

Secrets to Establishing an Enterprise-wide Methodology

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Introduction

Many organizations are enticed by the benefits promised by having a single, common enterprise-wide methodology for delivering IT solutions to the business. Executives find it hard to ignore compelling benefits resulting from having a "single way to develop and deliver solutions to the business" and having a "common language across their enterprise". These key benefits are summarized below.

Single way to deliver solutions to the business

- Promotes knowledge sharing for knowledge-intensive tasks
- Improves project planning efficiency due to use of templated approaches
- Eases communication of dependencies across integrated solutions
- Improves estimating accuracy due to consistent, repeatable techniques
- Improves decision-making quality due to consistent measuring and reporting
- Increases predictability, repeatability and efficiency
- Allows focused, continual leveraging and refinement of key best practices
- Promotes reuse of software, design models, patterns and techniques

Common language across the enterprise

- Improves communication clarity and efficiency
- Enables efficient multi-tasking of key resources
- Provides faster ramp-ups of new resources
- Enables quality assurance reviews to focus on content rather than format
- Improves risks mitigation with clearer expectations and consistent reporting
- Increases overall efficiency and speed of multi-role activities

Even with this strong desire to establish an enterprise-wide methodology, very few organizations actually achieve this goal. In fact, the overall success rate appears to be thirty percent. That is, roughly two-thirds of the organizations that take on an initiative to establish an enterprise-wide methodology simply do not achieve their stated goals. Many of these initiatives actually find themselves "on the wrong path" within the first few weeks. Often their resulting failure takes several months or years to recognize and corrective actions, if undertaken, are often simply too little, too late.

This paper explores several secrets uncovered by our teams through hands-on development and deployment of enterprise-wide methodologies for a number of clients.

It's Not the Methodology...

The key to successfully enabling an enterprise-wide methodology is not solely the intrinsic value of the methodology itself, but how the methodology is viewed, crafted and positioned for adoption by the enterprise. This statement forms the basis for several of our secrets to establishing an enterprise-wide methodology.

Our **first secret** highlights the importance of three Best Practices. Best Practices are those methods or techniques commonly used by successful organizations and have been proven “in the field” to reliably deliver the desired results in the most effective manner time after time.

Our experience has shown that successfully establishing a common methodology requires three Best Practices: establishing a sense of urgency, treating the development and deployment of the methodology like a project, and ensuring the change to the business and information technology areas is proactively managed.

The **second secret** is that all three of these Best Practices need to be used together. A single one, or even two of these Best Practices working together, is not sufficient. Successful establishment of an enterprise-wide methodology demands all three. It also demands the presence of all three Best Practices from the beginning of the methodology initiative.

The **third secret** uncovered by our teams is that if any of the three best practices are absent or unobtainable, it may actually be a symptom of a larger problem with the methodology initiative. This is explained further as we delve into the details of each best practice.

Best Practice: Establish a Sense of Urgency

Organizations must realize that establishing a methodology involves significant changes to not only the process and supporting technologies, but also the people in the organization. Their roles, required skills, responsibilities, empowerment and value to the organization will be affected. And like most human beings, change is typically not desired – especially if there is no sense of urgency.

A sense of urgency, if properly applied, actually instills three distinct perspectives:

1. Action (resulting in a change) is required immediately and is unavoidable;
2. The choice of alternative actions is limited; and
3. Once the change is made there is no returning to the previous state.

Statement of Need

Establishing a sense of urgency requires a clear, concise statement of a tangible, measurable need and an explanation of what will occur if the need is not met.

This “Statement of Need” can be expressed as simply as the following:

“We need to improve our efficiency and nimbleness in delivering quality solutions to the business within the next 120 days or else they will find an outside source to provide this service for next fiscal year.”

“We need to decrease our cost of delivering quality solutions to the business by year end or else the number of hours expected from our employees is going to increase from 42 hours per week to 48 hours per week.”

Both of these examples are from scenarios where the organization successfully established an enterprise-wide methodology and achieved their goals. Both

examples clearly indicate what is being solved (efficiency, nimbleness or cost), clearly delineate the timeframes and clearly indicate what will happen if no change is made (loss of employment or more hours at the same rate of pay).

Adversely, a weak or vague Statement of Need can literally drain the energy from your initiative. Consider the following example:

"We need to ensure there are no train wrecks for our high profile projects. This is why we are delivering a new methodology."

This Statement of Need, an actual example from a struggling organization, does not indicate a timeframe and does not specify what will happen if no change is made. Although it infers that a new methodology will eliminate or reduce the number of "train wrecks", continuing the current "bad" behavior may or may not adversely affect the employees of the organization. In fact, it implies that if an employee is not associated with the high profile projects and is not a stakeholder of the company, that most likely they will not be affected.

Assessments, CSFs and KPIs Lead to a Statement of Need

A key to defining a proper Statement of Need is to perform an assessment of the organization prior to undertaking an initiative to improve or establish an enterprise-wide methodology.

An assessment typically provides a snapshot of the organization along several perspectives including overall environment, process and supporting tools. This information is derived from both inspections of the organization as well as stakeholder interviews with representatives of each key role. It then provides recommendations for process improvement in terms of short-term, tactical gains (quick wins) and longer-term strategic improvements or needs to be fulfilled by a new methodology.

The assessment may also express the needs in terms of the Critical Success Factors (CSFs) and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The CSFs identify those attributes of the organization that are key to successfully delivering solutions to the business. The need for a methodology usually entails improving a number of those CSFs. The KPIs are quantifiable, visible measurements, agreed to beforehand, that reflect the CSFs of an organization. If a KPI is going to be of any value, there must be a way to accurately define and measure it relative to established targets.

For instance, if the CSF is "reliable delivery" then a related KPI may be "variance of actual release date to the estimated date". The KPI permits the CSF to be measured, leading to baselines of achieving the CSF both prior to and after implementation of the methodology.

Another source of the Statement of Need may arise from the desire to avoid "Classic Mistakes" in solution delivery. Some ineffective development practices have been seductively chosen so often, by so many people, with such predictable, bad results that they deserve to be called "Classic Mistakes". Even if avoidance of Classic Mistakes is driving the initiative, this need should be translated to the core CSFs and KPIs.

Demanding that a Statement of Need is defined prior to undertaking the initiative is extremely valuable to the efficiency and ultimate success of the initiative.

- Ensures there is a need
- Helps to define the tangible, measurable benefits
- Enables the need in to be expressed simple terms
- Helps to define what will happen in nothing is done
- Avoids the impression from the employees of "just another methodology"
- Assists with enabling visible executive buy-in

If there is difficulty in defining the Statement of Need, this may be a sign that the initiative is failed before it is even started.

Establishing a visible sense of urgency requires not only a clear statement of a need but also an explanation of what will occur if the need is not met. This can be aided by a technique referred to as "Burning the Bridges".

Burn the Bridges, Burn `em Now!

"When your army has crossed the border, you should burn your boats and bridges, in order to make it clear to everybody that you have no yearning for home." This advice is as valuable to supporting a strategy for establishing a methodology as it was in Sun Tzu's time regarding strategies for war.

The point is actually quite simple. If your team faces only two alternatives, victory or death, then you can expect they will muster up everything they can to win, considering the alternative is certain death. If however you give your team an attractive preference other than fight or die, there is a good chance they may choose that option if victory does not seem possible.

There are two elements to ensure the enterprise realizes that the "Bridges" are indeed "Burning". The first element is displayed by the initiative leader in the issuance of a strong Statement of Need. The previous examples by using the "or else" phrase clearly indicated that there were just two alternatives.

The second element consists of strongly portraying which path is being undertaken and that our team will not be stopped. A second interpretation of the Art of War demonstrates this element.

"If your adversary has burned his boats and destroyed his cooking-pots, and is ready to stake all on the issue of a battle, he must not be pushed to extremities." This indicates that if the Bridges are indeed Burned, that the team will not be distracted from their goal and are risking everything to accomplish it.

This helps to set the stage for the initiative – we have identified a need, established a single path and will not be satisfied until that goal is achieved, there is not turning back. Once the employees realize that returning across the Bridge is not an option, that returning to the old methodologies is not a potential, they will focus on the goal and not be distracted by other alternatives.

Burning the Bridges and enabling a strong Statement of Need can be reinforced by the presence of a visible "evangelist" leading the initiative. Often the success of enterprise-wide changes demands an effective change agent. In terms of an

initiative for an enterprise-wide methodology, the evangelist role is characterized by the following:

- A demonstrated level of experience, knowledge and skill in enabling and evolving enterprise-wide methodologies.
- Ability to draw upon past experiences of each of the key project roles in order to communicate effectively not only at the C-level but with project leads as well.
- Visible, continual, unforgiving passion about achieving the goals offered by an enterprise-wide methodology.
- Ability to temper the value of the methodology, avoiding the “silver bullet” syndrome by recognizing the importance of people and tools as well.
- Recognition of the need to tailor the methodology for the organization and for each project and the need to evolve the methodology based on feedback from practitioners.
- Ability to trace the methodology elements to the Statement of Need.
- Visibly backed and empowered by the Executive Team.

Just like any other change initiative, an evangelist is critical to achieving success.

Best Practice: Treat it like a Project

Our second Best Practice is to treat the initiative like a project. This may seem like a simple concept, but few organizations realize the importance of managing the development and deployment of the methodology as a project. Instead, they rationalize their inability to craft roadmaps for the initiative, establish milestones, prioritize content, and define release dates or just plain deliver as a symptom of “having stakeholders that keep changing their mind”.

Frequently, the managers of a methodology initiative may even view this bad symptom as a good thing. For example “our release dates keep changing since we are in tune with the business priorities and are able to adapt as priorities change”. Being nimble is good, as long it does not result in never deploying the methodology to the enterprise. Sounds like a normal challenge to a project and a great reason to “manage the methodology initiative like a project”.

Treating the initiative like a project allows the sponsoring organization to leverage all the best practices identified for any other IT related project. Among these are risk mitigation, change management, identifying stakeholders early, managing requirements, etc.

Each initiative should strive to:

- Have a roadmap displaying development activities and releases.
- Target early success and visible progress through “quick wins” that display both the ability to deliver and the potential value of the methodology.
- Provide frequent status based upon formal risk mitigation procedures.
- Ensure roles on the methodology development and deployment teams are clear, including who will act at the “analyst” to solicit requirements.
- Identify stakeholders early in the initiative. These may be formalized into a Software Engineering Process Group or a Methodology Leadership Team.
- Clearly identify and communicate the charters for any formal group associated with the initiative, such as Leadership or Subject Area Teams.
- Communicate a vision, based on stakeholder needs.

- Be guided by a project plan identifying activities, timelines, releases and deliverables.
- Provide standards (templates, style guides) for deliverables.
- Perform quality assurance on the deliverables prior to release.
- Manage change to scope, budget and project plans.

It is far too easy to view the methodology initiative as a “special case” being developed by “an elite team of senior process engineers” that does not require the rigors afforded a development project. This is a Classic Mistake and should be avoided.

In fact, a Best Practice is to use the methodology to develop the methodology. That is, ensure the development of the methodology is leveraging the Best Practices that have been identified as the foundation of the new methodology. This provides stakeholders with an introduction to the “new” language and visible evidence that the methodology is able to achieve their goals.

Best Practice: Manage the Change

Our final Best Practice is to proactively manage the changes to the organization that will result from the adoption of the methodology. Often this whole area is overlooked until the methodology is ready to be deployed. At that point, the opportunities for “priming” the organization for change have passed.

It is critical to understand that the establishment of an enterprise-wide methodology will result in not just changes to the methodology, but also to the people (culture, skills, and motivation) and the supporting tools. Any such initiative should clearly identify the areas of change and provide ample communication and “marketing” of the change in advance of each release.

The marketing of the change is designed to both communicate to the practitioners, managers and stakeholders the upcoming changes as well as to increase understanding and generate interest in the methodology. Any such marketing, whether through active or passive means, should clearly and concisely answer the following questions:

- What is it?
- What is in it for me?
- How will this help me?
- Why now?
- What’s next?

Remember, we are attempting to convince an entire enterprise, practitioner by practitioner, to adopt a new language and a new way of delivering solutions.

One final note on marketing the initiative concerns the name of the methodology initiative and various support groups. Consider a “branded name” for the initiative that conveys a clear sense of urgency and focus. Also consider a tagline to help with marketing. The following is a list of successful and less than successful names of methodology initiatives.

Successful

SPIRIT
Tempest
Foundation

Less than Successful

SEPG (seepage)
MITE
KRUP

Studies have indicated that the Department of Defense programs associated with an aggressive program name have always received the most funding and have remained successful. For instance, Fighting Falcon, Talon, Predator have all prospered, while other programs such as DAVT or JSF have not.

Summary: Avoid the AntiPatterns

Once you have successfully instilled a sense of urgency, are treating the initiative like a project, and are effectively managing change – don't let your guard down – there are still potential avenues to failure. A majority of these are caused by AntiPatterns.

An AntiPattern is what not to do: behaviors, habits or approaches that seem worthwhile but do not facilitate in the long term what you hope to accomplish. Left unchecked, these may impede the progress and quality of a project.

Our **final secret** is to be vigilant and avoid AntiPatterns.

The following is a list of common AntiPatterns to avoid when establishing an enterprise-wide methodology.

Name: Familiar but not the Best

Symptom: Having difficulty explaining the rationale behind elements of the methodology.

Cause: The methodology team has incorporated "familiar practices" in the place of "best practices" in hopes of increasing adoption of the methodology.

Prescription: Identify up front the best practices that will be part of the methodology. These should be derived from your need statement.

Name: Golden Hammer

Symptom: Project teams are rebelling against having to adopt to the methodology, quoting that it is too prescriptive and does not account for the subtleties of their specific project needs. For example, their project may be focused on incorporating a new software package from a vendor, but the methodology prescribes a significant amount of overhead that is not of value to this type of project.

Cause: The methodology team believes in the "one size fits all" mantra, not realizing that each project type has different needs.

Prescription: Provide a baseline methodology and also several subordinate "development cases" or "project types" that allow for specific, recommended tailoring of the baseline methodology for different main project types such as infrastructure, package implementation, data warehousing.

Name: Silver bullet

Symptom: The projects have adopted the methodology but are still struggling.

Cause: The methodology has been "over sold" and now the project teams believe that all is required is to follow the methodology to the letter. The impact of project team skills, culture and tools is ignored.

Prescription: Ensure that the rollout of the methodology is in parallel with initiatives focused on skill growth, role development and tool recommendations.

Name: One release and we're done!

Symptom: The methodology was rolled out last year, the methodology team has dispersed, but now project teams are finding flaws and ill-fits with the methodology – and are abandoning it.

Cause: The methodology team has not realized that developing a methodology is an on-going process.

Prescription: Ensure the methodology evolves after deployment. This is the time where opportunity for valuable feedback is highest. The methodology team needs to establish a feedback loop with the project team to ensure the methodology is evolved and refinement based on lessons learned from “the field”.

Name: IT is an island

Symptom: The business side of the organization is not buying in to the methodology.

Cause: The methodology developers have not included the business as a stakeholder in the methodology development.

Prescription: The development of the methodology represents a safe outlet to communicate with the business on how better to solve their delivery needs. Take advantage of it and recognize the business as important stakeholders in the initiative.

Name: Terminology Wars

Symptom: The methodology is built upon sound principles, but is referred to by non-standard terms.

Cause: The methodology team has developed the methodology but has built it upon terms that will not “conflict” with other terms used in the organization, or have included terms where not applicable in order to pacify key stakeholders.

Prescription: The methodology will be the source of terminology within the IT and business organizations dealing with solution delivery. Do not water this down by placating stakeholders or avoiding “overused” terms.

Name: Mushroom Management

Symptom: The methodology appears to academic or weak in key areas.

Cause: The methodology team has been kept in the dark and fed fertilizer. End-user interaction has been prohibited due to fear of commitment and fear of failure.

Prescription: Ensure that the end practitioners of the methodology are directly involved as stakeholders and testers to the methodology.

Name: Release-a-phobia

Symptom: The methodology is only updated and released once or twice a year, and each release is delayed.

Cause: The methodology team is not treating the development of the methodology as a project, striking a balance between time, quality and cost. Often the sponsors will suffer from analysis paralysis or simply from fear of failure.

Prescription: Establish a quarterly release cycle. Elements of the methodology that do not make the cut simply move to the next scheduled release. Keep the marketing and release management loosely coupled with the methodology development. Treat the development of the methodology as a project – with project plans, risk management and contingency planning.

Name: Lava Flow

Symptom: The methodology appears cumbersome and unwieldy, either to use or maintain.

Cause: The architects of the methodology have not taken an "object-oriented" view towards the design of the methodology. This AntiPattern is also detected in methodologies that have evolved out of long, extensive research and ultimately resulting into production. Because of the long duration of the research segment, some of the developers would have left the organization without documenting the purpose and function of specific elements. This will leave the future methodology developers looking aghast at a mass of immovable documentation and not knowing what to do with it. Because of this characteristic of unknown mass of flow of documentation, the AntiPattern derives the name as 'Lava Flow'.

Prescription: Treat the elements of the methodology in an object-oriented fashion, ensuring abstraction and loosely coupled items. For instance, ensure the guidance and instructions of each work element are distinct from the definition of roles. Keep the roles, activities and work product descriptions separate from the main description of the relationship among these items.

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