Acquisition Oversight as a Function of Program Office Capability Determined Using a Model-based Assessment

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Overview

- Background
- Assessment Methodology
- Typical Findings
- What We Learned
- Summary & Conclusion
Background

- Rapid Improvement Team (RIT) Initiative
- RIT Pilots
- RIT Assessment Objectives
Rapid Improvement Team Initiative

- Sponsored by OSD/NII
- Focused on reducing IT program cycle times
- Relief from “full-blown” acquisition system requirements
- Pilots distributed among components and Defense agencies
- Performance to be assessed for effectiveness
Twelve pilots originally identified
Significant differences in their characteristics
No two pilots tried exactly the same set of concepts
Pool of twelve decreased over time
RIT Assessment Objectives

- Validate RIT initiative concepts
- Identify best practices
- Determine applicability of maturity models to acquisition organizations
- Pilot an assessment methodology that would provide “ground truth” about acquisition organizations and programs
  - Possible basis for establishing risk associated with “risk based oversight”
Assessment Methodology

- Planning & Preparation
- Team Composition
- Nominal Schedule
- Model Selection
Planning & Preparation

- Mutually agreeable date; at least six weeks in advance
- Program office selects model and approximately twelve Process Areas of interest
- Program office appoints focal point for planning & logistics
- Team is formed, including one program office member
- Detailed agenda is prepared and interviewees scheduled
- Documents are made available (preferably electronically)
- Interview questions are prepared
Team Composition

- Lead Assessor
- OSD/NII representative
- Component/agency oversight organization representative
- Program office representative

- Sometimes more than one of the above categories (for orientation, familiarization, etc.)
- Split process areas in half for mini-team focus
Nominal Schedule

▲ 72 hour elapsed time

▲ Begins after lunch on day one with in-brief, program manager interview, and team caucus

▲ Second day devoted to interviews and document reviews

▲ Third day allows for follow-up interviews & document reviews followed by findings preparation and validation, then briefing preparation

▲ Fourth day morning devoted to final review, out-brief to program office, and debrief
Focus is on acquisition organization, so program office permitted to choose between SEI’s SA-CMM and FAA’s iCMM

No ratings of process areas or maturity levels

Although focus was on process areas selected by the program office, findings were briefed if they applied to non-selected process areas

Process area selection guided by the concepts being piloted by the particular program
Typical Findings

▲ Strengths
▲ Improvement Opportunities
The team found evidence that when the customer expresses short term needs, the program office has been able to respond using agile spiral acquisition with rapid costing, reprioritizing, and delivery.

It appears that making DOORS tool requirements data available on [a web site] is an effective way to involve industry and may constitute a RIT Best Practice.
Typical Improvement Opportunities

- It appears that there are no plans for periodic post-implementation reviews of the evolving [ ] program.

- It appears that requirements are not connected explicitly to the high-level needs documented in the Mission Needs Statement (MNS) and Operational Requirements Document (ORD).
What We Learned

▲ About Insight
  ▶ Program Office Level
  ▶ Component/Agency Oversight Level
  ▶ OSD Level
▲ About Acquisition -Focused Maturity Models
▲ About the Possibility of Risk-based Oversight
Every program office believes the results were worth the effort
Became familiar with component/agency oversight level and OSD concerns
Rare chance to step back and observe status and progress
Several significant “saves:” problems identified with plenty of time to resolve them
Program office team members remained behind as change agents
Able to observe day-to-day operations and meet program office personnel

Insight at a depth not normally associated with periodic reviews of a day or less

Able to bridge program office - OSD communication gap

Exposure to functions and concerns not normally raised to headquarters level
“Ground truth” available to OSD, as opposed to typical review of paper products filtered through several levels.

Identified potential best practices for adoption across the community

Able to bridge program office - OSD communication gap

Exposure to functions and concerns not normally raised to OSD level

Able to observe impact of policies and directives at the execution level
Acquisition-focused Maturity Models

- Both SA-CMM and iCMM provide useful framework for appraising processes and procedures in an acquisition organization.

- iCMM usable by both acquisition organization and development organization in an integrated product team environment.

- Use of a maturity model to appraise an acquisition organization enables a repeatable, differentiable approach to risk-based acquisition oversight.
Use of a maturity model to appraise an acquisition organization enables a repeatable, differentiable approach to risk-based acquisition oversight.

The results of a model-based mini-assessment could be used to determine the appropriate level and frequency of oversight for information system programs.

The effort associated with periodic mini-assessments may entail no more person hours than traditional document-based oversight.

The output associated with periodic mini-assessments is significantly more useful than the output of traditional document-based oversight.
Summary

- 72-hour pilot mini-assessments provided benefits to all the stakeholders
- Acquisition focused maturity models can be useful to acquisition organizations as well as for oversight
- Disciplined periodic maturity model-based assessments of acquisition organizations can provide results that could serve as the basis of risk-based acquisition oversight
Acquisition focused maturity models should be supported, adopted, and evolved.

Mini-assessments based on acquisition focused maturity models could contribute to significantly enhanced acquisition oversight.

The effort associated with mini-assessments as an oversight methodology is no greater than, and may be less than, the effort associated with document-based oversight.

Risk-based oversight is possible using the results of mini-assessments as the basis for determining the risk associated with the program office’s capability.