

Product Management Assessment – a New Approach to Optimize the Early Phases

Dr. Tilo Fritzhanns, Franz Kudorfer
Siemens AG, Munich

tilo.fritzhanns@siemens.com, franz-xaver.kudorfer@siemens.com

Abstract

For more than ten years Siemens Corporate Technology has applied the Capability Maturity Model (CMM®) and has performed more than 250 CMM-assessments. Over the years, improvement efforts based on the assessment results successfully proved their benefits. But, since these improvements focused solely on development processes it became apparent that problems that arise in earlier phases couldn't be disregarded. Thus, it was obvious that an additional assessment for product management processes is a necessity that helps understand and manage the entire process of the product life cycle.

Combined with best practice in product management these experiences result in a reference model that underlies the assessment structure for product management. The assessment consists of a questionnaire, evaluation tools and templates for documenting and presenting the results. The experiences in practice show their first benefits for the customers.

1. Lessons learned

In many Siemens departments that had undergone a CMM-based assessment a process improvement program was started. Over the years these efforts showed their benefits in shorter cycle times, lower costs and higher quality. As these improvements focused on development processes, more and more problems came to the surface, which lay beyond the development.

- Defined responsibilities are not sufficiently clear
- Insufficient communication
- Unclear strategic conditions
- Too little knowledge of the market
- Insufficient focus on core tasks in product management

As a consequence of these lessons learned many Siemens business areas asked for support in improving

the early phases of the product lifecycle. Siemens Corporate Technology chose the approach to transfer the best practice of integrated assessments and improvements to these early phases. The results are a reference model, a collection of best practices and finally the Siemens Product Management Assessment.

2. Integrated Approach

The integrated approach of assessment and improvement must be based on a reference model of the scope of operation. For product management however, there is no internationally recognized maturity model like CMM for software development processes. So Siemens started a joint research project with the University of Linz, Austria to develop an appropriate model that can be applied to product management. The reference model consists of three main components: the product management process as the core process, the support processes and the interfaces to relevant corporate functions.

The reference model is transferred into a questionnaire as the main component of an assessment procedure. The assessments are carried out in interview sessions, the information is processed by evaluating each question of the questionnaire. The assessment results are presented in four different documents:

- An evaluation chart
- A detailed profile of strengths and weaknesses
- A catalogue of recommendations
- A Portfolio of activity fields

3. Benefits

The Siemens Product Management Assessment provides a quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the customer's current situation. People and the organization gain in awareness of lacks and problems and get the orientation to take the measures with maximum leverage effect towards successful product management.