

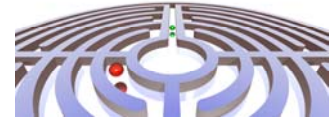
## Aligning the Organization for IT Project Success: Improving Customer Acceptance and ROI

### Executive Brief

This white paper attacks the problem of IT failure and customer dissatisfaction by defining a method to use the tried and true approach to IT projects and broaden it to consider strategy and organizational readiness. Reframing statistics that have battered CIO's for years, causes of failure demonstrate the need for a more systematic way to organize stakeholder needs, related actions, and top-level sponsorship.

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### Introduction: Can the Company Handle IT Success?

As every CIO knows, the facts of IT project failure are stark. Software companies and integrators include them in every sales pitch they deliver:

- 31% of IT projects are cancelled before completion
- 53% of IT projects overrun costs by greater than 200%
- 40% of completed projects fail to achieve business case within one year of going live
- 70% of IT projects fail in some way<sup>1</sup>

These statistics have been true for longer than is comfortable to admit, but organizations simply cannot afford this kind of failure any longer. Federal agencies alone are still wasting \$20B annually on “dead-end modernization projects”<sup>2</sup>

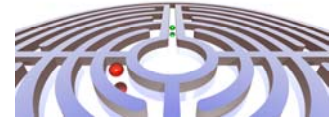
To address this issue, CIO’s and other executives have enlisted the help of consultants and then fired them again<sup>3</sup>, and pushed toward rigid and externally imposed control methods.<sup>4</sup> Revising, fine-tuning and micromanaging projects have created art forms of IT implementations. All this assistance is aimed toward execution of the project, making change happen one way or another.

All the presentations, articles, post-mortems, and analyses miss the main point. IT customers decide when an IT project has succeeded. It all comes down to a “people problem”, when everything else has been done right.

**An IT project means change, by definition. How customers, the organization itself, can handle that change, accommodate new ways of doing business, has an overriding impact on IT project success.**

Investigating how much change an organization can handle at a time, and the alignment of that change with the organization’s strategy and structure is a far less sophisticated activity, if done at all. Organizational alignment issues surface as poor understanding of scope, ineffective team behaviors, poorly targeted business results, and poorly adopted IT enablers. All of these translate to overspending and under-performing, characteristics not acceptable in any business activity.

This white paper provides the background to look at IT failure rates based on cause, and then defines a method to integrate the organization, from top to bottom, into a well-executed project that drives business adoption and support each step of the way. Leveraging the knowledge and techniques of IT project delivery, it provides an executable way to significantly increase probability of IT project success, by all definitions.



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### The limited traditional IT project approach

People issues have not traditionally been the CIO's problem. Long-revered methods of implementing technology follow a predictable pattern of getting a job done. They define requirements from the business, turn those requirements into technical specifications, design the technology, create it, test it, and put it into production. The levels of detail can vary slightly, but the traditional approach to IT projects follows the standard path shown in Figure 1<sup>5</sup>.

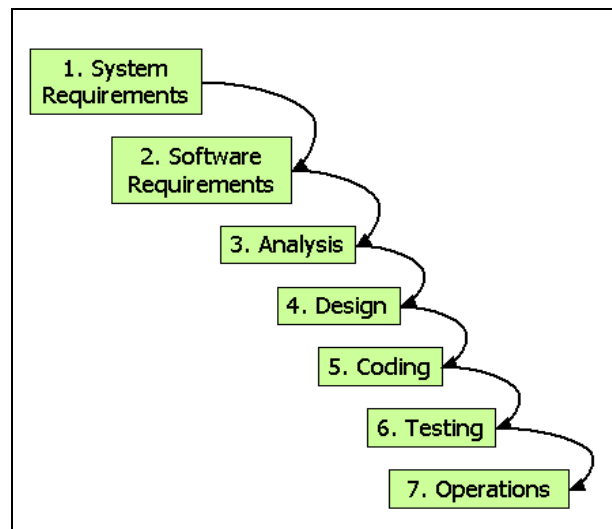
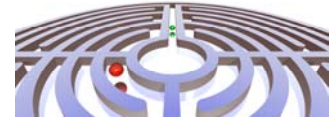


Figure 1. Traditional IT Project Flow

While implementation and IT professionals are beginning to acknowledge the gaps in the standard approach to some of the largest investments companies make, they still hold those gaps outside of the process. The non-technical parts of the job are someone else's responsibility to manage. Change management, human resource management, and organizational management get their own sections, after the section on core critical path analysis and execution for project management<sup>6</sup>.



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This marginalized approach, interpreted in Figure 2, demonstrates the placement of organizational impact still outside the perceived core objectives of an IT project.

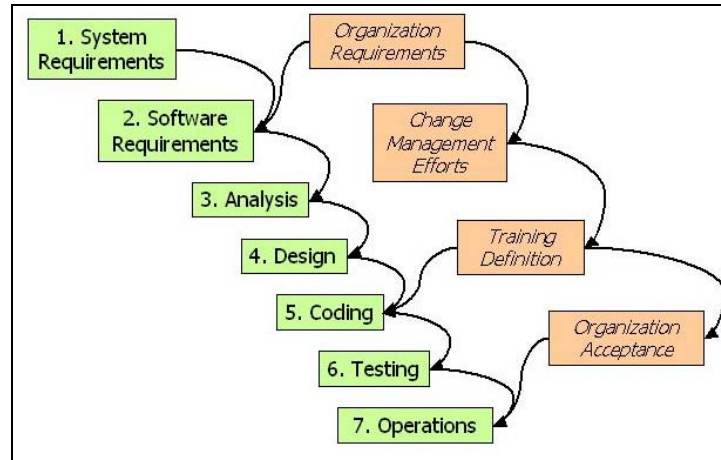


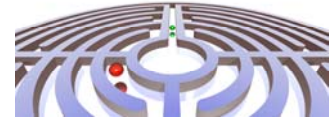
Figure 2: Traditional IT Project Flow with Ancillary Organizational Elements

## IT failure defined

Given how important it is to manage risk associated with any investment, it is critical to know when in the IT project cycle evaluating risks and mitigating them has the most impact. The data available on this comes in the form of understanding failure. IT project failure can be generally defined as the presence of any of the following conditions within the context of the project:

- **“The degradation of an existing business capability;**
- **The degradation of competitive advantage;**
- **An increase in operating costs;**
- **Failure to meet critical business requirements;**
- **Poor levels of user satisfaction;**
- **Loss of control over requirements management;**
- **Loss of control over planning”<sup>7</sup>.**

In an analysis of the mistakes on government IT projects over the past several years, lack of success is defined as “cost overruns, missed schedules and undelivered objectives”. Observed mistakes included lack



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of top management support, poorly defined requirements, scope creep, and a lack of appropriate user involvement<sup>8</sup>.

The statistics on project failure bear out the effect these mistakes have had. The well-quoted Chaos Report details the statistics of why projects fail:

- 13% Incomplete Requirements**
- 12% Lack of User Involvement**
- 11% Lack of Resources**
- 10% Unrealistic Expectations**
- 9% Lack of Executive Support**
- 9% Changing Requirements and Specifications**
- 8% Lack of Planning**
- 8% Don't Need It Anymore**
- 6% Lack of IT Management
- 4% Technology Illiteracy
- 10% Other

**80% of failure causes relate to communication, sponsorship, resources, and validation, all components of organization impact.**

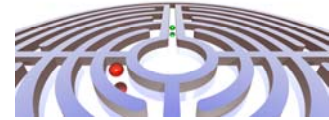
The common threads of failure in these definitions have to do with understanding what the project is meant to do, who is meant to do it, and who is meant to champion it. The organization itself is the key, getting people to understand what the project means.

## IT success defined

Project success is defined in the context of how the project achieves stated objectives. Pure on time, on-budget delivery is not considered a sole definition.

*Table 1: Project objectives and success criteria<sup>9</sup>*

Project Objectives	Project Success Criteria
To affect change	Completed to the satisfaction of the business stakeholders
To achieve a commercial goal	Achievement commercial goal
To implement business and IS strategy	Delivers functionality and usability to the satisfaction of the users



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To realize financial benefits	Realization of financial benefits
To achieve a political goal	Achievement of political objectives

## IT failure: The human dimension

These definitions lead to identifying the central reason projects fail. **“Most IS projects fail not because of technical failure, but because the people involved who have a vested interest in the new systems are not sufficiently involved, do not take ownership, and do not contribute to the design”<sup>10</sup>.**

Avoiding failure means managing risk at the right points in the project life cycle. Leadership needs to be willing to investigate and respond to current IT end customer needs, both inside and beyond the organization. That leadership comes in the form of executives willing to allow integrated project management to guide the choices surrounding projects, their scope, and their impact on the business.

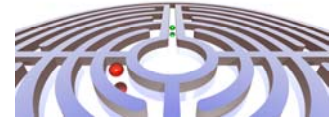
According to the Project Management Institute, specific responsibilities for sponsorship, guidance, decision-making, and enlistment exist in the structures within and surrounding any project<sup>11</sup>. These responsibilities manage risk and stakeholder satisfaction through a focus on change management. **What PMI and other sources do not do, however, is specifically define how to manage risk and stakeholder satisfaction with change in the context of IT projects.**

## Magnitudes of Risk and Change

As a short primer on change management, the three central segments of change management are “managing stress, transforming structures, and creating strategy”<sup>12</sup>. These three segments all address four change management areas: “change readiness, power and sponsorship, transition, and communication”. The most key of these is change readiness, and the hardest to assess. **“One of the most difficult challenges of dealing with major change is that neither the participants nor the leaders fully grasp the impact that change is going to have on them as a group and as individuals”<sup>13</sup>.**

Information technology projects do have three basic categories of change magnitude, and depending on the magnitude, the criticality of change readiness assessment varies directly. The higher the change magnitude, the higher the risk of failure will be. The higher change magnitude project will require:

- More organizations to participate



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- More resources to be invested
- More project requirements to be balanced
- More stress to be placed on existing processes and organization structures
- More reliance on the organization's ability to respond to change

Within the context of IT projects, the risk associated with that change is shown below in Figure 3.

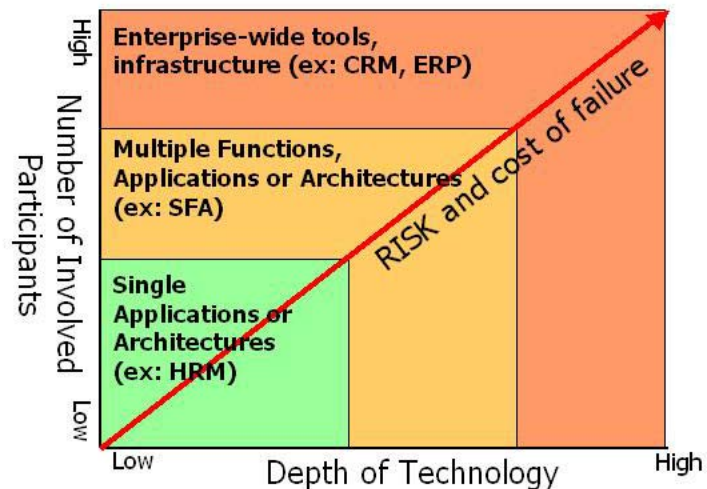


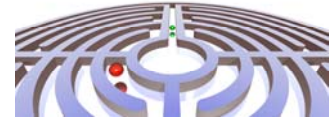
Figure 3: Complexity and Business Risk

This perspective translates to degrees of change magnitude, which can be defined as revolutionary, defining, or standard.

**Projects with standard magnitudes of change have a medium level of risk.** They have the following characteristics:

- A similar project has recently been completed successfully
- There is contained impact to organizations or infrastructure.
- There is a clear near term business case.
- The project is within current core competencies to deliver and integrate into business processes, organization, and tool set.

Decisions include risk planning and resource scheduling as part of normal project management.



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Projects with **defining** magnitudes of change have a high level of risk. They have the following characteristics:

- A project of similar structure but smaller scale has recently been completed successfully
- There is either broad or deep impact to organizations or infrastructure.
- A generally clear business case has been made.
- The project extrapolates current competencies to deliver and integrate into business processes, organization, and tool set.

Decisions include what assistance is needed within the project to mitigate risks and resource/skill gaps, and to manage the project to success.

Projects with **revolutionary** magnitudes of change have a very high level of risk. They have the following characteristics:

- The project concept has never been attempted on this scale.
- There is both broad or deep impact to organizations or infrastructure.
- A generally clear business case has been made.
- The project represents new competencies required to deliver and integrate into business processes, organization, and tool set.

Decisions include managing risks to the point of reserving a “stop” decision if conditions change. These levels of magnitude and change impact are shown in Figure 4.

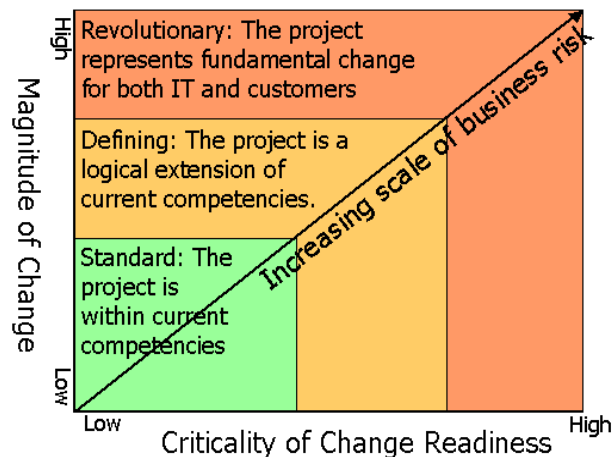
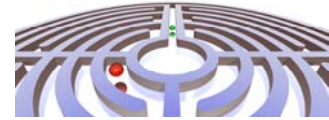


Figure 4: Change Magnitudes and Characteristics



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### IT Project Gaps: Dimensions of Change Readiness

IT project methods miss evaluating the two characteristics by which organizational change readiness can be assessed: competence and commitment. Competence is the ability of the organization to accommodate change, and commitment is its readiness to accept it<sup>14</sup>.

This basic starting point provides guiding principles to define further categories of change readiness specifically aimed at IT projects. Adapting process consultation concepts<sup>15</sup> and based on consulting and systems implementation experience, the elements of change readiness applicable for IT projects span cultural, functional and technical factors:

**Cultural Health:** How sound is the organization's cultural foundation? What is its tolerance against impacts a solution to the business problem may require?

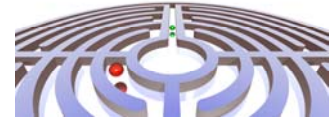
**Management Communication:** How comprehensive and multi-directional is the communication system? Can it successfully connect project participants and stakeholders to effectively execute change?

**Adaptability:** How flexible is the organization to modification? Do individuals and groups have the capacity to effectively incorporate new ways of interacting and functioning?

**Problem Awareness:** How widespread is understanding about the business need for change? How well do organization members understand their interdependencies and the impact of both the need and potential solutions?

**Criticality:** How well aligned are those individuals and departments needed to implement solutions? Are they aware of how important they are and what change may mean to them?

These factors can be assessed to define how close the organization is aligned to strategic objectives that can be met through new enablers implemented with technology.



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### Revised IT Project Life Cycle Approach

The first step in applying organization alignment assessments to IT projects, regardless of the change magnitude is revisiting the IT project flow to effectively integrate the organization impacts of the project into the critical path. A revision to the traditional model is shown below:

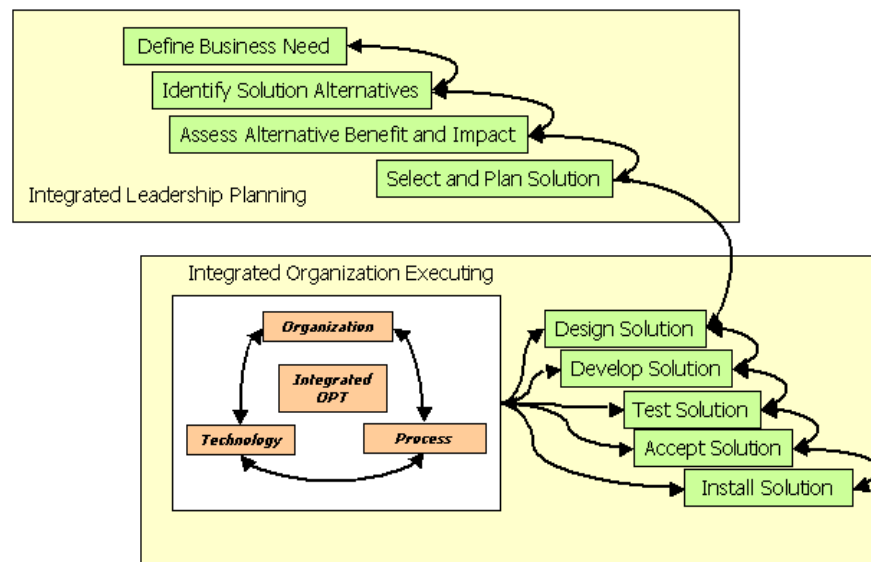
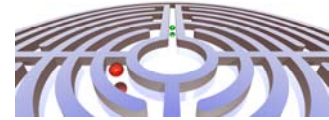


Figure 5: Integrated IT Project Flow

This revision addresses several elements omitted in previous models:

- **Any project needs to start with a business reason, no matter the change magnitude.**
- **There are alternative solutions to any problem, and sound management requires that they be considered and assessed for both benefit and impact or risk.**
- **Selection and planning go together due to the impact of the choice. For IT projects, this can include software, integration partners, ancillary services, and more.**
- **Execution is done on three facets of the organization, its people, its processes, and its technical enablers. All three have duties and expectations during each step in the project.**
- **The integration of organization, process and technology is iterative and continuous.**



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- **A solution is an integrated answer to the business need.**

This revised framework gives context to when an alignment assessment should be performed and the decisions an assessment can drive.

**IT Project Cycle: Organizational Alignment Process (OAP)**

There are specific project steps that represent decisions to proceed with an IT investment. Those are the steps that need to include an Organization Alignment Process. The process checks for organization readiness to go forward, and establishes the activities needed to improve success probabilities. Depending on the project step and the level of change impact, there are optimal times to perform an organizational alignment process, as shown below in Figure 5.

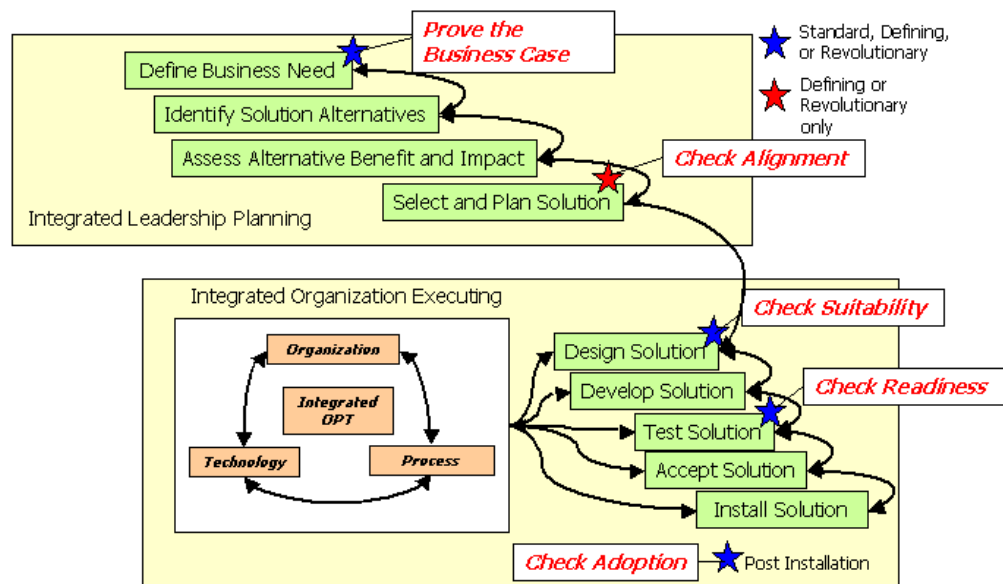
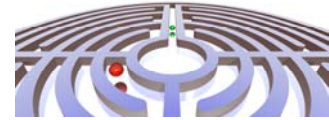


Figure 6: Project Flow with Alignment Steps

The timing of these alignment steps allows them to serve specific purposes. Project progress without evaluation and response increases the risk of failure for the remainder of the project.

**Define Business Need:** Prove the business case, validating appropriate sponsorship and understanding of business need and impact.

**Select and Plan Solution:** Check alignment of investment of time, funding, resources, and discomfort associated with solving the business problem. Validate augmentation of skills and resources with outside help.



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**Design Solution:** Check suitability of solution to meet business objectives and organization acceptance of solution concepts. The greatest source of eventual scope creep occurs because of disconnects here.

**Test Solution:** Check readiness to install solution, including organization awareness, processes, training, communication, and incentives.

**Post Installation:** Check adoption of change for organizational benefits, barriers to return on investment, need for additional remedies to make investments pay off.

Each check allows for action to be taken to improve project probability of success and ROI.

## Organizational Alignment Process Methodology

An OAP analysis follows specific steps that scale and scope for each project. Just as with any methodology, various steps take on difference importance depending on the organization's environment and specifics of the project.

The OAP follows six steps that repeat for each cycle:

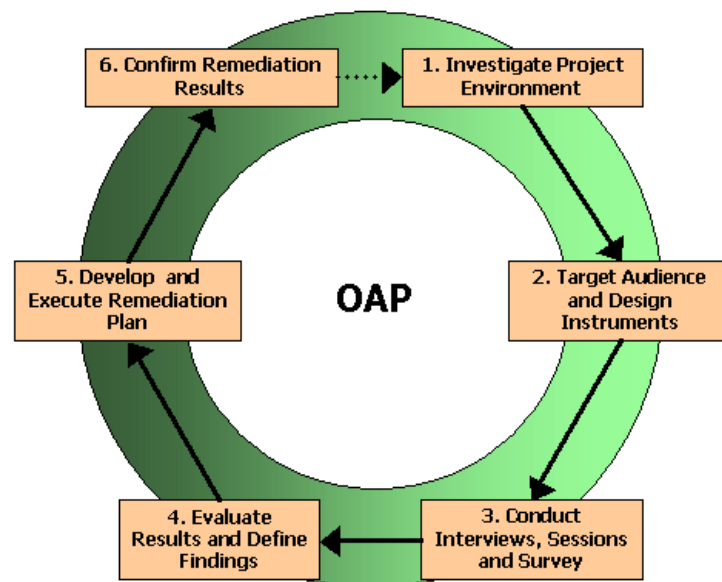
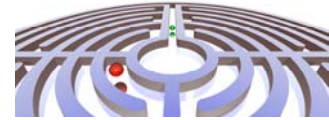


Figure 7: Organization Alignment Process (OAP)



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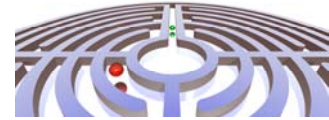
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The steps of the OAP contain specific activities that drive reducing risk of failure:

- 1. Investigate Project Environment**
  - Perform selected interviews and facilitated sessions with project and stakeholder teams
- 2. Target Audience and Design Instruments**
  - Scope and scale project constituencies
  - Construct project specific survey
  - Plan and scope additional information gathering
- 3. Conduct Interviews, Sessions and Survey**
  - Conduct discussions with sponsoring and affected senior management
  - Electronically distribute survey to 100% of affected community
  - Perform interviews and facilitated sessions performed with targeted teams and functions
- 4. Evaluate Results and Define Findings**
  - Analyze collected data into findings
  - Design Remediation Plan Options to address findings
- 5. Develop and Execute Remediation Plan**
  - Define Remediation Plan and integrate into project-required activities, including planning and control
  - Execute Remediation Plan as part of project execution
- 6. Confirm Remediation Results**
  - Test remediation effectiveness before proceeding if critical, in next cycle of OAP if not.

These steps, particularly the last one, depend heavily on the nature of risks and issues within the project and the organization. **A critical remediation, such as a re-organization or reprioritizing resources, may have to be in place and validated before the project can proceed.** Other remediation actions, adjusting communication methods, revamping training plans, and the like, can be incorporated into forthcoming project phases without needing to stop.



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## Organizational Alignment Process Toolkit

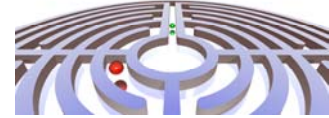
**Validating the purpose and risks of elements in the OAP methodology addresses constituencies and collected information, balancing risk and benefit.** The risks and benefits here are based on long collected and developed bodies of knowledge on organizational behavior and change management.

*Table 2: Assessment Methods for Organizational Alignment*

Methods	Benefits	Risks
Survey following executive communication <sup>16</sup>	Widest possible sample taken for comprehensive results	Impersonal approach requiring care in design and effective management communication on impact.
Observation, individual and group interviews and facilitated sessions <sup>17</sup>	Allows for observation of behaviors and relationships, provides direct information	More difficult to standardize, more evaluation required to define trends, more intervention
Organizational Diagnostics <sup>18</sup>	Allows for observation of actual operational flow and use of existing tools, processes, and relationships	Requires significant intervention at many levels, requires utilization of carefully crafted diagnostic tools for standardized approach
Feedback, Coaching, Mentoring, Structural Suggestion	Provides infusion of method for deciding remedies for current state, allows for planning to mitigate risks associated with company flexibility.	Requires emphasis on teaching skills and revealing observations rather than providing a single right solution and failing to enable client.

## OAP Process: Remediation Effectiveness

Once an issue or barrier to project success is identified, remediation is the specific means to resolve it. If a barrier cannot be remedied, the project is a candidate for termination. While this sounds drastic, it simply means that the circumstances that make remediation impossible also prevent sufficient business and organization justification for the effort.



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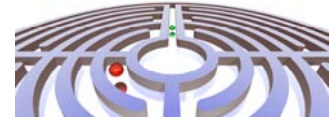
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These circumstances include:

- Not enough sponsorship to implement the remedy and support the project (incentive plans, revised performance requirements, etc.)
- No authority to establish the solution, the affected organization is not involved enough to adopt the remedy.
- Lack of ability to think in terms of both “carrots” and “sticks”.

Remediation works because of its ability to clearly identify what is necessary from the organization to improve success probability, and to define how it must be provided.

- Remediation validates the importance of the project or provides business justification to terminate it.
- Remediation provides a way to assess executive participation and drives the difference between “involvement” and “commitment”.
- Remediation leverages management’s stated commitment to the project into action.
- Remediation clearly assigns ownership and responsibility for activities.
- Remediation invokes the project’s own control functions of change control, scope control, and issue reporting.



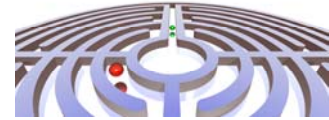
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**OAP Process: Sample Findings and Remediation**

To more fully understand the expectations and benefits of each OAP, the table below provides sample results and elements of a Remediation Plan that might arise from the first and last OAP cycles in different change magnitude environments.

*Table 3: Assessment Application, Sample Findings and Remediation Plan Element*

<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Sample Finding</b>	<b>Sample Remediation</b>
Standard: Prove the Business Case	Customers expect that IS will address more issues than currently defined to meet the business need and are building expectations.	While defining alternatives, refine the scope of the project to ensure alignment with priorities and plans as set by management, and communicate widely.
Defining: Prove the Business Case	Lower levels in the organization do not see the customer impact of manual internal processes.	Emphasize customer value chain and add wider organization training to solution definitions.
Revolutionary: Prove the Business Case	Not all senior staff members see the business issue as critical, nor do they see it as a shared responsibility.	Hold strategic planning sessions to define the true priority of the business need in wider context, validate the need and its immediacy.
Standard: Check Adoption	New employees are being trained to trust their co-workers more than formally provided training on the new system.	Integrate project training materials into standard Training Department delivery for appropriate job roles, and include in performance standards.
Defining: Check Adoption	There is residual concern about job relevance and ongoing system changes in more senior members of hourly teams.	Establish periodic refresher training courses, perform organization audit and revisit performance standards.
Revolutionary: Check Adoption	Formerly resistant management is now aligned with the change and has seen its value. Senior staff has coalesced its presence into a united message.	Use rewards and recognition programs to encourage the new leaders who have supported the transition, examine the organization structure to leverage those leaders more.



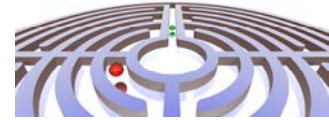
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### **Conclusion: Benefits to the Organization**

Getting customers ready for IT change with assessments of change readiness and taking action can make the difference between an IT project that consumes resources and at best delivers marginal benefit and one that meets expectations and enables strategic objectives. The organization's culture, management structure, response to customer, and perception of business situation allow leadership to plan for solutions with the highest probability of success. Measuring adoption along the way, as with any ongoing performance measurement system, allows for responsiveness and adjustment.

Validating decisions with actual results allows for final adjustments and significantly contributes to the organization's body of learning about itself. The OAP method provides that information and structures how to respond to it. Just as financial reporting provides strategic and tactical input to nearer and longer-term operational and financial activities, so does change acceptance and alignment reporting. This method closes the gap in tool availability to get those answers and manage responding to them.



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### Appendix: OAP Example

To demonstrate the flow of an OAP, a sample project is defined, a CRM implementation affecting corporate and regional operations.

#### Assumptions

Assumptions include that the company is generally accepting of new projects, has a good communications infrastructure, and a generally solid culture. Other assumptions and facts include:

- There is a belief that regional organizations are not on board with the project.
- There is a belief that resistance exists throughout the organization, but not fully diagnosed.
- The organizations affected include IT, Finance, Regional and Corporate Sales, and Regional and Corporate Service.

Based on project history and these assumptions, the change level is considered “revolutionary”, and an OAP is performed at the Define Business Need step.

#### Analysis Results

After performing the first three steps of the OAP process, gathering all the information required from affected communities through survey and interactive processes, the following conclusions are drawn:

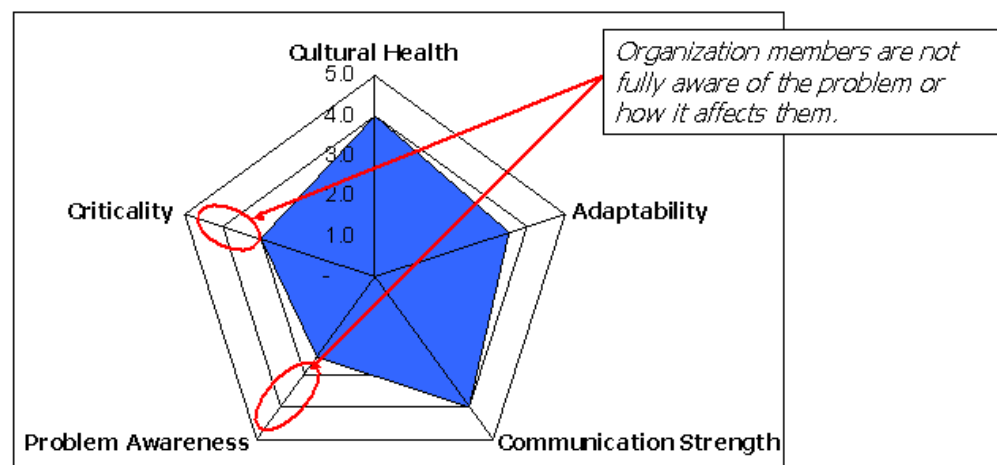
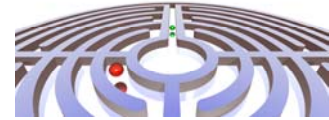


Figure 8: Overall Company Readiness



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The above graph shows that the company as a whole does not understand the problem and how important it is to the company's strategic success. This shows a lack of alignment with why the CRM project needs to happen, and what it means for the future.

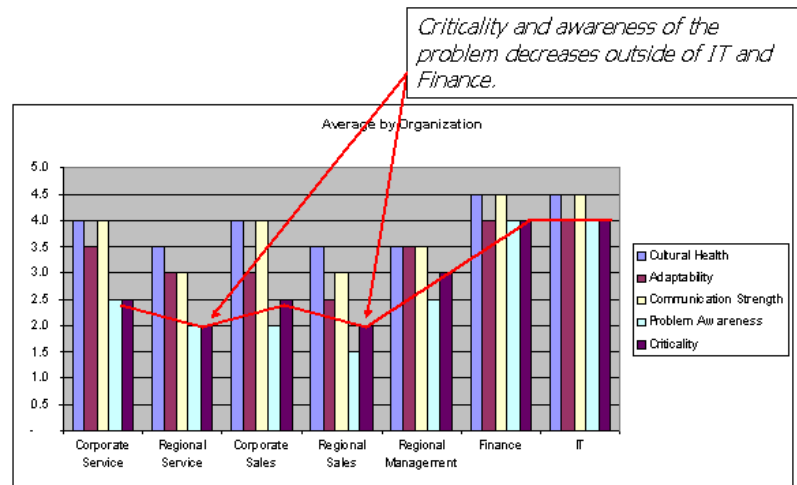
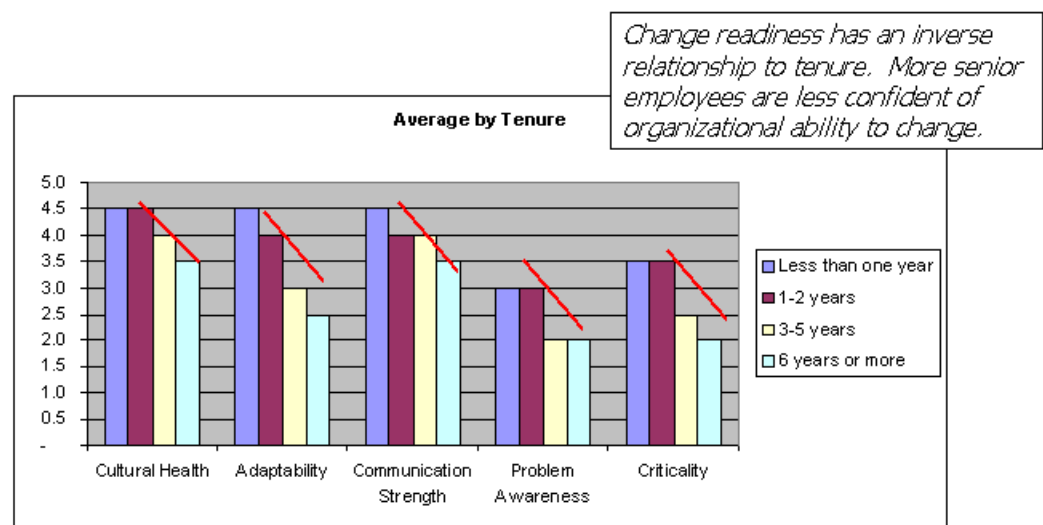
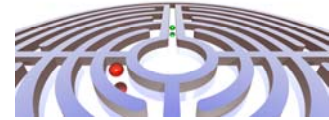


Figure 9: Alignment by Function

Looking at the project community by function, IT and Finance are on board, but the functions directly affected by the CRM project are not. The regional offices, the most removed from corporate functions, are the least aware of the business need and their role in addressing it.





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Figure 10: Alignment by Tenure

By tenure, the organization is losing awareness with its more senior members. The drop in all factors shows that newer employees have more readiness to adapt to change, and this is a critical resource to tap for choosing CRM project participants. Action steps will need to be taken to bring more tenured employees along.

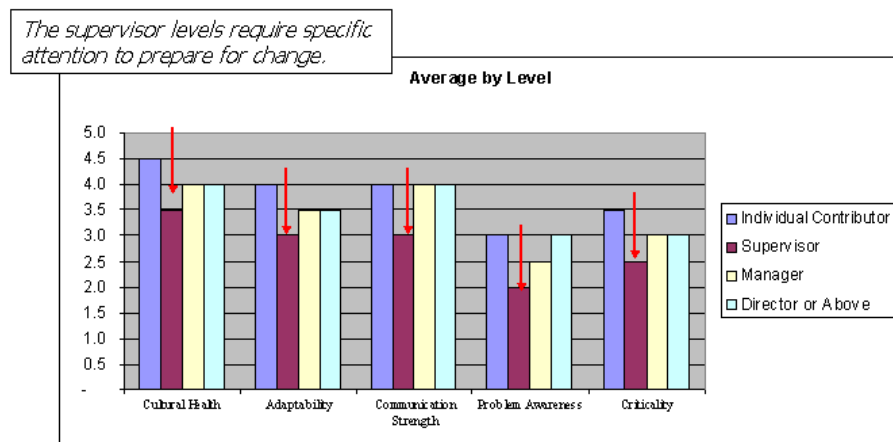


Figure 11: Alignment by Level

Supervisors, a critical role in the service organization as well as others, are notably less ready to accept the need for this project, and represent informal leadership for line employees. Specific action is critical here for a CRM project to be successfully adopted, especially in the regional offices where readiness is already lower than in other organizations.



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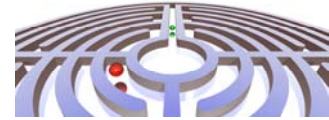
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### Findings

Sample summary findings from evaluating organizational alignment with the CRM project at this company include:

- Finance originated the project to solve sales reporting problems.
- Corporate Sales is on board with the benefits and willing to co-sponsor project.
- Corporate service is on board with the benefits of the project and the cost of not doing the project.
- Tenured employees are resistant to change.
- Newer employees are more comfortable with adapting to a new system.
- Regional offices are not fully connected to the issues or the solutions to those issues.
- Supervisor ranks are specifically not comfortable with change.
- Regional sales is the most resistant organization.
- There is perception that the project is to get more information for Finance and Corporate Sales to increase sales targets.

Overall, the findings include poor distribution of ownership, and most critically, a skewed perception of why the project is being considered. Rather than understanding a customer serving need to improve, the organization perceives the project to be a punitive and self-serving approach to raising targets by support and administrative functions. This finding, coupled with the organization's variation in readiness to participate, requires specific tasks to enable success on the project.



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**Remediation Plan**

A Remediation Plan defines the issue, what remediation is required, who owns execution, and the expected objective for the project. A sample excerpt from such a plan for this CRM project would include:

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Remediation</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Objective</b>
Overall lack of awareness why CRM is needed.	Use broadcast emails, website, and metrics to establish project communications campaign and define ramifications of current customer management.	Corporate Sales and Service	To raise understanding in entire sales and service organization, world wide, to increase survey results by at least one level before project execution.
Lack of regional buy-in	Establish regional incentive plans for sales and service tied to project success and resulting CRM benefits.	Corporate Sales, Service, and Executive Management	To create vested interest in success in regions, to encourage participation and highlight the benefits of change and the cost of not changing.
Supervisor and tenure levels more change resistant	Evaluate supervisor job descriptions and advancement plans, upgrade training plans for tenured employees	HRM and local management	Clearer expectations of responding to organizational change and aids to upgrading skills. Incentives to adopt change, and penalties for lack of participation.
Sponsorship of project is not clear.	Use project structure to define executive owners of project, establish MBO's to encourage active commitment.	Executive Management, Project Management	Clear ownership and responsibilities for leading the project and actively supporting its success.
Not all affected organizations have committed resources.	Use clarified executive sponsorship to define appropriate resources for project and hold proceeding until they are made available.	Sponsoring Management, Executive Management	Full, appropriate, and sponsored participation.



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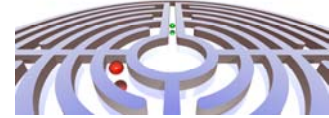
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### Remediation Execution

Most of the steps shown in the Remediation Plan can be incorporated into the CRM project approach this company would use. Executive level activities would need to be done prior to initiating the project, establishing appropriate sponsorship and leadership for the effort. From that point, defining needs from tools and vendors must take the maturity issues and distribution of effort and involvement across the organization into account. Involving HRM in order to execute training and job revisions has now been defined to be critical. This all becomes part of the project's governing guidelines and assumptions going forward.

### For More Information

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<sup>8</sup> See supra note 2.

<sup>9</sup> See supra note 7 p. 13.

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<sup>14</sup> See supra note 12 p.8

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