



Case Study

Mobilizing an Organization to Achieve CMM Level 3

Situation

What do you do when IT projects are not consistently coming in on time and within budget? When you need to improve project delivery capabilities? When you have customers clamoring for attention? One organization in this position embarked on an initiative to implement software engineering best practices by adopting the Capability Maturity Model (CMM).

CMM is a proven approach to process improvement implemented by many companies throughout the world. Companies at Level 1 are considered to have an unstable environment for software development, while Level 2 companies have repeatable processes and some controls in place. Level 3 companies have a standard process for defining and maintaining software.¹

In 2002, the year in which this IT organization sought CMM Level 3, the median time to attain Level 2 maturity was 23 months and Level 3 was 22 months. This organization sought to jump from Level 1 to Level 3 in just 2 years. Only 38% of all organizations attempting Level 3 or higher had achieved this goal.² The organization's challenge was daunting.

Response

The CIO recognized that success would take superior execution and implementation, not just of process, but also of people. The organization engaged Partnering Resources to optimize user adoption, employee commitment and accountability, problem solving, and information flow.

Partnering Resources guided the CIO-appointed implementation team through key activities designed to support the rapid changes in process and procedure. With Partnering Resources' counsel, the team assessed stakeholder concerns, developed messages, and implemented communications.

Partnering Resources developed and rolled out an organization-wide survey that assessed over 600 employees' ongoing perceptions of the CMM project. It solicited ideas for improvement, identified areas of concern, and paved the way for collective problem solving. This information was enhanced by facilitated discussion groups in which leaders and employees came together to understand the impacts of CMM and solve critical problems.

Results

The organization achieved its goal: it was assessed by outside auditors as operating at Level 3 certification with 50% the time recommended to achieve this goal. By doing so, the organization boosted productivity and throughput significantly, improved project estimating and management, reduced software defects, and improved project delivery, all having a positive impact on speed to market.

¹ From *Capability Maturity Model for Software, Version 1.1* (February 1993), at www.sei.cmu.edu/pub/documents/93.reports/pdf/tr24.93.pdf

² From *Process Maturity Profile of the Software Community: 2002 Mid-Year Update* (August 2002), at www.sei.cmu.edu/appraisal-program/profile/pdf/SW-CMM/2002aug.pdf

Client Profile

Industry
Insurance

Division
Information Technology

Operating Budget
\$110 - 125M

Staffing Level
500 – 550 internal plus
100 – 250 outsourced

Key Responsibilities

- New technology development
- System architecture, management, and maintenance
- Provide value for technology investment

Strategic Goal

Advance from CMM Level 1 to Level 3 in two years

Critical Success Factors

- Active CIO and executive team leadership
- Dedicated implementation team
- Alignment with strategic goals
- Progress measurement and reporting
- Employee engagement
- Information flow & feedback systems
- Collaborative problem solving