

# The Four Levels of Project Success

## The Project Management Maturity Matrix

Increasingly these days organisations are project based, meaning that the work they do is split into programmes of projects designed to deliver the organisation's strategies and add value. Good management of these projects is essential if the organisation is going to succeed. Equally important to individual project success is ensuring that the right projects are carried out. As project management guru Bob Buttrick put it, "Directing the individual project correctly will ensure it is done right. Directing all the projects successfully will ensure we are doing the right projects."

Organisations have varying levels of expertise in the project management function. Many of these organisations realise that to be successful a better approach to project management is necessary. As a consequence methodologies such as PRINCE2 are becoming popular, but this is just the first step. To become truly world class at project management requires much more.

This is where the Project Management Maturity Matrix can help. It is similar to the Capability Maturity Matrix used in software development, in that it can help organisations improve the maturity of their project management processes in terms of an evolutionary path from ad-hoc, disorganised processes to mature, disciplined project management processes.

### What is the Project Management Maturity Matrix?

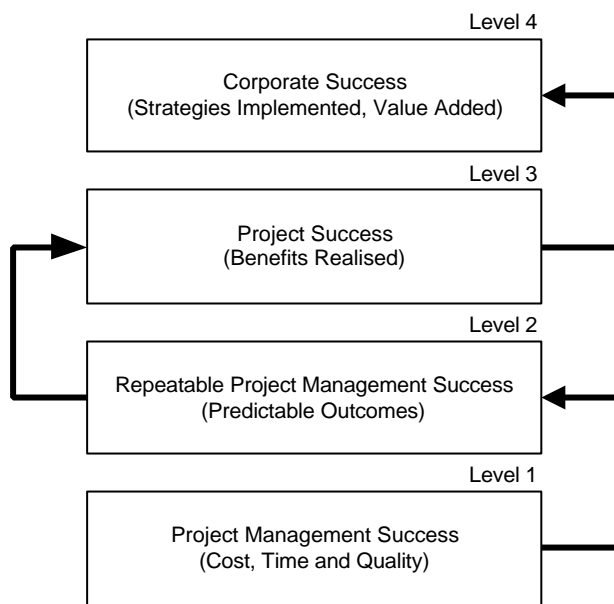
The matrix describes four levels of maturity in project management:

**Level 1:** Projects are often delivered through the personal heroics and effort of the project manager and his/her team. They tend to be delivered in spite of the organisation rather than because of it.

**Level 2:** Anybody can deliver here not just heroes, because there is an agreed methodology to be followed that helps repeat earlier successes from similar projects. Courses and training can help at this level.

**Level 3:** This is not only about delivering projects but also realising benefits. This involves knowing what benefits are expected and when the project has delivered them.

**Level 4:** Is concerned with whether we are doing the right projects and how via those projects we can deliver the business strategy and add value.



For organisations to understand the level they are operating at, it is useful to ask these questions:

**Level 1: Project Management Success (cost, time and quality)**

Did our project produce the desired output?

**Level 2: Repeatable Project Management Success (predictable outcomes)**

Do our projects consistently produce the desired outputs?

**Level 3: Project Success (benefits realised)**

Do the project outputs produce the desired outcomes?

**Level 4: Corporate Success (strategies implemented, value added)**

Do the outcomes produce or have the intended impact on the business strategy?

Moving from one level to another requires organisations to develop processes in a number of areas:

- A methodology is required to move from level 1 to 2
- Benefits management is required to move from level 2 to 3
- Portfolio management is required to move from level 3 to 4

The key process area at level 2 involves the introduction of a project management methodology. This may be in-house developed or something from the public domain like PRINCE2. The important thing is that all project managers have a framework within which to work and the organisation has the structures to support them. Once this is in place there is less reliance on personal heroics and more emphasis on repeatable and measurable success.

The key process area at level 3 focuses on benefits management. Surprising as it may seem many organisations do not look at whether projects have delivered the benefits originally envisaged at initiation. Success is only measured on whether projects have delivered against cost, time and quality criteria. As benefits are not usually realised immediately at the end of projects, it is necessary to revisit the project after a period of time to see if the benefits have accrued. If not then the organisation should seek to identify why not and whether any action is required.

The key process area at level 4 covers managing portfolios of projects to ensure that collectively they deliver the organisations strategies. Portfolio management is about ensuring the right projects are carried out, a balanced portfolio is created addressing all areas of business development and best use is made of resources. Processes need to be in place so that all new ideas for projects can be proposed, reviewed and decisions made about whether they contribute to the overall strategy of the organisation.

Each key process area contributes to an improvement in the organisation's project management capability, which in turn enables it to satisfy its goals.