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Systematic Closure of Continuous Improvement Projects in Matrix-Structured IT Organizations

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Abstract

This Article intends to explore the impact, causes and benefits of "Closure of ongoing Operational Excellence Projects/Continuous improvement initiatives in Matrix structured IT Orgs. (IT Operations). Ongoing/repeated Projects, due to, a) Matrix structure characteristics, b) Executional issues as well as c) due to repeated nature of Continuous Initiatives/Project itself makes it difficult for Project Managers to systematically close or handover to BAU, Operations, report benefit & value delivered out of Projects/CI Operations excellence initiatives.

The idea here is to identify the key causes in Matrix Structured Organizations, which leads CI Initiative/Projects to slip to next fiscal, impact of such initiatives on overall Org. Strategic Objective's achievement and build/propose a play book with "Set of Frameworks – Best Practices" which may help Project Managers to systematically close such ongoing, repeated Operational Excellence Projects/Continuous Improvement Initiatives on time.

This article investigates:

- Top Causes of delay & impact of ongoing Operational Projects on strategic goals.
- Benefits of a play book of Frameworks and best practices to close ongoing Operational Projects/Continuous Improvement Initiatives and handover/transition process to BAU.

Key Objective: Build playbook i;e set of Frameworks & Best Practices that allow PM a Systematic Closure of Operations Excellence, Continuous Improvement Initiatives/Projects.responsible, consumer-centric digital innovation that balances business growth with public wellbeing.

Keywords: IT Operations, CI Initiative, Matrix Structured Organizations, Systematic Closure

Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving and transforming IT industry, organizations tend to adopt matrix structures to maximize resource utilization and cost optimization as their primary goals. Based on various research and studies conducted, it is learnt that appx. 60-70% of total budgets in IT companies are allocated towards Operations" Run Bucket", thus ratify the significant impact of IT Operations Initiative/Projects for an Organization in achieving it's strategic goals/objectives.

Recent research conducted by McKinsey suggests that >70% of IT companies operate in a matrix-hybrid structure and that of, 60-70% IT budgets are allocated towards Operations.

"Nearly 70% of IT budgets are allocated to maintenance and operations. The 70% Problem: IT Spending vs Innovation | Synoptek

"In most Organizations, over 70 percent of IT budget goes toward ongoing Operations and maintenance as per IT Budget 2027: Three Quarters for Operations – That's the Problem"

Matrix structure in an organization frequently yields agility, enhanced productivity, and cost benefits but at the same time it's dual reporting structure and resourcing conflicts, work prioritization conflicts also have some proven adverse effects.

Imagine a resource assigned Project Manager for a strategic project with critical delivery in few hours and a long-lasting 8+ hours Priority 1 /P1 Break Down/Incident with $$million impacts on customer arise. In situations like this, the conflict in priority is obvious which can lead to significant impact/loss either on project or operations/BAU or both.

Additionally. some Projects/Operational improvement initiatives are, "by nature" repeated/ongoing forever every fiscal (eg. Improve MTTR by xx%, Enhance Productivity by yy%). Appropriate Closer, Handover or Termination and Value realization of such projects become necessary for organizations to achieve strategic objectives.

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

As we all know, the components (Projects/CI) which may have intangible benefits (usually Operations Excellence and Continuous Improvement Initiatives) make Portfolios more complex and some of

components are not feasible to permanently close as these improvements are required regularly on quarterly, half yearly or annual basis. Governance, Value measurement, and closure of ongoing Operational Continuous Improvements Initiatives is difficult, so when can a PM say – Project is closed & delivered expected value? Let Us Explore!

1.2 KEY CHALLENGES

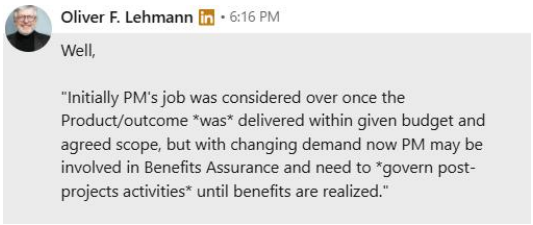
For a PM – How to close ongoing Operational Excellence Initiative or a Continuous Improvement Initiative/Project in a Matrix Structure IT Operations Org.
For Leaders/Organization – ROI - Quantification & realization of benefits and value delivered though ongoing Operational Excellence Continuous Improvement Initiatives/Projects.

1.3 SIGNIFICANTCE OF STUDY

This study is motivated by the impact and importance of IT Operations Continuous Improvements Projects/Initiative's contribution towards Organizational strategic objective. Numerous studies suggest that ">70% of IT companies operate in a matrix-hybrid structure and that of, 60-70% IT budgets are allocated towards Operations". The Impact of CI Initiatives/Projects in achieving organizational strategy is Significant. Timely and systematically closure of IT Operational Excellence Continuous Improvements Initiatives/Projects can reduce the Gap in strategic plan vs actual value delivery as well as it may ease the burden on PM for not having closed these ongoing Projects.
This article focuses on building a play book of frameworks and best practices for closing an ongoing Continuous Improvement Initiatives/Projects, which directly contributes towards achieving strategic vision in an IT Organization.

1.4 THERORITICAL FOUNDATION:

For a long time, Projects Managers lived with understanding that " PM's job was considered over once the Product/ Outcome *was* delivered as planned, within given budget and agreed scope, but with changing demand now PM may be involved in Benefits Assurance and need to *govern post-projects activities* until benefits are realized.". Taking reference from LinkedIn discussions (with permissions from Mr. Oliver F. Lehman, one of most renowned & PMI Authorized Trainer for PMI/PMP, Project Managers), in today's competitive environment "Projects/PM are expected to deliver the "Value" and not just outcome/product/service". Few years back, if we coined "Operational Projects" together, it would have been a topic to talk and debate. By definition, a Project is "Temporary endeavor with defined Start and End time", which delivers a unique product or service and is not repeated in nature. But in today's rapidly evolving environment with increased technology change rate, successful execution of all Projects (including projects impacting Operations which are approximately 70% of total IT projects investments) plays a significant role for Organization's in achieving strategic objectives, and hence there is a increasingly popular perspective towards ongoing Operational Excellence Continuous Improvement Initiatives to be considered and managed as Projects.



Permissions from Oliver obtained to use his views/chat

With the evolution in definition of a "Project" by PMI from PMBOK 5th edition to latest PMBOK 8th edition, focus is moving more from delivering an outcome/product/service (hypothetically, may or may not be beneficial to business, but accountability indicates delivering the outcome) to creating "Value", as well as introduction of word "Initiative" instead of "Project" in PMBOK 8th Edition gives us flexibility to consider this assumption.
Thus, we determine a theory "to look at "Continuous Improvement Operational Projects/ Excellence Improvements Initiatives" as a "Project", which may be, despite being repeated in nature, delivers unique value fiscal over fiscal which further contribute towards the achievement of strategic objectives in an organization. In this article we shall further explore "Building a Play Book of frameworks and Best Practices for closure of ongoing repeated Operational Excellence Initiatives i;e a "Project".

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, I have followed Hybrid/ Mix-Method approach for research, which combines both primary data collection, analysis and research i;e survey-based research as well as I have referred to 20+ relevant Literature, Case Studies, Journals, Books & Internet Publications by authentic sources

(like pmi.org, Mckensy etc.).
Firstly, I have deeply studied and reviewed existing research papers and publications/reports (20+ studies) analyses and determined the Key Challenges in Matrix Organizations and its impact on overall organizational strategic plan vs actual value delivery. This relationship can be factually established from research papers, and internet publications (for which detailed references are given under BIBLOGRAPHY at the end of this document).
Secondly, the primary data collection through surveys is conducted among the IT Professionals, PMs, Operations/Delivery professionals working in matrix hybrid structed organizations (Sample size: 120+). This survey I started for my Ph.D thesis, which is greater research with much broader aspects, I have infused 5 relevant/Key questions into overall questionnaires which are relevant to this article/research as well as deeply connected with my detailed research.
The focus of the literature's reviews & targeted questionnaires survey is to determine how common challenges across matrix structured organizations, impact strategy plan vs execution (plan Vs actual value delivery).
Data used are from 2 main sources:

1. Primary Data (Survey Questionnaires). Primary Data Sample Size: Sample size of 100 was planned, against which we received overwhelming 120+ responses.
2. Secondary Data Source (Studies by other Authers, Literature, books, internet publications by authentic sources like PMI (pmi.org). – 20+ Literatures reviews.

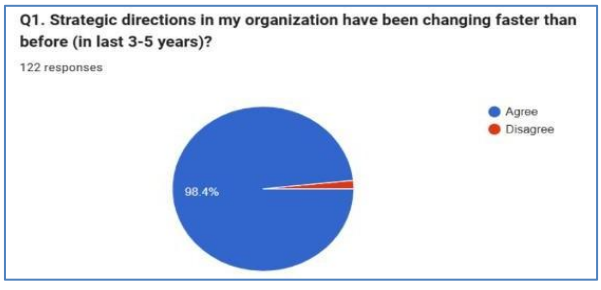
2.1 PRIMARY/ EMPERICAL DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS:

A Structured Questionnaire published via google doc/form is used for empirical/primary data collection, mainly targeting the Project Managers and Delivery Managers from IT Industry. The Questions formulated are in very simple language, straightforward and relevant to the given research. The structured questionnaire contains very simply and clearly articulated single and multiple-choice options which must be selected by interviewee. Questionnaire is a balanced blend of Multiple Choice, Closed ended and open-ended questions. Questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first part captures general information of interviewees (email ID, Industry size, Type and experience etc.) and second part captures information w.r.t research problem (matrix structure issues like dual reporting etc. and their relevant experience and answers).
In all, this survey proved to be very effective and efficient way to capture the relevant information and ratify the problem area.

2.1.1 DATA ANALYSIS
Impact of Matrix Structure (dual reporting, accountability ambiguity etc.) on ongoing operational excellence initiatives/projects.

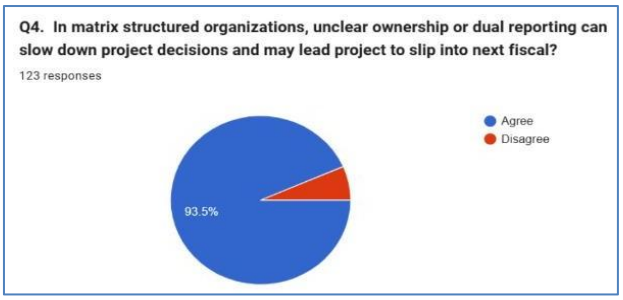
Ongoing data processing and analysis to establish the relationship between Matrix Structure and Delays in ongoing Operational Excellence Initiatives/Project, gives us meaningful and interesting results.

1. Over 98% of 120+ respondents agree that over the period of last 3-5 years, strategic directions in their organization have been changing faster than before, which certainly impacts on all ongoing work, projects, ways of working etc.

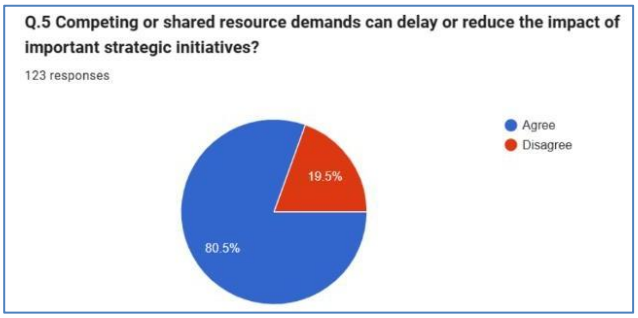


2. This question validates impact of unclear ownership and dual reporting etc. challenges in matrix structure organization can certainly lead the project to slip into next fiscal.

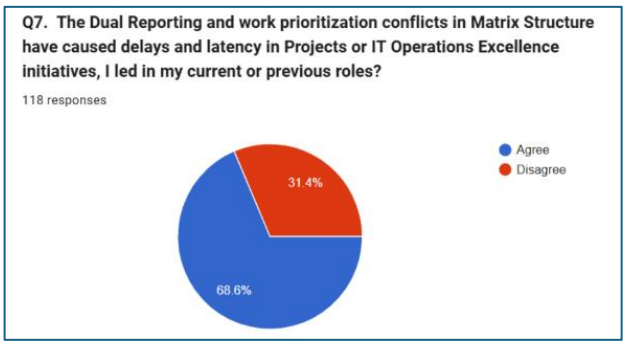
   Out of total 120+ respondents, 93% of respondents confirm the impact.



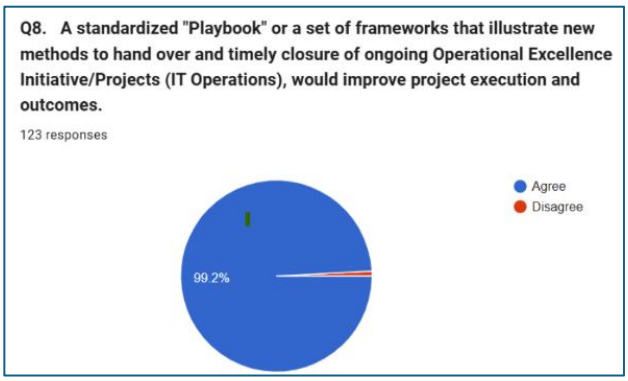
3. 80% respondents echo that shared resourcing conflicts due to conflicting demands and priorities between operations and projects can certainly have an impact of ongoing projects or operations or both.



4. 69% Respondents (out of 120+) has encountered these issues in an ongoing operational excellence continuous improvement initiative/project they have delivered in the current or previous roles.



5. 99% of 120+ respondents believe a Playbook or a set of Frameworks that illustrate new methods to systematically close, transition and hand over projects to BAU/operations and establishing processes that enables closure of ongoing operations excellence initiatives/projects can certainly improve project execution and outcome/benefits realization.



2.2 SCANDORY DATA – LITERATURES REVIEW, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS:

Secondary data analysis is completed by studying and analyzing 20+ literature, publications, books and case studies review. 10+ studies ratify the problems encountered in mid-large Matrix structure organizations. A few studies also determine causes and propose solutions in matrix structure organization, yet there is an opportunity for further research and solutioning on matrix structure issues identified in mid-large matrix structure IT organizations.

2.2.1 Top 3 Issues identified (validated in literature review):

1. Dual reporting, due to the functional structure of matrix organization is the most common issue highlighted among all literature reviews. Dual reporting frequently led to ambiguity in roles and responsibilities which further creates confusions in accountability and ownership. Due to which, actions and ownership of tasks/projects execution closure stay unclear. Execution gaps are obvious which lead to gaps in overall strategy execution.

From the study conducted by McKinsey from 2013-2018 and updated over psst 3 years. 750 respondents from 500+ companies. 90% of respondents worked in Mid-Large Matrix structure Org. Key Findings:

a) Uncleared roles paralyze Decision making.
b) Only 15% of respondents report R & R are completely clear.

One of other recent research conducted in 2026 by TechRadar Pro suggests that due to ownership, accountability ambiguity etc. matrix organization structure problems 41% of workers carry projects from one year into the next. 90% of respondents globally report problems caused by these projects.

2. Delayed Decisions: Due to various known matrix organization structural issues eg. dual reporting, roles ambiguity, unclear accountability etc. critical project decisions are frequently delayed. Which causes many projects/ Ops excellence initiatives slipping into next fiscal and eventually tagged a perpetuals/zombie project. Referring to one of extensive research conducted in 2021 by California Mgt. review, suggests that 43% of respondents from highly Matrix Org. reported that organizational complexity impedes decision-making and innovation "some" or "a great deal.

3. Inadequate Transition to BAU: Due to insufficient knowledge/information transition or transfer by Project team to BAU/Operations, Orgs. face support loops, knowledge gaps.

Recent research published in 2025 by plprojects cited in this guide indicates that 60% of project benefits fail to materialize fully because of inadequate transition planning into daily operations.

2.2.2 Core Alignment with research

All 20+ literature reviews conclude and validate Dual Reporting, Accountability ambiguities, Decision delays and poor Transitioning to Operations etc. issues faced in Matrix structure organizations strongly ratify the problems identified for the further research on solutioning.

2.2.3 Further Research Opportunities/ Research Gaps

While most literatures/documents reviewed largely focus on employee engagement, collaboration, role clarity, optimizing resource allocations, managing organizational changes and project closures etc., but limited empirical research investigates matrix structure impact on project closure, operational handover, benefits realization, and it's impact on strategy execution effectiveness in IT organizations. 99% (out of 120+ survey respondents) strongly believes, A set of frameworks to close ongoing projects in matrix structure organizations may certainly have an impact on strategic execution and outcome/value delivery.

Hence the research is highly motivated to analyze issues and develop this playbook, a set of frameworks for:

1. Project Transition to Operations.
2. Project % Completion (Quantification of qualitative milestones of projects).
3. Framework for Closure of ongoing, operational excellence project/CI initiatives.

Following tables illustrate detailed literature/case study reviews highlighting top issues in matrix structure organizations, detailed analysis of issues and causes (summary) and relevance to the topic. We have also shared assumptions based on our understanding of possible gaps in existing research or the opportunity for further research on given

2.2.4 Detailed Literature reviews – Problem & Gap analysis for further research

Sr No	Reference/ Article	Year Published	Owner/ Publisher	Document Type	Problem/Symptoms	Alignment & Relevance to the topic of research & Gap/Opportunity	URL

						for further research	
11	The Project-to-Operations Spanning Dilemma	2024	Xinyue Zhang, Juliano Denicol, Paul W. Chan, Yun Le	Journal of Operations Management	1. Unclear Closure accountability 2. Weak Lesions, knowledge transfer 3. Inadequate Transitioning to Operations.	Relevance: This case study highlights common issues in matrix stucture organizations and is highly relevant in the context. Further Opportunities for Research/Gaps: While this study explores framework for project to transition, but does not examine how matrix structure influence closure effectiveness, benefits realization and strategy execution.	https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/jo om.1275
12	Project Handover & Transition: Complete Best Practice Guide.	2025	plprojects.co.uk PL Projects	Book	Shared accountability in projects and operations/functional tasks create ownership /accountability issues Inadequate knowledge transfer Research cited in this guide indicates that 60% of project benefits fail to materialize fully because of inadequate transition planning into daily operations.	Relevance: When a project truns to repetitive operational task, the formal handover is frequentely neglected. Organizations face permanent, informal support loops, and extreme user dissatisfaction. The issues highlighted in this book are very relevant to the further study we are conducitng. Further Opportunities for Research/Gaps: Limited Evidences on how matrix structure affects project hand-over, closure effectiveness and strategy execution.	https://plprojects.co.uk/p roject-handover-transition-best-practices/
13	Projects Lifecycle: From Initiating to Closing (PMPeople AI).	2023	Jose Barato	PMPeople	This study emphasizes importance of clsoure and limiting free "right to request further change" Ownership transfer ambiguity btw PM & Functional Managers Ops team readiness Multiple reporting lines complexities Accountability Gaps in project transition & closure	Relevance: The PMPeople Project Management Community explicitly documents the shift in stakeholder behavior when projects turn into routine task and complexities associated qualifies this study for relevance to further research topic. Further Opportunities for Research/Gaps: Limited research on how matrix structure affects project closure, ownership transfer, benefits realization and strategy execution.	https://community.pmpeople.ai/projects-lifecycle-from-initiating-to-closing
14	Causes, Implications, and Strategies for Project Closeout Delays in Highway Construction	2022	Manideep Tummalapudi, Christofer M. Harper, Timothy R.B. Taylor, Steve Waddle, Rachel Catchings	Journal: Transportation Research Record (TRR)	The paper explicitly states that delayed project completion creates consequences for both organizations and stakeholders. Competing priorities when resources are shared Resource realignment by functional managers before project closure Delayed Benefits & Additional costs Loss of Project Knowledge	Relevance: Useful evidences to corelate with further study "that projects remaining open beyond their useful life continue consuming resources and generating hidden costs". Further Opportunities for Research/Gaps: Limited research on how matrix structure affects project closure, ownership transfer, benefits realization and strategy execution.	https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0361198 1221087229 #tab-contributors
15	Failure of Operational PPP Projects	2020	Sandeep Kudtarkar University	Case Study - Indian Journal	Key Findings: Operational projects that continue under unresolved issues suffer from:	Relevance: Strong support for business cases where operational projects remain active because benefits, ownership, or issues were never fully resolved.	https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343457465_Failure_of_Operation

	in India		of Mumbai	of Finance and Banking	Shared Accountability - Unclear ownership Risk Multiple stakeholders may interpret responsibilities differently Governance complexities	Further Opportunities for Research/Gaps: Limited research on how matrix structure affects project closure, ownership transfer, benefits realization and strategy execution.	al_PPP_Projects_in_India_Leading_to_Private_Developer%27s_Apathy_to_Participate_in_Future_Projects_A_Case_Study_Based_Analysis
16	Zombie Projects (Recent Industry Research)	2026	Sven Peters TechRadar Pro Atlassian AI Evangelist	TechRadar Pro	Key Findings: The article cites research showing these "zombie projects" consume resources without delivering proportional business value.: 1. Ownership, Accountability, Decision Delays 41% of workers carry projects from one year into the next. 90% of respondents globally report problems caused by these projects One-third report stress and burnout caused by such projects	Relevance: Unclear Ownership, Accountability, Decision Delays can cause projects to remain active longer than planned. Further Opportunities for Research/Gaps: Limited research on how matrix structure affects project closure, ownership transfer, benefits realization and strategy execution	https://www.techradar.com/pro/the-antidote-to-zombie-projects-that-drain-productivity-is-ai-oversight
17	Managing Project Interdependencies in IT/IS Project Portfolios	2016	Sameer Bathallath Åsa Smedberg Harald Kjellin Stockholm University	International Journal of Information Systems and Project Mgt. (IJISPM)	Findings: Large IT organizations struggle because: 1. Shared Resources, Multiple reporting's 2. Active projects become highly interdependent. 3. Delays in one project propagate into others. 4. Portfolio complexity increases exponentially. 5. Decision-making slows dramatically.	Relevance: Aging operational projects often become dependency bottlenecks for modernization and transformation initiatives. Further Opportunities for Research/Gaps: Limited research on how matrix structure affects project closure, ownership transfer, benefits realization and strategy execution	https://revistas.uminho.pt/index.php/ijispm/article/view/3886/3943 https://revistas.uminho.pt/index.php/ijispm/article/view/3886?utm_source=chatgpt.com
18	Resource Allocation Syndrome in Multi-Project Environments	2025	Mats Engwall Anna Jerbrant	ITPro Publication	Findings: Recent industry research found: Dual Reporting - accountability ambiguity , Low value projects continuity 50% of IT leaders report transformation fatigue. 45% report burnout. 36% consider leaving due to continual change initiatives. Long-running transformation programs are a major contributor.	Relevance: Useful for demonstrating the human impact of keeping operational transformation projects alive for years without clear closure criteria. Article highlights Org find it difficult to terminate low value/under performing projects because of unclear ownership and closure authority. Further Opportunities for Research/Gaps: Limited research on how matrix structures contribute to project closure delays, transformation fatigue, employee attrition, and strategy	https://www.itpro.com/business/digital-transformation/heavy-workloads-and-botched-digital-initiatives-are-causing-transformation-fatigue-and-enterprises-risk-losing-top-talent-if-

						execution effectiveness in IT organizations	they-dont-change-their-ways?utm_source=chatgpt.com
19	Project Termination: An Analytical Framework for Managing Project Closure	2006	K. D. Baker, D. G. Murphy, D. Fisher (	International Journal of Project Mgt.	Unclear Ownership for project closure, Delayed Sign-offs Weak Projects Accountability Premature pulling up resources from projects	Relevance: Shared resource , dual accountability issues Strategic value is not fully achieved unless projects are fully closed and transitioned to operations. Further Opportunities for Research/Gaps: Limited research on how matrix structure affects project closure, ownership transfer, benefits realization and strategy execution	https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0263786306000329?utm_source=chatgpt.com
20	Lost in the Matrix: How to Overcome the Daily Grind of Organizational Complexity	2021	Jonathan Hughes and Ashley Hetrick	California Management Review Insights	1. Accountability confusion 90% of respondents worked in somewhat or highly matrixed organizations 43% of respondents from highly matrixed organizations reported that organizational complexity impedes decision-making and innovation "some" or "a great deal.	Relevance: This paper is highly relevant and highlights matrix complexities - decision delays and accountability ambiguity significantly delays project closure , transition to operations and benefits realizations. Further Opportunities for Research/Gaps: Limited research on matrix structure impact on project closure, operational handover, benefits realization, and strategy execution effectiveness in IT organizations	https://cmr.berkeley.edu/assets/documents/pdf/2021-12-lost-in-the-matrix-how-to-overcome-the-daily-grind-of-organizational-complexity.pdf

3. SOLUTIONING PROPOSAL: Build Playbook of Frameworks:

i) Project Transition to Operations
ii) Simple Techniques for Quantification of milestones of CI Initiatives/projects
iii) Framework for Closure of ongoing, operational excellence project/CI initiatives

Framework: Is divided in 2 phases of overall lifecycle. Project Phase a BAU Phase.

1. Project Phase – A Project in IT Operations may be categorized in following buckets:

a) Service Resilience Projects (Project examples – MTTR Reduction, Incident/backlog Reduction, Problem Mgt. etc.) – Outcome expected is improved service availability, uptime, MTTR reduction and improved reliability.
b) Automations/AI & Service Excellence Projects (Examples – Process Automation, Monitoring Automations, Incident/problem Resolution targeted workflows automations) – Outcome assumed as Reduced Manual Efforts, Efficiency & Productivity Enhancements, Lower Operations cost and Faster Resolutions.
c) Infra, Tech or App Modernization Projects – (Examples - Server/DB Upgrades, Cloud Migrations & Data Center Transformation etc.). Outcome – Reduced Tech. Debt, Faster & Cheaper Operations, Improved scalability, resilience and performance.
d) Security, Compliance & Business Continuity Projects – (Examples – Patch updates, Vulnerability remediations, Mandatory Regulatory compliance initiatives, DR Implementations and Backup modernizations etc.). Outcome – Reduced Security Risks & Audit-compliance and Business Continuity etc.).
e) Strategic Transformation Projects: - (Examples – DevOps Adoption, Agile Transformation, AI Transformation). Outcomes – Strategy execution, Business Agility, Innovation & Competitive advantages).

Based on unique products or services/improvements which may be part of larger operations portfolio priorities, there could be other categories of projects. In order to make this study feasible we are limiting intake to general and most popular categories.

Following the targeted outcome, investments and leadership intent, a Project may deliver above mentioned outcomes as a service improvement or

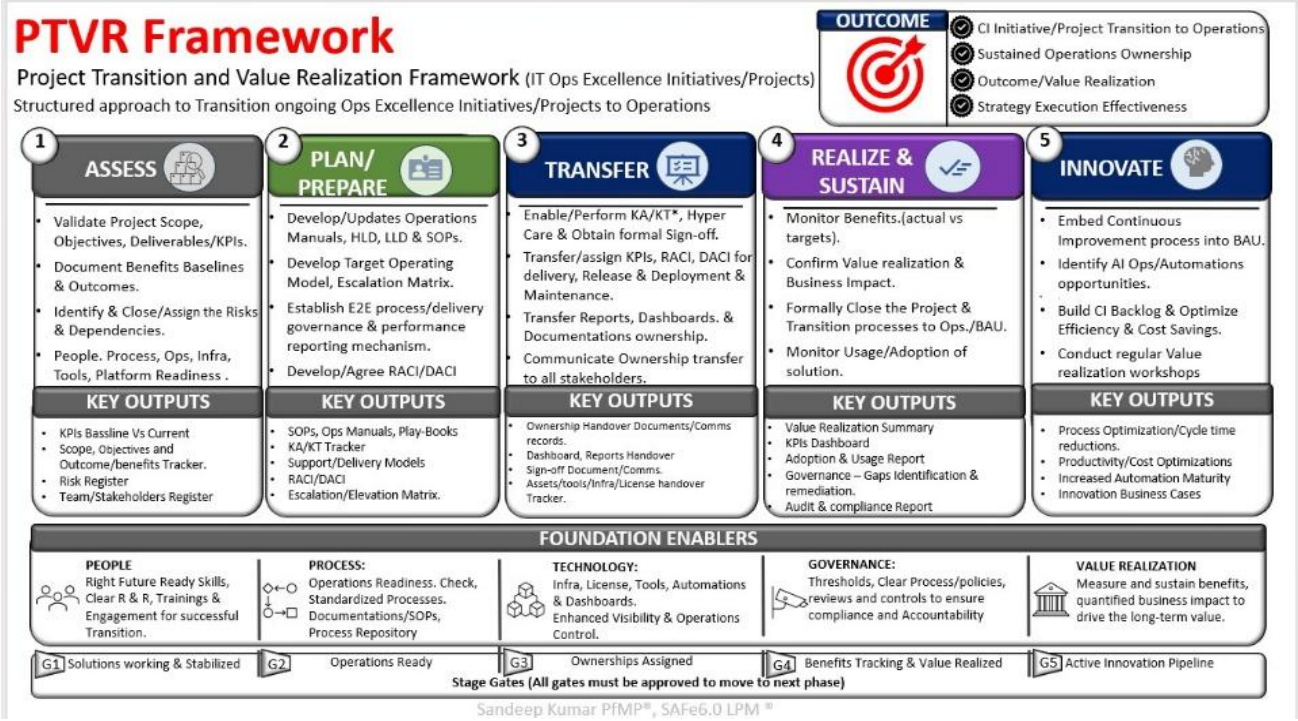
product or process change in outcome. Some of these projects could be one time spanning across 1-3 years (targeted duration) and quite a few may be repeated/ongoing year on year. So, it becomes utmost important for Project Manager to ensure the expected outcome or the targeted benefits are realized within agreed duration/timelines. And the Value is mapped with larger organization goals/objectives.

An adequately agreed process or framework for transitioning the project's product, service improvements to the operations can contribute significantly to the success of project.

i) CI Initiative/Project Transition Framework to Operations.

Project Phase: PTVR Framework: Project Transition and Value realization framework (IT Ops Excellence initiatives/Projects) is a structured approach to transition ongoing Ops excellence initiative/project to Operations. PVTR framework intended to deliver following outcomes:

- Continuous Improvement Initiatives/Projects Completion & Handover
- Sustainable Operations Ownership
- Outcome/Value Realization
- Strategy Execution Effectiveness



*KA/KT – Knowledge Acquisition/Knowledge Transition/Transfer.

*DACI – Deliverer – Approver – Consulted – Informed

PVTR Framework proposes 5 Key Stages:

1. Assess – Determine as is state, validate project scope, objectives, key deliverables and baseline/document benefits & outcome, availability of team/people, processes, infra/tools/apps/licensees' availability. This stage also identifies and remediate/assign potential Risks. Outputs of this stage are KPIs baseline, Scope, Objectives and outcome/benefits tracker and Risk Register with clear owners.
2. Plan/Prepare – This stage outlines project & operations preparedness/readiness, building repository of necessary documents eg. Operations Manual, SOPs, HLD, LLD, delivery models, escalation matrix, Governance & performance mechanism and RACI/DACI (Deliverer -Approver - Consulted – Informed). Output – SOPs, Ops Manuals, KA/KT Tracker, RACI/DACI, Risk Register & Escalation Matrix.
3. Transfer – This is the most crucial stage where actual KA/KT and knowledge transfer, including hyper care takes place. One of other important aspects to consider on this stage is ensuring all relevant stakeholders receive the communication of ownership transfer to ensure stakeholders on same page and gaps can be addressed. Outputs of this stage are Ownership handover, Documents repository, reports/dashboard handover, assets, tools, licensees' s administrative rights handovers and last but not the least A formal Sign-off from sponsors of Project and Operations.
4. Realize & Sustain – This stage operationalizes processes for monitoring

benefits, confirm value realization and business impact, formal closure of project and transition to operations, monitor usage/adoption of solution and establish & operationalize governance compliance reviews. Outputs of this stage are value realization dashboards, Adoption & usage reports and audit & compliance reports. If any Gaps observed at this stage w.r.t knowledge, documents, process or skills it must be captured & addressed.

5. Innovate – This stage embeds continuous improvements and innovation processes to Operations/BAU, Identify AI/Automation opportunities, Build CI backlog and Optimize Efficiency and Cost savings. Outputs of this stage are Process Optimization/Cycle time reductions, Productivity enhancements /Cost Optimizations and improved automations maturity.

ii) Quantification of milestones of CI Initiatives/Projects

In Matrix IT organizations, one of the common issues identified is non availability (or adherence) to standard project management/planning tools (MS Project, Jira etc.) Ven though PM develop/share plan in project management tool, due to access/adherence or availability issues most stakeholders are not able to view/edit the plans. While building project plans hence MS Excel is still most commonly used tool to develop and share a project plan. While building the project plan in MS Excel, sometimes calculating overall progress or completion % of project becomes a challenge for many beginner Project Managers (specially in matrix structure where an operations/delivery resource can be assigned as PM).

This Framework shares some of best practices to quantify the milestones with weightage method and determine overall project completion (%).

Let's take an example of ongoing operational excellence initiative/project, which is repeated every fiscal with same of improved targets.

Project - Improve MTTR by 15% (FY26-27) - Project plan is built for MTTR Reduction by 15% in FY 26-27. We have identified a few key milestones (for simplicity to showcase plan, we have limited the milestones to 5 & activities to 4, but more Milestones, Activities and sub-activities can be considered).

Key Milestones/ High level Activities	Milestone Weightage	Activity Weightage	% Completion (actual vs plan)	Overall Project Completion
M1. Establish MTTR Baseline & Hotspot Identification	15%			
A1 - Establish current MTTR baseline		4.50%		
A2 - Identify Top 20 Incident Drivers		4.50%	15%	
A3 - Identify high-MTTR applications		3.75%		
A4 - Create MTTR dashboard		2.25%		
M2. Improve Visibility & Detection	20%			
A1. Enhance Monitoring Coverage for Critical Services		6.00%		
A2. Implement Event Correlation & Alert Noise Reduction		6.00%		
A3. Create Service Dependency Mapping & Topology Visibility		5%	12%	**47%**
A4. Develop Unified Operations Dashboard & Early Warning Alerts		3%		
M3. Accelerate Root Cause Diagnosis	25%			
A1 - Standardize incident playbooks		6.25%		
A2 - Standardize & force resolution commets closure template via ITSM		3.75%		
A3 - Improve RCA quality - Implement AI Ops/BHOM (automated RCA)		10%	20%	
A4 - Setup Major Incident War Room process		5%		
M4. Automate Incident Resolution (AIOps / Self-Healing)	30%			
M5. Institutionalize Continuous Improvement & Governance	10%			

Legends			
	Complete		In-Progress on Tarck
	Yet to start		Delayed (recoverable)
	Delayed (Impact Occ	urred)	

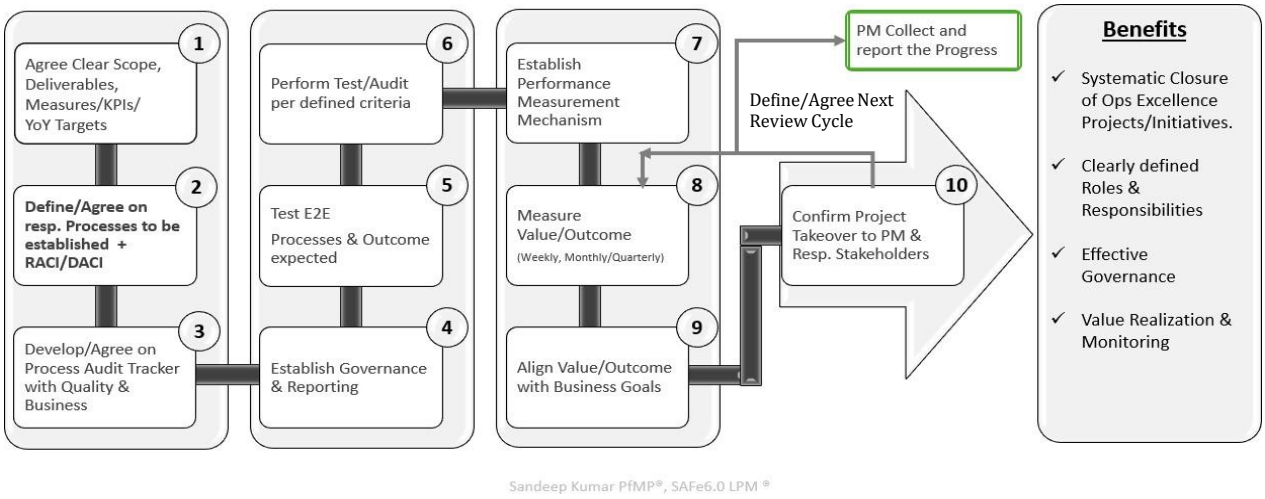
Process Steps:

1. Identify milestones, activities and sub-activities with the help of SMEs/Team.
2. Assign logical weightage to all milestones in consultation with key stakeholders (Customer, Sponsors, SMEs & Project team).
3. For an activity under one milestone – there are 2 ways to assign weightage i) divide milestone weightage straight into activity weightage based on impact, priority, urgency and outcome. Eg in image above M1 total weightage is 15 % , so activities beneath this milestone divided into A1-4.5, A2 -4.5, A3 – 2.75 & A3 –(totals 15%). ii) Second option is, consider 15% of milestones weightage = 100% for activities weightages. For 4 activities 15% becomes 100% (A1 – 30%, A2 – 30%, A3 – 25%, A4 – 15%). Same logic applies to sub activities.
4. Sum-up the activities completion feeding into total milestone completion. For eg. M1 has 4 activities and all 4 activities are completed, hence M1 milestone is completed 100%, which means M1 is 15%

of overall project completion. Another eg. Milestones M2 has 4 activities out of which 2 are completed. 2 activities completed constitute 12% out of 20% overall milestones weightage. So, when we are calculating overall project completion based on M1 (15%), M2 (12%), M3 (20%) = 47% complete.

There can be many other ways to determine project completion based on which tools/AI capabilities exist within teams/organizations. There is a possibility to develop in-house AI enabled PPM tool capable of completing all above tasks automatically. This Framework may help Matrix Organizations in measuring project completion and closing IT Operations excellence initiatives/projects lead by shared resources in absence of automated/AI enabled tools.

iii). Operations Phase: Framework for Closure of ongoing, operational excellence project/CI initiatives When we come to operations phase, the key here is to establish the E2E processes by which expected outcome keeps coming at regular intervals repetitively. Once the process is established and approved by quality audit (Quality Assurance) team, PM can partially be free from project except governance & benefits assurance.



3.5 Program/Portfolio Level tracker (Project/BAU Phase – Handover):

Project Phase						
Project Names	Objective	Benifites- QI	Benifites- Qn	St Date	En.Date	Status
IT Ops Maturity Model - ITOM	Enhance Service Maturity Scores 15% YoY	Enhanced Customer Experince	15% Producivity Improvement	Apr-25	Mar-26	100%
Problem Management	Reduce Reoccuring Inc by 15%	Inc Inflow Reductions	15% Producivity Improvement	Apr-25	Mar-26	100&
FTF Shift Left	Shift Left 15% Inc(L2 work to L1, L1 to L0 0 Automate)	Faster Resolution/FTF	10% Producivity Improvement	Apr-25	Mar-26	100%
MTTR	Reduce MTTR by 15%	Faster Resolution/FTF	10% Producivity Improvement	Apr-25	Mar-26	100%

BAU Phase							
Process Established	Governance & Reporting	Hand-Over to BAU	Audit Perameters Incusion in ITOM	Performance/Outcome			
				Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
				2.5	3.1	3.3	3.5
				5%	5%	10%	20%
				10%	10%	15%	20%
				5%	10%	15%	15%

	Completed		Delayed
	In-Progress On track		On-Hold

At operations phase, process steps largely remain same as project phase, but these incudes real world operations test of all processes.

- Possibilities of and Gap and overlaps are eliminated at this stage.
- Scope, Objectives, Outcome, KPIs, Targets etc. are fine-tuned.
- Development, implementation & testing/Audit of E2E processes are performed.
- Governance models are implemented, performance gathering mechanisms are built & approved.
- Outcome is quantified and compared with plan and Value is aligned with Goals/Objectives.
- Finally, the sign-off of project takeover is approved/given by Operations team.

4. CONCLUSIONS:

Through this research, we learnt that while matrix organization structure remains a preferred model for executing complex portfolios through shared resources that help organizations to bring down costs effectively. But matrix structure in many cases may lead to significant challenges due to its basic characteristics of dual reporting, accountability ambiguity and decision delays etc., which can be a lead contributor to the gap on organization strategic plan vs actual value delivery. The literature reviewed steadily highlights reoccurring issues due to Shared Resources, Accountability confusions and decision delays for critical time bound actions impacting overall portfolio, programs, projects and operations and inadequate handover of projects to operations and its impact on organizational strategic goals. Premature withdrawal of resources (due to loss of motivation in ongoing projects) One of critical findings from literatures review is that timely completion of a project may not often translate into business value. Transition from project to BAU/Operations is critical but often overlooked and leads to value leakage in many matrix structure organizations. This study of literature also reveals a gap/ further opportunity for research.

While sufficient research has determined matrix structure, employee engagement, collaboration and role clarity etc., limited empirical research investigates relationship between matrix structure characteristics and operational excellence initiatives/project closure effectiveness, operational handover success, benefits realizations and strategic execution effectiveness in IT organizations.

To address these challenges, PTVR – Project Transition and Value Realization Framework (PM side), Project closure Framework (Ops side), shares a structured approach to transition operations excellence initiatives/project to sustainable BAU/Operations through 5 stages – Assess – Plan/Prepare – Transition – Realize/Sustain & Innovate. This Framework ensures operations readiness, ownership clarity (RACI/DACI), Governance, Benefits realization & continuous innovations thus transforming projects outputs into sustainable organizational value.

Eventually this study demonstrates that organizational success is not determined merely by investing and initiating & closing the projects but by effectiveness of transition ongoing projects to operations, sustain continuously improve the outcome of the projects and align the value/outcome by organizational strategic goals.

Organizations that systematically strengthen (inbuild by deign) project closure governance, Operational handover/transitioning, Accountability with thresholds, innovative culture and capabilities building are much better positioned to realize the strategic benefits and sustainable competitive advantage in rapidly evolving matrix structure organization.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS:

a. Strengthening Ownership & Accountability
b. Formalize Project to Operations Transition
c. Improve benefits realization centric governance
d. Enhance knowledge/documents management practices
e. Reduce Decision Delays
f. Integrate Operations readiness and handover in project plan itself.
g. Establish continuous improvements and Innovation mechanism conduce to organizational changes
h. Conduct further empirical research

Operations are bread and butter for any organization. Each strategy refreshes/ update or execution brings changes in organization w.r.t Product, tools, systems, ways of working and daily operations etc. Each change in organization is implemented through a project, program and portfolio or Change Initiative. Making the environment conducive to the changes and executing changes with successful implementation of Portfolios, Programs, Projects, Operations Excellence Continuous Improvement Initiatives can lead to successful execution of organizational strategy and yield the expected value

We learnt through this research/literature reviews/case studies, IT organizations spend appx 70% of their budgets on “Run-Tech” investments bucket (Operations), successful execution of projects, programs and CI initiatives can significantly reduce the gap in strategy plan vs execution and improve the value realization.

Note of Thanks to Co-Authors & My Mentors & Survey Participants: I would like to express my sincere gratitude and heartfelt Thanks to mentors from JG Institute of Business Administration – Guide

- Dr. Avanti Shah, Co-guide - Dr. Vishvas Shah for ongoing guidance and support and ensuring I sail through the tough challenges we encountered throughout the research.

Deep regards to each fellow participant/respondents

- PM, Delivery Executives from across industry and geography who participated in surveys for data collection and analysis.

Many Thanks!

Scope of Investigation is limited to the Matrix Structured IT Organizations - IT Operations. This article does not investigate and propose a solution for delay of standard CAPEX Projects, which is already covered by the Methodologies & Best practices from PMI - PMBOK, SAFe Agile & Prince2 etc.

The proposed methodology may or may not fit industrywide, but we assume it may certainly help IT Ops. excellence continuous improvement initiative's monitoring, closure/ benefits realization.

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3	Revisiting the Matrix Organization	2021	Michael Bazigos and James Harter McKinsey report	https://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/McKinsey/Business%20Functions/Organization/Our%20Insights/Revisiting%20the%20matrix%20organization/Revisiting_the_matrix_organization.pdf
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Metric / Statistic	Data Point	Research Source / Context
Active "Zombie" Projects	44% to 45%	Atlassian's global survey found that nearly half of all knowledge workers enter a new fiscal year carrying at least one project that is functionally dead (stalled for weeks, generating no results) but still officially marked as "active" by management.
Regional Spikes (e.g., India)	53%	In major IT hubs like India, this metric rises to over half of all knowledge workers trapped managing legacy, stalled work from previous cycles.
Resource & Productivity Drain	31% to 40%	Staff report that these never-ending projects directly cause burnout, waste critical budget, and actively undermine work on newer, high-impact tasks.
Source: Atlassian Survey Analysis via Inc. Magazine / CXO Chapter Study Reporting		

Structure Type	Estimated %	Reality
Matrix / Hybrid (dominant)	70–85%	Delivery + function + account overlay
Functional (with project overlay)	10–20%	Legacy or infra-heavy orgs
Pure Projectized	5–10%	Consulting / niche firms only

FINDINGS: Recent research conducted by mckinsey suggests that >70% of IT companies operate in a matrix-hybrid structure.
70% of IT spending is on Ops, maintenance & support only 20-30 % on new projects
How to balance maintenance and IT innovation – Computerworld
65-85% of total SDLC effort is spent on Ops
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Conclusion – 50-70% of overall IT projects are directly or indirectly linked with IT Operations thus making a strong impact on overall organizational strategy execution and value realization.

7 ANNEXTURES

JG_Ops Project Clsoure_Literature Rev

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