Chapter XVIII

Improving Resource Management: Lessons from a Case Study in a Middle-Range Governmental Organization

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ABSTRACT

In organizational studies, resource management is the efficient and effective deployment of an organization’s resources when they are needed. Such resources may include financial resources, inventory, human skills, production resources, or information technology. Usually small organizations have to carry out these activities themselves because they cannot yet afford part- or full-time help. However, they should always ensure that policies that conform to current regulations are applied. This is especially true for middle-ranged governmental organizations. In this chapter, we discuss a case study where resource management was addressed through recommendations of a process improvement model called MoProSoft. We illustrate the resource management procedure and we draw some lessons learned from the case study.
INTRODUCTION

While there is an increasing benefit of software process improvement in terms of producing high quality software, the adoption in software development has resulted in limited success for many efforts. There are many instances in which process assessment is at best wasteful and at worst counterproductive (Leung, 1999; Saiedian, 2003). Of particular concern is the comparison of a real world organizations’ practices against the idealized recommendations of an improvement model. As more and more organizations embark on software process improvement, the question most frequently asked preceding any commitment to investment is what tangible and intangible benefits can be expected. Generally speaking, there is a perception in small to medium software developers that process improvement models such as CMMI (Capability Maturity Model Integration) or ISO/IEC 15504 (Helfat & Raubitschek, 2000) are developed and are relevant only for large organizations. Then, benefits must be scarce and highly costly when applying them to small organizations (Demirörs et al., 1998; Tuffey, Grove, & McNair, 2004).

The correct implementation of any improvement initiative is an important undertaking. In this context, COMPETISOFT (2006) is a process improvement project set up through seed funding from the CyTED organization (CyTED), an Ibero-American organization aiming at supporting science and technology development in Latin America, Spain, and Portugal. In 2006, CyTED funded this project for small to medium software developments. The initial phase involved, among other things, conducting a number of assessments and experiences in implementing improvement practices. It included selecting participating organizations where investigate about the advantages and pitfalls of applying such improvement practices.

As the judicial system of the Province of Neuquen, Argentina, a medium governmental organization that produces software has previous experience in process improvement activities such as Metrica V.3; there was a concern about new programs oriented to small/medium organizations. Particularly, it was interesting to them to analyze the organization’s perception of what a process improvement project involves in order to manage resources. With this concern in mind, the organization set the following goals that it wishes to realize by participating in a process improvement program:

1. Improve efficiencies within the resource acquisition practices
2. Improve productivity
3. Reduce critical dependency of subjective evaluations
4. Set operational policies and procedures to evaluate and acquire resources

This chapter discusses the results of a case study focusing on the conduct of a process improvement project in this medium-sized governmental organization mentoring to improve the capability of the organization’s resource acquisition processes (Luzuriaga, Martínez, & Cechich, 2006). The activities centered on the recommendations of the Mexican model MoProSoft (Oktaba et al., 2003), providing a basis for developing management practices, which were implemented over a period of six months, and finally determining the improvements realized over that time frame. We discuss lessons learned and highlight benefits and drawbacks of implementing improvement from the case study.

RESEARCH PROJECT

There is a considerable diversity of recent proposals to address organizational research (Clegg & Ross-Smith, 2003; Czarniawska, 2003), ranging from modest attempts at enhancing “managerial implications” sections of scholarly articles to calls
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