Governance and Maturity

Governance is concerned with how a company organizes its managers. A company concerned with business processes, for example, will have managers assigned to assure that processes function as they should.

Maturity is not so easily defined. Its use among process practitioners usually derives from the work undertaken by the Software Engineering Institute (SEI) at Carnegie Mellon University. In the early Nineties, SEI was hired by the US Department of Defense (DoD) to develop criteria for determining which companies bidding on DoD contracts were likely to deliver the required quality on time and within budget. A number of spectacular failures in the Eighties suggested that the DoD didn't have a good way to make such judgments. SEI created the Capability Maturity Model (CMM) which was designed to determine how good software organizations were at managing their processes. The assumption underlying CMM was that organizations that understood and managed their processes in a systematic way would be more likely to meet their contractual obligations. Put another way: Organizations that didn't have well-defined processes, that didn't consistently perform tasks in the same way and didn't have data on how long tasks would take, or metrics for monitoring progress, would be unlikely to accurately predict how long a task would take or what it would ultimately cost. In the course of the Nineties, the SEI spent a lot of time studying organizations and refining its models. Figure 1 illustrates a popular overview of the CMM maturity ladder.
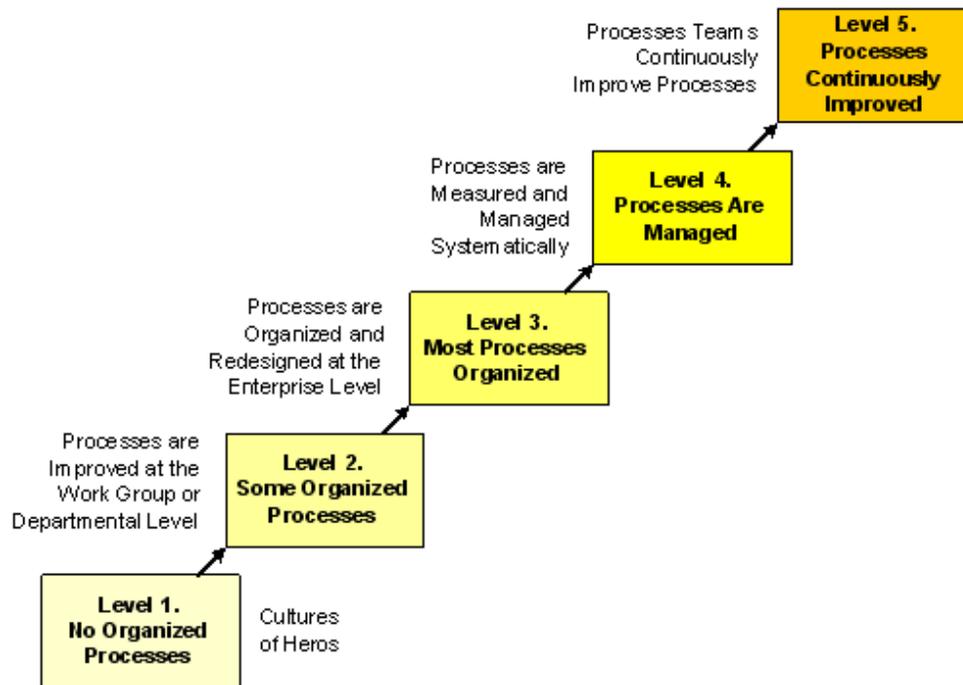

Figure 1. The SEI Capability Maturity Model (CMM) ladder

The idea of "maturity" caught on and other organizations developed other maturity models. Today, there are dozens. In an effort to pull together the variations that SEI had spawned, SEI created the CMM Integrated (CMMI), a revised maturity model that is quite a bit more complex than the original and that is generalized so that it is appropriate for a variety of processes.

What isn't obvious from Figure 1, or from the casual CMMI descriptions, is that CMM and CMMI focus on how managers perform their jobs. In effect, CMM and CMMI assume that if managers follow appropriate processes, then the company's

core processes will function efficiently. It's a reasonable assumption, backed by quite a bit of data, but it isn't a concept that is commonly understood. Consider a simple example. Company X has a supply chain that isn't functioning well. They hire consultants to help them redesign their supply chain. As a result of the redesign, Company X's costs are reduced and its supply chain functions much more consistently. Is Company X a more mature process organization as a result? Maybe, but if the work was done by outside consultants and if the managers responsible for managing the supply chain process haven't changed their behavior then, while Company X may have improved their supply chain process, there would be little improvement in their overall CMMI rating. In other words, there is a difference between improving a company's particular processes and improving a company's process governance capabilities.

Today, if you look at the various process maturity models, they fall roughly into two groups. One group is based on CMM and focuses on specifying the changes that a company needs to make in its process governance to assure consistently more mature process performance. The other group is based on the idea that companies improve the way their actual processes work. Gartner, for example, has proposed a BPM Maturity Model that focuses on process technologies and IT capabilities and not on management practices.

Neither approach is better than the other, and, in some sense, it all eventually blends together. The CMM-oriented approach to maturity, however, focuses on long term, systematic change that results in more sophisticated managers. The Process/IT approach focuses on short term changes in how things are done that make the organization more efficient. It's important to keep this basic distinction in mind when you consider process maturity models. That said, we have published a wide variety of articles on governance and on process maturity on the BPTrends website.

One of the original authors of the CMM methodology was Dr. Bill Curtis, and he has written a number of articles for BPTrends, often co-authored with John Alden. Some of their Columns explain the initial CMM/CMMI approach and others describe the work they did with the OMG to create a new CMM-derived Business Process Maturity Model (BPMM). Here are four examples:

[BPM and Organizational Maturity: Business Process Improvement Guided by the BPMM](#) Bill Curtis - November 07, 2006
In their initial Column, John Alden and Bill Curtis provide an overview of the Business Process Maturity Model and describe the five levels of Maturity.

[Business Process Management and Organizational Maturity: The What, Why and How of BPMM](#) John Alden - February 06, 2007
Read Bill Curtis and John Alden's Column this month to learn how the Business Process Maturity Model (BPMM) can be used for planning, prioritizing, managing and optimizing a company's business process program.

[BPM and Organizational Maturity: A Popular Misconception about the Maturity Models](#) Bill Curtis - April 01, 2007
Bill Curtis and John Alden dispute a common criticism of the Watts Humphrey's Process Maturity Framework - i.e., that it focuses on management practices rather than value-adding processes. Alden and Curtis dispel this misconception by examining all five levels of the Watts Humphrey's Process Maturity Framework.

[BPM and Organizational Maturity: Maturity Model du Jour](#) Bill Curtis - October 02, 2007
Bill Curtis and John Alden argue in favor of consolidating rather than expanding the number of Maturity models. They contend that the world needs only a handful of MM's and propose some means to achieve that end. Read their Column for some timely advice on this subject.

Here, Paul Harmon reviews a book that defines the SEI's move from CMM to CMMI.

[CMMI: Guidelines for Process Integration and Product Improvement](#) Book review by Paul Harmon - September 02, 2003.
Software development groups have been using the Capability Maturity Model

(CMM) for years to judge how well managed their software development processes are. CMM Improvement is an extended model that is more general in nature. This is the latest, definitive book on the SEI's CMM research and development program.

This Column, by JimSinur, who was one of the authors of the Gartner maturity model, describes the Gartner approach, which relies on technology rather than governance.

A Strategist's Perspective: Business Process Management Maturity Jim Sinur - May 01, 2007
In his initial column for BPTrends, Jim Sinur seeks to clarify and expand the definition of "maturity" in BPM. To do so, he proposes some sound oversight practices that will continuously improve your organization's processes.

A good example of an approach to maturity that is more process oriented, and based on research, is described in this paper by Dr. Michael Rosemann and Tonia de Bruin, at Queensland University of Technology.

Application of a Holistic Model for Determining BPM Maturity Michael Rosemann - February 01, 2005
Michael Rosemann and Tonia de Bruin report on the results of tests of the Holistic Model for Determining BPM Maturity that has been developed at Queensland University of Technology.

Examples of other process/technology approaches to process maturity are described in these publications.

The Business Process Maturity Model: A Practical Approach for Identifying Opportunities for Optimization David Fisher - September 07, 2004
David Fisher is the Managing Director at BearingPoint, and the author of a new book, Optimize Now (or else!). In this Article, he shows how a Maturity model can suggest a practical approach to identifying opportunities for optimization.

The Third Wave: Process Management Maturity Models Howard Smith - July 06, 2004
This month, Howard Smith and Peter Fingar reflect on CMM-inspired models and how they relate to the Third Wave of business process management.

Beyond Process Maturity to Process Competence Andrew Spanyi - June 01, 2004
Andrew Spanyi considers some efforts to create a process Maturity model and goes on to suggest that, in many cases, the major obstacle to organizational change is the silo- focused thinking of senior executives.

Michael Hammer's Process and Maturity Model Brad Powers - July 03, 2007
Brad Power presents a critique of Michael Hammer's article in the Harvard Business Review on PEMM (Process & Enterprise Maturity Model). While he believes that Hammer's PEMM may be useful to business process people, he points out what he considers to be some weaknesses you might want to consider.

BPM Methodologies and Process Maturity Paul Harmon - May 16, 2006
There are a number of BPM methodologies available today. Most were developed when companies' business process work was relatively immature. As companies have become more mature, newer methodologies are being developed to support more sophisticated BPM efforts.

Finally, here is a different take on maturity all together. These articles apply the basic concept of maturity to a completely new technical domain - SOA.

SOA Maturity Model Srikanth Inaganti - April 01, 2007
Believing that pursuing either technology or process in isolation will not produce the best result, Srikanth Inaganti and Sriram Aravamudan propose an SOA Maturity model for assessing the effectiveness of processes, people, and technology options, as well as the Maturity of the architecture.

SOA Maturity Model Scenarios Srikanth Inaganti - December 04, 2007

Srikanth Inaganti, in another of his insightful articles, simplifies the Maturity Model and demonstrates that a successful SOA Transformation Process, from Level One through Level Five, depends on wide-ranging IT processes. All who are interested in understanding Maturity Models will want to read this article.

Till next time,

Paul Harmon, Executive Editor