

IT IN SEARCH OF PROCESS EXCELLENCE - WHY

The Information Technology Infrastructure Library has been widely accepted as the standard for managing information technology infrastructure and operations. ITIL is a buzzword today and ITIL certification is becoming a mandatory qualification for job seekers and working professionals who want to demonstrate an understanding of its body of language. This article is for those who are new to IT process management for all those who have either been formally trained or intend to get trained in ITIL Best Practices.

The most obvious question an IT Executive asks is “Why focus on process improvement when what we really need to do is improve our software products and services? After all, we sell software products and services to our customers, not processes.” Improvements in the process result in measurable improvements in products and services, hence “process improvement” implies IT product AND IT service improvement.

Getting the process to produce the desired results is not easy. We should continuously identify areas where process efficiency can be improved. There are generally four goals for process improvement and their related drivers. For the benefit of those IT personnel who are new to process management I have explained in simple language the **four goals** of processes. They are Process *Effectiveness*, Process *Stability*, Process *Efficiency* and Process *Capability*.

PROCESS EFFECTIVENESS: Effectiveness of a process is the ability ‘to do the right things’. Process effectiveness implies that the activities being performed in the process are adequate to produce the desired results. Every process has objectives and outputs it has to deliver. A process is effective if the output produced is the ‘desired’ output or ‘expected’ output.

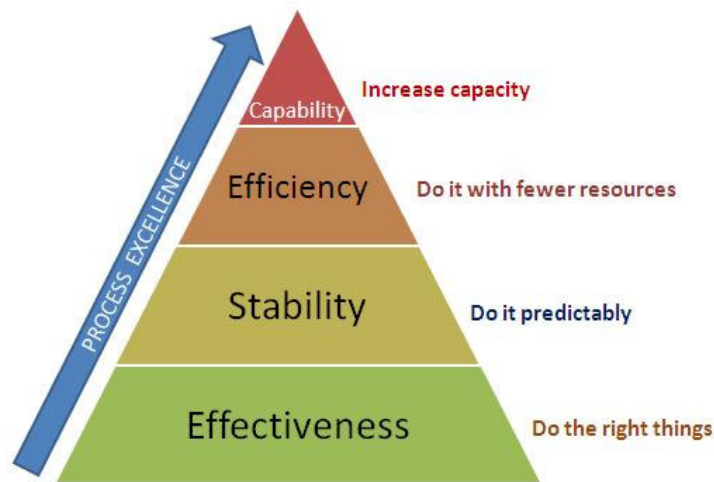


Fig 1: Four Goals of Process Improvement

For a process to be effective the following questions should be answered:

- Is the process producing what it is supposed to produce?
- Are the processes clearly defined and documented?
- Are there proper control mechanisms in place to check the process effectiveness?

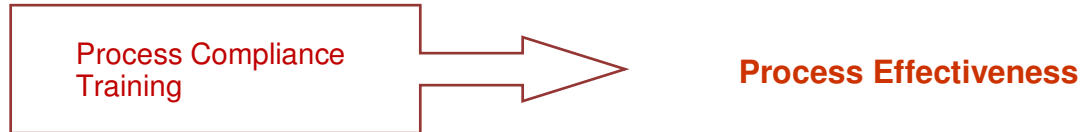


Fig 2: Drivers of Process Effectiveness

PROCESS STABILITY: Achieving Stability is to perform a process in a predictable manner, reducing variation from common causes. Process Stability is important and central to an organizations ability to produce products and services according to plan and to improve processes in order to produce better and more competitive products.

For a process to be stable the following questions should be answered:

- Is the process behaving in a predictable way?
- What are the causes for performance variation?
- What are the tools and techniques used by the process?

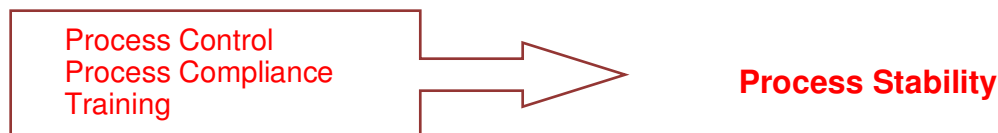


Fig 3: Drivers of Process Stability

PROCESS EFFICIENCY: Process efficiency is the measure to which the process obtains the required or desired outcomes with minimum consumption of resources. Goal of process efficiency is to continuously reduce the amount of resources consumed by the process once it obtains the required outcomes (process effectiveness).

For a process to be efficient the following questions should be answered:

- What resources is the process consuming?
- Is the process always consuming fewer resources?
- What is the variance in resource consumption along the time?

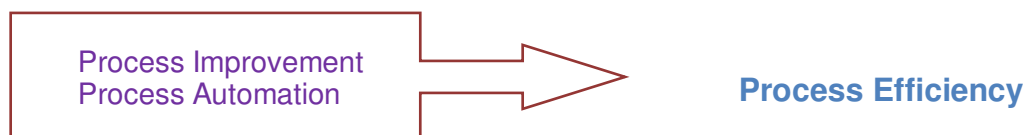


Fig 4: Drivers of Process Efficiency

PROCESS CAPABILITY: Process capability is the ability of a process to produce predictable results in a predictable manner. Process capability is characterized by maturity, where this term

implies that process capability must be known. This relies on the assumption that improving the maturity of a process as the CMM and Six Sigma models suggest, drives to the improvement of the capability of the process.

For a process to be capable the following questions should be answered:

- Is there a commitment to process improvement over time?
- Do we have a corporate culture that supports business oriented methods and procedures in order to achieve Process Improvement goals?

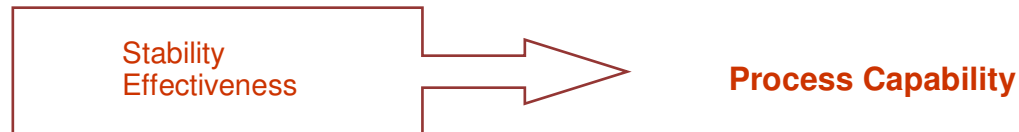


Fig 5: Drivers of Process Capability

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT: It takes uncompromising commitment from organizations to maintain a climate for continuous improvement to establish a framework for achieving incremental improvements that can result in more effective processes that can produce better IT services. Continuous improvement must be looked as a pre-requisite for long term success and it must be viewed as a way of life for process driven organizations.

About the Author: Venkat Madireddy is a Certified and Accredited ITSM Trainer based in India. He has over 15 years experience in Information Technology Industry. He has a BE & MBA from India, a Graduate Certificate in Project Management from Adelaide University, Australia and a Post Graduate Diploma in Training and Development from ICFAI University, India. He is certified in Outsourcing Management for Information Technology by Singapore Computer Society and National University of Singapore. He has trained over 400 executives on ITIL, ISO 20000, ISO 27002 and Project Management in India, Singapore, Malaysia and Middle East.