ITSM Maturity Assessment Models – How does your organization stack up?
The Federal Leaders Playbook Season 1, Episode 3

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Tom Hamill: Today's subject's going to be: 'Maturity Assessment Model - How Does Your Organization Stack Up?'

Eric Lazerson: Alright. I think, I think that's a fascinating topic to-to-to dive into.

Tom Hamill: Are you excited?

Kerri Posteraro: You look excited.

Eric Lazerson: I try to look excited. Yeah, the, it's the intro into every new organization is where are you today? So, every ITIL book, every IT, you know, book when you start looking at measuring organizations performance, you've got to start somewhere, and my personal preference is to start at 'where are you today?'. There's a lots of ways to capture that. I've run into a number of organizations recently where because assessments have been done for so long in so many different facets across IT and other parts of the business that the word assessment is not seen favorably.

Kerri Posteraro: Do you think that the word assessment got a bad reputation because the organization feels like the already know confidently where they are, or that they've done these in the past and didn't get a clear result from it?

Tom Hamill: Yeah, I think yeah, they believe they know where they're at. So, it's almost, they take offense to you.

Eric Lazerson: They do take offense to that. It-it's fascinating to watch at that workshop that we were doing, and when I mentioned the word assessment, we had been in there for probably 4 hours in the morning and we were in an afternoon session and I was like 'okay so we're getting somewhere, we're going to come in we're going to help you do all these things' and I said 'we should take a little time to do an assessment' and when I said the words 'take a little time' the guy sat back in his chair and he kind of looked at me and he said, "Eric I don't want to take any more time to do an assessment because you're going to go away for weeks and I'm not going to hear anything and then you're going to plop some paper in front of me and what does it mean."

Kerri Posteraro: And at a broad and executive level I know where I am and where I want to go but I don't know what's preventing me from getting there and what challenges I can anticipate.

Eric Lazerson: And that's where I would to say and sometimes I say it, kind of in a negative way I've been told, 'you don't know where you're at, you don't know what's preventing you and I can help.' So, I've, I'm learning through the, through the years how to soften that. I think our approach is that, at that meeting, through the first four hours of talking to you and several of your developers and several folk from the business I've already done an assessment.

Tom Hamill: Yeah.

Kerri Posteraro: Right.

Eric Lazerson: I already have that output of what I would tell you but I only have a piece of it and if you give me a few days and give me access to a few more people I can complete that picture.

Kerri Posteraro: Right.

Eric Lazerson: It'll make your upgrade more successful. It will make your organization improve the way that they're operating today. I'll call it whatever you want. I don't have to call it an assessment.

Tom Hamill: But you're trying to get a baseline where they're at now and that baseline then tells you the maturity and then how to drive forward with that. So, that's also part of it is grabbing the assessment, making that baseline and then saying this is how we're going to drive you forward in maturity.

Kerri Posteraro: Right.

Tom Hamill: But I have a question, you know people say maturity, where are we getting maturity from? How do we measure maturity? Should I bring up another Wikipedia on that? Is it in a book, but how do we gauge their maturity?

Jessica Alfaro: Yeah, I think that there's many different resources out there that you can reference. I know CMMI is one of those, just looking at, I know for us from an Acuity perspective, we know based on ITSM and where certain organizations are. So, I know that there's the ad hoc and you know they're doing certain things that may not be fully documented, you know process of procedures aren't fully communicated. So, it's happening, it's just not in a streamlined way and so, as you go through that maturity model, the top level I don't think, I would like to know which organizations are actually there. I think most common is probably within two or three. You know, which is…

Eric Lazerson: Right, it's a repeatable process. It's, it's not maybe across the entire organization, but yeah there are models out there that will tell you from 0 you're not doing it or you are doing it in spreadsheets, which you know, I love. You can do service management with a piece of paper and a pen. It's not the most mature way to do it but if that works for your

organization, that's a good start. So yeah, there are - there are models out there, CMMI is certainly one that we reference a lot and there are certain targets that you have to hit before you can advance levels of maturity, and when we talk maturity, there is an overall organizational number that you could apply but there's also per process number that you could apply. Every organization that I've been to has some process for Incident Management. If a system goes down, or the performance is degraded, they are getting in and they're fixing it…at all costs, right. They are putting on their incident management hat and they are like 'I'm going to just get this server backup, this application back up, the website working again', they're doing it. Some organizations have moved, you know, past just doing it and they're documenting it. Some are moving past it and they're classifying it. Some are moving past it and everybody's doing it the same way. So, you take it from Incident Management which would be, if I'd say across the federal government, Incident Management is done probably the most, it's probably the most mature process across the federal government. Whereas you look at some of the other more obscure processes that are down the road on a roadmap and they're at a 0. If you take some of the capacity management, you take the financial management, some of these that are obscure, your organization may never get there, you may not need to get there, but I would say you can go process by process and-and determine levels of maturity which gives you a starting point.

Jessica Alfaro: Yes, so kind of to the baselining and the assessment, there are different areas that you guys, or that we analyze when we're you know there's the infrastructure, there's the processes, there's you know, the tools, the-the culture, so there's a lot of different parts that are being assessed when we're going in and doing these assessments.

Eric Lazerson: Absolutely. Yeah, we get called in a lot of times because their ITSM tools are failing them or they want to make a jump to a new tool and so, before we do any of tho-you know support any of those decisions or give our recommendations, I want to know where are you today with the technology. I want to know where are you today with the user adoption. I want to know where are you today in just overall organizational, you know, awareness of what you have, how you're operating, where are those pockets of excellence, who's doing it well and where are the pockets of resistance, and-and as you go into these organizations, once you kind of break down you know, those barriers of 'I don't want an assessment', let me ask a few questions. I'm not here to call your baby ugly but I mean at the end of the day I might have to but I'll do it nice, as nice as I can. It-it's one of those things where if you give me an opportunity, we can come in we can ask the probing questions about why is it this way how you know show me some documentation that got you here and I'm not I'm not making recommendations in those conversations at first, but I'm going to use all of the information that we collect to make some recommendations. Then you get into, 'what can we do quickly?' you know, because you have to show quick wins. You have to be able to show some value around ITSM and then you put them on a long-term road map. It's really you got to break down the barriers, there is an assessment that needs to be done.

Kerri Posteraro: And it's really no different than any other goal you set even in your personal life, right. I want to learn a new language. I'm not going to wake up tomorrow and be fluent in Spanish but I can take the first couple of steps and think about what my end goal is, where I am today, and what I need to do in between. Or let's say I want to run a marathon, and but I don't run it all today; okay, how do you do that? Are we clear on what the goal is? Do I have an honest assessment of where I am today? Which is not ready to run a marathon but, you know, and then you can put a plan in place that makes sense for you and for your organization. So, I know we've lived by that series of questioning really in every aspect of what we do, of where are we, where do we want to go how are we going to get there and Tom to your point earlier, how do we know if we got there, did I realize the improvement or the target that I thought I would get? Did I get something different?

Tom Hamill: Yeah.

Kerri Posteraro: Should I take a different approach next time, and that repeatable line of questioning really at whatever frequency suits your business. I think it applies weekly, monthly, quarterly, it's a great place to start when you're feeling like what you thought would happen isn't moving as quickly as it should. Maybe you're way off base, who knows, but it's a great foundation to keep coming back to.

Jessica Alfaro: Yeah. Well and that's why, you know, that's part of the continual service improvement process of, you're constantly going through those cycles to make sure that you're moving forward, you're not going back.

Tom Hamill: Yeah, I think, last thing on assessment is that one of the most pleasurable contracts we worked on and I thought it was a great success was the assessment upfront where we talk to them about where they are, what they're doing but you know as installing the application and knowing what to put in first and quickly we talked a bit earlier about myth busters, knowing where the maturity helped us to do the implementation, helped get it in and then get those that first level maturity where they're at in the system quickly; but then we have to tell them where to go from there, the roadmap. So how do we go about telling them [now ten] we've got your like incident and how do we get past the standard incident change that's always put in first to go beyond that?

Kerri Posteraro: Right.

Tom Hamill: What's that roadmap, how do we do that?

Kerri Posteraro: Right, I think as you complete an assessment, there's two things that come out of it that are critical. The things that you're doing well, praise your team, and again with communication and the sharing of those wins and accomplishments, people want to feel good about what they're doing so anything in that assessment that comes out positively, shine a really big spotlight on that so people know and are encouraged to do more. On the con side the things

that you might not be doing so great, the next steps of improving that need to come quickly on the tail of that assessment or it's viewed as just another piece of 'shelf ware' that isn't so meaningful three months down the road.

Eric Lazerson: So, I think that momentum, if that gets back to the, you know the federal buyers when you're looking for these services and when you're looking for somebody to come in and do an assessment, don't just say I want you to come in and do an assessment without adding on an optional period to actually do some of that road map activity or do some of the improvements from that group that you bring in. If you just say, 'come in and do an assessment and give me the paper and I'm going to do it internally', it will go nowhere. You need an outside voice to come in, assess your organization and then get your-your improvement process moving. It has to be bundled together or that word assessment, you know, will go back and will continue to be just kind of a, you know, a frustrating word for government buyers.

Jessica Alfaro: Usually, our foot in the door to an assessment is a customer wants to do an upgrade, they're trying to move off of one platform to another. They're, you know, complaining about certain things are not working and then you do this assessment and you're like 'well it's really not the tool…'

Eric Lazerson: Right.

Jessica Alfaro: 'It was your processes.'

Eric Lazerson: Yep, yep.

Jessica Alfaro: 'So your goal of what where you want to go, I see that you want to do this but is that really going to get you where you need to be?' like, 'You really should focus here on-on the process or on your culture within your environment' so there's a lot of outcomes that come out of that that's not where you initially came in.

Eric Lazerson: I would agree and I-I would say waiting for that significant event to happen to them, calling an assessment – you're too late. If you were an IT leader of a service management organization or you play some role in IT operations, you should be asking for an assessment today. When was our last organizational assessment? When did someone from the outside come in and tell us how mature we are in these processes that-that we're operating on a daily basis?

Kerri Posteraro: Right, your-your environment is constantly changing, your priorities from your leadership are constantly changing, so if you're still operating from a road map that was done 18 months ago chances are your, there's either a lot more on your plate, or your resources have been, you know, diverged to other areas of the business and coming back together to say does this plan still make sense…

Eric Lazerson: Yeah

Kerri Posteraro: Goes a long way.

Eric Lazerson: And I would say in some of these large contracts that I've seen that are operational data center operations that have a ITSM component to them, a lot of them have weaved in the person doing, you know, that won that solicitation, that is doing the work for you, they probably wrote, go back to their response and look in the response to see 'are they going to maintain a road map for you?' and if they are and you haven't received it lately, ask for it.

Jessica Alfaro: Yeah, I think the nice thing about our assessments as well is opportunities for other areas for us to be able to come in and help them. Usually we, like I said earlier, we come in with the they want to do an upgrade, they want to do some data migration, we do this assessment, we find out hey we can help you with you know incident management, problem management, change management, and CMDB like ultimately, in order to reap the benefits of this effort that you're going down, this path that you want to you know this goal you want to reach we can help you do some process improvement. We can help you do some of these other areas, establishing a service catalog or some of those other things are part of the just rolling out a new tool.

Tom Hamill: What do you think are key to continue moving forward on a maturity level? Is it like finding that champion and maintaining the relationship with the champion as well as constantly reassessing as we talked a little bit about the road map and how to get them to the next level, what are keys to success?

Kerri Posteraro: I think it's, I think it's both.

Tom Hamill: Yeah.

Kerri Posteraro: I think you need somebody in the government organization that understands the value of it and is willing to stand up for it. I think that coupled with a person that is willing to look at all of the factors in an organization that influence it, because it's rarely, like-like we've talked about a couple of times, just the tool or just the process. It could be the way you communicate or-or the way you don't communicate.

Tom Hamill: Right.

Kerri Posteraro: An understanding of all of those dependencies that can influence how well that may or may not work, I think is equally important.

Eric Lazerson: Yeah, I-I think that's the challenge that everybody is facing is 'ok we've started, ok we have a tool implemented, ok people are using it, but' you know 'what-what's next? How do we get to that what's next? How do we mature?' And it is breaking down each level of maturity within each process and putting a process improvement plan in place and holding people accountable to doing the small things, making the small tweaks. The communication is key, training is key, getting everyone on the same page.

Kerri Posteraro: Yeah.

Eric Lazerson: So,

Kerri Posteraro: Don't be afraid to say, "Wait, where are we? I thought I knew but, based on what you just said now, I'm not so sure." Don't-don't be afraid to ask those questions.

Eric Lazerson: Yeah, so you're looking at the metrics that are coming out of your system. Are you getting what you though you would get? And if you're not make those changes, make those changes.

Tom Hamill: Okay, thank you everyone. Some good, good discussions on Maturity Assessment Model, so thank you.