

UNLEASH PROGRESS WITH MATURE IT

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CONNECT TECHNOLOGY, PEOPLE, AND PROCESSES TO YOUR MISSION

When we talk about technology here at DelCor, we discuss much more than networks, hardware, and software. We talk about people and processes. Your organizational culture, departmental collaboration, governance, professional development expectations, business processes and policies, budgeting, and management – all these non-technical factors impact the effectiveness of your technology.

We feel so strongly about this “beyond the technical” approach to technology that we developed the DelCor IT Maturity Model for Associations and Nonprofits – a valuable framework for thinking about technology. “Maturity” is simply a measure of how well technology supports an organization by making it more efficient, progressive (forward-moving), and capable of fulfilling its mission, vision, and business objectives.

At DelCor we use the IT Maturity Model to help our clients understand how their existing technology supports or limits their potential. We help them take their technology, and technology-related things, to where they need to be, so they can strategically use technology to achieve their mission and goals.

Since we first launched the IT Maturity Model in 2006, we’ve seen many organizations use its framework to move beyond having project-based discussions to discussions that help move them from restrictive to strategic uses of technology.

SOOTHING THE SOULS OF THE C-SUITE

Fulfilling ever-changing member and constituent needs and expectations is a challenging but continuous task for associations and nonprofits. Many don’t have the technology they need to keep up, never mind what’s needed to get ahead. The burden of catching up weighs heavily on executives whose boards are always pressing them to do more with fewer resources. “How do we begin, prioritize, and make efficient use of our technology dollars?” they ask. That’s when we can provide substantial guidance.

DelCor has been helping associations and nonprofits with technology for three decades. We saw the need for this type of framework for analysis, discussion, decision-making, and measurement – a way for executives to take a broader, more systemic look at how technology supports or limits their organization. The IT Maturity Model was developed to provide our clients a path toward progress.

Back in the day, a recording studio’s engineer watched the needles move

back and forth on the sound mixer’s gauges. The vocals, drums, guitar, and bass each played their own parts, yet each individual performance affected the collective outcome. Keeping the band’s vision for the song in mind, the producer and engineer made adjustments to the mix based on what they heard and what the needles revealed.

Our IT Maturity Model is like a console of gauges that measures how effectively your network, online initiatives, data, and technology management work together to support your organization’s progress and vision. On this console, as in the real life of your organization, the needles don’t move in isolation. Everything is connected and affects the final outcome.

How well do the different functions of your technology work together to help your organization accomplish its strategic objectives?

- Can you use your AMS to send targeted messages to member segments? Or do you blast everything to everyone and risk

ending up in someone's spam folder or becoming "inbox noise"?

- Do your website and conference registration sites "know" your members? Or do members have to reenter profile information?
- Does your network infrastructure provide you with secure and consistent performance? Even from a remote location away from your office?

When your technology is deficient in one area, other areas are impacted. Your members' experience and your organization's potential suffer. Don't deal with a technology project in isolation. Instead, consider how that one piece affects your entire technology portfolio.

We're in business to help your organization move the needles on the gauges that measure your progress. We use the IT Maturity Model to help you understand how effectively you use technology (and how you compare to other organizations), what it will take to advance to the next level, and how you can better use technology to accomplish your mission. You'll have a strategic approach for making decisions about priorities and resources.

IMMATURITY ISN'T PRETTY OR EFFECTIVE

Like 13-year old boys, "immature" organizations don't think they're susceptible to danger; but, in reality, they're covered with bruises and bandages. They are unaware of what they don't know and prone to awkward mistakes.

Immature organizations don't realize their predicament because they're used to operating within the limitations of their technology, culture, and processes. However, the signs are there.

- Staff responds to new ideas with furtive eye rolls or an exchange

of knowing glances. Members are routinely told, "We'd love to, but there's no way to do that with our database (website, network, etc.)."

- Staff spends precious time creating workarounds, manipulating data, or applying bandages just to get things done.
- IT staff doesn't participate in strategic planning. Any technology planning is done on a department-by-department basis and lacks an association-wide perspective.
- Technology is seen as a series of projects or purchases, not as a strategic asset that helps the organization achieve its goals.
- Technology is used solely for operational purposes, and rarely to serve the organization's mission or vision. Its potential is not realized. It's reactive, not proactive. It might even be seen as a necessary evil.

However, just like a teenager, immature organizations can develop into mature organizations with a little guidance.

A SHIFT IN PERSPECTIVE

Disruptive technology and technology-based innovations, like social media, create additional challenges for associations. Members can now find resources and community online, and no longer solely rely on associations for professional development and networking.



Invincibility = immaturity? (photo: jamieanne, Flickr)

Yet, technology provides solutions too. Associations use technology to better understand, communicate, and engage with members, prospects, volunteers, donors, and other groups. Instead of being reactive and only responding to needs, organizations use technology to engage, be proactive, and anticipate needs.

A mature organization uses technology to increase its effectiveness and to improve the value it delivers to members and constituents. No one can know what the future holds, but mature organizations have the tools, processes, and culture to be responsive, nimble, and relevant in times of change.

THE ROAD TO MATURITY

Even with cutting-edge technology, your organization's effectiveness will be limited if your culture and processes haven't adapted enough to take advantage of technology's potential.

For example, imagine that the tools your association uses to manage all your online initiatives are integrated. Your website, community, publications, mobile website, and apps are all in sync. You're ready to position the association as the online knowledge hub for your industry.

However, you don't have a content strategy. You struggle to find fresh content for your community and social media platforms. Without collaboration, content continues to be published in various departmental and online silos. Members visit your community once but leave unimpressed with its resources. They have a hard time finding the value hidden throughout your association.

The technology works, but the people and processes, despite their efforts, aren't quite there yet. It's time to connect the pieces.

FOUR MAIN FUNCTIONS OF IT

During the development of the IT Maturity Model, DelCor polled the association and nonprofit community to develop a widely accepted benchmark against which organizations could compare their level of maturity. We identified four common and main functions of IT within nonprofit organizations:

1. Network/Infrastructure
2. Online/Digital
3. Data
4. Management

1. Network/Infrastructure

Your infrastructure is the circulatory system of your organization. Every function of the organization – human resources, finance, communications, security, and more – is supported by the infrastructure, or as it's more commonly called, the network.

In immature organizations where various types of resources are lacking, even the best network managers may end up with a poorly configured or managed infrastructure. Systems fail, computers crash, productivity suffers, and when security is compromised, the organization is exposed to legal liability and a damaged brand.

But in a mature organization, the network never goes down unexpectedly. It extends your organization's capabilities. It is an asset, not a restriction. IT staff knows exactly how to handle the constant influx of anti-virus signatures and patches. Security isn't compromised. Data isn't lost. Staff can get the same work done whether they're in the office, at home, or on the road. The network isn't a topic of conversation, ever.

2. Online/Digital

For an association or nonprofit, communication and engagement with your members, volunteers, donors, and prospects is vital to your mission and to your relevancy. The traditional methods – committee service, conferences, and printed publications – are no longer sufficient. Members

have access to resources and peer-to-peer networking on the web and – with increasing frequency – on the phone in their pocket. They can learn, organize, and “associate” without you.

Mature organizations have integrated technology; for example, the AMS talks to the website and the website talks to the AMS. When members visit your website using their desktop computer, tablet, or smartphone, the website provides the appropriate experience for each device. The website helpfully “knows” their activities, interests, purchases, registrations, and

donations. Mature organizations are knowing, social, and mobile.

3. Data

Data leads to business intelligence. It is the key to understanding the needs and preferences of your members, and the basis for sound decision-making about programs, content, and communication, now and in the future. Mature organizations collect, analyze, and use data to deliver value to their constituents and to have clarity about their own value.

In mature organizations, everyone acknowledges the need for data integrity – their work depends on it. Emails don't bounce back. Data is only entered once and doesn't live isolated in stand-alone departmental databases. Instead, it lives in a network of integrated systems – for example, an AMS, learning management system, and accounting system, all working together. At a single glance you get a complete picture of any member, donor, or prospect.

4. Management

Mature organizations keep their organizational goals and mission in mind while designing and managing their technology. A strong foundation for progress is established with sound management practices.

Business processes, IT policies and procedures, and social media policies support the productive and wise use of technology. Both technical and non-technical employees have the professional development resources needed to be technically competent in their areas of expertise.

A MATURE ORGANIZATION USES TECHNOLOGY TO INCREASE ITS EFFECTIVENESS AND TO IMPROVE THE VALUE IT DELIVERS TO MEMBERS AND CONSTITUENTS.

IT and executive staff understand technology and nonprofit management trends and practices. They use that knowledge, as well as insight gleaned from member data, to make planning and budgeting decisions. IT has a place at the strategic planning table to ensure the organization takes full advantage of technology to deliver value to its constituency.

FOUR PHASES OF IT MATURITY

By examining how the four functions of IT within an organization – infrastructure, online, data, and management – support the overall goals of the organization, we determine the organization's level of IT maturity:

1. Restrictive
2. Functional
3. Effective
4. Innovative

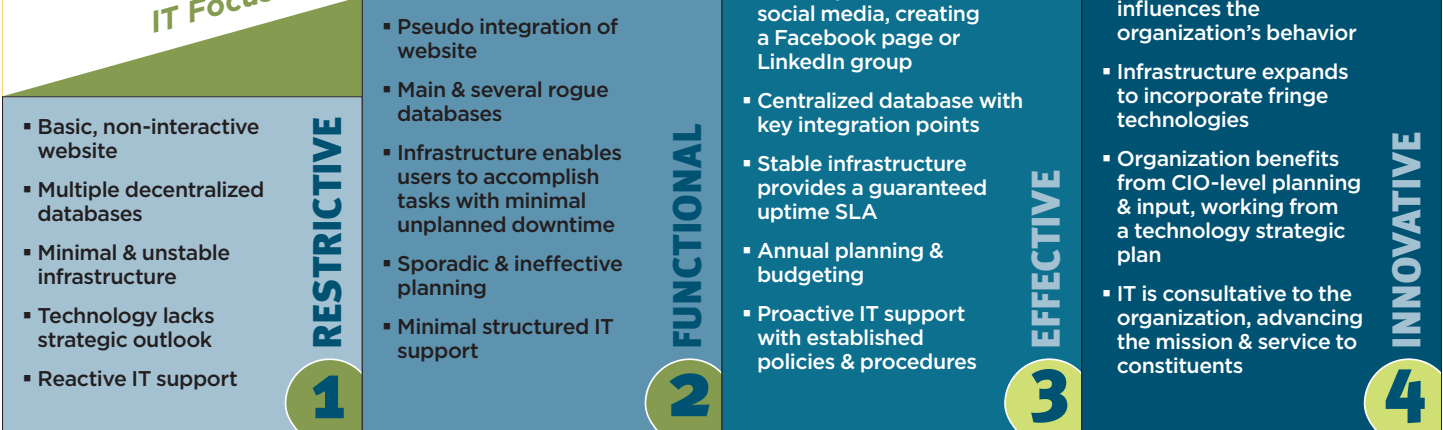
1. Restrictive

Members are fully immersed in the 21st century, but, in the restrictive phase, the association's technology is stuck back in the 20th century.

IT Maturity Model for Associations & Nonprofits

IT Focused on Mission, Vision, & Business Objectives

IT Focused on Organization



- Employees maintain their own member lists, rendering organizational data inaccurate or incomplete. Emails bounce. Magazines are sent to old addresses. Members complain about missing benefits and having to repeatedly update their information to no avail.
- Network access is slow. Staff unknowingly spread viruses. Files are lost. When the network goes down, staff productivity goes down with it.
- Members can't find what they need or accomplish what they came to do on the slow-loading website. They get blurry-eyed trying to navigate the full website on their mobile devices (since no mobile-friendly version is available). Members routinely call staff for basic information or to help with registration. Website content is managed manually without the help of an organized content management system.
- Employees don't have the necessary training to effectively use existing technology. The office

is full of technology doubters. Technology is for tasks, not the big picture. IT is simply an expense, not an investment.

In the restrictive phase of IT maturity, technology sometimes causes more harm than good. Members are frustrated and staff morale is low. With an insufficient budget, outdated equipment, and undertrained staff, the barebones operation stumbles along.

2. Functional

A functional organization has better technology but it works only to a point. It's one step shy of integration and automation.

- The website and AMS aren't integrated. Members get frustrated when they're charged the wrong rates or can't access members-only resources. Staff spends precious time uploading files and authorizing access.
- The CEO is the only one with network access outside the office. During a blizzard, no one can work at home, even when it's only days before a big meeting. There's no desktop or mobile access to the AMS at the annual conference;

instead, staff relies on printed lists or a "local" copy. If staff wants to work from home, they have to use a workaround, like emailing files to themselves.

- The AMS doesn't have the data or capability to segment members for targeted communication. Tired of irrelevant emails, members delete them without opening and unsubscribe from the mailing list.
- Technology's percentage of the organizational budget hasn't changed since the 1990s. More money is spent on an annual conference that serves hundreds of members than on technology that could potentially serve thousands of members.

There's a general feeling of making do with systems and processes that work, but are cumbersome.

3. Effective

In the effective phase of IT maturity, technology is more than an operational tool. Technology supports the organization's mission by adding value to the member, volunteer, donor, and constituent experience.

- The secure network rarely goes down. Staff works and accesses any association system from home or at events without using a workaround.
- All systems are integrated. Members sign in only once to access their member profile, website, certification program, and online community.
- Content and digital strategies are aligned with the organization's strategic plan. Online content is fresh and relevant. Communication is targeted.
- The association is tweaking their mobile and social strategies, a decision based on an increasing percentage of website traffic from mobile devices and member use of social platforms. Programs are being reengineered based on accurate data and clearer value propositions.

These organizations are effective in keeping up with their members, but they're not yet anticipating their future needs.

4. Innovative

In the innovative phase of IT maturity, an association strategically uses technology to meet members' existing needs and anticipate future needs. With the association's help, members become more successful and the

membership experience becomes more valuable and meaningful. You might call it the ideal association.

- The future needs of members are identified. The organizational culture is nimble enough to support the adoption of technology systems and processes that will help the association meet those needs.

How mature is your organization now?

By completing our IT Maturity Self-Assessment, you'll get a sense of how effectively your organization uses technology – and how your IT maturity compares to other associations and nonprofits. Contact us for more information.

- Members keep the association in their pocket or purse. With their phone or tablet they can read the latest industry news, ask their peers a question, register for a webinar, arrange to meet a member in a city they plan to visit, or favorite a conference video to watch on the plane. They experience the benefits of membership on a daily basis.

- Even with limited staff resources, associations leverage the data and automation provided by technology to deliver a membership experience that is more personalized, relevant, and transformational than ever before.

In an innovative association, even when the future is unknown, the association is prepared to move forward and provide value to its members.

TECHNOLOGY IS A MISSION-ENABLER

Fulfilling your organization's mission is the first, and foremost, measure of your success. At DelCor we make your measure of success our own. Our mission is to help you use technology to accomplish your goals and live your mission.

With a strategic and integrated approach to technology, your organization will make maximum use of its resources and realize the full potential of your IT systems. Tools, processes, and people work together to provide a valuable and transformational association experience for your members.



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