CMM and P3M3. Often we adapt them to a specific area, creating one model for organizational use and another model for a specific business area. Do we need different models for different purpose? Do we recommend the same model if we want to identify business areas needing improvement in our organization or if we want to create a benchmark between organizations?

The quality is important. I think the result depends on who familiar we are with maturity models and how well the attributes are described. The objective must be to provide a structured approach that ensures quality.

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4.   AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHIES

K. Westerlund. I work as an IT-strategist at Umeå University since 1997. I am a part of the IT Office and we have a mandate from the University Management to take strategic responsibility for all common IT at the university. At the beginning of the 90s I worked as a development strategist at Umeå University and in the sector. Between the years 1994 to 1997 I worked as a project manager and was responsible for the development of an IT system supporting human recourses, named Primula, for higher education in Sweden. During the years 2006 to 2012 I was a member of the Ladok Board. I have studied, economics, law and informatics at Umeå University.