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# BRIDGING the Gap from Transformational Strategy to Operational Implementation

Have you ever worked with two seemingly disparate concepts and struggled with how to connect them? It can happen often in the corporate learning space when organizations are undergoing a transformation. GP Strategies® uses a unique tool to help bridge the gap.



## USING a Maturity Matrix to Chart the Course of a Major Initiative

Company A was on a transformational journey in their enterprise learning space, and had just completed developing the processes for maintaining the courses in their learning catalog for a complex array of domains and found alignment across the enterprise difficult. We discovered that the imposed rate of change—the requirement to continue supporting the business needs as new processes were designed—limited leader support and alignment.

Instead of deterring the client, this discovery led to a renewed commitment that the transformation was indeed going to happen. Success was predicated on the leaders coming together and genuinely committing to the program. The decision was made to bring the leaders together to participate in renewing their strategy for all their domain content.

The strategy statement developed rather quickly. It was visionary in nature and included specific outcomes. Everyone felt good about what we had accomplished.

But then we queried, “If you were a manager or supervisor, what specific actions would you take to help achieve this vision?” When we thought about executing the vision, we discovered it was difficult to directly map actions “on the ground” to this lofty vision concept.

The issue was not that we had the wrong vision or that it was too high. The issue was that we needed a means to bridge the gap between the strategy and our execution plan and established processes. As we reflected on this, it became clear that we needed something that could help chart a roadmap with specific dimensions and milestones to lead our planning and help evaluate our progress over time.

We selected a maturity matrix to bridge this gap. It fit naturally, drove clarity of the journey ahead, and most importantly, facilitated actionable planning at the organizational levels.

Our maturity model saved the day. We split up the team into specified dimensions and had them develop the maturity journey. Then we came back together to allow the larger audience to pressure test each team’s work. This process ensured each team member was invested in the process and was committed to the outcome. We achieved alignment!

“  
If you were a manager or supervisor, what specific actions would you take to help achieve this vision?  
”

# CREATING YOUR OWN

## Maturity Matrix to Help Bridge Gaps

Was the situation just described unique? Or could the maturity matrix tool take a more permanent role in bridging the gap between strategy and operational implementation?

We find the maturity matrix often helps with business transformation. Moreover, it's easy to chart. If you've never done one before, consider building one around each of the following: people, processes, and tools & technology. The example below considers process and allows you to compare and contrast each element across the milestones as it matures over time.

“ A maturity matrix tool can take a more permanent role in bridging the gap between strategy and operational implementation. ”

### PROCESS Maturity Model Matrix Example for an Information Technology Business Transformation

DIMENSIONS	NEAR-TERM	MID-TERM	LONG-TERM
<b>Simplify</b> 	Processes are custom and complex, not consistently followed	Templates are available in a central repository and consistently used	Processes are integrated and automated
<b>Searchable Information</b> 	Information stored on multiple non-integrated servers and applications; search on object title only	All relevant information is accessible by all within a single search	Ratings and algorithms are applied to return information in a predetermined priority order
<b>Speed</b> 	Processes are linear by design, documented but not broadly communicated or enforced; requires manual coordination across functions and departments	Hold frequent, highly structured integrated service meetings to facilitate collaboration and coordination across functions and departments	Automate information sharing for everyone to have continuous access, sharing capability, and participation accountability
<b>Success Metrics</b> 	Success is subjective and dependent on the mood of the department head	Quantifiable and qualitative measures exist, map to strategic business objectives, and are broadly communicated, baseline measurements have been established	Linked to historic and real-time performance and industry benchmark data; applied predictive and prescriptive data analysis

# Maturity Model BUILDING BLOCKS:

When building a maturity model, consider documenting the following topics. They will help you ultimately arrive at the category elements to include in your maturity model:

 <p><b>DEFINE the competitive advantage</b> that this business area (IT in our case above) will have on people, processes, and tools &amp; technology.</p>	 <p><b>ANTICIPATE what decisions need to be made</b>—Decisions typically boil down to starting, stopping, or changing something.</p>	 <p><b>INCLUDE key principles</b>—These could be grounded in stated business or program requirements (e.g., optimize reuse, intuitive to the end user); business strategy (e.g., move from waterfall design approach to agile approach); or cultural norms (e.g., assign approved metadata and taxonomy to make searchable in repository).</p>	 <p><b>IDENTIFY the success measures</b>—What evidence do you need to know you have been successful?</p>	 <p><b>PINPOINT the enablers</b>—Enablers might be systems or functional capabilities that create an ecosystem that facilitates the desired long-term state of being.</p>
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These are just a few sample inputs to think about as you build your category elements list. Feel free to have clients work collaboratively on building each of these to seed their minds about key elements of consideration. It’s not uncommon to overlook a critical element of consideration, so brainstorming helps. Then just trust the process and do the work.

## Maturity Models Offer FLEXIBILITY

You can use nearly anything as a dimension in your maturity model matrix. Here’s an example of what another matrix might address for a client setting up an internal consulting function:



The key with this maturity model is to show what the organization could look like as it progresses over time for each dimension. Once the vision is set and everyone understands the expected outcomes over the course of the transformation, the gap between your current state and ultimate state will be better understood and easier to span.



## Maturity Model BENEFITS

Consider some of the benefits of a maturity model as you seek to operationalize your vision and desired outcomes. Maturity models:

- Provide a high-level roadmap that will link the strategy statement to major milestones.
- Break down the journey into bite-sized chunks.
- Align stakeholders.
- Facilitate constructive conversations.
- Easily assess where the team is at in the journey.
- Help visualize where the organization is at in the program lifecycle at any point of time.
- Assess the progress made over time.
- Facilitate expectation setting and accountability.
- Identify the next major milestones to focus on.
- Provide psychological relief from being overwhelmed with trying to make the jump to future state in a single bound.
- Expose dependencies to other functions and systems.
- Allow end users freedom to be creative when developing their supporting task-level implementation plans.

## Maturity Model LIMITATIONS

A maturity model is not a “silver bullet.” It is still only a tool.

- It still requires leaders to lead the initiative, delegate responsibility, and hold team members accountable.
- It is a bridge, not a standalone solution—it still requires decomposing each milestone down to the end-user task level to achieve the desired outcomes.

However, if used effectively, a maturity model can go a long way toward smoothing the course of your initiative and leading it to a successful conclusion.

For more information on ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT visit

➤ <https://www.gpstrategies.com/solution/organization-leadership-development/>



## About the AUTHOR

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### About GP Strategies

Founded in 1966, GP Strategies delivers performance improvement programs that strategically align with your unique business objectives and differentiate your global workforce, leaders and salespeople to ensure business excellence. Our sole focus is performance improvement, and everything we do, from technical and compliance training to process improvement and human capital technology integration, is focused on helping your organization deliver meaningful results. Visit [gpstrategies.com](http://gpstrategies.com) for more information.

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