



Building a Solution Definition Competency Center

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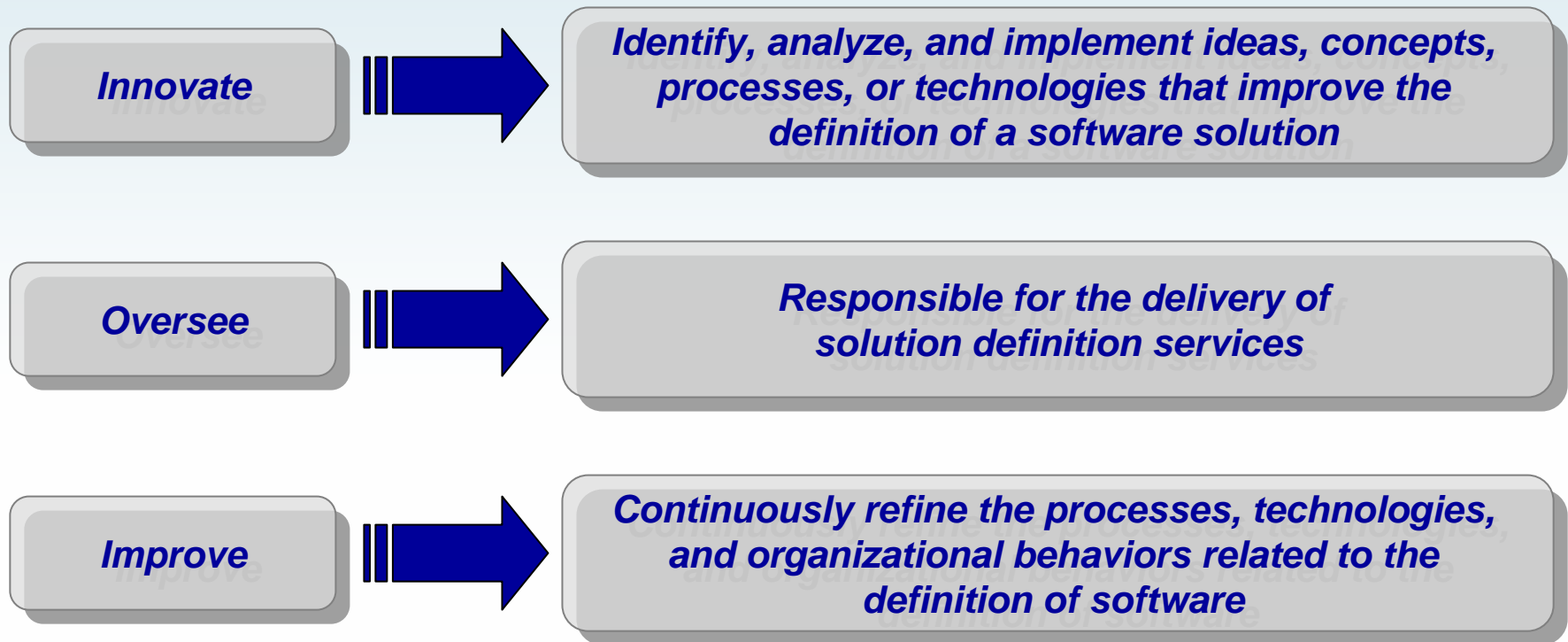
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“An organization's ability to learn, and translate that learning into *action* rapidly, is the ultimate competitive advantage.”

-- Jack Welch

Introduction: What is a Solution Definition Competency Center?

- ❖ An organizational unit, comprised of business analysts and user experience experts, created to **innovate**, **oversee** and **improve** the definition of software solutions within an organization.



- ❖ Is the successful definition of a solution dependent on the competence and heroics of the people, and not on the use of proven processes?
- ❖ Does each project follow the same solution definition process?
- ❖ Are enabling technologies consistently used throughout the organization to define software solutions?
- ❖ Is knowledge sharing or artifact reuse minimal, or nonexistent?
- ❖ Is there a mechanism to introduce – and drive enterprise adoption of – a transformational process or technology?

- ❖ The framework to efficiently and predictably define software solutions.
 - Institutes repeatable process; Effective use of technologies.
- ❖ The organizational memory to use knowledge from the past on present activities.
 - Leverages knowledge sharing and artifact reuse for increased effectiveness.
- ❖ A community of like-minded individuals that work to solve common business problems.
 - Provides an identity; Culture of knowledge sharing and continuous improvement.

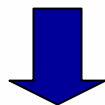
Phase 1: Planning and Justification



Phase 2: Building the Foundation



Phase 3: Early Adoption



Phase 4: Proliferation

- ❖ Establish the business case for the Solution Definition Competency Center.

- ❖ Key activities:
 - Establish executive level support.
 - Establish baseline metrics.
 - Effort for requirements elicitation and analysis.
 - Requirements rework.
 - Project success, etc.
 - Define the costs of the competency center.
 - Resource acquisition/allocation.
 - Skill acquisition.
 - Technology costs, etc.
 - Define the value of the competency center.
 - Reduce requirements cycle time.
 - Reduce development costs.
 - Increase operational efficiency.
 - Increase project success rate, etc.

- ❖ Recommendation: Formalize the creation of the Solution Definition Competency Center.
 - Informal groups struggle with resource commitment and allocation.
 - Formalization enables leadership to clearly define and brand the group.
 - Formalization provides the ability to measure, reward, and incentivize the team differently.

- ❖ Launch and define the team, processes and technology enablers that will form the foundation of the competency center.

- ❖ Key activities:
 - Assess the current state to determine areas of improvement.
 - At the core, you must have resources with the right mix of skills.
 - Key soft skills: communication, facilitation, collaboration, etc.
 - Key hard skills: methodologies, requirement tools, design artifacts, etc.
 - Review and refine (or define?) the Design phases of the Software Development Life Cycle (SDLC).
 - Define how supporting technologies will be used to enable the SDLC.
 - Establish a knowledge sharing repository; create a culture of knowledge sharing.

- ❖ Recommendation: Build an organizational unit that endures beyond a single individual.
 - Enterprise adoption will require a common knowledge system based on common practices, processes, and methodologies – not on the heroic efforts of a single individual.

- ❖ Recommendation: Define different and innovative incentives for team members.
 - Measure and reward usage of the knowledge repository.
 - Reward individuals for the identification and analysis of process improvements and innovative technologies.

- ❖ Create momentum and demonstrate the value of the Solution Definition Competency Center.

- ❖ Key Activities:
 - Pilot projects – pick the right first few problems to solve.
 - Execute, execute, execute.
 - Demonstrate the value – measure the results and compare to the baseline. (e.g., reduce requirements cycle time, reduce development costs, increase operational efficiency).
 - Create the buzz.

- ❖ Recommendation: Advertise and promote early successes.
 - Resistance to transformational change is common; overcoming resistance requires an unwavering demonstration of value.
 - Include team members that have the ability to sell.
 - Utilize executive champion to sell the value.

- ❖ Drive mass adoption and to infuse the competency center into the enterprise software development process.

- ❖ Key Activities:
 - Create a scalable business unit – leadership, recruiting, delivery assurance.
 - Connect to external communities – certified Business Analysts (IIBA), certified modelers (iRise), UPA.
 - Continuous training and mentoring, both formal and informal.

- ❖ Recommendation: Define and provide career paths for Solution Definition team members.
 - Lack of career pathing brands the initiative as a single event, a project.
 - Provides opportunity for professional growth and development within the competency center.
 - Increases retention of team members.

- ❖ Repurposing existing team members rather than selecting the right core team members.
- ❖ Not uniquely branding the competency center.
- ❖ Creation of knowledge silos.
- ❖ Becoming dependent on a few key resources rather than building a scalable business unit.

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