BIG IDEA BOOK

Smart Ideas from Greater Washington's Brightest Minds

Rx CURE FOR THE COMMON CMMI

Agile **CMMI**™®

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Alleviates aches and pains associated with common CMMI approaches, including:

- **Headaches** from lost productivity
- **Bloating** due to cookie-cutter processes
- **Fever** as a result of high costs
- **Indigestion** caused by bad advice

If you suffer from these symptoms and concerns for your company's health or prior bouts with CMM/CMMI are preventing you from taking proper action,

call **1-877-ENTINEX**

or visit us at **www.entinex.com/cure**

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Is CMMI Right for You, and What Must You Do?

To determine whether Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMMI) is right for your organization we must start with a basic notion of what CMMI is. CMMI is a model for business process improvement; in particular, the business processes of developing technology. So we should ask: If you are developing technology, do you feel the need to improve your business processes?

Some will probably come across CMMI in the form of a pre-qualifier in some RFP (request for proposals). The CMMI then becomes a necessary evil regardless of whether or not a company's processes need to be addressed. In this group, there aren't many loop-holes.

If you don't sell to the Feds or their Primes then the question is, "What's not working for you with your current way of developing wares?" If you're finding that customer and employee acquisition, satisfaction, or retention, and/or project success, profitability, predictability, or timeliness are tied to uncertainty in your processes, then you could do worse than investigating CMMI for what it offers in rectifying these concerns.

Now that you've determined that CMMI is for you, the next question is: What must you do?

The latest version of the CMMI model is 560 pages long. Some companies try to do everything in it. Entinex doesn't recommend that. What's actually required to follow CMMI? The model is very careful to only use terms that imply that requirements of the model are for the model, not for process improvement. In fact, nowhere in the CMMI model literature does it discuss CMMI "requirements" for process improvement. If an organization is doing something, then it must be resulting in some form of identifiable, tangible output. However, not every organization does the same thing, therefore not every organization produces the same outputs, and therefore sub-practices and work products of a process style practices as described in CMMI are only *informative*, and neither *expected,* nor *required.*

The only time when CMMI matters is when you're aiming to be appraised. In the context of performing to the model – especially where an appraisal is concerned – there are three types of components: required, expected and informative.

The goals are *required.* Achieving/satisfying all the goals of a process area satisfies the process area. Since goals don't get done by themselves (sports analogies work well here), an organization *must* be performing *some* kind of practices in order to achieve a goal, therefore, in the absence of any other practices, CMMI provides some practices that an organization *might* perform to satisfy each goal. That's why the practices are *expected*, but not *required.* The organization might have entirely different practices and might have a different number of practices, either of which are entirely OK as far as CMMI goes, but *something* must be happening to achieve a goal.

The appraisal even has a term for practices that achieve goals that aren't in the model. They're called alternative practices. Alternative practices include sub-practices and produce work products that aren't in the model. However, when it comes to the goals, they are immutable. The goals support the process area's purpose and each purpose supports process improvement.

What does this mean for an appraisal or the appraiser? It means that in order to demonstrate that an organization's process area (or a goal) is satisfied, the appraiser might not be able to rely on the stated practices, "typical" work products, or sub-practices of a process area. This means that appraisers (and consultants) could be exposed for not being competent in the ways and means of modern development. We have a saying around here: Those who cannot do, teach. Those who cannot teach, audit.

It's much easier on the appraiser if the expected components were investigated as "required" and if some of the informative materials were also expected or required in order to demonstrate the required parts. This is closely tied to our discussion above regarding the implementation approaches. Until now, we didn't have enough background to get into it. The blunt approach to CMMI is replete with verbatim practices and sub-practices that start to get a little fishy since sub-practices often change with the context of the projects and typical work products. If CMMI is right for you, it can be implemented without breaking your back or your bank. For more information, please visit www.CMMIFAQ.info.

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