AROUND
THE WORLD,
ORGANIZATIONS
ARE TAKING
A GOOD,
LONG LOOK
AT THEMSELVES—
AND FIGURING
OUT WHERE
TO GO NEXT.

MAPPING
MATURITY

BY LIBBY ELLIS * PHOTOS BY SHASHI KIRAN

It certainly sounds good in theory. With project management maturity comes improved project delivery, increased ROI and smarter allocation of resources. And now, more companies are starting to realize those payoffs.

But not all organizations are taking the same path. Here's how four project leaders around the world are addressing maturity matters—making efforts not only to "grow up," but to "wise up."

VENKATA RAMAM
ATMAKURI, PMP
INVENSYS DEVELOPMENT
CENTRE INDIA PVT. LTD.
HYDERABAD, INDIA

Building Consistency

Without a doubt, India is fast emerging as an economic superpower—with a long list of mega-projects to prove it. And as the country matures, so does project management.

"In terms of maturity, I would say India has stepped up significantly over the last five years, thanks to large projects being outsourced to and executed from India," says Venkata Ramam Atmakuri, PMP, vice president, Invensys Development Centre (IDC) India Pvt. Ltd.

As the largest software development center for Invensys—a global industrial automation, controls, transportation and process solutions giant—IDC is one of those Indian companies striving for greater maturity.

In the process, Mr. Atmakuri has had to overcome organizational culture issues and rethink the way IDC functions. "When we started out, things were inconsistent,"

he explains. "People would avoid saying 'no' to things and end up adding to the scope without allotting extra time. Then, they wouldn't raise the red flag when things got off schedule."

The solution, he found, was education. Mr. Atmakuri implemented a consistent reporting method. And, most importantly, he trained his people on *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge* (*PMBOK® Guide*). "To get the best results, most of the team members should be equally equipped to understand project management principles," he says. "The training gave our senior engineer, domain experts and project managers alike a taste of all of the Knowledge Areas."

Sixty people at IDC completed the training, which included a session on maturity. And Mr. Atmakuri says he believes the knowledge they gained is directly responsible for the organization's current success.

Another challenge he faced is common in today's world of globally scattered project teams: communication. In the past, IDC's project reporting was done through too many sources, and that led to consistency woes, time-zone issues and miscommunications. So Mr. Atmakuri did some restructuring and cut out the intermediary. Project managers in India now manage global projects and report directly to IDC's management and global project management office.

In the last year, since implementing training and the reorganization, Mr. Atmakuri reports dramatic improvements in both predictability and consistency. Deviation rates are down from 24 percent to between 8 percent and 12 percent. And everyone in every region has a docket of projects in progress and runs through the same extensive list—including schedule and budget checks—to assess their health.

ALL TOGETHER NOW

If companies really want to improve maturity, they should require all their employees to attend at least a small-scale project management training session, says Venkata Ramam Atmakuri, PMP, Invensys Development Centre (IDC) India Pvt. Ltd.

At IDC, all of the senior software engineers have gone through a workshop covering PMI's *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge* (*PMBOK® Guide*).

"We get a lot of engineers fresh from college," Mr. Atmakuri says. "We put them through a half-day session about the importance of project management because when team members are aware of their own role and impact on a project, productivity will be higher."

Even those who don't go on to earn a Project Management Professional (PMP®) certification become better team players because they gain understanding of how projects work. "In a way," he says, "we've decentralized project management so that everyone does it well."

MAURO SOTILLE, PMP
PM TECH
PORTO ALEGRE, BRAZIL

Making Demands

An overwhelming majority—94 percent—of Brazilian companies say they see the value of improving project management maturity, according to a 2007 survey of 220 respondents conducted by the National Integration of Brazilian PMI Chapters.

But Mauro Sotille, PMP, owner of PM Tech, doesn't see that translating to action—yet.

He estimates only half of the clients his consultancy works with are taking steps toward measuring project performance and tracking best practices.

"In Latin America, in general, there is still a sense of 'doing,' [being valued more than] 'planning,'" Mr. Sotille explains. "That has been changing over the last 10 years, but it's still a challenge to convince organizations that the resources spent to put processes in place to plan and run projects equals money well-spent."

To help his clients get up to speed, he can't follow a single model. "We have been using as many varieties of approaches to assessing maturity as there are companies," Mr. Sotille says.

He typically begins by going into an organization to:

■ **Assess** its ability to identify the relationship between projects and its overall strategic objective
■ **Ensure** the establishment of a minimum set of standards, including a common set of project management processes and templates
■ **Reinforce** processes that drive good behaviors and eliminate those that inhibit the organization
■ **Calculate** current project success rates

■ **Measure** client attitudes, compensation systems and skill levels.

Recently, Mr. Sotille was working with Gens S/A, a software development company that has been successfully implementing technology to automate medical offices for the last decade. Yet even though it was the market leader, the company realized its potential client base was shrinking and started competing for work in larger organizations in 2007.

"They won a bid for a huge systems integration and customization project and were surprised when the first questions the CEO had were: 'Please show me your project management methodology. When will I be able to talk to your project managers? Can I visit your PMO?'" Mr. Sotille says.

It was just the incentive Gens S/A needed. The company has since jump-started its project management practices and launched an internal push to maturity aimed at helping the company increase its customer base and reinforce its leadership position.

FELICIA HONG, PMP
BAE SYSTEMS
SANTA CLARA, CALIFORNIA, USA

Thinking Ahead

BAE Systems, the world's third-largest global defense company with close to 100,000 employees around the world, is growing up fast. In a period of rapid expansion, the organization is moving forward with its project management practices and focusing on selecting the best maturity model.

Across the board, BAE is very mature, says Felicia Hong, PMP, program and risk management lead at BAE Systems. For several years, the organization has relied on an internally developed life cycle management model designed to

PLAYING CATCH UP

In an era of hyper-globalization, multinationals are setting up shop around the world—and bringing project management maturity with them.

But the results are often mixed.

In Poland, after the Solidarity movement caused economic transformation in 1989, there was a chasm between the companies opening satellite offices and the less mature homegrown ones, says Stanislaw Gasik, consultant with Sybena Consulting, Warsaw, Poland.

Since then, Polish companies have made strides, entering the project management field and training many local professionals, he says. Mr. Gasik also credits the use of modern project management software tools with sparking more interest in project management education. And the process was further accelerated by Poland's entrance into the European Union in 2004, he says. "These two streams together make a good basis for establishing maturity in Poland, but it is difficult to assess true maturity," he says.

In South America, it was the larger multinational companies in Brazil that first started paying attention to project management maturity, says Mauro Sotille, PMP, PM Tech.

Yet, while that might be where the trend started, he says more and more of the region's smaller companies are starting to adopt project management practices.

STUNTED GROWTH

Trying to do too much too fast and not being realistic about how far along an organization is in its maturity can lead to frustration and, ultimately, slow progress.

"People look at a model and think they have to go straight through from step one and do every single thing the model says," says Felicia Hong, PMP, BAE Systems.

Instead, she says, organizations should be metrics-driven, gauging results based on the organization's starting point rather than the end goals. Ms. Hong recommends organizations prioritize and choose specific areas to focus on.

Stanislaw Gasik, consultant with Sybena Consulting in Warsaw, Poland, agrees. Improving maturity is a long process that demands a huge amount of work—including dedicating time to selecting the proper maturity model. He suggests implementing improvements incrementally, aiming to improve one process and then the next, moving toward the goal one step at a time.

provide some global consistency. "All of our global regions are measured against the same criteria so we know what the gaps are and can address them," she says.

Ms. Hong describes the model as "ever-evolving," so she and other leaders can test new tools. "Recently, in my line of business—ground systems—we became interested in implementing [PMI's *Organizational Project Management Maturity Model*] *OPM3*® to help us measure where we are and map out plans for improvements," she says.

Because BAE's project managers are being developed via an internal program based on the *PMBOK® Guide*, Ms. Hong explains, "we felt that using *OPM3* as a way to further develop our program and portfolio management methodologies would be a logical approach."

It's still early in the pilot program, but her team is looking for a model that will include standard benchmark data. The goal is to find one that can help BAE measure itself against its peers—identifying both the good and the bad.

"In organizations that have been doing well, there's euphoria in thinking that we can always do that well and we don't need to focus on improvement and maturity," Ms. Hong says. "But we have to put plans in place and prepare for growth in order to meet future challenges. There's a danger when people feel they can stop trying to improve."

SAADI ADRA, PMP
COLLABORATION
MANAGEMENT AND
CONTROL SOLUTIONS
DUBAI, UNITED ARAB
EMIRATES

Battling a Lack of Awareness

With no region-specific data to back up his arguments, Saadi Adra, PMP, is struggling to sell Middle Eastern organizations on the merits of maturity.

"To be able to speak with clients at this level requires mature leadership among upper management," says Mr. Adra, PMP, manager of professional services, *OPM3*-certified assessor and consultant, Collaboration Management and Control Solutions (CMCS).

So he takes it as a positive sign when someone approaches him with questions about maturity.

"If I get such a request, at least I know that they know what maturity is, and it is a lot easier to work with people who are aware enough to ask the question," Mr. Adra says.

But, he acknowledges, even those familiar with some project management concepts can find maturity difficult to grasp.

To help address that problem, Mr. Adra developed a half-page information sheet covering the basics about project management best practices and maturity. Internally, the document made a huge impact: The CMCS CEO decided he and the other senior managers will become *OPM3*-certified by the end of the year.

"We believe in the system," Mr. Adra says. "But, corporations and governments in the Middle East do not yet know the model. The value of assessing maturity needs to be proven to them and just presenting studies conducted in the States is not enough."

Mr. Adra's goal is to create successful case studies specific to the Middle East. He's currently at work on two maturity assessments, but until those results are in, he's focused on spreading the word. That push includes a one-day workshop he developed for about 40 IT leaders on how to implement project management practices—with an hour dedicated to the value of measuring maturity.

"People are asking for leaders who are vision-makers. They say, 'You are promising me benefits but I want to see proof,'" Mr. Adra says. "I think it will take us some time in the Middle East, but we have a huge potential." PM