POV

Progression Matrix Framework
How well are things going?

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Where do organizations begin on their agile journey?
And what challenges must they be ready for?
How do you frame in the context of where the organization stands?
What does history tell us about the organization?
These are some questions we seek to address in this paper.

You must start somewhere –
but where?

The KEY is to understand that IT departments exist to enable businesses to achieve their vision and mission. Knowing that change is inevitable, this article focuses on understanding how an IT department can respond to shifting organizational goals. The Progression Framework is one of the ways to understand the organization's IT position holistically. Before you start your race, you must know the starting line.

This article will enable you to gauge your organization's current position with a simple yet powerful framework of a 2x2 scoring matrix that I am calling "Progression Matrix". It has attracted many leaders given its logical and straightforward approach.

Dimensions of the Progression Framework

The Progression framework leverages two dimensions: Rate of delivery capacity change and Rate of engineering capability change.

Rate of Delivery Capacity Change

Project Portfolio typically comprises several planned initiatives that will contribute to the vision through value generation. It begins with identifying the leads who will execute and directly own the program. Each initiative will have an independent project lead or dedicated manager who will plan, oversee, and control the execution and be directly responsible for its success.

It is helpful to understand if the organization's project leads have taken on increasingly more significant initiatives and responsibilities. This would mean that underlying project controls are maturing and streamlining through automation of job flows and quality controls.
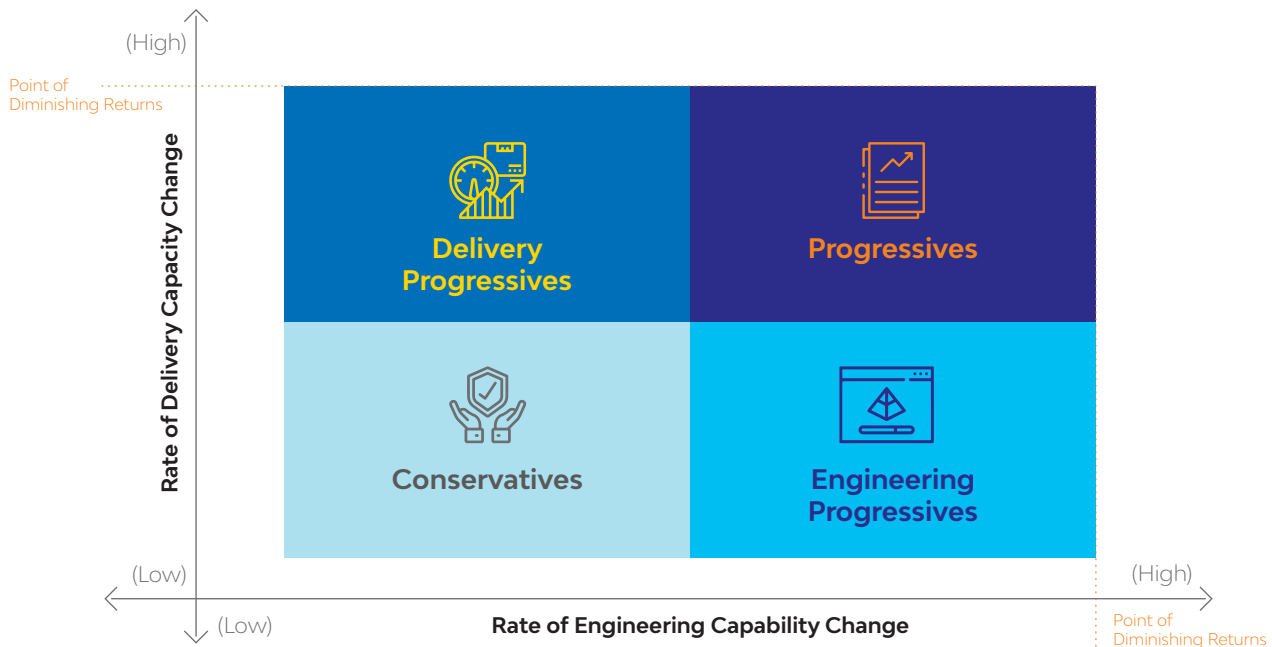
We describe a framework later in the article to help you evaluate this aspect. The intent is to quantify how well the organization is maturing its delivery of front-line champions.

Rate of Engineering Capability Change

Initiatives are enablers for business operations to remain competitive. IT can support organizations by remaining technically viable based on industry-level demand. Rate of Engineering Capacity Change is a measure of how IT is growing its competitive edge and readiness for future evolutions. It also includes the adoption of DevOps and Agile Toolkits that in turn improve delivery capacity.

Here too, we describe a framework later in the article to help you evaluate the aspect.

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Quadrants of the Framework

(High)

Point of
Diminishing Returns

Rate of Delivery Capacity Change

**Delivery
Progressives**

Progressives

Conservatives

**Engineering
Progressives**

(Low)

(Low)

(High)

Rate of Engineering Capability Change

Point of
Diminishing Returns

After applying the ranking, you will find the organization will be in one of the four coordinates:

Progressives

This is a green zone for all organizations. It means that organizations have been mining opportunities through technical & process improvement and ensuring their leaders can take on more delivery responsibilities.

The organizations in this quadrant will be very receptive to progressive strategies. Limited challenges can be expected for advancing well-formed transformation roadmaps.

Delivery Progressives

IT departments of organizations in this quadrant have been ensuring that project delivery is strengthened by mainly pushing their front-line leaders to take on more. However, these organizations have not invested significantly in engineering advancements, ensuring value delivery by de-risking technical or process disruptions. The high delivery strength is not complemented with technical leverages.

Historically, these organizations like to stick to the landscape and processes and are encouraged by repeated past successes. These are risk-averse organizations that avoid changing stereotype delivery processes that have ensured value over time. The resistance to landscape change might be higher as they typically lack rewards for taking such risks.

Engineering Progressives

These organizations have implemented advanced engineering controls to optimize value delivery. However, there seems to be a challenge in levering and transforming the engineering advancements as enablers for project leaders to optimize the delivery processes. This, most of the time is the result of disconnected investment in technology by organizations. If you need a tractor, a Ferrari will not help.

These organizations would be open to tools or processes that provide value delivery options and are in the best position to enter the green zone. Typically, the organization will be enthusiastic with optimization proposals envisioning returns on already committed investments.

Conservatives

These organizations are rigid; they not only stick to proven engineering but never take on more than what they have confirmed they can deliver. The management of such organizations is risk-averse and adheres with what has worked for them so far.

Typically, to change such an organization, you will have to begin with senior management and executives. Progress has to be made on multiple fronts while traversing through amplified resistance. This quadrant will pose maximum challenges to transformations due to its history and culture.

Dimensions of the Progression Framework

Using the metrics is simple when you have access to company project historical data. The PMO typically captures some information on project and portfolio performance. The key to deriving information is to explore enough to evaluate but not to confirm. Hence, the metrics below can be altered to best suit your operational constraints and parameters.

The essential data points may vary based on your operational constraints. However, the ideas below provide you a very simplistic approach to cater to fundamental analysis needs.

Delivery Capacity Change

The capacity typically should be measured in terms of how organizations plan and capture demand. The following are some of the parameters that could be used solely or in weighted combinations to drive capacity summarization.

- **Total cost incurred – This approach needs some due diligence to review non-labor costs.**
- **Total number of resources**
- **Total number of project hours**

The example below is based on the total project hours. The data has been collated to show two situations to illustrate the exercise.

Period	Total no. of Initiative Leads (PMs)	Total Project Efforts (Hrs)	Delivery Capacity (Hrs/Lead)	Delivery Capacity Change (Previous Yr - Current Yr)
YR 1	35	77512	2215	NA
YR 2	38	79060	2081	-134
YR 3	32	74099	2316	235
YR 4	40	82109	2053	-263
YR (N)				
				Average Capacity Change: **-54**

In the above observation, it can be concluded that delivery capacity did not improve over the years. This is an example where the organization will be rated as "Low."

Period	Total no. of Initiative Leads (PMs)	Total Project Efforts (Hrs)	Delivery Capacity (Hrs/Lead)	Delivery Capacity Change (Previous Yr - Current Yr)
YR 1	35	77512	2215	NA
YR 2	38	96780	2547	332
YR 3	32	97880	3059	512
YR 4	29	99070	3416	357
YR (N)				
				Average Capacity Change: **401**

The data above represents a "high" rating. We can conclude without doubt that the organization is operating in symphony and maximizing efficiency in the value delivery chain. This is the data that you would ideally want to see.

Engineering Capability Change

The organization's engineering defines parameters to determine and track technology advancements to ensure vision alignment. The following are a few of the criteria used by organizations:

- **Enterprise Data Management (Enterprise Data warehousing, Data Analytics, Data Science, etc.)**
- **BPM investments**
- **Cloud Solutions – Cloud Migration**
- **APIfication**
- **DevOps& Agile Toolkits**
- **Other digital initiatives**

The above will be typically agreed upon by management and enterprise teams as an engineering advancement roadmap.

The next data point that can be generated is by tracking how much part of the total project budget is allocated to the initiatives over the years. This data might not be readily available with the PMO and may have to be collected from the project leads.

The following is an example data collection framework,

Period	Enterprise Data Mgmt.	BPM	Cloud Solution & Migration	Enterprise API Mgmt.	DevOPS/ Agile Toolkit	Other Digital Initative	Total Budget towards engineering capacity	Engineering capability Change (Pre. yr - Current Yr.)
YR 1	0.50%	1.02%	1.36%	0.04%	1.00%	0.09%	4.01%	NA
YR 2	0.25%	0.65%	0.35%	0.08%	2.00%	1.75%	5.08%	1.07%
YR 3	2.00%	0.65%	0.35%	0.08%	1.00%	2.00%	6.08%	1.00%
YR 4	0.50%	1.02%	1.36%	2.45%	1.00%	0.09%	6.42%	0.34%
YR (N)								

In the above example, the trend is very encouraging. We can see the organization is able to make engineering advancements incrementally over the years.

Point of diminishing returns

Like every optimization technique, both the above parameters would have a point beyond which further optimization, improvements, or investments would not yield comparable benefits. At this point, we can consider that organization is at maximum delivery velocity.

Conclusion

This point of view paper is my perspective on assessing where an organization is before embarking on its agile transformation journey. And, with a strong situation analysis we can position ourselves to best support our customers to appropriately transform and reave maximum benefits, ensuring high moral. The necessity to transform will only exponentially increase, and by evolving a more adopted approach aligned with customer's unique position we can ensure a successful operational model.

About the Author

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Since 2001, he has been globally architecting solutions by decoding complex business problems ensuring optimum value realization. He also specializes in developing enterprise and application road mapping to help businesses obtain benefits through alignment with their vision. He executed multimillion-dollar global programs in a highly diverse environment and pioneered transformation through digitization and innovation.

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