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# Strategies To Improve Project Management Maturity Processes

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## Walter Sargent, DBA

## Abstract

Information technology (IT) organizations lose significant competitive value when business leaders fail to use **project management maturity (PMM) processes** that enhance market delivery, reduce costs, and increase profitability. This **multiple-case study** involved **20 project leaders** that used successful strategies to improve PMM. **Thematic analysis** and **cross-case analysis** revealed **6 strategies to improve PMM processes**, which are (a) Project leader development, (b) customer focus, (c) standard methodology, (d) interactive communication, (e) organizational structure, and (f) continuous process improvement.

## Problem

IT companies lose considerable competitive value when business leaders fail to use PMM processes to enhance market delivery, reduce cost, and increase quality to optimal levels.

The failure rate of IT projects in the public sector is 84%, a figure that represents approximately $150 billion lost in the United States each year.

The **general business problem** is that IT project leaders are often unable to manage processes in the PMM model, which results in a lower ROI.

The **specific business problem** is that some IT project leaders lack strategies to improve PMM processes.

## Purpose

The purpose of this **qualitative multiple-case study** was to **explore in-depth experiences** of project leaders to determine the strategic implications of PMM processes employed within the **federal government, for-profit, Not-For-Profit Organization (NFPO), and Non-Profit Organizations (NPO) within the U.S. defense industry.**

## Relevant Literature

**Project management and the organization** refers to project, program, or portfolio management as part of a practice management system within the project management office (PMO) as a set of, processes, procedures, frameworks, methods, tools, methodologies, techniques, and resources used to manage the project life cycle from beginning to end.

**The PMO** influences project outcomes (Pemsel & Wiewiora, 2013; Spalek, 2013). The success of projects center on an investment in the PMO (Spalek, 2014). Investing in the PMO to provide project management support using PMM processes is more important as projects become more complex (Spalek, 2014).

**The PMM level** of an organization defines organizational evolution based on industry, technology, or professional standards (Stevens, 2013). Neverauskas and Raitaite (2013) posit that it is the investment to increase the organizational PMM levels that has the most significant impact for achieving strategic goals.

**Realized beneficial value** are the measures associated with the project deliverables that has an the impact on the organization (Lappe & Spang, 2014).

## Research Questions

**What strategies do IT project leaders use to improve PMM processes?**

## Procedures

A **case study protocol was designed** to explore the experiences of IT project leaders working in the different PMO types: governmental, for profit, NPO, and NFPO.

The study included **semi-structured, open-ended interview** questions and responses, key organizational documents, email correspondence, and field journal notes.

The **20 participants** were current project leaders that have 3 years of experience working IT projects. **Five respondents** were interviewed from each case. All the respondents worked in the southeast United States.

Completed **interviews were transcribed** to begin initial **jottings to code** the transcripts, and organize the **code to nodes** for data analysis.

## Data Analysis

Data analysis was done through **thematic analysis**, for which I identified and labeled **1,038 segments of text as codes in 42 thematic nodes.** Further thematic data analysis reduced the data nodes to **4 major themes and 6 subthemes.**

For this **cross-cases analysis**, an individual case study was treated as a separate study, and the findings were aggregated across a **series of single case studies**, and analyzed using a **framework matrix technique.**

## Findings

The 4 major themes that PMM processes have a strategic impact are
- profitability factors,
- project success factors,
- challenges to PMM processes, and
- strategies to improve PMM processes.

Subthemes directly attributable to improving PMM processes are
- project leader development,
- customer focus,
- standard methodology,
- interactive communication skills,
- the project office organizational structure, and
- continuous process improvement.

## Limitations

**Potential limitations** to the study include:
- Use of an interview protocol for data collection.
- Participants may not have been aware of recurring patterns or nuances that I hoped to explore.
- The questions did not inspire sufficiently long narratives and storytelling.
- Participants may not have had the verbiage to adequately describe their experiences surrounding their environment.

## Conclusions

**Strategies to improve PMM processes** have
- a direct impact on providing the beneficial value to the project sponsors and end users,
- a positive effect on the project success rate, and
- demonstrated improvements in on-time delivery, cost reductions, organizational efficiency, and improved profitability.

**Recommendations** are to
- professionalize the project leaders through training and rotational experience,
- adopt a customer-focus PM culture,
- establish a standardized methodology within a formalize PMO for improved communication,
- enhance emotional intelligence practices, and
- practice continuous process improvement.

## Social Change Implications

**Implications for change** include the potential to
- improve the economic conditions in local communities supported by benevolent groups,
- expand charitable, socially responsible projects; and
- realize economic benefits and economic transference to local community small business.

*Chair: Dr. Gail Ferreira, 2d Cmte Member: Dr. Tim Truitt, and URR: Dr. Matthew Knight*