The Application Leader’s First 100 Days

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How you perform in the first 100 days in the role is critical to your success or failure as an application leader. Gartner provides target outcomes, advice and supporting resources to help you maximize your success during this pivotal transition phase.

Key Findings

■ New application leaders are judged against the reputations of their predecessors and must analyze those people’s successes and failures, as well as the expectations of their managers, peers, teams and business stakeholders.

■ If application activities are not functioning smoothly, new application leaders will be unable to address new demands for applications arising from digital business.

■ New application leaders need to know the facts, expectations, issues, stakeholders, key events and key collaborative initiatives to plan their first 100 days in the role.

■ The relationships formed with all stakeholders are critical to a new application leader’s success.

Recommendations

As a new application leader responsible for leading and governing applications and products, you should:

■ Establish relationships with key stakeholders and use initial meetings to rapidly learn the environment and the issues you will need to deal with.

■ Meet with IT peers, managers and your staff to get an immediate sense of the culture and to garner any insights that will help when meeting business stakeholders.

■ Follow the calendar and checklist in this research and the accompanying Toolkit to keep track of your progress, the facts, and your assessment and action plans.

■ Once you have identified your team, conduct an assessment of its maturity and its processes in relation to five objectives.
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Introduction

The first 100 days constitute an expected “honeymoon” or transition period. This all-too-brief period is yours to formulate a course of action, make and qualify connections, and establish and communicate a personal management style. It is within this critical period that you establish yourself and create the basic perceptions that others will, for better or worse, associate with your subsequent plans and actions.

Proper preparation, assessment, planning, acting, measuring and, above all, communicating can greatly enhance your chances of success. This research highlights the key activities that focus on critical issues and identifies actions and resources to help you achieve your intended outcomes. Gartner also offers a unique companion experience to this research in our Peer Connect forum for Applications. You can use this forum to meet other newcomers to application leadership roles, discuss challenges and get support from like-minded peers.

We break down your first 100 days into six phases, each overlapping with suggested durations that you can customize. Each phase includes critical target outcomes, actions and resources, as well as some optional ideas to consider as time and resources allow. The Communicate phase spans the full duration, and we include specific actions for effective communication for each phase (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. First 100 Days Road Map

Source: Gartner
ID: 398073
Use this report alongside “Toolkit: The Application Leader’s First 100 Days,” which contains calendars, checklists, question lists and other tools with which to track tasks, collect information and analyze your situation.

You will probably want to adapt the 100-day agenda and the checklist of actions based on your organization’s strategy, planning horizons, value objectives for IT investment, cultural norms, management styles and other “personality” traits (see Note 1). You may also need to consider the nature of the application arena you’re managing, including:

- Sourcing and delivery modes — for example, on-premises, hosted applications, cloud services, business process outsourcing (BPO).
- Ways of working — waterfall projects versus agile development of products.
- Phases of the life cycle you will manage — such as, develop, maintain and integrate.
- Whether you will manage all applications, a vertical group of applications — for example, ERP, supply chain management (SCM) or CRM applications — or a cross-application area (for example, as application architecture and integration manager).

In brief, a successful agenda for your first 100 days should be to:

1. Begin prior to your arrival.
2. Focus on a subset of priority issues and drive actions that deliver near-term improvements in a couple of key areas.
3. Forge solid relationships with all key stakeholders and sponsors (such as customers, business leaders, product managers and IT leaders).
4. Reshape your approach to planning and delivery guided by this document and an appreciation of how those stakeholders and sponsors define success, as well as how you can best measure business outcomes.
5. Communicate the business value of the application organization, and engage your stakeholders in regular, open communications.
6. Develop a roadmap for your application organization that shows how you will build and develop the maturity, scale and scope of the organization over time.
7. Elevate your credibility, and elevate the image of the application organization.

The First 100 Days Plan

Prepare Phase (Days −10 to 15)

Don’t wait until your first day on the job to prepare. Take some key actions before your start date to inform yourself, learn about your colleagues and staff, and draft communications to make a great impression on Day 1.
Target Outcomes for the Prepare Phase

- A common agreement and understanding of your role, and what is expected of you, from your management, senior stakeholders and new staff, as well as what you expect from yourself
- The foundations for developing meaningful relationships with your new staff and stakeholders
- An initial understanding among your staff, management and other stakeholders of your management philosophy and approach

Actions for the Prepare Phase

Don’t make the mistake of approaching your new role with ad hoc communications and plans. A few hours invested in planning before you start your new job will ensure critical preparations are completed.

Actions Before Day 1

To help maximize the value of the first week, complete the Prepare phase by taking the following actions in the week or two before your arrival.

- **Reinforce new connections:** Send thank-you notes to interview participants to build relationships and set a positive tone for your next interaction. Set up lunches with a few key people. These actions will show that you are a “people person,” in addition to being an exceptional technology leader.

- **Set logistics:** Connect with HR representatives and your future administrative support to resolve any logistical issues that you can in advance, including arranging a “meet and greet” on your first day. This will drive the point home that you want to be active and productive from Day 1 and will expect the same from others.

- **Analyze your organization’s structure:** Request organization charts and other basic materials to start analyzing the stakeholders and their relationship to your organization. Request overall organization material and specifics for IT and applications, and start making a list of possible power relationships you will be facing.

- **List key stakeholders:** Compile an initial list of key stakeholders to meet during the first week.

- **Tune your perception:** This research assumes that, in your role, you will be accountable for the people, processes, technologies and relationships associated with a defined group of applications. Before planning your first 100 days, read “Gartner for IT Leaders Overview: Applications” to tune your perception of and objectives for your new role.
Communications in the Prepare Phase

Before Day 1

Assess your communication skills: Follow these best practices for effective communication:

- Use business language wherever possible. Avoid detailed technical terms. Clearly define any specialist terms, such as IT abbreviations and acronyms.
- Be brief, clear and consistent in your message across forums and audiences.
- Avoid generic statements — for example, “IT is a critical input to the business” — and focus on only what is specific to your organization’s performance.
- Connect plans explicitly to the strategic investment objectives of the enterprise and the business outcomes needed for them to succeed, thus demonstrating that the IT organization is synchronized with the business.
- Socialize your plans with IT peers and business leaders across the organization, and actively solicit feedback.

Write an introduction: Prepare introductory communication material about yourself, your background, and your initial thoughts on joining the organization. Make this content as fact-based and neutral as possible, and keep it short and succinct. For example, try a 100-word short biography, along with some personal information about your key priorities in life and work, your value systems and integrity.

Draft discussion guides:

- **Stakeholder discussions**: Prepare a list of no more than five questions, some specific and others open-ended, that will ensure the early stakeholder conversations yield insights beyond the polite “meet and greets.” For example, when meeting key business stakeholders, ask about their perception of and satisfaction with the organization’s current state, any urgent issues they think must be resolved as quickly as possible, and any chronic pain areas, priorities and general expectations.
- **Staff discussions**: Prepare a list of similar questions for your first one-on-one meetings with your staff. Ask them about their key work challenges and constraints, and their perception and satisfaction levels with their own team and organization.

Actions and Communications on Day 1

Since your first day on the job is all about listening and communicating, we’ve combined this phase’s actions and communications tasks.

**Meet your manager and plan your first week**: Set up a meeting with your manager on the first day — even if it is by phone or video. Prepare a list of top questions; send them to your manager in advance of the meeting, to help that person prepare and avoid surprises (see Note 2). Define the context for the questions — you’re working on your 100-day plan, and these questions will help
jump-start that process. Include questions about the expectations for your job, promises made, which people and what issues are most important or in need of immediate attention, and other matters (see “Toolkit: The Application Leader’s First 100 Days” for some sample discussion points).

Meet and greet: Arrange a meeting with your direct reports, in person and through videoconferencing or audio conferencing for remote workers. This meeting has two objectives: (1) to introduce yourself; and (2) to show that you are approachable and available to everyone. Offer no opinions of any kind. Explain that you are still gathering information and are not yet ready to make decisions or changes.

During this meet and greet:

- Deliver the introductory message you drafted in advance. State when you will report back to the team with updates on your progress.
- Let the people attending the meeting introduce themselves in their own way and ask whatever questions are on their minds.
- Remember some details about each person to help you start conversations later.
- Be mindful of any apparent biases — identify political/social issues that may remain from your predecessors.
- Be careful of “coming on too strong” and appearing as a threat or hurdle — first impressions are lasting ones.
- Understand your direct reports’ concerns, priorities and career aspirations. Which ones understand and can describe the bigger picture? Which ones seem siloed in their views? Where do they need immediate help?

Distribute your introduction: Distribute the introductory remarks to the wider IT organization. See if you can post them on the company intranet.

Regroup with your manager: Wrap up the Prepare phase with a meeting with your manager that covers:

- The key challenges and opportunities from your point of view.
- Your preliminary strategic vision.
- A communications schedule for the future between the two of you. Ask when to check in again with your manager, how often and by what method. Knowing each other’s styles can set expectations and avoid communication missteps.

Ask for a copy of your job description: Identify differences in this description versus your perception and understanding of your job. Maintain a checklist of differences for later discussion and alignment with your manager. (You will probably want to ask for a copy of your direct reports’ job descriptions, recent appraisals and current objectives at the same time.)
Schedule one-on-ones with your direct reports: Follow up the meet and greet with individual meetings with each of your direct reports. There is a sample set of questions for these meetings in “Toolkit: The Application Leader’s First 100 Days.”

Resources for the Prepare Phase

Gartner Research and Tools

- “Creating the Communications Core: The CIO’s Guide to Effective Communications”

Other Suggested Resources

- **Company and industry websites**: Develop an understanding of the fundamentals of your new employer’s industry. This insight will give you the first glimpse into the market pressures that will impact the application team.
- **Published financial reports**: Utilize public financial and performance data, such as stock exchange filings, to gauge the recent trends with the company relative to its financial results.
- **Press releases and other news reports**: Look beyond the financial data for other information on the company to understand how it is performing.
- **Professional networking and employee feedback sites**: Find out what current and former employees think of the company.
- **Job sites**: Assess how many other IT and non-IT positions are open in the company to get an early indication of whether the business is expanding or has high staff turnover in any areas.

Assess Phase (Days 0 to 30)

Use this period to gain as much insight as possible into the current state of the application organization and to build relationships with key stakeholders and your staff.

Target Outcomes for the Assess Phase

- Solid insight into the current state of the application organization
- Early indications of what is working and what isn’t
- A list of critical events (significant target dates/milestones) that you will prioritize for the first three to six months

Actions for the Assess Phase

- **Inventory the applications and systems for which you’re accountable**: Take a quick inventory of the significant applications for which you’re responsible. Use this information to guide your discussions in meetings with your stakeholders. This may be something you can delegate to a direct report, but you should then update the assessment based on stakeholder discussions.
Collect enough general information to determine potential issues or “hot spots.” Create a basic profile for each application: the name of the application, the business function supported, date acquired, vendor, key service providers, active projects, maintenance backlog and a general history of problems (low, medium and high), and performance (excellent, good or poor). Ask your direct reports for any standard reports on the applications, such as outstanding problem reports, demand backlog and current project/product status.

Use this inventory and your notes to confirm or update the current workload, perceived quality (in terms of business support, technical quality and operational quality), and the enhancements or support backlog for the application. “Toolkit: The Application Leader’s First 100 Days” contains a quick inventory sheet. Eventually, you will want a more complete application portfolio assessment (see “How to Assess Your Application and Product Portfolio for Business and Technical Fitness”).

**Review your budget and year-to-date actuals:** Review the existing budget and actuals year to date to become familiar with how spending was allocated. After meeting with stakeholders, assess the existing budget to make sure it is consistent with the commitments and expectations you uncovered. If it is not, you may have to work with the business stakeholders to reprioritize or reset expectations.

Another budgeting cycle will be approaching. Ensure you have the data to assemble that budget and that you work through the investment governance process to make sure priorities are set that you can achieve with the available resources.

**Determine the health of your processes and governance:** Investigate how well your day-to-day processes are really working. Are they well-defined and consistently followed? Is the business engaged, and is there an adequate governance process to clearly set priorities for work being done? Or is it chaos? The answers to these questions should give you some insight into how the stakeholders perceive the job IT is doing.

The key disciplines of an application organization that require good processes and governance are:

- Management of the product and application function
- Building and customization of products and applications
- Integration of platforms, products and applications
- Management of the product and application portfolio
- Management of vendor and sourcing relationships

Gartner has assessment tools for each IT leader role. Application leaders who want to gauge their level of maturity should go to gartner.com and complete an “IT Score for Applications” assessment.

**Transition from project to product:** Many application organizations are in the middle of a transition from a traditional waterfall project method of managing work to agile development and product-centric approaches (see “Survey Analysis: IT Is Moving Quickly From Projects to Products”). The actions in this first 100 days document are the same, whether the organization is pursuing product-
centric delivery or still working on applications, or undertaking a combination of the two. In most cases, your organization may reflect both project and product characteristics as the change cannot be done quickly. (see “Becoming Product-Centric Should Be an Evolution, Not a Top-Down Transformation”). You will have to interpret the results of the maturity assessment in this light.

More importantly, if you are taking this position because your predecessor failed to lead the transformation successfully, you will have a mess to clean up, including poorly performing agile teams and traditional teams more resistant to change than ever. You will need to determine whether your predecessor tried to go too fast or too slow or did not confront the cultural change required for success.

You will need to pay special attention to getting the agile teams working and to providing coaching and support for their success. This may include dealing with stakeholders and peers to overcome issues blocking their success (see “Adopting Agile? Do What Successful Agile Teams Do”).

**Identify critical events (significant target dates/milestones):** There are always inevitable and unmovable events that will require immediate and extra attention from you and your team. As you meet with your manager and other stakeholders, identify and confirm substantial events for the next three months. Add this data gathering and these events to your must-do list for your first 100 days.

Examples of key milestones:

- Performance reviews of direct subordinates
- Contract renewals or negotiations with strategic vendors
- Significant project/product reviews
- Annual planning process deadlines
- Implementations of new applications, substantial changes to existing applications and product launches
- Conversions of applications, significant databases or business processes
- People milestones (retirements, new hires, resignations, vacancies) among key employees, users and stakeholders

**Identify collaborative key initiatives:** There are initiatives that your organization must collaboratively “own” and execute. Collaborative key initiatives benefit the business and IT, and deliver business outcomes critical for execution of the enterprise’s strategy. These may include business transformations, major process improvements, or the implementation of new products or business models. These initiatives may also benefit multiple business units. There should be an identified business owner, as well as an IT owner for each of these initiatives and a well-understood business outcome. If there isn’t, then note this as an issue for near-term resolution. The IT organization and multiple business units have a vested interest in collaborative key initiatives. All must invest resources. All must support, govern and collaboratively implement these initiatives.

You are responsible for cooperatively working on these initiatives, including leading the pieces that are owned by the business units with which you are aligned. You must also represent the views and
work of the IT organization to your business users and, likewise, represent the views and work of your business users to the IT organization.

Key initiatives that require collaborative ownership and execution, and are likely to be underway, include:

- Application rationalization and modernization
- Pace-Layered Application Strategy
- Alternative sourcing strategies, including cloud computing and SaaS
- The shift to agile and product-centric delivery
- Digital business

You will need to identify the initiatives that most heavily affect your application area. Include these in your strategy, and actively advocate for and facilitate these initiatives for inclusion in your business unit’s strategies.

**Communications in the Assess Phase**

**Schedule meetings with key stakeholders:** Your key stakeholders include your management (your manager and her/his manager), key users of your applications (application owners, operational leaders and critical users), your peers (in applications and other IT areas), and strategic application vendors or service providers. Depending on the circumstances, you may also consider your predecessor as a stakeholder, or at least an influencer. Figure 2 shows these stakeholders and the type of information you must learn from them to assess your situation.
Take the following actions:

- Begin scheduling meetings immediately after you meet with your manager and have a sense of which people and what issues are important. Expect that some of these people will schedule themselves early on your calendar — be prepared by knowing who they are and why they’re important to you.

- Communicate with these stakeholders early and often (see Note 3). Tell them what you’re doing, when you’re doing it and what they should know about you. Encourage them to talk to you — maintain an open-door policy, leave time on your calendar open, and ask for time on their calendars. Tell them when you’re expecting to meet them, unless they need more urgency.

- Prepare a list of key questions for your meetings with each stakeholder. Adjust these questions as you go in order to leverage what you’ve learned along the way. Design the meetings and the questions to maximize their talk time and to minimize yours, and then listen to what they have
to say. (See Note 4 for a starting list of discussion tips and questions for your key business users.)

**Schedule formal one-on-one meetings with your peers in the IT organization:** Follow-up your initial quick introductions with more formal one-on-one meetings. These will include other application managers, plus other management roles across the IT organization. These peers should have received your introduction letter and your list of questions. A starting list of peer contacts will include:

- Other application managers, such as those who lead integration, application architecture, standards/testing, web development, workplace applications and business applications
- Head of project management office
- Head of operations and infrastructure
- Head of networking and telecom
- Heads of competency centers, such as business intelligence
- Heads of enterprise architecture and IT strategy
- Head of product management (if not in your organization) and key product managers

**Connect with key talent in your own organization:** Schedule one-on-one meetings within two weeks. Your direct reports should identify these key people, and you should add anyone that key users consider critical.

**Attend meetings where you can gain critical information:** Identify all the existing meetings that discuss items of importance to you. Categorize these as “must attend regularly,” “should attend when agenda suggests important issues will be decided” and “should ask to be copied on minutes.”

**Get on the right distribution lists:** Identify all the critical management information flows and ensure that they are distributed to you. These include meeting minutes from the IT steering group, your manager’s team meeting minutes and so on.

**Perform analysis of stakeholders:** Gather and analyze key information about your business users to understand how they view and influence your plans (see Note 5). This will be a living tool that you’ll maintain during your first 100 days, and will continue to use throughout your career.

**Assess your team:** You may or may not have inherited the right team to accomplish what is expected of you. As you learn their strengths and weaknesses, do a formal assessment of each person and determine what human resources actions may be required. There is an assessment worksheet in “Toolkit: The Application Leader’s First 100 Days.”
Resources for the Assess Phase

Gartner Research and Tools

- “How to Assess Your Application and Product Portfolio for Business and Technical Fitness”
- “Minimize, Maximize, Optimize: A Framework for Analyzing Application Work”
- “In Application Rationalization, the Number of Applications Is Irrelevant”
- “How to Develop a Pace-Layered Application Strategy”

Other Suggested Resources

- **Existing application organization documentation**: Examine these sources, which include policies, principles, charters, standards, strategy plans, program plans and roadmaps.
- **The current application budget**: Request material available on the actuals in order to plan expense and capital spending activities. Seek any available forecast information, too.
- **Existing executive and operational reports**: Study these to get additional insight into any challenges and opportunities inherent in the application team.
- **Statements of strategy**: Review formal strategy documents from senior leaders, internal and external, to identify what the organization’s strategic priorities are. Look at the strategic initiatives of the past two or three years to see what has been the focus and what was the outcome.

Plan Phase (Days 15 to 45)

The Plan phase synthesizes the abundant Assess phase information into the areas of focus, transforming all you’ve learned during your first weeks on the job into a blueprint for action.

Target Outcomes for the Plan Phase

- A planned operational application budget for the next two to three months
- An interim application strategy for the first six to 12 months of your tenure, which identifies the key initiatives that you will focus on over the next three months

Actions for the Plan Phase

**Clarify your application strategy for the next six to 12 months**: Review the current application strategy (see “Engage the Business by Developing an Application Strategy Together”) to determine:

- How comprehensive and forward-looking it is
- Whether it is focused enough to be achievable
- Whether it supports the business strategy
Whether it is described in terms of business outcomes
- The alignment of skills to strategy

Create supplemental plans to shore up missing elements of strategy. Ensure there are appropriate metrics and measures to determine whether the strategy is succeeding.

**Plan your operational application budget for the next two to three months:** Review the existing budget in light of the commitments and expectations you discovered from stakeholders. Is it adequate? If not, how will priorities, commitments and expectations need to be changed to work with the available resources? You should now have a reasonably accurate picture of your monthly application operations budget. This budget may expand or contract as you work with stakeholders to develop your strategy, but you should be able to provide fairly specific answers to any questions about where the money goes. Create a checklist of items to include in the next strategic planning cycle.

**Spend time in each of your application owners’ business areas:** If this is a new business area to you, ask whether you can “shadow” a key position for at least one day. Develop a checklist of suggestions, issues and opportunities for the business area. Provide the list to the application team and to the application lead/product manager for action.

**Evaluate and update your strategy and plans for key application initiatives:** Identify all critical events (significant implementations, milestones, trouble spots and major promises) scheduled during the next 60 days.

**Communications in the Plan Phase**

**Share a snapshot of your initial observations:** Announce your intentions regarding the organization (and any reorganization). You may or may not be planning significant changes, but let people know what’s on your mind, and tell them when you may announce changes, if any are in the works. (Local regulations and culture may limit what you can do here without first going through local work councils.)

**Meet with direct reports and key team members:** Hold regular meetings to determine the status, obstacles, resource gaps and alternatives to resolve any issues. Create or confirm plans, actions and shortfalls, and decide how to address them.

**Communicate critical event gaps:** Ensure all primary stakeholders understand the gaps in resources or timing that affect the ability to deal with the critical events and agree on a resolution.

Communicate interim application strategy: Ensure all primary stakeholders understand the interim application strategy and its implications for their operations.
Resources for the Plan Phase

Gartner Research and Tools

- “How to Develop a Pace-Layered Application Strategy”
- “Designing the Application Organization: An Overview”
- “Emerging Practices in Organizational Design for Digital Product Delivery Organizations”

Other Suggested Resources

- **Existing IT strategy documents and budgets:** Study these to gain a good indication of the structure and format used for strategic planning in the enterprise.
- **Existing/old application strategy documents and budgets:** Use these sources to frame discussions with your new team and stakeholders to identify what worked well and what did not.
- **Existing planning documentation:** Seek the planning principles and guidelines that can help you focus on business requirements during your planning process.

Act Phase (Days 30 to 80)

Put your plan into action, engage your stakeholders and sponsors in the application organization, and consistently demonstrate the value of your organization to the enterprise.

Target Outcomes for the Act Phase

- Announcement and implementation of organizational changes
- Results of application maturity assessment
- Longer-term plan to respond to “IT Score for Applications”

Actions for the Act Phase

**Announce and implement any initial organizational changes among your direct reports:** Propose these to your manager to get feedback, and ensure that she or he is aware and supportive of any changes you plan. Depending on their nature, you might want to preview them with your direct reports as well. Manage even small adjustments as if they are significant changes. Complete any significant organizational changes, within the limits of regulation and culture.

Implement the organization design you expect to use for the delivery of applications during at least the next 12 months. Be careful here. An organizational change may be necessary, but it is also disruptive, and a new leader is inherently disruptive. Ensure that you’re addressing an organizational issue, rather than an operating or delivery issue (see “Designing the Application Organization: An Overview”).
Conduct an IT Score for Applications application maturity assessment: Conduct this with your direct reports and relevant key stakeholders.

**Determine required actions from the maturity assessment:** This requires a twofold approach:

- Identify any short-term (within three to six months) changes and schedule these into your immediate plans. Look for leverage points where smaller changes can yield larger results. Your goal should be to get momentum, which means you need to build credibility quickly.
- Identify longer-term changes and integrate them into your six-month to 18-month plans — that is, the remainder of the current year plus the following year.

**Communications in the Act Phase**

**Socialize a draft application strategy with stakeholders and consult with them to improve it:** The application strategy should be your core communication vehicle with stakeholders. It is a presentation summarizing the business strategy and context, application principles, current assessment of the portfolio, and status of existing and proposed projects as you understand them. You then identify options and recommended approaches to achieve the business outcomes needed by the business. Socialize this with stakeholders, noting their challenges or corrections to the assumptions and their requests for specific action. This is an iterative process, and when you get inconsistent information you will need to escalate within management to clarify the facts. Over time, this should become a consensus document for the path forward and operationalized through the demand management governance process (see “Engage the Business by Developing an Application Strategy Together”).

**Discuss how you’re doing with your manager, direct reports and key stakeholders:** Determine what to continue, slow down, speed up or stop doing during the next 60 days. Adjust your plans accordingly.

**Resources for the Act Phase**

**Gartner Research and Tools**

- “Designing the Application Organization: An Overview”
- “Toolkit: Application Portfolio Business and Technical Fitness Assessment”

**Other Suggested Resources**

- **Collaboration tools:** Many organizations have collaboration and document management/workflow tools in-house (such as Microsoft SharePoint, IBM Connections and Yammer). Use these to help coordinate and control delivery.
- **Application and management consulting resources:** Leverage supplemental resources from external providers when internal resources don’t exist to drive action in the targeted areas.
Measure Phase (Days 45 to 100)

Develop the metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs) that will enable you to ensure the application organization is delivering business value, and to track its performance.

Target Outcomes for the Measure Phase

- Metrics and reporting framework developed
- Opportunities for continuous improvement developed
- Application practices refined through the governance process

Actions for the Measure Phase

**Develop a scorecard for your application organization:** Include the following components:

- Identify the KPIs that are most important for your application people, processes and technologies. Start by reviewing those already in use. Include support for both business and IT metrics.
- Define the monitoring and measuring process for your KPIs and related incentives that drive appropriate behaviors.
- Develop a plan for implementing the scorecard process model, including decision analysis and actions based on scorecard results.

**Develop an executive reporting framework and process:** Effective metrics reporting often takes into account the characteristics of individuals that the report goes to. Concepts, language and areas of individual sensitivity are important. Identify your audience. Know each person’s interest and expectations. Understand the decisions that each person makes every day. Refine the metrics that you have.

**Evaluate the governance mechanisms for your application organization and IT:** Recommend improvements or changes required to speed up decisions, fill gaps or resolve other shortcomings.

**Revisit and revise your job description to reflect any updated responsibilities:** Discuss these changes and updates with your manager — reach agreement on your role, responsibilities and expectations.

Communications in the Measure Phase

**Monitor program, project and product progress:** You must still monitor the application projects/products you inherited, and remain involved with those you have initiated. Regular progress reports should be brief and focus on only the project information you need to discuss with business leaders and financial management. Keep your project/product managers focused on telling you how they’re doing, not what they’re doing. Ask occasional probing questions at greater levels of detail, to ensure that you can articulate the business value of the project team’s efforts.
Highlight early wins, successes and challenges: Schedule meetings with your line manager, team leaders and key stakeholders to gather their thoughts on the progress made and challenges encountered during the first 90 days of your tenure. Ask your key stakeholders: “How am I doing? What’s working and what’s not? Are we delivering quickly enough? Are we doing the right things? Is communication effective? Is quality at the level it should be? Are projects and products successful?” Collate the findings into a first-quarter status report for executive management and the steering committee. Report on only what is relevant to them. Don’t rely on just numbers. Interpret the metrics for your audience, and provide recommended courses of action.

Resources for the Measure Phase

Gartner Research and Tools

- “Use the Right Metrics in the Right Way for Enterprise Agile Delivery”
- “Strategic Benefits Realization: IT as an Engine for Coherent Execution of Strategy”
- “IT Key Metrics Data 2019: Key Applications Measures: Application Support: Current Year”
- “IT Key Metrics Data 2019: Key Applications Measures: Application Development: Current Year”
- “IT Key Metrics Data 2019: Key Applications Measures: Cost and Staff Profile: Current Year”

Other Suggested Resources

- **Industry best-practice frameworks**: Examine established frameworks, such as COBIT, which offer an abundance of best-practice guidance for application leaders.
- **In-house metrics and measures**: Your organization has likely developed its own set of metrics and measures. Use and extend these where appropriate.
- **Scorecards and benchmarks**: In most cases, a good graphic is a great way of communicating a metric or KPI. Therefore, reach out to a design team, if you have one, or use in-house tools (for example, Microsoft Excel has great dashboard resources and templates).

Gartner Recommended Reading

*Some documents may not be available as part of your current Gartner subscription.*

- “Toolkit: The Application Leader’s First 100 Days”
- “Move Away From Waterfall to Agile and Product-Centric Delivery Methods”
- “Top 10 Strategic Technology Trends for 2019”
- “Applications 2023: Critical Skills and Knowledge for Application Leaders in a Digital World”
Note 1 Our Assumptions About Your Job Profile

This 100-day plan assumes that you are a mid- to high-level application manager. This means the scope of your job is defined as having the following minimum responsibilities:

- **Scope of people management:** You are managing a significant number of people (a minimum of 50) involved in various aspects of application work, organized into teams or competency centers, whose leaders or managers are your direct reports. This number may include contractors or service providers who are not employees, but who are under your direction. If you are using a product-centric management approach, this number may include product managers/product owners, if they don’t report to the business.

- **Scope of application management:** You are managing, at minimum, the applications that support a business unit or a division of your organization (for example, ERP, CRM, application integration or testing/standards).

- **Scope of user domain:** Your contacts include the application owners (that is, the responsible business leaders), operational managers and lead users for each application or an integrated group of applications.

- **Scope of your IT role:** Your peer interactions include other IT functional leaders (for example, those in charge of architecture, security, infrastructure and operations, a project office or a process management office).

- **Reporting relationship:** You report to the CIO or to a direct report of the CIO who has group responsibility for your team and other teams of similar scope.

This research will best fit this profile, but its structure and content should be adaptable and useful to any application leader. In particular, the size of organization will affect how you execute this list:

- Leaders with smaller organizations may have a simpler list, because relationships tend to be tighter, and there may be less formal material required to see the whole picture.

- Leaders with much larger organizations will probably delegate many of these tasks to direct reports and then review the results. More of their time will be spent on the strategic and relationship aspects of the job, rather than on the “nuts and bolts” of data collection. In addition, the timeline may need to be extended for large organizations.

Note 2 Discussion Points for the First Meeting With Your Manager

These 12 questions will help you understand the role, key people and key challenges of your job as your manager sees it. Many of these questions should have been discussed when you were being
considered for the job. If they were, confirm that nothing has changed. If they were not, this is the time to get the discussion started:

1. How do you define the scope and responsibilities of my job?
2. What are your main expectations of me and my team?
3. What will be my most important actions during the first 30 days?
4. What will be my single biggest challenge in this job?
5. Whom should I meet with first (my team, my peers or business users), and why?
6. Which business users are most important to our success?
7. Which of my team members are most important (in terms of my relationships with them)?
8. Which of my IT peers are critical to my team’s success?
9. What are business users’ perceptions of our IT organization (positive and negative)?
10. Are there specific concerns about me (from you, my peers, my team or my business users)?
11. Is there a formal job description for my role?
12. When and how should we communicate with each other? Daily check-in, weekly meeting or some other schedule? In person or by electronic means? Are there standing agenda items you would like me to cover?

Note 3 Top Concerns When Correlating Key Data From Stakeholders

The information gleaned from initial meetings with stakeholders is the basis for your 100-day plan. In addition to critical events, there are other types of information needed for your planning and actions. Some of the information provided by your stakeholders will be factual, but most of it will be opinions and perceptions:

- **Factual information should be readily available.** Listen to any facts presented by your stakeholders; however, your application processes should be designed to manage fact-based issues and needs. Check for performance monitoring, scorecards and quality reporting to ensure that you have the facts. Use your stakeholder discussions to understand whether application processes are effective and reliable, rather than focus on gathering facts.

With regard to information presented as facts, there may be discrepancies among your stakeholders that require immediate action. Prioritize the “factual” discrepancies, and assign each to a specific individual for resolution. Resolution should include determining whose opinion is fact, and what process or system changes need to occur. In the end, the responsible individual should recommend how to address these.

- **Opinions and perceptions are the real nuggets in your stakeholder discussions.** These are the basis for establishing and improving relationships and relationship management, so that future outcomes are successful. Listen well for the “areas of concern” for your first 100 days. It
is key to note here that your job is not to rebut or defend. It is simply to distinguish perception from reality and to deal with each.

Here is a starting checklist of areas of concern about which to glean opinions and perceptions, based on your discussions with each stakeholder:

1. **Your team culture:** What is the culture in your application team (the current state, the desired state and in which direction it is headed)?

2. **Status of your applications:** What is the status of the application software and systems? Which applications are strategic or nonstrategic? What is the quality of the vendors? What is the quality of the support provided by the application team? What is the overall perception of the application software’s quality and agility? In each of these areas, what are the users’ perceptions? How large are the gaps between users’ perceptions, your own perceptions and those of your team?

3. **Status of business engagement:** What are the overall challenges, obstacles and issues for this stakeholder in working with his or her application team (people and processes)? How does the stakeholder rate the overall quality of the relationship? Are the stakeholders really engaged with the application organization? Do they participate in governance and strategy processes? What power do they wield in the governance process? Do they have joint accountability with your organization for the results of application work?

4. **Connection to business strategy and initiatives:** How well is the application team (people, processes and technologies) linked to the business and its direction and goals? How well does the application strategy reflect the business strategy?

5. **Alignment of your team’s work with the IT direction:** How well are your team’s work and skills aligned with the enterprise architecture, and to the standards, methods and direction of the IT organization? Where are the gaps and shortfalls? What measures are being used to determine performance, and how well do these measures correlate with the real needs of the organization?

6. **“Health” and quality of your team:** Who has the right talent and skills? Who can be trusted to tell the real story? Who can be trusted with tough assignments? Who has a negative, positive or “wait and see” attitude? Who needs attention now? Where do you have gaps, and need to add talent? What is the current reputation of your team among key stakeholders? What is staff turnover?

7. **Political hot spots:** What is “out of bounds” to touch, change or challenge in your first 100 days?

8. **Promises made:** What has been promised to users, team members, vendors and others?

9. **Status of work:** What is the status of all work in progress? What critical projects are underway, and what (if any) are imminent? What is strategic versus nonstrategic? What does this stakeholder expect of you? Where are the problems and opportunities? Where are the shortfalls in skills, people or other resources? Are a business case and benefits realization tracking in place for each effort?
10. **Status of vendors and service providers:** Are these players considered partners with or competitors of the IT organization? Do they know what your organization expects of them? Are they delivering what the business needs? Is the quality and performance of their products and services where they should be? Which vendors work directly with your business users, with your application team and with other IT organizations?

11. **Quality of your organization design:** Is the organization working effectively for this stakeholder? Does this stakeholder know how and where to get the services needed from applications? Is the application team proactive or reactive? Are the processes effective? Are there enough of the right skills and talent?

12. **Preferred styles and frequency of communication:** Your stakeholders will have preferences for frequency and style of communication. You will probably set up some standard communication practices, but it is important to know what key stakeholders want; what is comfortable for one person may not be comfortable for all.

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**Note 4 Discussion Points for Meetings With Business Users**

These 12 discussion points will help you elicit needed information from key business users about their perceptions and levels of satisfaction with IT and the application team.

Preface these discussion points by learning something about the business users — what their groups are responsible for, the trends and challenges that concern them most, how they measure success and the key people in their organizations. Get a sense of their styles, body language and comfort levels with you. As you move into your discussion points, adjust your language and questions to their styles.

It is unlikely that you will use these questions verbatim; however, you can adjust them to suit your users’ styles and preferences:

1. How well does our team meet your requirements and expectations?
2. How well are our plans and actions aligned with your strategies and goals?
3. What are your expectations of me and my role?
4. Who are the key contributors to your success (either in IT or in your business operations)?
5. Do we seem to have enough resources, budget and skills to deliver on your needs and requirements?
6. What are your top-three concerns or issues?
7. What is broken and needs immediate correction?
8. What promises and commitments have been made for the next six to 12 months?
9. What are your visions and top requirements for your applications during the next one, three and five years?
10. Who else should I talk to concerning your IT and application support?

11. Do you want to participate in efforts to align IT people, technologies and processes with your business direction?

12. How often should we communicate, and in what format? Are there any standing agenda items we should include?

Note 5 Stakeholder Analysis Worksheet

“Toolkit: The Application Leader’s First 100 Days” includes a stakeholder analysis worksheet. Stakeholder analysis is the process of analyzing the needs, sentiments and even idiosyncrasies of key individuals who have a stake in an application effort. This analysis is used:

- To tailor communication to, and ensure alignment with, stakeholder needs
- To plan and change adoption purposes
- To identify each key stakeholder’s information needs as an input to the measurement program

With respect to applications, the key information and characteristics for each stakeholder include nine elements that you can add to or customize based on your situation and culture:

- Title/role
- Level of influence — decision maker versus influencer
- Perception of the application organization — positive, negative or mixed
- Perception of the IT organization — positive, negative or mixed
- Power — whether this person’s power is derived from formal roles or from professional influence
- Issues — major challenges facing this stakeholder
- Opportunities — major opportunities envisioned by this stakeholder
- Decision-making style — directive, analytical or conceptual
- Personal characteristics — observed or identified