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Looking for a reliable starting point – use component maps!

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1 Introduction

In our highly interactive and constantly changing business environment we need instruments that easily allow structuring complexity via visualization, ordering, abstraction or reduction. This is key to enable constructive and focused discussions across individuals or groups to achieve alignment.

A key strength of the human being is his cognitive capability that allows him coping with complex situations, challenges or environments. Whilst this strength is excellent to individually deal with complexity or changes it does not help sharing the acquired experience across a group.

Our experience has shown that a simple **two-dimensional component map**, which categorizes topics of a theme, represents a strong basis for a structured discussion. It enables mutual understanding and serves as a good starting point to further expand the exploration of the theme.

2 Objectives

The objectives of this article are to

- explain the concept of component maps
- explain three examples of existing component maps
- show how component maps can be applied to improve communication in projects
- show a way how to be clearer on project scope definition and better understand the environment of projects and project management

3 History

Component maps are not new. Various consulting firms have developed their own concepts based on two-dimensional maps but the majority has focused on business components and not on transformation components.

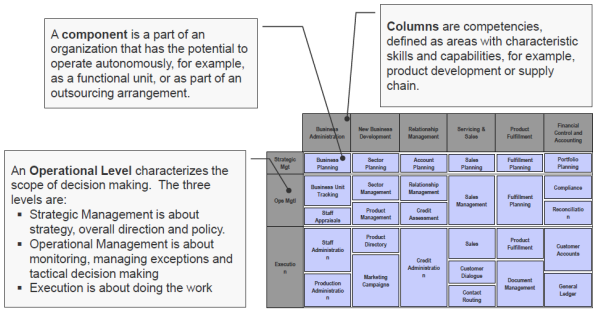
In the book “Der neunte Schlüssel” (the ninth key) [1] about project-conscious management a component map is being presented as an instrument for analyzing and designing project management environments. With this map a view on components has been introduced which are seen as important for a “project-friendly environment” within an enterprise, including those components operated by the permanent and those operated by the temporary organization i.e. projects and programs.

4 Component maps are two-dimensional navigation aids

Component maps are two-dimensional representations of a particular theme. Components represent a kind of autonomous function, which has its own underlying standards, processes and resources.

On one dimension the competence areas or topics the component belongs to are shown. The other dimension is used to allocate the management level the components are assigned to.

The three layers “Strategic Management”, “Operational Management” and “Execution” were seen as helpful and self-explaining – they represent common sense management levels.



Picture 1: Concept of Component Map

A particular strength of such a map is the so-called **"heat map"** feature. Once a certain qualification of the components is accomplished, e.g. the maturity level a particular organization has regarding the components, the components can be colored accordingly. This leads to a very powerful and compact piece of information.

But it is not just the map it is also about the description of each of the components. This is of importance to have a common understanding of the purpose of each component and to avoid misinterpretations.

However, not everything can be solved with component maps. As soon as a more detailed specification, a scope descriptions or planning details are needed, documents and detailed plans are still required.

5 Three examples of component maps

In this chapter three freely available examples of component maps [5] are briefly explained.

The **Project Management Map** [2] represents project management related components in an organization. The original intent was to build a framework to building a "project friendly environment" where the components were one part of the overall approach. Due to the fact that an overall approach is rather a long-term transformation, the map is now being used as an analysis instrument for project management related topics, be it analyzing the coverage of a project management tool or service development for a project management group.

The **Behavioral Transformation Map** [3] represents change related components that are important during a behavioral change. There are so many buzzwords, books, trainings and opinions concerning "change management" out in the market that make it difficult to keep the overview and find a common language, e.g. in discussions of a "change approach" with a customer. With the Behavioral Transformation Map all relevant components were put together on one A4 sheet that can be used as a kind of navigator through the change related discussion. It allows visualizing the organization's competences, needed support or relevance to a particular transformation.

The **IT Infrastructure Map** [4] represents components, which are relevant for the operation and transformation of an entire IT infrastructure. Compared to the other example maps this map not only covers "transition related" components, it also covers the operations of an IT related environment. This component map can be used to discuss the scope of IT infrastructure transformation, to capture the maturity of an IT infrastructure, to define priorities of actions or to discuss sourcing aspects in the different areas.

6 Component maps effectively support collaboration and communications

In the following three chapters the use of the three example component maps in real life is illustrated.

6.1 Defining the starting point of a program management service group

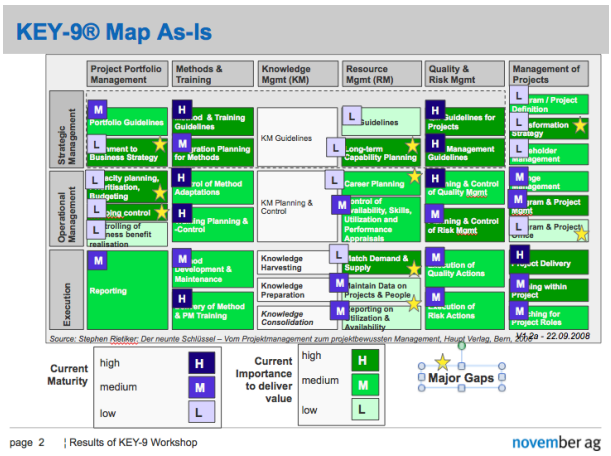
A globally organized program and project management service group had to plan their future service development and their future need of additional competences.

To effectively facilitate this discussion the usage of the Project Management Map was proposed **as it** provides a good picture about relevant project management components within an enterprise.

The first question which has been asked in the workshop was "What maturity do you think you as a project management organization have in these different components?". After intense discussions a first

agreement on a "heat map" has been achieved, which then served as input and basis for the second question: "Where do you see the priorities to enable improved delivery of the expected business value to the organization?". After having agreed on this view the next step was to identify the major gaps between actual maturity and the expected improvements (see picture 2).

This "heat map" then served as the starting point to plan the necessary improvement actions.



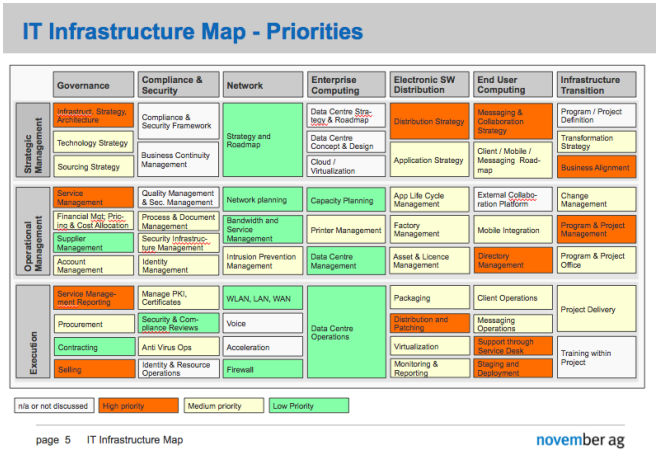
Picture 2: Project Management Heat Map

6.2 Setting priorities for IT infrastructure improvement

A CIO of a global logistics company did not feel comfortable with the messages he constantly received about issues in the IT infrastructure. It was not clear to him whether the agreed project portfolio addresses the right hot spots and whether he could potentially use his resources more effectively in other areas.

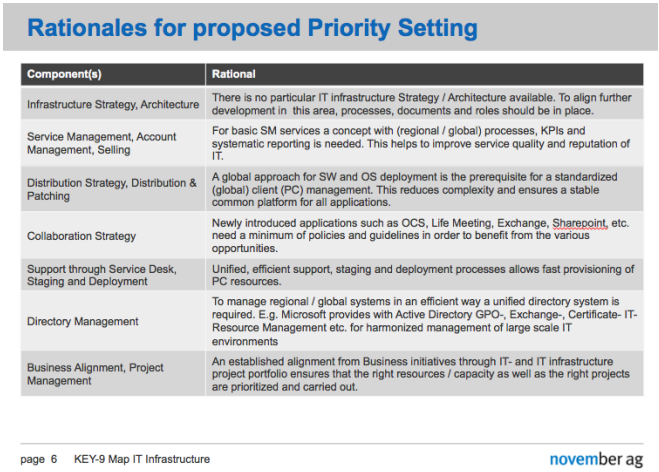
In a two-hour session the issues as well as the currently running projects have been analyzed using the IT Infrastructure Map as a reference to make sure all aspects have been addressed but also to verify that not just the "project level" has been considered but also strategic elements as well as operational issues.

At the end of the discussion it was agreed to provide a "heat map" to mirror the current situation of the environment (see picture 3).



Picture 3: IT Infrastructure Heat Map

Additionally, rationales why particular components were set as "high priority" have been delivered (see picture 4).



Picture 4: Rational for priority setting

6.3 Shaping a complex transformation program

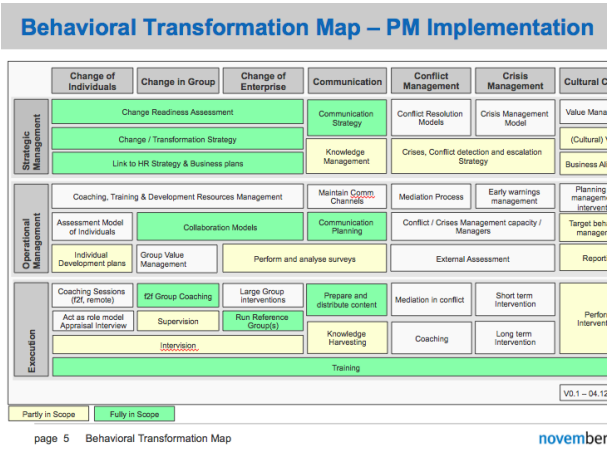
A global non-profit organization has decided to improve their project management culture fundamentally. Many aspects were addressed in a request for proposal, e.g. skills, processes, tools, management style and cultural aspects.

The discussion in the multinational proposal team how to shape the behavioral transformation for this client became more and more difficult.

Many different aspects in terms of which change targets have to be considered (e.g. individuals, groups or the whole organization), what tools should be

recommend and how can the transition be supported, were discussed intensively.

As a consequence the Behavioral Transformation Map was used to have a common basis and to mark and explain the components which were seen as important for the ambitious transformation program of the client (see picture 5).



Picture 5: Behavioral Transformation Map

6.4 Example maps - application overview

The below table summarizes coverage and examples of potential heat maps of the three presented maps.

Table 1: Example Component Map overview

Example Map	Coverage	Heat map examples
IT Infrastructure Map	IT Infrastructure	Scope, priorities, verify portfolio, sourcing
Project Management Map	PM in organizations, disciplines	Assess maturity, coverage of PM methods and tools
IT Transformation Map	Behavioral change aspects of transformation programs	Design change approach, sourcing, maturity, priorities

7 Conclusion

As the three examples have shown, the component map approach is straightforward and very effective. In a relatively short period of time different aspects of rather complex themes can be discussed in groups, and agreements (or disagreements) on different views can be easily documented and shared by applying the “heat map” feature.

Especially in multi-national environments it was remarkable how fast a common level of understanding has been achieved.

Therefore, we see the component map approach and the already existing example maps as a powerful complement to existing communication and facilitation aids.

In project environments we see most benefit when we use the component maps as an instrument to clarify scope, agree on priorities and achieve a common understanding on a particular theme, e.g. project content. This helps to achieve a **reliable starting point** in projects.

However, to successfully use the component maps a sound understanding of the map and its components as well as good facilitation skills are required.

8 Literature und References

[1] Stephen Rietiker, Der neunte Schlüssel - Vom Projektmanagement zum projektbewussten Management, Bern, Haupt Verlag 2006

[2] november ag, Project Management Map, KEY-9® map; URL: http://www.november.ch/en/project-management-map

[3] november ag, Behavioral Transformation Map; URL: http://www.november.ch/en/behavioral-transformation-map

[4] november ag, IT Infrastructure map; URL: http://www.november.ch/en/it-infrastructure-map

[5] Maps are published under the Creative Commons License, URL: http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/