

Case Study:

Operational Assessment



CDI conducts an operational assessment and establishes a prioritization action plan that provides a cost-effective, timely solution to significantly improve company operations.

Client Description:

A subsidiary of a healthcare insurance and related services provider to over three million members in the Northeast, providing administrative services, IT oversight and governance for the support and development of software for insurers, health plans, employers and providers in the Medicare, Medicaid and group retiree health plan markets.

Business Issue:

The company was experiencing serious organizational issues in several areas and required an independent review of the causes of the ongoing symptoms. They were facing a high level of customer dissatisfaction with the tracking and delivery of change requests against work-related software applications. These change requests were a result of software defects, regulation changes and enhancements. The backlog management system became a black hole where some requests were parked in the system for over a year. A lack of portfolio management and work prioritization created an environment where the IT solution delivery organization could not keep up with delivery demands. Virtually all requests required immediate attention and the unreasonable timelines led to the abandonment several quality-related activities including release management, design documentation, design reviews, production readiness reviews and other critical quality steps. Additional problems included an inability to validate requirements and the need for a significant amount of re-work throughout the software development lifecycle (SDLC). Business analysts refused to sign requirement specifications due to requirement integrity problems and it was difficult to achieve release plan approval. A lack of accountability within the organization led to low morale and increased turnover.

CDI Solution:

CDI to perform an organization operational assessment covering all aspects of the operation from initial customer

requirement generation to final delivery and application support activities. Within two weeks, CDI planned the assessment and had a team in place at the client's location. A six-phase assessment approach was conducted:

1. A review of policies, methodologies, processes and templates
2. Interviewing the company's subject matter experts (SMEs) to identify assigned functional areas
3. Review of evidence of execution
4. Developing a detailed gap analysis against what was in place and industry best practices using the Software Engineering Institute (SEI) Capability Maturity Model integration (CMMi)
5. Creating an Assessment Summary Report including findings, industry best practices, comparisons and recommendations
6. Establishing a comprehensive action plan that ranked actions and outlined next steps

Results:

A top-to-bottom operational assessment was planned and staffed within a two-week period. The actual assessment took place in a single week and the assessment summary report and action plan were delivered the following week. The operational assessment was designed for maximum effectiveness with particular attention given to performing detailed, in-depth interviews and reviewing company process assets including policies, processes, templates and guidelines, all conducted with minimal interference to day-to-day operations.

The assessment identified areas critical to improving the organization's overall effectiveness. Each area contained a process improvement plan with detailed structure and action

items necessary to remedy the issues identified in the report. Also included were metric recommendations that would track the success of the project.

Key areas were identified for improvement and next steps to increase productivity were outlined including:

- Developing an IT portfolio management process that would fairly represent all stakeholders and provide clear direction to the delivery organization
- Creating an improved governance process
- Establishing a ranking and prioritization process that was efficient and accurate and rolled into realistic release plans and schedules
- Improving the project management office operations (policies, processes, templates and guidelines) that would support release planning and execution
- Enhancing quality assurance
- Incorporating better requirement development and management processes
- Improving unit, integration, system and regression testing
- Developing configuration management
- Expanding SDLC quality activities to improve technical solution design, coding and testing discipline activities

Through a comprehensive operational assessment, CDI was able to quickly identify the causes of the many organizational issues and to create a prioritized action plan that provided a cost-effective, timely solution to significantly improve company operations.