



Tips for the Process Lead and Cohorts

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HELPING YOU ACHIEVE YOUR STRATEGIC BUSINESS GOALS

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HELPING YOU ACHIEVE YOUR STRATEGIC BUSINESS GOALS

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Background

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- **Projects usually are under schedule pressure from management to simultaneously “get the Level n ” while producing top quality products and providing excellent customer service**
- **Senior management has the pressure of achieving a Maturity Level yesterday, at minimal to no cost, not using overhead dollars, and with minimal impact on project resources**
- **In short, the Process Lead must pull off a miracle**



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Scope



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This presentation covers:

- **Common obstacles encountered by Process Leads**
- **Applicable organizational change management approaches**
- **How to get the project staff engaged and productive in implementing the process**
- **How to obtain strong management buy-in**

The principles addressed here can also be applied to ISO implementation and other organizational initiatives

Brain Teasers



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- **Why is the industry average 18-24 months for achieving CMMI level 2?**
 - Why so long?
- **What can be done to reduce the time?**



The Answers



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- **The CMMI is complex and challenging, but that's not why it takes so long**
- **The challenge is changing the organization's way of operating**
- **The Process Lead can:**
 - Manage the organizational change aspects that you can control
 - Provide information about what is not in your hands
 - Be clear about what you have no impact on
 - Be clear about what management needs to do

Process Lead Skill Set



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- **To facilitate organizational change, the Process Leader needs:**
 - A strong personality
 - Management, technical, *and* interpersonal communication skills
 - In-depth knowledge of the CMMI
- **In fact, CMMI expertise may be the easiest part of the job**
- **The more challenging aspects of a Process Leader's job are:**
 - Staying organized, positive, and decisive
 - Communicating a lot of information to a time challenged, other focused audience
 - Knowing when to spend money and when not to, when to get training or not, when to call the consultant or not
 - Getting executive management's active involvement and leadership regarding CMMI implementation

Common Obstacles



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- The Process Lead
- The Sponsor
- The Organization
- The Consultant



Common Obstacles - The Sponsor

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The Sponsor:

- May have unrealistically high expectations of the process lead
- Not leading the CMMI effort by example, no time for CMMI, always on travel, not taking minutes in their meetings, relies on the grass roots effort
- Holds the wrong person, the process lead, responsible for implementation (responsibility without authority)
- Sets a bad example, e.g., the sponsor won't follow the process, then no one else does either
- Views CMMI process as separate from the everyday business
- Doesn't have sufficient funding and/or staff for PI
- Won't acknowledge the issues, is defensive, ...
- Sponsor won't:
 - Make decisions
 - Implement change
 - Discuss process status at the senior status meetings
 - Re-organize when needed
 - Assign people to key positions such as QA and CM

Common Obstacles- Process Lead

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- **The Process Lead:**

- Has no authority
- Doesn't or won't use the consultant in order to save money
- Develops a “unique” scale for measuring progress, not necessarily consistent with the CMMI
- Reports “Everything is on track” even though it isn't, to save face
- Doesn't heed consultant's advice, guidance, and direction
 - Uses the consultant only after the fact, to review what the process lead has done

Common Obstacles - The Organization

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- **The Organization (in general):**
 - Roles and responsibilities of the organization are not clearly defined
 - Have tried process improvement for the past 3 years
 - “My last company” ...
 - “We have great processes, they’re just not documented”
 - Resources are limited and have competing responsibilities

Common Obstacles - The Consultant

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- **The Consultant:**

- May have a bad attitude
 - “Do everything I tell you and don’t ask questions”
 - “I’m the consultant, therefore I know all”
 - “One interpretation is correct, mine”
 - “Fix with the same methods that I have always used”
- The consultant doesn’t understand your unique organization
- Limited budget for using the consultant



Common Organizational Obstacles - Excuses

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Excuses voiced from throughout the organization:

- “The last consultant said that we didn’t have to document anything and we could still get a level 2”
- “You said...” (and proceed to conveniently misquote you and take everything you’ve said out of context)
- “I’m a project management/CM/QA expert. I was on a project where it was done”
- “You don’t understand my project, we’re very complex”
- Every project is “special”; “CMMI doesn’t apply to my project”
- “Our customer won’t let us do CMMI; our customer won’t pay for QA; our customer doesn’t want us spending our time doing CMMI” and so on...



How Far Can We Go?



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- **Many issues are straightforward and can be addressed directly**
 - With the sponsor
 - With the consultant
 - With the individuals in the organization or in group training
- **Others may be political or sensitive**
 - A re-org or buy-out is about to happen
- **Having the courage to address issues can be difficult**
- **Not doing it can lead to negative consequences, e.g., never achieving Level 2, getting to Level 2 with minimal to no ROI**
- **Some issues are better left alone**
 - Choose your battles

Tips for Overcoming the Obstacles - Sponsor

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- **Plan for meetings with your sponsor during the first couple of months to address and resolve any organizational obstacles**
 - Obtain (request) required resources
 - CM Lead
 - Quality Manager
 - Ensure you have the time to lead
 - Ensure you have the appropriate skill set, get CMMI training
 - Ensure you have the authority or work closely with those that do in order to affect change
- **Succinctly document your key points before speaking with the sponsor and executive team**
 - Respect their time

Tips for Overcoming the Obstacles - Process Lead

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Problem: Responsibility without authority

Solution:

- Do accept responsibility for developing processes and providing implementation guidance
- Don't accept responsibility for actions that you don't have the authority to achieve, such as implementation
 - Management must take the responsibility for implementation
- Don't try to change the organization, this is the sponsor's responsibility; provide recommendations for changing the organization
- Be clear in your process improvement plan, schedule, and presentations what you can and cannot do

Tips for Overcoming the Obstacles - Process Lead

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Problem: Lack of management buy-in

Solution:

- Make expectations clear; not the generic “management must buy-in”
 - Have senior management hold middle management accountable for process change on their projects
 - Report on their own progress and be held accountable
- Provide management with succinct tasks, not fuzzy tasks
- Provide management with templates and checklists for what tasks they need to do and by when they need to do them
- Provide the templates for middle management to use for reporting and the agenda for senior management
- Show dependencies on the schedule and the CMMI appraisal date if senior management doesn't hold middle management accountable for implementation

Tips for Overcoming the Obstacles - Organization

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Problem: Projects try to opt-out of CMMI

Solution: Clearly define what the scope is and make your position known

- Work with the sponsor to clearly and concisely define the scope of the CMMI effort
- Work with the sponsor for “one voice” message
 - “All projects are special, but, ... all projects must follow CMMI”
- Address project implementation details and issues on a case by case basis
 - Sit down with each project manager and identify their issues and challenges
 - Customer
 - Lifecycle phase
 - Type of project, whether maintenance, development, partial software, etc.
 - Work together with the manager to develop an implementation strategy for their project

Tips for Overcoming the Obstacles - Organization

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- **Problem: Overly committed resources**
- **Solution: Plan for and use process staff wisely**
 - Identify hours and dates that you require from process staff and work the schedule with them as well as their management
 - Start with a detailed schedule and personnel requirements
 - Arrange an escalation and resolution process to address availability issues; don't wait for them to happen, we know it will, plan for it and manage to it
 - Don't baby-sit the process staff; use the process, use your steering committee
 - Meet with your process staff regularly and use an agenda and action item list
 - Keep the action item list up to date and accessible, not hidden on a directory where only you know where it is
 - Report on individuals' progress, give them credit, and report on their lack of progress and impact to the schedule and milestones if individuals aren't available

Tips for Overcoming the Obstacles - Consultant

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- **When you can do things internally, e.g., editing processes for grammar, then do so**
- **Use your consultant for guidance and direction**
 - Collaborate with your consultant
 - Ask questions and listen to the answers
- **Manage the process improvement program**
 - Use the CMMI principles
 - Take minutes and track action items
 - Don't rely on the consultant for basic project management of the process improvement program; that is your job



Conclusions



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- **Not only must you know the CMMI and your organization, you need to be a good team facilitator with good leadership skills**
- **Knowing the obstacles and managing them early in the program can make the difference between meeting a schedule or not, and can alter the environment from an adversarial uphill battle to a challenging but rewarding success story**
- **Make it easy for management and staff to know what needs to be done, when it needs to be done, and who has to do it**
- **Use the CMMI principals to manage the process improvement program**
- **Despite the challenges a Process Leader must overcome, using common sense and a little chutzpah, success is very achievable**

The Process Lead's Invocation



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*"Grant me the serenity to accept
responsibility for the things I can control,
to not sign up for the things I can't, and
the wisdom to know the difference"*



Comskil is a woman owned small business headquartered in Bethesda, Maryland

- Galina Knopman, President
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