

THE LADDER™

a GPA Unit magazine

Issue No. 1, 2025

Inside the GPA Unit's
Quest to Create
an Ecosystem of
Excellence



GPAU Pulse

2025: A Year of Strategic
Partnerships and Performance
Excellence

Editor's pick

5 Ways Saudi Arabia's Vision
2030 Sets The Benchmark
For Strategic Planning And
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The Next Step in Management Evolution

Author Bori Péntek

Section Editor's letter

Every generation of management thinking has reflected its time. Classical management valued structure and control; human relations taught us to listen; human resources reminded us that people and performance are intertwined; systems theory revealed the interdependence holding it all together.

Each paradigm emerged not by replacing

what came before, but by integrating it into something larger.

Today, we stand at the threshold of another such integration — one that moves beyond systems thinking to **ecosystem thinking**. Performance management system maturity represents the next logical step in this evolution: the capability to orchestrate

not just internal coherence, but dynamic interdependence across boundaries — with partners, stakeholders, and the broader environment in which organizations exist, for a triple bottom line.

Ecosystem management and maturity are therefore indispensable to each other

Ecosystem management and maturity are therefore indispensable to each other. You cannot build a thriving ecosystem without the maturity to sense, adapt, and co-evolve. And maturity itself is no longer about perfecting isolated systems — it's about cultivating the conditions for collective intelligence and shared performance across an entire ecosystem.

Where past models sought stability, performance management maturity seeks adaptability. It is less about authority and more about alignment — less about transmitting information and more about shaping shared meaning. It represents management becoming fluent in its own complexity, and wise enough to orchestrate complexity beyond its walls.

At the Global Performance Audit Unit, we've watched this shift emerge through our work conducting maturity assessments across

sectors and geographies. What begins as an organizational diagnostic often becomes something more profound: a mirror reflecting not just where an organization stands, but how ready it is to evolve. Organizations no longer ask only what to measure or how to plan — they ask how to make their systems coherent, how to link governance, culture, and leadership into an ecosystem that learns as it performs.

For years, this conversation lived in a niche. Maturity models and assessments were the language of experts and auditors, tucked deep within consulting methodologies and academic papers. But the time for niche language has passed. The demands of today's world — sustainability, wellbeing, agility, accountability — all require organizations to **grow up, not just scale up**. The vocabulary of performance management maturity now belongs to everyone who leads, designs, and learns inside an organization.

That is why The Ladder exists: to open this dialogue, to translate the science of maturity into the art of management.

In this first edition, you'll see performance management maturity come alive across multiple scales. Our Highlight interview with Adrian Brudan reveals how the GPA Unit itself is evolving into a performance excellence ecosystem, redefining how thought leadership, assessment, and community



connect. Our Editor's Pick explores how Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 has transformed strategic planning into a living national system — perhaps the clearest illustration yet of performance management maturity as a whole-of-government capability.

Across Mind the Gap and Systems in Focus, maturity shifts from theory to practice: the case study from Red Sea Global demonstrates what it means to bridge vision and execution through structured maturity assessment and continuous learning. And in Maturity Outlook, we trace how performance management

Together, these stories tell a single truth: performance management is no longer about control — it's about building organizations capable of sensing their own patterns, adapting to complexity, and evolving with purpose.

systems are becoming the true enablers of sustainability — where wellbeing, innovation, and accountability converge.

That's the real measure of maturity — not a level achieved, but a rhythm sustained.

And fittingly, we begin this journey in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Riyadh, a city in a region and country that has turned transformation into an art form. The visual tone of this issue honors that spirit — structured yet luminous, rooted yet forward-looking — just as the performance management maturity movement itself bridges rigor and renewal.

Welcome to The Ladder.

A space where performance meets evolution — and where the next chapter of management begins.

Bori Péntek
Editor-in-Chief, The Ladder

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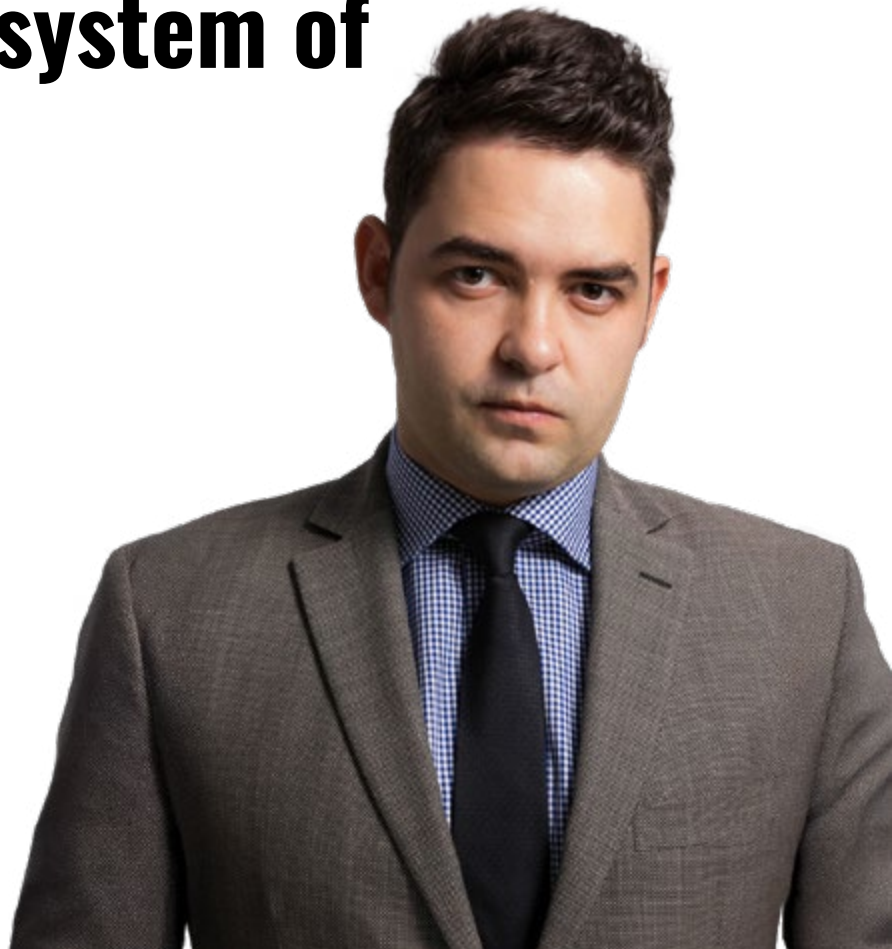
Inside the GPA Unit's Quest to Create an Ecosystem of Excellence

Author Bori Péntek

Section Highlight

An Interview With General Manager and Co-Founder Adrian Brudan

We sit down with Adrian Brudan to tell the story of the Global Performance Audit Unit (GPA Unit). In a transformative journey that seems to touch on everything, from how services are delivered to how professionals develop their careers, we see the thread that binds it all—as told by the man whose vision created a new paradigm.



The Transformation

What drove you to reimagine the GPA Unit so comprehensively?

Let me begin with the origins of the GPA Unit. Everything started to take shape many years ago, in 2008, when I was about to complete my master's studies at the Aarhus University School of Business in Denmark. At the time, I reconnected with my current partner and co-founder of the GPA Unit, Dr. Aurel Brudan, who also happens to be a family member. Back then, he was working in strategy and performance consultancy in Australia, while I was exploring ideas for my future and finalizing my studies in Denmark.

During our discussions, we identified the opportunity to explore maturity models for strategy and performance management systems. At that time, this was still a novelty. While such models existed in ICT (CMMI) and project management (P3M3), they had not been applied on a broader scale to strategy and performance. Academic research in the field was also limited.

In other words, it was a wide-open territory—almost like the Wild West—and a great opportunity to develop something that could evolve from a simple idea into a valuable service for organizations.

I integrated this concept into my master's thesis, which later became the backbone of what evolved into the first performance measurement and management maturity model. A year later, in the fall of 2009, I moved to Australia and began contributing to the foundation of The KPI Institute. It was at that point, together with Dr. Aurel Brudan, that we formalized the first iteration of the strategy and performance management maturity assessment service—essentially version 1.0.

For the next few years, not much happened with the maturity assessment service. It was available but had not yet gained significant

traction. Things changed in 2015, when our first major project took shape: collaborating with a leading Nordic financial group headquartered in Finland, with a strong presence in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. Interestingly, the very region where the idea was first conceived became the first to see its organizations benefit from the service it inspired. This was soon followed by other, smaller projects, each of which further validated the viability of what had initially been just a concept.

At that point, I decided it was time to evolve the model. Over the course of a year, we transformed it from a basic measurement and management model into a comprehensive framework covering five core capabilities—strategic planning, performance measurement, performance improvement, performance culture, and employee performance—the same ones that exist today. By the end of 2016, version 2.0 was completed, and at the beginning of 2017, we launched the Global Performance Audit Unit—established as the strategy and performance audit division of The KPI Institute. From the start, this new version proved successful, especially in the Middle East, a region experiencing rapid growth and interest in strategy and performance. Our early projects were in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), followed by Saudi Arabia, where the launch of Vision 2030 created a strong demand for such frameworks.

Did you face any challenges? You mentioned the first project in 2015 as a milestone. Was there another turning point that ushered in the GPA Unit that we know today?

Of course, we faced challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic caused a temporary stagnation as organizations shifted priorities from growth to survival. But from 2022 onwards, things picked up rapidly. By 2023 and 2024, we were scaling exponentially and began working with large clients such as the PIF, MODON, Red Sea Global, ZATCA, and STC. We also expanded globally, with projects in Ecuador, Indonesia, and interest from the U.S. and, recently, Canada.

This period also marked a shift in organizational needs. Initially, companies were focused on how to set up performance management systems. Over time, however, the focus moved towards how to mature those systems. At the GPA Unit, our role is to assess an organization's current state, identify gaps, and design roadmaps for continuous improvement. The goal is to help organizations adjust and enhance their systems in a way that truly influences performance.

Recognizing the importance of a comprehensive approach, we transitioned from offering a single service (Version 1.0) to creating a dedicated division (Version 2.0). Now, with Version 3.0 in 2025, we are evolving into a fully standalone organization. This transformation is not just structural; it reflects our intention to present ourselves in the most relevant and impactful way for organizations, building on the knowledge and expertise gained over the past 15 years.

Fittingly, this next chapter is being launched in Saudi Arabia—a country that today leads not only in transformative real estate and infrastructure projects, but also in advancing modern approaches to business, strategy, and performance management.

The Pillars

You're building what you call a "performance excellence ecosystem." Walk us through what that means and how it differs from traditional consulting approaches.

The assessment services are central to what we do: they define our identity, guide our mission and vision, and embody the purpose we stand for.

I call it an **ecosystem** because the core purpose of our existence—the essence of our work—is assessing the maturity of strategy and performance management systems. And this doesn't happen in a vacuum.

Yet, to fully accomplish this mission, we realized we needed a much more **comprehensive** approach. What began as a niche, targeted service gradually expanded into a broad offering that, alongside an ever-growing portfolio of assessment types, also includes:

- **Certifications and accreditations** for building credibility and lasting systems
- **Licensing** for stronger market representation and
- **Thought leadership**, for better clarity and understanding of the maturity assessment platform and knowledge usage

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To achieve our purpose and build the right foundations, we structured our work into **10 interconnected pillars**:

01

Research & Innovation: It serves as the foundation that drives the future of performance excellence through academic research, business insights, surveys, and new methodologies. It will be guided by a Scientific Advisory Board to ensure that the GPA Unit remains future-ready and continues to provide thought leadership globally.

02

Standards & Accreditation: Starting in 2025, this will formalize our role as the authority in strategy and performance management systems maturity and excellence. Its call to action is “Driving maturity, certifying excellence.” Through this, we will certify organizations, assessors, trainers, and advisors.

03

Training & Coaching: Delivered through the **Performance Excellence Academy**, this pillar equips professionals to use our framework effectively. It includes certification programs for assessing performance management maturity and practical tracks that simulate implementations, and ensures specialization in each of the five capabilities. It also covers assessor accreditation, ensuring a strong global pool of trained experts.

04

Assessments (PerforAssess): The heart of the GPA Unit’s authority, where methodology meets technology. This pillar houses our structured services: **Self-Check, QuickScan, Diagnose, and Certified Assessments**. Together, they provide organizations with a pathway from self-discovery to full external certification.

05

Awards & Recognition: This pillar celebrates and endorses excellence. We honor organizations, teams, assessors, trainers, and partners who exemplify maturity and impact. Recognition includes organizational awards, professional awards, and inclusion in the **Performance Excellence Hall of Fame**, reserved for those who achieve Level 5 maturity. This pillar builds prestige, sets benchmarks, and motivates excellence across industries and countries.

06

Insights & Media: Our communications and PR platform. It encompasses The Ladder magazine, newsletters, news portals, podcasts, videos, event coverage, and social media campaigns. This pillar ensures the GPA Unit has a strong public voice, boosts visibility, and shares research, events, and achievements. It is the storytelling glue that connects all the other pillars.

07

Knowledge Hub: A dedicated repository that gathers academic papers, case studies, podcasts, and other resources. It serves professionals seeking to expand their knowledge and provides global access to performance excellence insights.

08

Events: A convening platform that includes the **Performance Excellence Forum & Awards Gala**, along with executive dinners, webinars, and future gatherings.

09

Network: This pillar is focused on global expansion. Through the **GPAU Ambassadors Network**, we will license local partners, create community chapters, and build practitioner groups. This ensures localized delivery while maintaining global standards. The network has tracks for both individuals and organizations, creating a broad platform for international collaboration.

10

Connect: The unifying pillar, with the motto: “Together, we raise the standards of performance excellence.” It develops a global community through national and regional chapters, practitioner circuits, and online forums, fostering peer-to-peer learning and engagement.

Together, these ten pillars form the **GPAU Performance Excellence Ecosystem**. They reflect the journey we have taken over the past decade and a half, the position we hold today, and the ambitious vision we carry into the future: to be a global authority that shapes strategy and performance management maturity.

The Vision

Where do you want the GPA Unit positioned in five years when organizations think about performance excellence?

Our ambitious vision requires a broader acknowledgment of our organization's efforts, and one of the steps we've already taken is the creation of the **GPAU Institute for Standards and Accreditation**. Its role is to drive maturity, certify excellence, and ensure that we uphold the way we position ourselves and the way we are perceived at the global level.

Looking ahead, I don't want us to just be considered an authority in five years—I want us to be universally recognized as the authority. To achieve this, we have taken

concrete steps. Namely, we developed the first GPA Unit Standard. Inspired by ISO 9000 but dedicated to recognizing maturity and excellence, **GPAU-IS 91000** certifies and accredits strategy and performance management frameworks from this particular perspective.

Why is creating a standard so important to your vision? What do you aim to accomplish by doing this?

GPAU-IS 91000 was not created in isolation; it is grounded on the backbone of our ongoing research. I am personally in the final stages of completing a PhD focused on strategy and performance management maturity assessments and their impact on organizational performance. My partner and GPA Unit Co-Founder, Dr. Aurel Brudan, dedicated a significant part of his doctoral research to studying the importance and benefits of integrated performance architectures. In parallel, we have published multiple academic and business research articles in collaboration with GPA Unit members and partners. Our research agenda continues to expand, exploring topics such as the state of performance maturity in Saudi Arabia, across the wider region, and on the global stage.

All this expertise—academic research, business practices, and fieldwork—reinforces our legitimacy. It provides us with the credibility to establish global standards for strategy and performance management systems maturity and to define what excellence means in this particular field. Of course, we acknowledge that this is an ongoing journey, requiring continuous refinement, further research, and broader implementation.

One of our most trusted partners in this journey has been, and will continue to be, **The KPI Institute**—the organization from which the GPA Unit first emerged. While we have now evolved into an independent entity, The KPI Institute remains a vital global partner, working alongside us to advance these practices worldwide.



Of course, achieving this will require us to grow our team further. Five years from now, I envision the GPA Unit as a strong, vibrant, and global organization—one that not only delivers impactful services but is also a wonderful place to work. Ultimately, it's not only about the services or the organization; it's about the people behind it all: the colleagues, partners, and friends who make this vision possible. Together, we will build both excellence in service and excellence in culture.

The Impact

How will the GPA Unit's transformation change the career path for performance excellence professionals? What new opportunities are you creating?

This transformation brings unique opportunities: specifically, the potential to create new roles within organizations. We know the internal audit function is well established, but what we are contributing to developing can be seen as an extension of it.

Organizations will be able to educate certain stakeholders to become assessors of their own strategy and performance management systems. By using methodologies developed by the GPA Unit or derived from them, these internal assessors can evaluate where the

organization stands against best practices and identify areas for further maturity improvement.

This is why we created the **GPA Unit Performance Excellence Academy**. The academy's purpose is to train, certify, and authorize professionals to apply our methodologies through structured programs that combine theory with practice. Learning will be reinforced through training, coaching, and supervised support during initial deliveries. In this way, the academy not only educates internal stakeholders but also creates new opportunities for consultants and independent assessors to complement their expertise and expand their business opportunities.

You're building multiple levels of certification and accreditation. How do you see this professionalizing the field?

Being an assessor means being recognized as an expert in strategy and performance management maturity. This requires robust knowledge across the five core capabilities: strategic planning, performance measurement, performance improvement, performance culture, and employee performance. From this foundation, professionals can embark on a structured learning journey:

When certification is required, the GPA Unit will be there to provide global standards and accredit organizational maturity. At the same time, companies will also have the option to manage parts of this process internally.





- **Professional Certification:** This is the entry-level certification focused on theoretical understanding.
- **Practitioner Certification:** Based on simulated assessments, this certification is available for each of the five capabilities. One can become a certified practitioner in a single capability, several, or all five.
- **Accredited Assessor Path:** This recognition progresses through four levels: Specialist, Senior, Expert, and Master Assessor. Advancement requires both knowledge of theory and practical experience, with each level demanding a proven number of completed assessments.

This pathway ensures that accreditation is not only about understanding the theory, but, more importantly, it is about consistently demonstrating the ability to apply theory in practice by delivering meaningful results.

For consultants and professionals, this creates powerful opportunities. It allows them to deliver services both internally and externally, while enabling GPA Unit to **license the framework globally**. Through local partners and ambassadors, services and content can be localized to fit different markets. Meanwhile, certification, education, and accreditation will remain centralized to ensure consistency and quality.

By building this structure carefully, we ensure that every assessor accredited by the GPA Unit upholds a high standard of quality. This, in turn, strengthens the brand, reinforces credibility, and guarantees the reliability of our services worldwide.

The Future

What part of the GPA Unit's transformation are you most excited to see in action?

What makes this transformation truly exciting is that it's not about developing just one component: we are advancing on multiple avenues at once. Every component is fascinating in its own way, and what I enjoy most is seeing how all the pieces of the puzzle are falling into place.

Week after week, important milestones were reached. Like bricks stacked one over the other, we were building the pillars of the GPA Unit ecosystem. It has been incredibly satisfying to watch assessment services, complementary components, and different initiatives not only take shape but also integrate—culminating in a coherent system with practical relevance.

Developing the assessment toolkits under the **PerforAssess** brand has been particularly rewarding. The branding work, the creation

of new tools, and the ability to see how these will be applied in practice are immensely satisfying.

Then there are the smaller but equally important pieces: launching the Leading Voices podcast series, designing the Performance Excellence Webinar Series, and developing The Ladder magazine.

The Ladder, in particular, is a metaphor for the scale used in maturity assessments, and supporting the development of the concept, structure, and editorial vision has been a deeply enjoyable process.

All of this, of course, requires hard work, late nights, and a lot of silent reflection. Much of the journey involved visualizing, designing, and iterating, and then turning those ideas into reality (i.e., logos, branding elements, structures, and formats). The satisfaction is even greater when these creations are validated almost immediately by the market and when they demonstrate not only conceptual strength but also real business viability.



This past year has been extraordinary. While we were creating and shaping this ecosystem in the background, the business was simultaneously moving forward in exciting ways. I cannot say that I had envisioned all of this in detail years ago, but it came together in the most meaningful way possible.

And none of this would have been possible without the extraordinary team we have assembled. Many of these ideas existed before—some dormant, some only partially explored—but it was the team’s dedication, creativity, and execution that brought them to life. I deeply value these colleagues, and I hope they will remain part of the journey ahead as we continue to build around this strong core.

How do you envision the GPA Unit’s impact once it accomplishes its lofty goals?

Ultimately, we hope to “put a dent in the universe,” at least within the field of strategy and performance management maturity assessment field by creating something that did not exist before: a structured roadmap for organizations to understand where they stand and what they need to do for continuous improvement and achieving performance excellence

This vision could even create new roles inside organizations, such as internal strategy and performance maturity assessors or auditors. These would bring a higher degree of understanding and rigor to the way organizations manage and mature their systems.

What lends credence to all of this is the combination of academic research and practical experience. Several of our team members are deeply engaged in academia while simultaneously connected to the realities of business practice. This dual perspective ensures that everything we create is both conceptually sound and practically relevant.

We look forward to what the future holds for us!



Self-Check. Improve. Assess. **All in one system.**

PerforAssess™ powered by GPA Unit

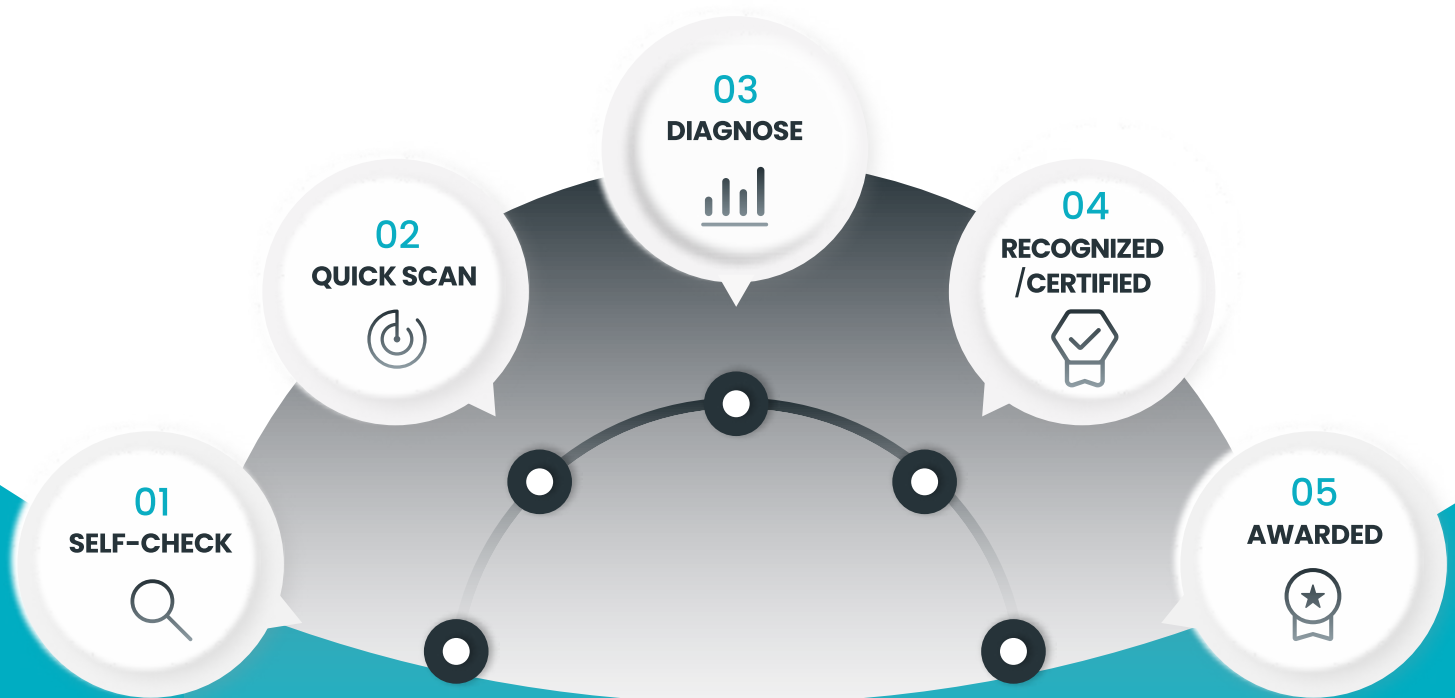
is a structured assessment platform that supports organizations in evaluating their performance management maturity across various capabilities and levels.

Combining data analysis with recognized methodologies,

PerforAssess establishes a transparent foundation for continuous improvement and institutional development.

Initiate your maturity assessment >

www.gpaunit.org



WHERE METHODOLOGY MEETS TECHNOLOGY TO ENABLE PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE.

Editor's pick

In this inaugural edition, we spotlight a defining story: how Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 has redefined what strategic planning maturity means on a national scale.

This feature exemplifies the systems-oriented, ecosystemic approach that anchors our editorial vision — showing how alignment, governance, and cultural coherence can elevate performance from institutional to national transformation.

Vision 2030 is more than a roadmap. It is a living system of intent, action, and measurement — one that offers the world a new benchmark for how performance excellence can be designed, communicated, and sustained.

5 Ways Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 Sets The Benchmark For Strategic Planning And Execution

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Author Bori Péntek

Section Editor's pick

Strategic planning maturity reflects how well an organization formulates, aligns, and executes its strategy. But what happens when the organization being assessed is not a single entity but an entire nation connected to a global ecosystem?

Saudi Arabia's [Vision 2030](#) challenges conventional boundaries. As a national strategic plan with ecosystem-wide implications, it aims to align every ministry, sector, and region around a single, long-term vision. Evaluating it through the lens of **strategic planning maturity** is not only possible—doing so reveals best practices that even high-performing institutions can learn from.

This article explores how Vision 2030 exemplifies excellence across the dimensions of strategic planning capability: **strategy formulation, strategic focus, articulation, and governance**.

A Tiered Architecture

To conduct our assessment, we analyzed publicly available documentation: the Vision



2030 blueprint, the 2024 Annual Report, official program highlights, and delivery plans for key Vision Realization Programs (VRPs).

To understand the depth of Vision 2030's design, we examined it across multiple interconnected levels:

- **The Vision:** A national manifesto organized around three pillars (a vibrant society, a thriving economy, and an ambitious nation)
- **Vision Realization Programs:** Medium-term implementation vehicles with defined strategic objectives and KPIs
- **Delivery Plans:** Includes the 2021–2025 HCDP roadmap, which translates VRP goals into tangible sectoral and regional actions
- **National and Regional Strategies:** Cascading operational plans tied to ministerial and local delivery frameworks

How We Analyzed the Data

Our approach combined evidence-based analysis and perception mapping, in line with the GPA Unit's maturity assessment methodology. We reviewed official reports and digital content, cross-referencing these with real-time perceptions captured through media coverage.

We then benchmarked Vision 2030 against our **Integrated Maturity Model Framework**, focusing specifically on four core dimensions

of the strategic planning capability: **formulation, focus, articulation, and governance.**

Key insights

Key Insight #1: Strategic Horizons

Vision 2030 stands out for integrating objectives across three time horizons:

- **Short-term:** Annual reporting and rolling KPIs drive tactical responsiveness.
- **Medium-term:** VRPs operate in five-year cycles with mid-range goals.
- **Long-term:** Vision 2030 itself spans 15 years, broken into three phases:

Phase 1 (Foundation): Reform and capacity building.

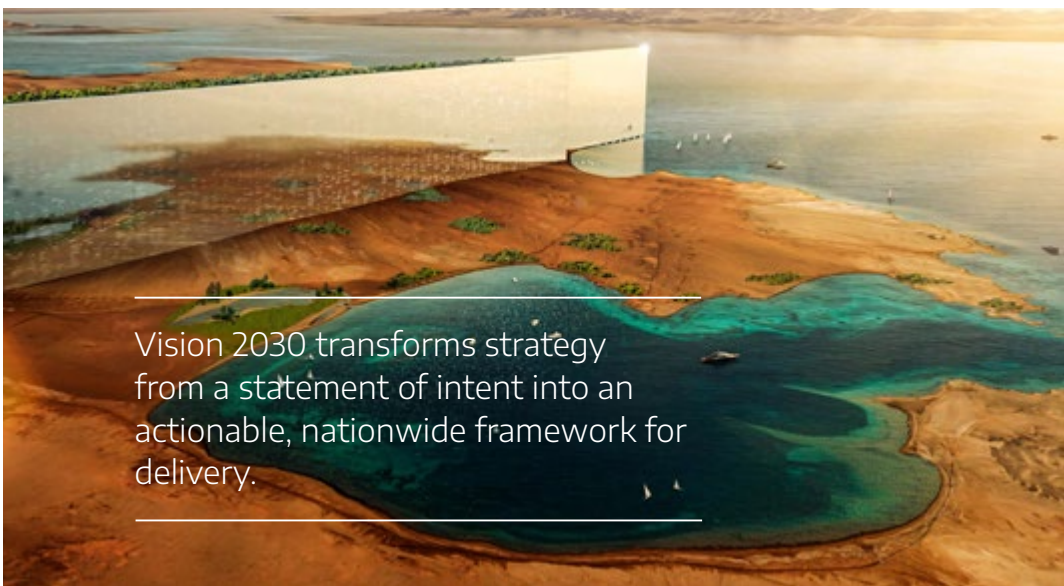
Phase 2 (Acceleration): Sectoral expansion and private-sector integration.

Phase 3 (Delivery, 2026–2030): Final push for sustained impact.

This multi-horizon design is a hallmark of strategic planning excellence, allowing the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) to maintain focus while adapting to change.

Key Insight #2: Strategic Cascading in Action

Vision 2030 achieves what many institutions



Vision 2030 transforms strategy from a statement of intent into an actionable, nationwide framework for delivery.



struggle with—a consistent, rigorous approach to cascading objectives. KPIs exist at three levels:

- Vision-Level: e.g., “three Saudi cities ranked among the top 100 globally”
- Program-Level: e.g., percentage increase in workforce digital skills under the Human Capability Development Program (HCDP)
- Delivery-Level: metrics embedded in ministry and regional plans

This alignment enables real-time monitoring of how local actions contribute to national outcomes. Crucially, objectives are classified into direct and indirect contributions, reflecting a systems-thinking mindset that accounts for interconnected impact and emergence—a sophisticated approach rarely seen in national planning.

Key Insight #3: Strategic Articulation Through Storytelling

What sets Vision 2030 apart is not just the clarity of its goals, but the way those goals are communicated—clearly, consistently, and compellingly. Each strategic pillar is expressed through purpose-driven language that resonates beyond policy circles:

- A vibrant society with strong roots and fulfilling lives
- A thriving economy offering rewarding opportunities
- An ambitious nation that is effectively

governed and responsibly enabled

But the real strength lies in how these themes are translated into public-facing narratives that make the strategy both tangible and relatable. Across official websites and communication materials, Vision 2030 uses:

- **Executive summaries** that make complex plans accessible to non-specialist audiences
- **Striking visual storytelling**, including diagrams and thematic overviews, to convey strategic links between initiatives and long-term goals
- **Infographics and thematic framing** that help individuals and sectors understand how their contributions connect to national objectives

This level of strategic communication fosters a performance culture where people don't just understand the vision—they can see themselves within it. Many organizations, even high-functioning ones, struggle with this degree of narrative alignment, especially at scale. Vision 2030 makes it look effortless.

Key Insight #4: Governance That Precedes Execution

One of the most mature aspects of Vision 2030 is its **interconnected governance infrastructure**, which aligns a wide range of institutions under a unified strategic direction. Rather than functioning in silos, entities work within a **multi-layered governance model** that ensures coordination from vision to execution.

Vision 2030 goes beyond being a mere roadmap for Saudi Arabia. Instead, it serves as a global best practice in how to architect, communicate, and operationalize large-scale strategic transformation.

رؤية 2030 المملكة العربية السعودية KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

- **Governance is layered**, with different bodies responsible for strategic alignment, resource coordination, implementation support, and communication—each playing a distinct but interconnected role.
- **Institutional roles are clearly defined**, allowing for consistent decision-making and seamless handoffs between planning, delivery, and oversight functions.
- **Integration is a key strength**; institutions operate within a shared system that reinforces strategic coherence across ministries, regions, and sectors.
- The **National Center for Performance Measurement (ADAA)** is a central enabler, unifying performance tracking through common tools, digital platforms, and quarterly reporting to ensure measurement links directly to strategic outcomes.

This level of structured coordination elevates governance from an administrative function to a core component of strategic planning excellence and a driver of performance culture across the public sector.

Key Insight #5: Platformization and Self-Evaluation

Vision 2030 builds institutional capacity for learning. Through platforms launched by the

ADAA, public entities can:

- Self-evaluate their performance maturity.
- Automate data reporting for transparency and consistency.
- Align their KPIs with national benchmarks in real time.

This reflects a mature performance culture where improvement is not episodic but continuous—and where strategic planning is a living process, not a static plan.

Strategic Planning on Another Level

Strategic planning is hard. National strategic planning is harder. But executing a multi-tiered national strategy with cascaded KPIs, robust governance, and real citizen engagement? That's playing in the major leagues.

Vision 2030 goes beyond being a mere roadmap for Saudi Arabia. Instead, it serves as a global best practice in how to architect, communicate, and operationalize large-scale strategic transformation. For institutions, ministries, and countries aiming to embed excellence in strategic planning and performance culture, Vision 2030 offers both a benchmark and a challenge.

Advancing Performance THROUGH THE GPAU MATURITY MODEL

The **GPAU Maturity Models** define best practices in strategy and performance management for organizations to identify their system gaps and engage in a continuous improvement journey towards business excellence.

Performance Management cuts across organizational functions and levels, and so do our maturity models. Our portfolio ensures a holistic assessment approach by providing specialized frameworks:

- **Organizational Level**
Focused on corporate level driven capabilities, to be evaluated either separately or as part of the **Integrated Performance Maturity Model**.
- **Operational Level**
Adapted to suit the particularities of optimizing performance management for functional areas.
- **Individual level**
Targeting the specifics of designing an employee performance management system.



Explore the GPAU Maturity Model >

GPAU Pulse

Keeping you connected to the heartbeat of performance excellence. This section chronicles the evolution of our community, celebrates breakthrough achievements, and shares developments that are shaping the future of organizational maturity. From groundbreaking assessments and Hall of Fame inductions to framework innovations and recognition events, GPAU Pulse captures the dynamic energy of a global movement committed to raising performance standards worldwide.

In this inaugural edition, we spotlight the organizations making exceptional strides in performance maturity, unveil our expanded research initiatives, and introduce the enhanced capabilities that position GPAU as the definitive authority in performance management system assessment and recognition.

2025: A Year of Strategic Partnerships and Performance Excellence

Author Doina Popovici

Section GPAU Pulse

As the year draws to a close, we naturally reflect on what we achieved, wondering about the opportunities we seized and the ones we may have missed. Organizations do the same. When we look back at 2025, the story isn't solely about assessments completed or methodologies deployed. It's also important to look back on the institutions that decided this was their moment—this was the year to pause, examine, and systematically strengthen how they operate.

From supporting government authorities that manage millions of stakeholders to guiding private holdings through complex operations, our assessments have spanned industries and geographies (banks, defense contractors, and everything in between). Regardless of the circumstances, the goal has remained the same: to advance performance maturity and foster excellence.

Here's how we did in 2025.



Our 2025 Client Portfolio at a Glance

Government & Public Sector

- Zakat, Tax and Customs Authority (ZATCA): Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)
- Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services (CFMWS): Canada
- Small and Medium Enterprises General Authority (Monsha'at): KSA
- Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission (LPTC): KSA

Transport & Aviation

- Riyadh Airports Company (RAC): KSA

Urban Development & Housing

- Mohamed Bin Rashid Housing Establishment (MBRHE): United Arab Emirates (UAE)
- Saudi Downtown: KSA
- Soudah Development: KSA

Private Sector & Finance

- Albawani Holding: KSA
- Al Jazira Bank: KSA

Defense, Technology, & Security

- SAMI Advanced Electronics: KSA
- Saudi Technology and Security Comprehensive Control Company (Tahakom): KSA

Clients That Shaped 2025 Excellence

Throughout the year, our clientele reflected remarkable diversity. We worked a lot with public sector institutions. For example, we assisted ZATCA in managing Saudi Arabia's complex fiscal ecosystem while simultaneously supporting the CFMWS in their mission to serve Canada's military families. In spring, we collaborated with MBRHE on Dubai's urban development challenges. Come summer, we were exploring entrepreneurship ecosystem development with Monsha'at.

The private sector added different dimensions to our work. Albawani Holding's extended engagement reflects the complexity of creating coherence across multiple business units. SAMI Advanced Electronics operates in the specialized world of defense technology, where innovation must coexist with reliability requirements. Urban development took center stage with Saudi Downtown, where success means orchestrating entire city districts. Al Jazira Bank navigated the intersection of traditional banking and the digital transformation pressures that were reshaping the entire industry.



RAC highlighted the operational demands of aviation, where passenger experience and safety converge under national vision goals. Tahakom showcased how advanced technologies and smart systems can enhance both safety and performance at scale. Soudah Development brought forward the challenge of aligning luxury tourism and urban projects with environmental stewardship in one of Saudi Arabia's most unique natural settings. Meanwhile, the LPTC emphasized cultural development as a cornerstone of national transformation, where performance practices must support both creativity and sustainability.

Working across such diverse sectors creates unexpected insights. Urban development timelines operate differently from banking cycles. Government authorities deal with complex stakeholders that private companies usually don't, while private companies face market pressures that government authorities rarely encounter.

Each engagement delivered actionable insights and measurable improvements, reflecting tailored approaches to strategy and performance management. Despite the bespoke nature of strategy and performance, patterns emerged.

Every organization is grappling with maintaining excellence while adapting to change, whether from regulation, technology, markets, or society. The fundamental challenge remains: how can organizations systematically improve while continuing to deliver?

2025 Trends and Benchmarks in Assessed Organizations

Using the GPA Unit's Integrated Maturity Model Framework, a proprietary tool designed to assess organizational maturity across five capabilities, we evaluated how these organizations are advancing in their performance management journeys.

The five capabilities are: Strategic Planning, Performance Measurement, Performance Improvement, Employee Performance Management, and Performance Culture. Most organizations landed solidly at Level IV (Integrated), with several showing momentum toward Level V (Optimized) in select areas, with a few already reaching the pinnacle in specific capabilities.



Strategic Planning emerged with some of the strongest scores, highlighting a clear emphasis on setting long-term objectives, defining organizational priorities, and aligning initiatives with overall vision and mission. This suggests that most organizations have already established robust planning processes, governance structures, and formalized strategy documentation. However, within this capability, some variability indicates potential gaps in areas such as formal strategy review timelines or the integration of strategic objectives across all departments.

Employee Performance Management showed the most potential for growth, especially in connecting individual objectives with organizational goals, implementing structured goal-setting and competency frameworks, fostering performance recognition, and enabling ongoing feedback.

Performance Measurement and Performance Improvement demonstrated solid use of KPIs across all organizational levels and systematic

performance monitoring, while Performance Culture reflected ongoing efforts to reinforce individual ownership, team accountability, employee engagement, alignment with organizational goals, knowledge sharing, and embedding innovation into daily practices.

These results went beyond simply mapping current performance. They also offer insight into where organizations can focus next, turning assessment findings into steps for sustaining excellence.

Innovation and Methodology

This year, the GPA Unit advanced its methodology to stay at the forefront of performance management best practices.

Framework 3.0 of the **Integrated Maturity Model** was launched, ensuring that organizations can track evolving standards and align their strategies with the latest industry insights. In addition, the GPA Unit developed its **Diagnosis Service**, a concise version of the full maturity assessment, designed to provide quick, actionable insights while maintaining rigor and quality.

Knowledge Initiatives and Thought Leadership

The GPA Unit broke new ground with its first strategy and performance excellence podcast and inaugural series of webinars, extending its reach globally. The podcasts provided a platform for clients to share their experiences and performance management journeys, while the webinars showcased best practices in this field.

Celebrating Excellence

The Performance Excellence Forum & Awards Gala (PEFAG) marked the culmination of a dynamic and complex 2025 for the GPA Unit. As part of a growing series of events, the PEFAG brought together senior leaders and practitioners to explore performance management system maturity in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

The event featured interactive sessions,

followed by an evening gala recognizing organizations that attained Level 4 and Level 5 maturity.

Looking Ahead

Partnerships remain central to the GPA Unit's achievements. This year, we formalized the accreditation process for external assessors, ensuring they are fully equipped with the GPA Unit's frameworks, methodologies, and standards.

Each collaboration with a newly accredited GPA Unit Assessor brings fresh perspectives and deepens our expertise, while reinforcing the consistency and quality of services delivered to our clients.

Looking ahead, the GPA Unit will prioritize expanding the assessors' faculty capability, cultivating a network of accredited assessors and ambassadors who consistently deliver high-quality services. Next year's initiatives will focus on sustaining excellence, enhancing knowledge sharing, and embedding a culture of continuous improvement across all engagements.

Building on Success

As we look back on a year full of collaboration and impact, the GPA Unit has set a clear standard for what organizational maturity means in strategy and performance management. By creating practical evaluation frameworks and assessment criteria, we've made it easier for organizations to understand where they stand and how to grow from there. Our commitment continues: to guide organizations on their journey, helping every effort lead to sustainable performance and lasting value.



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Maturity Across Levels

THE
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Bridging Strategic Intent With
Individual Performance

Author Bori Péntek

Section GPAU Pulse

In 2024, the Global Performance Audit Unit's assessment of Saudi public organizations uncovered an unexpected pattern. These institutions demonstrated sophisticated approaches to strategic planning, with high maturity scores in strategy development and documentation. Yet when researchers evaluated how the same organizations managed individual employee performance, scores dropped noticeably.

This disconnect revealed what we now refer to as the maturity gap—a divide between organizational strategic capabilities and individual performance outcomes. The findings prompted a crucial question: if organizations excel at designing strategies, why don't those ambitions consistently translate into measurable results at the employee level? The answer requires deeper investigation, which is why the GPA Unit is launching the 2025 Strategy & Performance Management Maturity Outlook. Below you will find the context, preliminary results, and sample survey questions. Join us in shaping the benchmarks in performance management!

Research Design and Methodology

The initiative spans from April 2025 through March 2026, with data collection taking place from April to November 2025. Five comprehensive questionnaires (one for each capability area) are available in both English and Arabic. Each survey takes approximately 20 to 30 minutes to complete. Participants can choose to complete one or all capability surveys based on their expertise and interest.

Access the survey links below:

- [Strategy Planning](#)
- [Performance Measurement](#)
- [Performance Improvement](#)
- [Employee Performance Management](#)
- [Performance Culture](#)

The research targets practitioners and subject matter experts in strategy and performance management fields, with participation drawn primarily from Saudi Arabia, secondarily from the broader GCC region, and globally where relevant expertise exists. Survey topics will include tools, methodologies, and technologies currently in use; key organizational processes; measurable organizational impact; and overall capability maturity levels.

Using the GPA Unit's Integrated Performance Maturity Model, the study assesses five interconnected capabilities that determine whether organizations can successfully bridge the strategy-execution divide.

Strategic Planning: The Foundation That Works

The 2024 Saudi assessment confirmed that strategic planning represents a regional strength. Organizations showed maturity in defining vision and mission statements, aligning corporate values with operational priorities, and implementing structured planning tools, including strategy maps,

dashboards, and balanced scorecards (BSCs). These practices offered clear direction and strengthened governance structures.

The current study examines how organizations across the region approach their planning processes. Researchers are investigating whether strategies emerge through deliberate, structured processes or develop more adaptively in response to changing circumstances. The study also explores how strategic goals move from executive levels to operational teams, how external market factors influence planning decisions, and whether strategic communications reach all organizational levels effectively.

Sample survey question

How strongly are the objectives in your organization's strategy plan interconnected and influencing each other?

While strategic planning provides essential direction, the Saudi results from 2024 revealed that strong planning alone cannot guarantee successful execution. Without robust mechanisms connecting organizational strategy to individual accountability, the gap between design and delivery persists.



Performance Measurement: Where Strategy Meets Reality

Performance measurement represents the transitional layer between strategic intentions and operational execution. This capability covers the systems and processes that transform plans into measurable outcomes through BSCs, key performance indicators (KPIs), and target-setting frameworks.

The study examines how effectively organizations apply these measurement tools in practice. Surveys focus on how KPIs are selected and documented, how performance data is monitored and analyzed, and whether visualization techniques support clear communication and informed decision-making across organizational levels.

Effective measurement systems serve as the bridge between organizational ambitions and daily operational reality. The research determines whether Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) institutions use measurement strategically to create alignment across all levels or if reporting remains disconnected from individual employee objectives and daily work priorities.

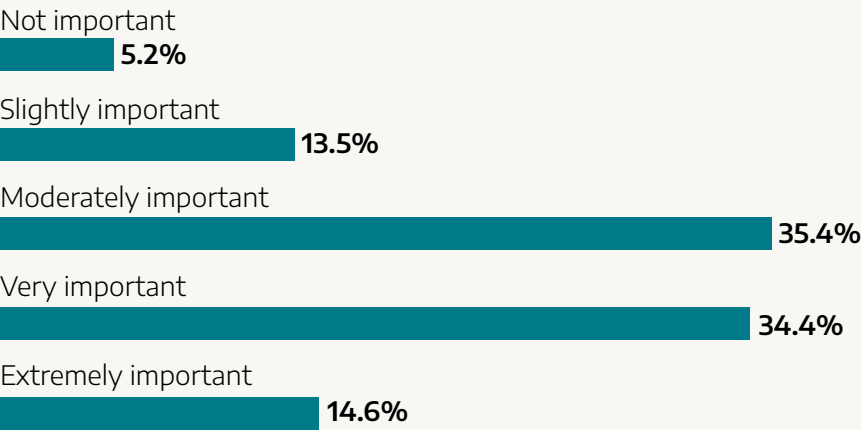
Performance Improvement: Closing the Action Loop

Measurement without corresponding action risks becoming routine administrative reporting rather than a driver of organizational change. Performance improvement, the third capability under examination, focuses on whether organizations systematically use performance data to drive decisions, foster learning, and support innovation initiatives.

While Saudi institutions demonstrated structured reporting practices in the 2024 assessment, questions remained about how effectively these reports translated into systematic improvement cycles. The expanded 2025 GCC study will examine how dashboards, review processes, and reporting mechanisms contribute to closing the loop between measurement and meaningful action.

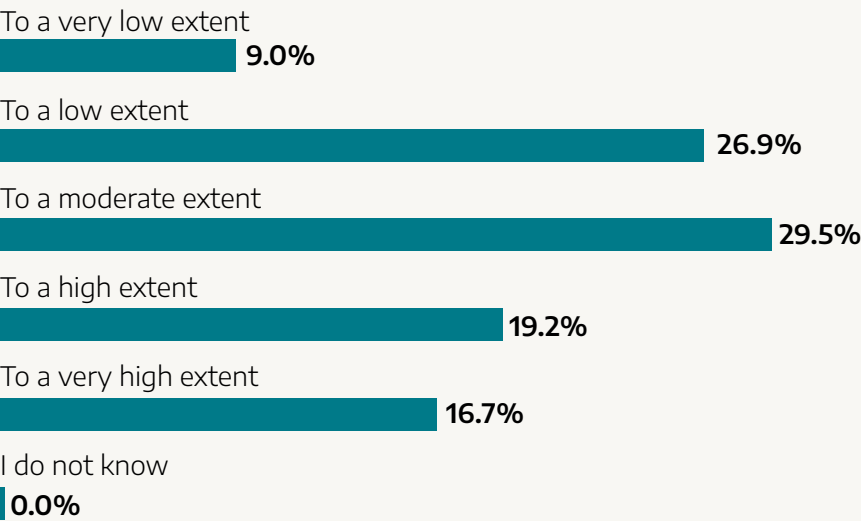
Sample survey question & 2025 preliminary results

How important is data visualization in your organization's performance management process?



Sample survey question & 2025 preliminary results

To what extent are KPIs communicated beyond top management to engage all teams in improving performance?



This capability examines how performance results are communicated beyond senior management teams, whether employees at multiple organizational levels actively engage with KPI data, and how institutions ensure accountability through structured follow-up actions. Strong improvement mechanisms are crucial for organizations seeking to move beyond data collection toward tangible performance enhancement.

Employee Performance Management: The Critical Weak Link

The 2024 Saudi research identified employee performance management as noticeably less mature than strategic planning capabilities, marking it as the primary weak link in the performance chain. This capability encompasses how individual objectives are established, tracked, and reviewed, and whether performance discussions translate to meaningful growth opportunities for employees.

The research provides insights into how employee performance is managed across the region. Surveys examine employee satisfaction with current performance management systems, the frequency and quality of performance conversations, and whether review processes are perceived as fair and transparent by all participants.

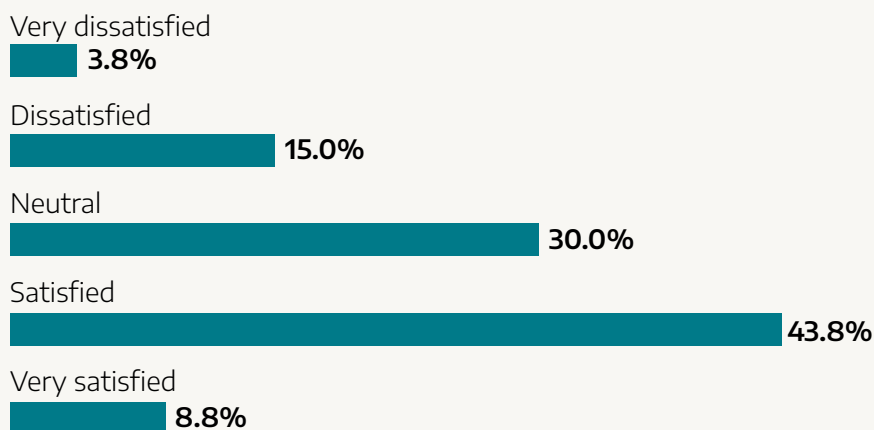
This capability represents the point where organizational strategy must become individual accountability and personal contribution. The expanded 2025 study will pay particular attention to two alignment questions: do employees understand how their daily work connects to broader organizational priorities, and are managers adequately equipped to guide and support this connection process?

Performance Culture: The Human Foundation

Performance culture represents the context within which all other capabilities operate.

Sample survey question & 2025 preliminary results

How satisfied are you with the current process for setting individual objectives and KPIs within your organization?



Sample survey question & 2025 preliminary results

How often does top management engage in dialogues with employees?

These discussions only take place in the case of severe performance issues



Once per year, as part of the appraisal cycle



Bi-annually as part of mid-year review



Quarterly



Monthly or more often



Even the most well-designed frameworks and processes fail without a supporting culture characterized by trust, engagement, and continuous learning.

The GCC research explores how leadership behaviors shape organizational performance culture, how communication flows across different organizational levels, and what recognition and development opportunities exist for employees at all levels. The study examines whether performance management is experienced as supportive and developmental or whether it feels procedural and disconnected from daily work experiences.

Culture ultimately determines whether the other four capabilities function as an integrated, coherent system. Without a genuinely performance-oriented culture, strategy, measurement, and improvement efforts remain fragmented initiatives that fail to create sustained organizational change.

Building Regional Understanding

The 2024 Saudi results provided valuable initial insights: strong strategic planning capabilities, weaker individual performance management practices, and clear evidence of a maturity gap. The expanded 2025 GCC study now seeks to understand whether this pattern reflects broader regional trends or represents localized challenges.

By collecting comprehensive data across multiple countries, the research will establish the first regional benchmark for performance management maturity.

Organizations will gain insights into how they compare with regional peers, identify specific capability gaps within their own systems, and uncover targeted opportunities for improvement. Governments and institutions managing rapid transformation agendas will



find this evidence base invaluable for strategic decision-making.

Research Outputs and Participant Benefits

Survey participants will receive substantial benefits for their contribution. They will gain complimentary access to all research reports with regional benchmarking insights, invitations to online report launch events, and free e-learning certificates for each capability area they complete (valued at \$200 per certificate). Participants who complete all five surveys will also receive a 50% discount voucher for the complete Certified

Performance Management System Audit Professional program.

Research partners will receive customized reports where data volume permits meaningful analysis, acknowledgment in published research reports, and prominent visibility at the Forum and Awards Gala events.

Bridging the Strategy-Execution Divide

The maturity gap identified in Saudi Arabia's public organizations demanded further exploration. The upcoming GCC study is designed to determine whether this gap represents a localized occurrence or reflects broader regional patterns that require systematic attention.

By participating in this research, organizations can contribute to building the first regional benchmark for performance management maturity while gaining actionable insights to address their own strategy-execution challenges.

The research aims not only to document current regional capabilities but also to illuminate pathways for aligning Vision 2030 achievements with individual performance outcomes.

The expanded GCC study offers professionals the opportunity to shape performance management practices across the region while supporting national development goals through evidence-based excellence. Whether organizations choose to participate in one capability survey or all five, their contribution will help build a stronger foundation for performance management across the GCC.

Organizations interested in participation or partnership opportunities can visit [AuditUnit](https://AuditUnit.org) or contact the research team at office@gpaunit.org.



Contribute to the Performance Maturity Outlook.

The **Global Performance Audit Unit** we invite professionals & organizations to take part in a landmark research initiative assessing the maturity of strategy and performance management systems across the GCC.

The findings will support institutional benchmarking, evidence-based policymaking, and **the broader Vision 2030 agenda** for organizational excellence.

HOW IT WORKS



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GPAU Launches Integrated Performance Management Maturity Framework 3.0

Enhanced Precision and Alignment

Author Cristina Mihăiloaie

Section GPAU Pulse

The Integrated Performance Management Maturity Framework is the blueprint behind the maturity assessments conducted by the GPA Unit. The framework was created to provide a holistic perspective on performance management, a function with numerous

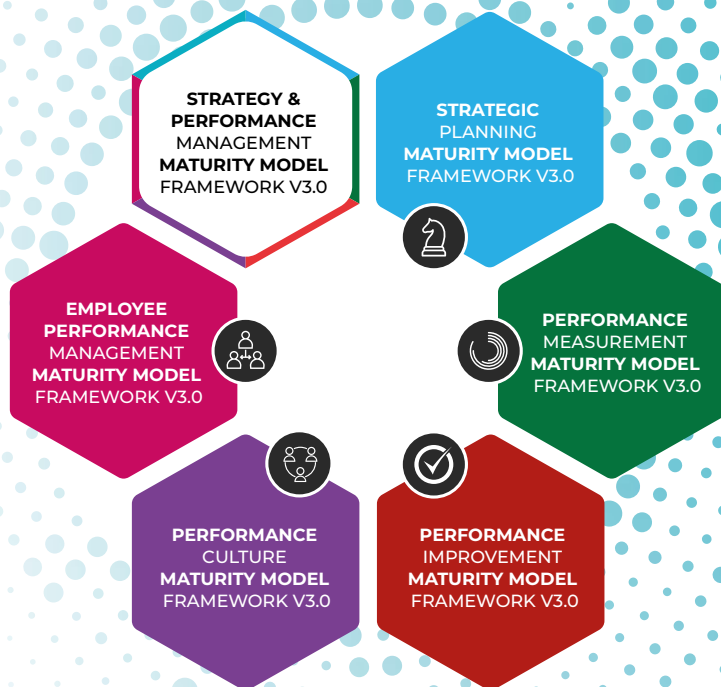
implications across various organizational systems. It consists of five capabilities that intertwine and create an effective infrastructure for defining, monitoring, evaluating, and continuously improving performance.

- **Strategic Planning:** articulating a future state with clarity and desired outcomes and breaking it down into concrete actions
- **Performance Measurement:** designing a relevant and reliable KPI system
- **Performance Improvement:** making data-driven decisions, executing projects effectively, and nurturing organizational learning through KPIs usage
- **Employee Performance Management:** aligning individual performance to corporate strategy and designing a relevant evaluation and rewards system to empower people to succeed
- **Performance Culture:** creating the social context that fosters the right behaviors and habits among employees to drive high-performance

The GPA Unit compiled academic research studies and practitioner insights in order to define the most relevant best practices in each of the capabilities. By analyzing the diversity of performance management systems in organizations and their evolution over time, our research team was able to identify different levels of complexity leading to a five-stage maturity model.

Stage 1. Initial: This stage is composed of ad hoc and informal practices, lacking standardization or methodology.

Stage 2. Emergent: The importance of performance management is acknowledged, and foundational elements are introduced. Inconsistency and fragmentation are common issues at this stage.



Stage 3. Structured: Performance management is institutionalized across the organization. Practices are regular and consistent, but there is room for improvement in terms of alignment at the corporate, operational, and individual levels.

Stage 4. Advanced: The system is integrated and data-driven. Technology supports advanced analytics and constant performance tracking. A continuous improvement culture begins to take shape.

Stage 5. Leading: Performance management becomes a core driver of organizational excellence and transformation. There is a strong performance culture. The system is agile, adaptive, and continuously evolving alongside business needs. Predictive modeling and AI are used for forward-looking insights.

The five capabilities have individual maturity frameworks, but when merged, they bring clarity to the intricacies of a complex system that cuts across functional areas and hierarchical levels.

During the maturity assessment, the structural concepts of each capability (best practices) are probed against the institutionalized processes and scored on a scale of 1 to 5 (corresponding to the five stages). Moreover, the application of best practices is also informed through surveys and interviews with relevant internal stakeholders. In the end, the final maturity score

Final Score	Maturity Level
≥ 4.50	V - Leading
3.71 - 4.49	IV - Advanced
2.71 - 3.70	III - Structured
1.51 - 2.70	II - Emergent
≤ 1.5	I - Initial

is calculated as a weighted average between the score provided by the assessor (75%) and the score obtained from the survey (25%).

More than being a scoring tool, the maturity assessment is a valuable catalyst for change and continuous improvement. Conducting an Integrated Performance Maturity Assessment engages key stakeholders across the organization, such as the Strategy and Corporate Performance teams, the Human Capital team, executives, and the CEO. Even middle management and employees get to share feedback through surveys. This demonstrates that performance management is part of everyone's work, and building an effective architecture requires a systemic and holistic view. The true value of the assessment report lies in outlining the current gaps and lighting the way forward through improvement recommendations to reach higher maturity stages.

Framework Updates

The Integrated Performance Management System Maturity Framework 3.0 brings several updates:

- **Increased digitalization requirements** were established to support strategic planning, as well as corporate and employee performance management, for entities targeting maturity levels IV and V. Although not yet mandatory, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools is also being closely monitored by assessors.
- **New assessment items** were introduced to address critical aspects relevant to modern organizations. These include strategic resilience, sustainability, and risk management as part of strategic planning; the decentralization of decision-making; capacity for strategy execution; benefits realization; and continuous performance management for employees.
- **We renamed certain dimensions** (clusters of assessment items) and evaluation steps to provide greater clarity and make the model easier to use.

- **The maturity calculation formula for Performance Culture** was adjusted to a 50%-50% weighting between assessor scores and survey scores. This change was applied only to this capability to ensure that the assessment accurately reflects organizational culture aspects, which may not always be visible through institutionalized procedures and policies.
- **Greater flexibility in rating allocation** was introduced to encourage fit-for-purpose approaches rather than strict adherence to standardized best practices. While standardization offers many benefits for conducting reliable assessments and operating a performance management system, in practice, the most successful tools and methods are those that align closely with the organization's context and culture. To enable this flexibility, the new assessment criteria do not impose a particular framework, such as the balanced scorecard (BSC) or objectives and key results (OKRs). Optional criteria exist for levels IV and V, and assessors are encouraged to rely more on insights from interviews before finalizing their scoring and making tailored recommendations for the evaluated entity.

Added Value

The Integrated Performance Management System Maturity Framework v3.0 provides a clear X-ray of the system, mapping out the gaps and guiding organizations along a structured journey of improvement across the five maturity stages. Additional benefits include:

- Outlining alignment gaps and system fragmentation issues
- Implementing a cross-functional project that benefits multiple functions in the organization (strategy, corporate performance, human capital, people performance, talent management, organizational culture, executives, and employees)
- Ensuring maturity score comparability through internal benchmarking using

reassessments, as well as external benchmarking

- Providing evidence for decision-making and improvement prioritization
- Increasing engagement and securing buy-in from key stakeholders to kick off the improvement journey
- Acknowledging and sharing best practices
- Receiving official recognition through maturity certificates issued by the GPA Unit
- Earning the opportunity to be nominated for the annual GPAU Awards

Where Do We Go From Here?

Over the past decade, the GPA Unit has released three versions of maturity frameworks specific to organizational performance management, with the latest one being launched this year.

The maturity frameworks are reviewed regularly to ensure new developments in the field are integrated.

Our growth as an organization has also attracted a diverse client base. We have professionals interested in doing a self-check of their organizational practices. We also have organizations in need of a quick and insightful diagnostic scan. Meanwhile, some are best served through an extended assessment. In response to these diverse scenarios, the GPA Unit plans to launch a variety of services and options to access maturity assessments in various formats

To deliver relevant assessments and actionable advice for evaluated entities, we must adjust according to recent practices and discoveries. Thus, we continue to iterate upon the solid foundation that we have set. As performance management matures, so too must the frameworks that measure its growth and development.



MATURITY OUTLOOK

In an era where organizational change accelerates exponentially, executives need more than trend reports—they need strategic intelligence that cuts through noise to reveal the forces actually reshaping performance management. This section delivers provocative insights and forward-looking analysis designed to help leaders quickly identify what deserves their immediate attention and what can wait.

Rather than cataloging every emerging practice, Maturity Outlook focuses on the fundamental shifts that will determine which organizations

thrive in the next decade. We examine how performance management maturity intersects with the most pressing strategic challenges facing leaders today, from sustainability imperatives to cultural transformation demands.

These are not incremental improvements to existing systems—they represent fundamental reconsiderations of how performance ecosystems can be architected to address complex, interconnected challenges that traditional management approaches cannot solve.

Beyond Ticking Boxes

The Performance Management System Maturity as an Enabler of Real Sustainability

Author Teo Gorski and Bori Péntek

Section Maturity Outlook

Sustainability is often narrowly interpreted as a checklist of environmental commitments: lowering carbon emissions, reducing waste, and reporting on climate-related risks. But true sustainability runs deeper. It is the ability of an organization to operate in a way that is socially responsible, economically resilient, and environmentally viable. This commitment must go beyond the present, affecting generations to come. This is not simply about mitigating harm, but about building systems that can adapt, endure, and create shared value over time.

Despite the proliferation of sustainability strategies and ESG disclosures, impact remains inconsistent. It's easy to mistake this for organizations lacking ambition. More often, however, it is because their internal systems are not mature enough to translate ambition into execution. This disconnect stems from faulty integration rather than a lack of intent.



In short, sustainability is already in the system. The real question is whether the system is ready for it or not.



In recent years, sustainability reporting has evolved into a standalone industry with its own frameworks, standards, assurance models, and compliance mechanisms. While this has advanced transparency, it also introduced a structural risk: treating sustainability as a reporting function rather than an operational capability. When environmental, social, and governance (ESG) metrics are managed in isolation from strategy, operations, and performance management systems, they become disconnected from decision-making. The result is familiar: well-designed reports with poorly delivered results.

Yet sustainability is not—technically speaking—outside the scope of the performance management system. On the contrary, it enters the organization through the same channels as any other strategic or operational priority: environmental goals become strategic objectives; social commitments translate into initiatives and programs; and governance indicators show up in KPIs and risk dashboards.

The challenge, then, is not structural inclusion but systemic maturity. All organizations may

capture sustainability somewhere in their system—but only mature ones manage it coherently, accountably, and with impact.

How Are Sustainability and Performance Management Maturity Related?

As with any organizational priority, the way sustainability is approached depends on how mature the performance management system is. A well-designed performance management system aligns intentions, builds accountability, and ensures that what matters gets managed. The problem is that many organizations still operate in immature systems where sustainability is either symbolic, siloed, or structurally constrained.

To understand how maturity shapes the ability to deliver on sustainability goals, we can map sustainability performance against the five-level Performance Management System Maturity Model Framework. The results show a clear pattern: organizations don't just fail at sustainability because they lack commitment; it's because their systems aren't mature enough to maintain it.

Maternity Levels 1 and 2: Sustainability Is a Compliance Exercise

Organizations at this stage treat sustainability as something they must respond to, seeing it as a reputational safeguard or regulatory obligation rather than a strategic priority. Efforts tend to focus on minimizing harm (e.g., reducing emissions, improving efficiency, or publishing ESG reports). But without structured planning or alignment mechanisms, sustainability goals remain ad hoc, disconnected, and largely symbolic.

At this stage, the performance management system lacks the maturity to translate broad ambitions into actionable, measurable objectives. As a result, sustainability operates on the margins—visible in reports, but not embedded in how decisions are made or progress is tracked.

Maternity Level 3: Sustainability Lives in Silos

At this level, performance management systems are more organized. Basic governance structures are in place, and sustainability may begin to appear in the form of formalized initiatives, which are often led by a specific team or champion. One typical sign of this stage is the preparation of a sustainability report, which may be treated as a deliverable or milestone. But the system itself still lacks full alignment.

Objectives may be written, but they do not cascade across the organization. Reporting becomes more common, but impact remains difficult to track or sustain because sustainability is still managed as a standalone effort as opposed to a strategic function.

Sustainability goals exist, yet they are not fully integrated into planning cycles, performance indicators, or operational reviews.



Maturity Level 4: Sustainability Is Aligned, but Conditional

At this level, sustainability is **formally embedded** in the organization's strategy, planning, and performance frameworks. Clear governance structures exist, KPIs are defined, and sustainability goals are linked to operational targets. The organization may actively report on progress, engage stakeholders, and align initiatives with broader frameworks such as the Triple Bottom Line (TBL). However, sustainability is still often **subordinated to financial priorities**. This means it is only pursued where profitable, justified where efficient, and sidelined when it comes into conflict with short-term returns. The system can support sustainability, but only within the limits of existing business logic.

Maturity Level 5 and Beyond: Sustainability Redefines Performance

At this highest level of maturity, sustainability is not merely integrated—it is transformative, shaping how the organization defines success, allocates resources, and measures value. The performance management system supports continuous improvement, employee ownership, and a deeply embedded culture of accountability and regeneration.

Sustainability is no longer treated as a separate function or strategic add-on. It has become a core rationale for how the organization exists and operates. The shift from minimizing harm to creating net-positive impact is now structurally and culturally supported. Regenerative thinking (social, environmental, and economic) moves from aspiration to operational reality.

A Pathway to Embedded Responsibility

Sustainability is not assessed directly in the Performance Management System Maturity

Model Framework, but that doesn't mean it's out of scope. On the contrary, the maturity assessment provides something just as powerful: a clear roadmap to optimize the systems where sustainability already lives.

When an organization undertakes a maturity assessment, the quality of its performance management is assessed in order to enable change. Each identified gap and every benchmarked capability becomes an opportunity to strengthen the structures that support meaningful, sustained outcomes. This includes sustainability goals, which—like any strategic priority—depend on clarity, alignment, measurement, and follow-through.

We won't assess your carbon emissions or social programs directly. However, we will assess whether your strategy planning process can support long-term goals, whether your indicators are reliable and aligned, and whether your performance culture can carry sustainability from intent to implementation.

In this way, maturity assessments are not passive diagnostics. They are a driver of progress for the entire system, tackling the issues that matter most.



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A Four-Part Journey Through Performance Management Maturity

THE
LADDER™

Synthesizing Insights from
GPAU's Expert-Led Webinar
Series

Author Bori Péntek

Section Maturity Outlook

Organizations worldwide struggle to translate strategic vision into operational reality. While executives articulate ambitious futures and consultants provide frameworks, transformation happens in the messy middle—where capability meets culture and aspiration confronts existing systems.

The GPA Unit has spent years developing methodologies for assessing organizational performance management maturity across five critical capabilities: strategic planning, performance measurement, performance improvement, performance culture, and employee performance management. Through hundreds of assessments, we've learned that sustainable excellence goes further than merely identifying gaps. It needs practitioners who understand the systematic thinking that enables genuine transformation.

This insight shaped the GPA Unit's evolution into GPA Unit 3.0, transforming from assessment services into a comprehensive ecosystem for organizational excellence. This includes research publications, diagnostic tools, thought leadership content, and



centralized knowledge repositories where professionals can access transformation frameworks and case studies.

This culminates in a [major live event in Riyadh](#), where we will bring together organizational leaders, assessment practitioners, and performance management experts for intensive peer learning, case study sharing, and recognition of sustained excellence. This involves more than gathering smart people in one place. Careful preparation is required to ensure participants arrive with shared frameworks for understanding performance maturity and a common vocabulary for discussing organizational transformation challenges.

Between August and October 2025, the [GPA Unit's four-part webinar series](#) served this crucial preparation function. The virtual sessions created a common language around performance management challenges, introduced diagnostic frameworks essential for forum discussions, and built the foundational knowledge needed to enable meaningful peer-to-peer learning when practitioners finally meet face-to-face.

From Virtual Learning to Physical Collaboration

Each webinar session was designed to serve as strategic preparation for the forum experience. The virtual format allowed global participation while testing concepts and approaches that would be refined for physical events. Questions raised during webinar Q&A sessions informed forum agenda development, and engagement patterns revealed which topics generated the most meaningful discussion, shaping the structure of peer learning breakouts.

The webinar community became the foundation for the forum community. Attendees who participated in the virtual sessions on performance culture maturity or strategic alignment diagnostics should arrive at the gala with a deeper appreciation for what genuine performance excellence requires and why recognition matters.

The Learning Architecture: Three Questions, Four Capabilities

THE LADDER™

Every webinar followed the same three-part structure, guided by key questions that connect individual capability development to organizational transformation:

Maturity Perspective

How does this topic look through the lens of maturity?

Part 1

Improvement Tools and Techniques

How do organizations mature?

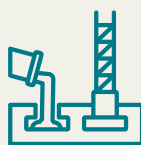
Part 2

Governance and Leadership

How do leaders guide this transformation?

Part 3

This consistent architecture ensured that forum participants would arrive with common analytical frameworks for examining performance management maturity-related challenges, regardless of which specific sessions they attended.



Session One (August 26)

Strategy Alignment in Action

Cristina Mihăiloaie opened the webinar series by addressing the foundational question:

How does strategic alignment function differently across organizational maturity

levels? Participants learned to distinguish between organizations that merely apply documentation from those that embed strategic thinking into operational decision-making—a diagnostic skill essential for forum discussions about transformation challenges.

The improvement focus provided frameworks for moving from fragmentation to effective strategy execution, while the governance component addressed how leadership creates and sustains alignment through systematic review processes. Forum participants who attended this session will arrive in Riyadh equipped to facilitate peer discussions about strategic coherence during change periods.



Session Two (September 16)

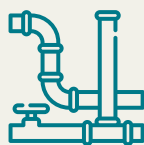
Strengthening KPI Practices for Better Decision-Making

Next up was Teo Gorski's measurement session, which tackled the persistent challenge of organizations drowning in



metrics while missing decision-driving indicators. The maturity perspective revealed progression from volume-based approaches to insight-driven KPI systems—knowledge that proves crucial when forum participants share measurement challenges with peers from different industries.

Improvement methodologies included KPI selection frameworks and governance practices for maintaining decision-ready measurement systems. The session equipped participants with diagnostic tools for recognizing low-maturity measurement patterns in their own organizations and others, enabling more sophisticated peer coaching during forum breakouts.



Session Three (October 7)

Transforming Initiatives into Performance Improvement Enablers

Andrea Minelli's performance improvement session followed, addressing performance management system maturity, specifically initiative fragmentation. The third session highlighted how organizations transition from managing initiatives for completion to managing them as learning tools, and how fragmented initiatives can be a pitfall to performance management excellence. This systems thinking approach directly prepared participants for forum discussions about sustainable capability building.

The improvement focus provided frameworks for aligning strategic initiatives with organizational learning objectives, while governance considerations addressed the shift from management-for-control to management-for-learning. Participants gained vocabulary and analytical frameworks essential for meaningful peer exchange about transformation approaches.



Session Four (October 28)

Well-Being as Strategy - Embedding Happiness into Performance Culture

Bori Péntek's concluding session explored the integration of well-being into performance management systems to evolve beyond wellness programs into cultures where accountability and care coexist. The maturity perspective helped participants distinguish between well-being theater and genuine cultural transformation, preparing them for nuanced forum discussions about sustainable performance.

The session provided institutional listening practices and governance structures for system-wide well-being integration, giving forum participants practical tools for peer consultation while building appreciation for the cultural sophistication that recognition in the awards gala represents.



Synthesis

From Individual Learning to Collective Intelligence

The complete webinar series demonstrated how capability development across strategic alignment, measurement, improvement, and culture creates reinforcing effects that amplify organizational performance maturity. More importantly, it prepared a global community to engage in sophisticated peer learning when they converge in Riyadh.

Forum participants will be armed with shared analytical frameworks, common diagnostic vocabulary, and an appreciation

for the complexity of genuine organizational transformation. Through the webinar, they will have an understanding of the difference between capability documentation and capability integration—a distinction that enables meaningful peer coaching and collaborative problem-solving.

The awards gala is also recontextualized, now recognized as a celebration of achievements born of a sustained commitment to systematic development.

The Continuing Journey: Virtual and Physical Integration

The webinar series continues beyond the Riyadh event in November, with upcoming sessions on Employee Performance Management and Performance Measurement Assessment. These maintain the same three-part structure while building on the community foundation established through the initial four sessions.

The integration of virtual learning and physical convergence exemplifies the GPA Unit's ecosystem approach. Each element reinforces and amplifies the others, creating compound value for participants while building the global community of practitioners committed to systematic organizational excellence. The webinar series proves that meaningful community building requires careful preparation, shared frameworks, and a progressive development of collective intelligence.

The GPAU webinar series continues with sessions on Employee Performance Management (December 16, 2025) and Performance Measurement Maturity Assessment (January 14, 2026).

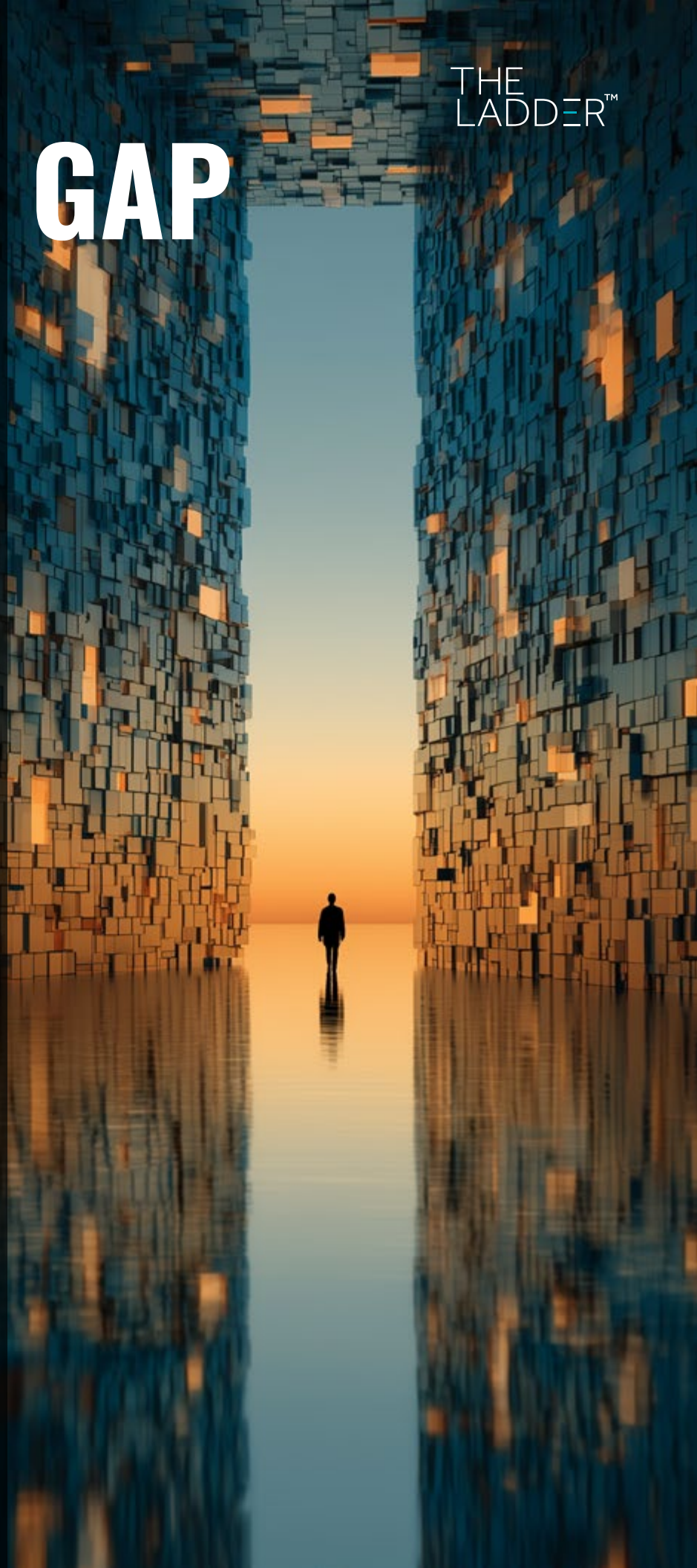
The Performance Excellence Forum & Awards Gala takes place on November 17, 2025, at the Hilton Riyadh Hotel & Residences.

MIND THE GAP

The distance between strategic vision and operational reality represents the most expensive gap in organizational life. While executives excel at articulating ambitious futures and consultants provide frameworks for getting there, the practical work of transformation happens in the messy middle—where capability meets culture, where assessment meets action, and where aspiration confronts the constraints of existing systems.

This section examines how organizations successfully navigate these transitions through rigorous assessment, structured development, and sustained commitment to systematic change. Rather than celebrating isolated success stories, we explore the methodologies, decisions, and organizational capabilities that enable genuine transformation.

The case studies featured here reveal how performance management maturity assessment becomes a catalyst for bridging strategic gaps—not through prescriptive solutions, but by building organizational capacity to diagnose current reality, design appropriate interventions, and execute sustained change initiatives that align operational capabilities with strategic ambitions.



Tracing Red Sea Global's Path Towards Excellence

A Case Study on Performance Management System Maturity Assessment

Author Bori Péntek

Section Mind the Gap

As we launch the first edition of The Ladder, it feels fitting to pause and reflect on our own transformation. Over the past 15 years, the Global Performance Audit Unit (GPA Unit) has evolved from a small consultancy idea into a comprehensive ecosystem for performance excellence. Along the way, we've learned that true impact doesn't come from tools or frameworks alone—it comes from the people, processes, and organizations willing to embrace continuous improvement.

This magazine is our way of sharing that insight with the world. Each story, each case study, highlights how

organizations translate vision into measurable outcomes and embed excellence into the fabric of their work. It is one thing to talk about performance management in theory; it is another to see it applied, optimized, and thriving.

In this issue, we are proud to present the journey of Red Sea Global (RSG), a company whose commitment to performance management has set an unprecedented benchmark in organizational maturity. Their story is a testament to what can be achieved when strategy, culture, and execution are perfectly aligned.

When Red Sea Global was formed in 2018, its brief was as sweeping as its geography: design and deliver regenerative luxury tourism destinations that protect and improve the environment while driving economic opportunity. From the Red Sea to Amaala, the vision demanded imagination—and flawless execution.

RSG built its performance management system (PMS) alongside the business. Across the span of five years, planning frameworks, key performance indicators (KPIs), and reporting mechanisms were established; governance structures matured; and a performance-minded culture took hold.

”

From day one, our goal was to set new standards in everything that we do. We are proud to have achieved the highest possible level in this certification, reflecting our comprehensive approach to planning and performance, which is not merely about adhering to established norms but about redefining and innovating them. — **John Pagano, Red Sea Global Group CEO**

By 2023, leadership wanted to be certain their system was not only functioning but optimized for long-term impact. The question was not whether a PMS existed, but how well it converted strategic intent into measurable, repeatable results.

To answer that question, RSG invited external scrutiny by engaging the **Global Performance Audit Unit**—once a division of The KPI Institute, now an independent entity dedicated to assessing and advancing performance maturity—to conduct a full performance audit. What followed was an intensive, evidence-driven journey designed to surface both strengths and the small opportunities that make great systems even better.

A Rigorous Assessment That Measured More Than Numbers

The comprehensive audit unfolded over ten weeks. Guiding the work was the GPA Unit's Integrated Performance Maturity Framework, a toolkit built on more than 300 best-practice statements. The GPA Unit team reviewed over 100 documents (policies, process maps, dashboards, reports, and communications), deployed five tailored surveys to 158 stakeholders across the business, and carried out 15 in-depth interviews to contextualize and reconcile the differences between evidence and perception.

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Red Sea Global



Critically, the methodology balanced objectivity and voice: 75% of the assessment weight came from evidence-based analysis of artifacts and documentation, while 25% reflected stakeholder perceptions. Interviews were not used for scoring, but instead to interpret findings and shape recommendations. The deliverables included a detailed diagnostic report, an executive dashboard of maturity scores, and a poster and roadmaps for continuous improvement.

The results were striking. At the time of the assessment, RSG recorded exceptionally high maturity across the five assessed capabilities:

For reference, the maturity levels at the time of the RSG audit ranged from Initial (ad-hoc and reactive) through Emergent, Structured, Advanced, and Leading, with Leading organizations recognized as role models that continuously innovate their strategy and performance management practices.

4.7

Overall Maturity = Leading: This placed the company at the very top of the maturity framework, a rare achievement that marked RSG as a role-model organization. At this level, systems were not only operating efficiently but were also setting benchmarks for others, driving innovation, and demonstrating industry-wide leadership.

Strategic Planning = Leading: The company demonstrated a clear, coherent strategic framework that cascaded seamlessly from organizational goals to departmental objectives. Planning processes were formalized and data-informed, ensuring alignment between vision and execution and enabling leaders to anticipate challenges proactively.

Performance Measurement = Leading: RSG had implemented an advanced, automated measurement engine that used a balanced mix of financial and non-financial KPIs. Targets and thresholds were clearly defined, making measurement a reliable foundation for informed decision-making rather than an exercise in compliance.

Employee Performance Management = Leading: The assessment highlighted structured objective-setting processes where employees had ownership over their goals, supported by competency frameworks that combined technical skills with behavioral expectations. A dedicated performance management unit reinforced this capability, ensuring alignment with strategic objectives.

Performance Improvement = Advanced: Dashboards and analytics surfaced opportunities tied directly to strategic priorities, allowing teams to act on insights and refine practices. While highly effective, there remained room to evolve toward predictive, continuously improving performance practices.

Performance Culture = Advanced: Incentives, processes, and leadership behaviors were closely aligned with strategic objectives, embedding performance into everyday practice. The assessment suggested that further diffusion across all levels could strengthen this alignment even more.



RSG has dedicated itself to the development and enhancement of its strategy and performance management practices, aligning them with its strategic intent and industry best practices. With this achievement, Red Sea Global sets a new benchmark for excellence within its industry and beyond.

— Adrian Brudan, GPA Unit CEO

An Embedding of Excellence Into the Organization's DNA

The most remarkable aspect of RSG's journey is not the scores or certifications, but the holistic integration of strategy, culture, and execution. KPIs are embedded across teams, data drives timely decisions, and employees are empowered to own their objectives, making continuous improvement a reality. Leadership, auditors, and GPA Unit representatives recognized this achievement in Riyadh, celebrating a system where excellence is ingrained at every level.

A First in Performance Excellence

RSG's journey is historic: it is the first organization to achieve the highest level of overall performance management system maturity. Beyond certification, the real story lies in the benefits realized—faster, more informed decision-making; stronger alignment between strategy and execution; empowered teams; and a culture where excellence is embedded into every process.

This milestone sets a new standard for others to follow and illustrates what is possible when vision, discipline, and execution converge. It is a story of ambition realized and a beacon of what performance management excellence can look like in practice.

Benefits & Lessons Learned

For High-Maturity Clients

01

- **Refinement and Optimization:** The assessment catalyzes refinement, ensuring existing processes fully align with organizational goals and uncovering opportunities for continuous improvement.
- **Insights for Continuous Improvement:** Data-driven decisions optimize the performance management system.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** The process fosters cross-departmental collaboration, alignment, and transparency.

This was the case at Red Sea Global, where the focus was on continuous improvement and engagement.

For Low-Maturity Clients

02

- **Identification of Critical Gaps:** Uncovers key gaps and provides recommendations to address them
- **Strategic Direction and Alignment:** Clarifies the connection between daily activities and overarching goals
- **Roadmap for the Effective Use of Performance Data:** Guides the organization toward better data-driven decision-making
- **Targeted System Improvements:** Enhance the strategic architecture and KPI integration
- **Transformation of Inefficiency:** Moves organizations from disjointed, reactive processes to systems where decision-making is informed, resources are strategically allocated, and performance improves across levels

The maturity assessment is a catalyst for positive change, guiding low-maturity clients toward a strong foundation for effective performance management.

SYSTEMS IN FOCUS

Strategic decision-making in complex organizations requires more than intuition and experience—it demands rigorous analysis of systemic patterns, empirical validation of assumptions, and frameworks sophisticated enough to capture the nuanced dynamics that drive organizational performance. This section provides the research foundation and analytical tools that enable advanced organizations to make informed decisions about performance system development.

Rather than relying on anecdotal evidence or best practice copying, the research presented here examines large-scale patterns across multiple organizations, identifying the specific conditions, capabilities, and transition signals that characterize different

maturity levels. This systematic approach enables leaders to diagnose their current positioning accurately and design development initiatives based on empirical understanding rather than theoretical constructs.

The studies featured here represent multi-year research initiatives that track organizational development over time, revealing how performance management systems actually evolve rather than how they should evolve according to conventional wisdom. This evidence-based approach equips organizations with the analytical precision necessary for strategic decision-making in an era where performance advantage increasingly depends on systematic capability development.



Researchers Applied a Maturity Model to Morocco's Education System

Here's What They Discovered

Author Bori Péntek

Section Systems in focus

It turns out, some systems are just more complex to manage than others.

These complex systems involve multiple layers, distributed actors, and shifting expectations. And while performance management frameworks are easy to write about, they're much harder to apply when the system itself lacks coordination.

Education is one of those systems.

That's why a recent research study by [Hind Benhabib and Abdelaziz Berrado](#) stands out. Instead of focusing on isolated tools or school-level reforms, the authors designed a full-scale maturity model for performance management in education systems—then tested it in the Moroccan context.

The model is designed to assess how well an education system develops and sustains

performance. It maps out 6 core dimensions, 15 capability areas, and 42 best practices, offering a structured way to understand what performance maturity looks like across a complex, fragmented environment.

In this article, we explore how the model works and what its application reveals about designing performance maturity frameworks that can handle real-world complexity.

Key insights

01

Performance management maturity requires systemic coherence. It's less about adopting tools and more about aligning vision, structures, processes, and behaviors across the education system.

02

Complex systems benefit from structured maturity models that offer a shared language and practical staging for capacity development, especially where reforms have been fragmented or uneven.

03

Evaluation and learning are foundational to maturity beyond being accountability mechanisms. They must also function as feedback loops that shape strategic and operational decision-making.

04

Cultural and institutional context shapes how maturity evolves. This underscores the importance of adaptability, pacing, and stakeholder participation in model design and implementation.

05

Dimensions of maturity often cut across traditional reform categories. This highlights the value of integrated frameworks that link planning, management, improvement, and policy at every level.

06

Academic research can directly inform real-world maturity efforts, especially when translated with an eye toward systems in a transitional phase.

Why Are Education Systems a Good Litmus Test for Maturity?

When we assess maturity, we're not asking whether a system uses performance management tools. Instead, we want to know whether it can integrate, sustain, and evolve those tools into something systemic.

That's why education systems are especially revealing. They bring to the surface the real complexity of building maturity in environments that are layered, long-term, and often politically charged.

Take timing, for example. Education outcomes often unfold over years or even decades. This long-term duration makes it difficult to link strategic intent to measurable impact,

especially in systems where data is not always timely or trusted. A maturity model must therefore assess whether the system is designed to manage over time.

Then there's structure. Most education systems are highly decentralized, with responsibilities split across ministries, regional authorities, and thousands of schools. While decentralization is often framed as a reform success, it introduces real challenges for alignment. Maturity in this context requires mechanisms that connect institutional layers through shared strategy, coherent processes, and clear performance logic.

Culture also plays a role. Schools are not just delivery units—they are deeply symbolic institutions, tied to identity, equity, and public trust. That means performance systems are often perceived through a social and political lens. Building maturity here goes beyond being merely technical to relational. Systems must invest in transparency, participation, and communication to foster legitimacy.

Finally, there's reform fatigue. Many education systems have experienced wave after wave of change (new plans, new frameworks, and new expectations). In these environments, even well-intentioned performance reforms can be met with skepticism. A maturity model can help reset the narrative by offering a structured path for capability development based on evidence, pacing, and learning.

All of these dynamics were present in the Moroccan case study, and that's precisely

what made it such a robust test environment for a newly developed maturity model. Rather than targeting a single institution or policy, the researchers asked:

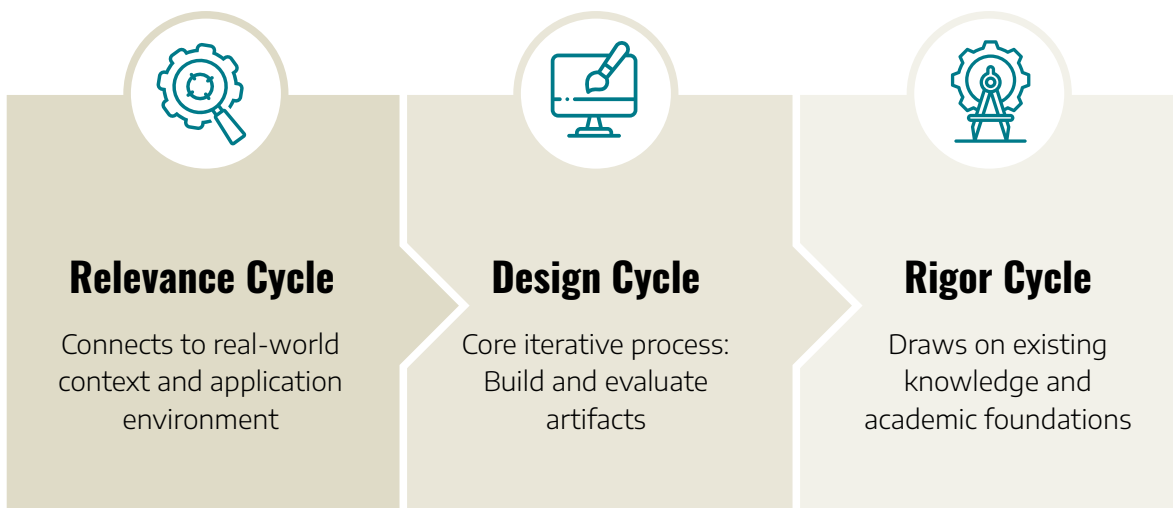
What does it take to assess and improve performance capability across the entire education system?

Performance Management System Maturity in an Educational Context

The aforementioned case study of Morocco's education maturity model is best understood as a structured research effort to explore how performance management maturity can be defined and assessed in a complex sector.

Led by Hind Benlhabib and Abdelaziz Berrado, the project set out to develop a conceptual model, offering a structured way to analyze the organizational capacity of education systems in managing performance. It's one of several academic initiatives in recent years that aim to make maturity thinking more concrete and tailored to real-world systems.

To build the model, the researchers used an approach known as Design Science Research (DSR). This methodology is focused on building practical tools that can be tested and iteratively improved. It is particularly useful in fields where systems are large and





interdependent. Drawing on international case studies, education policy benchmarks, and performance management literature, the researchers identified common capability patterns in high-performing systems and translated them into an initial maturity framework.

The researchers conducted a trial assessment in Morocco to test how well the framework could identify maturity levels across the national education system. The goal of this pilot was to validate the model's logic, not to evaluate Morocco's performance or prescribe solutions.

The result is a useful academic contribution that offers one way to think about maturity in sector-wide performance management. For practitioners and maturity model developers, it provides a reference point both in terms of design structure and in the types of capability areas that such models might consider.

What Do We Mean by Performance Management System Maturity?

A mature performance management system isn't defined by how many tools it uses but by how well those tools, processes, and behaviors come together into a coherent, sustained whole.

In mature systems, performance management is deeply embedded into how the organization thinks, plans, and acts. You'll often see:

- **A clear strategic direction**, where performance goals guide long-term priorities and align actors across the system
- **Integrated processes and routines** that turn plans into action, supported by timely data and clear responsibilities
- **A learning-driven approach**, where feedback and evidence shape continuous improvement across policies and programs
- **Investments in people** with the right capabilities, roles, and incentives to lead and manage for performance at all levels
- **A performance-oriented culture**, where improvement is normalized, participation is valued, and results are part of the system's identity

This is how we understand maturity at the GPA Unit: a system's ability to sustain, adapt, and improve its performance logic over time.

Six Dimensions of Maturity in Education Performance Management

The maturity model tested in Morocco

organizes performance management into six interconnected dimensions, each reflecting a key domain where education systems must build capacity to manage for results. These dimensions offer a structured way to assess how mature a system is in embedding performance management through deep integration into how education is governed, delivered, and improved.

The researchers broke down this dimension into two core capability areas:

- **Strategy Development:**
This area explores how national education strategies are created, including whether performance objectives are clearly defined and whether long-term goals reflect stakeholder needs. It also considers how

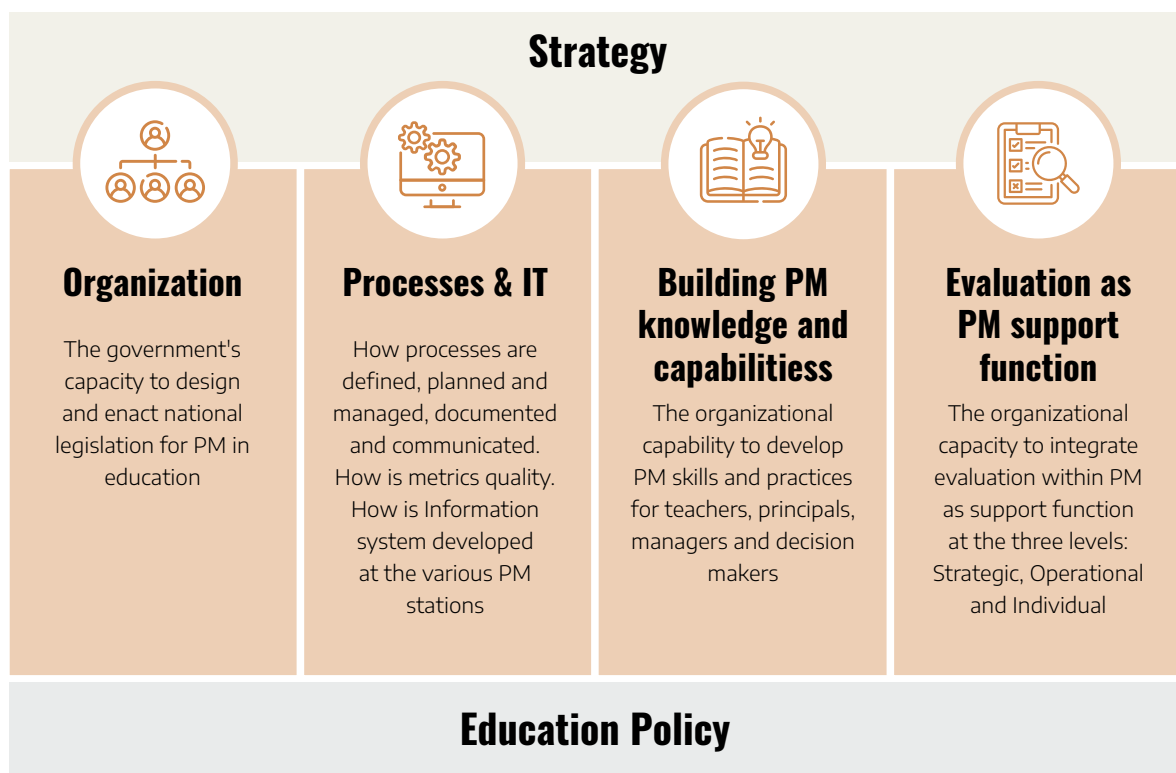


Figure 1. A maturity model for performance management in education systems: Evidence from Morocco | Source: [Journal of Infrastructure Policy and Development](#)

D1: Strategy

This dimension focuses on how education systems develop and implement strategic plans that integrate performance management principles. It considers whether strategies are formulated clearly, executed coherently, and aligned across institutional levels—from national authorities to schools.

visions are articulated for the system as a whole and how strategic priorities are framed in relation to student learning and institutional performance.

- **Strategy Implementation:**
This area assesses the extent to which strategic plans are operationalized across all levels of the education system. This includes how well objectives are cascaded, whether planning and performance processes are aligned, and if mechanisms exist to monitor progress and adjust course as needed.

A mature education system under this dimension demonstrates coherence between vision and execution. This means strategic intent translates into structured, measurable,



and widely supported performance goals.

D2: Organization

This dimension focuses on how education systems are institutionally structured to support performance management. It looks at the way responsibilities are distributed, the degree of autonomy that exists, and how accountability is encouraged through incentives and oversight mechanisms.



Maturity in this area is assessed across three capability areas:

- **Institutional Design:**
This evaluates whether roles and responsibilities are clearly allocated across national ministries, regional authorities, and schools. It includes whether legal frameworks exist to support performance management, and whether decision-making structures enable coordination rather than fragmentation.
- **School-Based Management:**
This examines how much autonomy schools have in managing their own operations, including control over budgets, personnel, and instructional planning. It also considers whether this autonomy is supported at the local level.
- **Incentives and Accountability Mechanisms:**
This assesses whether systems use performance-linked incentives to motivate improvement, and whether accountability frameworks promote transparency and trust. In mature systems, performance

expectations are clear, constructive, and balanced with developmental support.

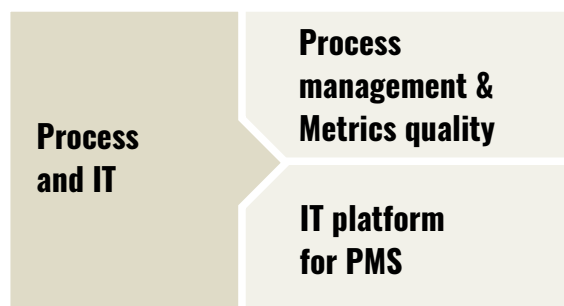
In combination, these elements determine whether the education system can balance centralized coherence with decentralized flexibility.

D3: Processes and Information Technology (IT)

This dimension examines how education systems operationalize performance management and whether digital tools are in place to support those processes. It focuses on whether performance routines are consistent and embedded and whether information systems enable those routines to function effectively.

There are two capability areas in this dimension:

- **Performance Management Processes and Quality of Metrics:**
This evaluates whether systems have structured processes for setting objectives, monitoring performance, delivering feedback, and conducting formal reviews. It also considers the quality and appropriateness of performance indicators, particularly whether they reflect educational priorities and are adapted to different levels (e.g., schools, districts, national, etc.). Maturity here means that performance routines are standardized, understood by practitioners, and integrated into regular school and system operations.



- **IT Platform for Performance Management:**
This assesses the existence and functionality of the digital tools and

information systems used to support performance management. It covers legal adoption, data quality, coverage, and the platform's ability to generate timely insights. In mature systems, technology acts as an enabler, supporting school leaders, policymakers, and administrators in planning, tracking, and decision-making based on real-time data.

Together, these capabilities determine whether an education system can move beyond ad-hoc performance tracking and toward a structured, technology-enabled performance cycle.

D4: Building Performance Management Knowledge and Capabilities

This dimension addresses how education systems build the knowledge, skills, and institutional learning needed to support performance management over time. It



focuses not just on individual competencies, but on the collective capacity of the system to professionalize performance thinking and embed it across roles and functions.

The model breaks this into three capability areas:

- **Performance Management Curriculum and Initial Education:** This assesses whether performance management principles are included in the initial training of teachers, principals, and education officials. Maturity here involves recognizing performance management as a foundational discipline within the

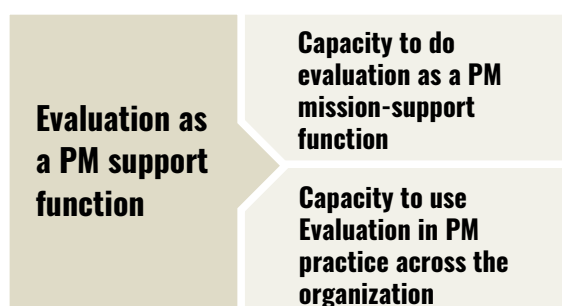
professional preparation of those who will lead, plan, or teach within the system.

- **Professional Development Programs:** This examines the existence and quality of in-service training and ongoing support related to performance management. This includes structured programs for teachers, principals, and education officials that build the competencies needed to plan, measure, evaluate, and improve performance. Mature systems ensure that performance development is not a one-time event but an ongoing feature of professional growth.
- **Performance Management Research and Innovation:** This looks at the extent to which education systems invest in research, experimentation, and innovation related to performance management. This includes local studies, pilot programs, and national initiatives aimed at contextualizing and adapting performance approaches. Maturity in this area means research is used to drive reform, shape practice, and continuously improve the system's capacity to manage performance.

Education systems that perform well in this dimension treat capacity development as a strategic priority, building a workforce that is equipped, supported, and informed in how to manage for results.

D5: Evaluation Supports Performance Management

This dimension examines how education systems integrate evaluation as a key support function within performance management. It focuses on the education system's capacity to conduct and use evaluations at different levels, ensuring evaluation informs decision-



making, fosters learning, and supports continuous improvement.

The model breaks this down into two capability areas:

- **Capacity to Conduct Evaluation:**

This capability assesses whether education systems have the mechanisms in place to perform effective evaluations. It examines the robustness and reliability of evaluation methods, ensuring they provide meaningful insights into educational performance. In a mature system, evaluation is an embedded process, one that is consistently used to assess various aspects of the education system, from teaching quality to student outcomes.

- **Capacity to Use Evaluation:**

This capability focuses on how well the education system can apply the results of evaluations to improve performance. It examines whether evaluation findings are used to inform decisions, adjust policies, and guide reforms. Maturity in this area means that evaluations are not merely an isolated activity but serve as a continuous feedback loop, supporting both immediate improvements and long-term strategic goals.

Education systems that excel in this dimension treat evaluation as an essential tool for learning, growth, and accountability, integrating it seamlessly into their broader performance management strategies.

This dimension addresses how education systems develop and implement policies that support performance management goals. It focuses on the ability of education systems to formulate and enact policies that align with performance management principles and improve overall student achievement and system effectiveness.

The model breaks this down into three capability areas:

- **Education Policy Development**

This assesses the performance management system's capacity to design policies that reflect the strategic objectives of the education system. It ensures that performance management principles are integrated into national education policies. Maturity in this area involves policies that are aligned with national development plans and educational goals, addressing the needs of all stakeholders.

- **Education Policy Implementation**

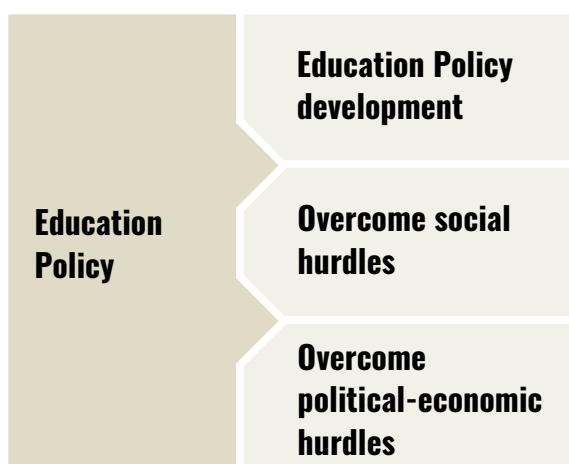
This evaluates how effectively education policies are put into action across all levels of the education system. This includes the processes and structures that ensure policies are enacted and supported in schools. Maturity in this area means that policies are not just created but are understood, communicated, and executed with the necessary resources to achieve their goals.

- **Overcoming Social and Political Hurdles in Education Policy Implementation**

This focuses on the system's ability to address social, political, and economic challenges that may hinder policy implementation. Maturity in this area involves mechanisms to navigate resistance, build support, and adapt policies to local contexts. It ensures policies are flexible and resilient in the face of ever-changing circumstances while still supporting performance management objectives.

Education systems that perform well in this dimension are capable of developing, implementing, and adapting policies

D6: Education Policy



that foster sustainable improvements in performance management, ensuring alignment with global best practices while addressing local needs.

From Insight to Systemic Capability

This study goes beyond introducing a new model; it helps clarify what performance management system maturity really looks like in complex, real-world environments. It reminds us that while systems differ in shape and context, the underlying building blocks of maturity are surprisingly consistent: alignment between strategy and operations, the ability to learn and adapt, and a culture that treats performance as an integral part of how institutions work.

At the GPA Unit, this is exactly the space we operate in.

We work with institutions and sectors to translate performance ambition into system capability, connecting strategy, management, improvement, people, and culture. What this research offers is a complementary way of structuring that effort: a model that echoes the same dimensions we support as seen through the lens of the education sector.

It reinforces a core message we share with our partners: maturity is not a destination. It's a pattern of behavior—one that is measured by how consistently a system can plan, act, and improve.

By surfacing and translating research like this, we aim to make that journey more visible and more feasible. Because, whether in education, finance, health, or beyond, the same principles hold: better-aligned systems deliver better results.



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Performance Management Maturity Through Five Perspectives

What Happens When Organizations Are Ready to Evolve?

Author Bori Péntek

Section Systems in focus

Performance management systems aren't static. They are living (and hopefully thriving) systems that require constant refinement and recalibration. As organizations grow, so too must the maturity of their performance management practices. But how can leaders recognize when their organization is truly ready to take the next step?

In this report, we explore the **key signals** that indicate when an organization is on the verge of advancing to a higher level of performance management system maturity. From how strategy and goals are defined and executed to how performance is measured and integrated into everyday culture, the transition to a more mature PMS is complex.

Fortunately, there are clear markers along the way.

To bring this to life, we've gathered insights from our in-house experts in **strategic planning, performance measurement, performance improvement, employee performance management**, and **performance culture**. Each of them highlights specific signs that organizations should look for to know that they're ready to take the next step toward sustainable, high-impact performance management.

What does this shift look like in action? How do you know when your organization is moving from a reactive, disjointed system to one that is strategically aligned, data-driven, and performance-embedded at all levels? Let's find out.



Strategic Planning: The Visionary Lens

To help us explore how an organization can transition to a higher level of strategic planning maturity, we turn to [Cristina Mihailoae](#), Strategy and Performance Management Expert and Head of Product & Innovation at the Global Performance Audit Unit (GPA Unit). Cristina has extensive experience in both research and practical strategy development. She has spent over a decade guiding organizations across industries like oil and gas, finance, telecommunications, and manufacturing to improve their strategic approaches and performance systems.

When it comes to the common practices that organizations rely on in their strategic planning processes, Cristina highlights the **foundational approaches** that are typically in place across many businesses. These are the starting points for organizations on their journey toward greater maturity in strategic planning:



In most organizations, strategy planning is an annual event where objectives, KPIs, and initiatives are reviewed by a specialized function such as the Strategy Office or an internal committee. While the process is formalized and clearly defined, it tends to focus on past data and is often a reactive response to market conditions. The final strategy, after several workshops among top management, is approved and communicated across the organization.

When organizations begin with these foundational practices, they establish a solid base for strategic planning. However, as companies evolve and aim for higher maturity, these initial practices—while necessary—are no longer sufficient to drive long-term success. The next step involves moving beyond this reactive, annual review process and embracing a more dynamic, integrated approach.

So, what signals should organizations watch for as they transition to a higher level of strategic planning maturity? Cristina identifies several key traits that mark this shift toward a more mature, forward-thinking strategic planning process.



There is a strategy, before moving into planning. It may sound logical, but not all organizations are skilled at precisely defining their vision, mission, and how they want to position themselves to win the market.

01

The Extensive Yet Focused Involvement of Stakeholders

Mature organizations develop extensive stakeholder engagement plans. Throughout the year, they engage constantly with all their business partners, clients, and other external stakeholders to understand their expectations. They also establish effective communication channels from the bottom to the top of the organization, so on-the-ground issues as well as potential solutions are being heard at the top level. Moreover, the strategy team identifies the most efficient manner to involve each category of stakeholders, and it does not try to do this in a six-week strategy planning process, but during the entire year. Thus, a variety of perspectives are collected, converted into insights, and made available to the top management team to analyze and decide the best approach.

02

Data-Driven Decision-Making and Scenario-Planning

Forecasting, scenario planning, and even the usage of AI to envision the future and support decision-making are strong indicators of an advanced strategy planning process, along with the usage of technology to track strategy execution.

03

Integration With Other Key Processes in the Organization

The strategy planning process must inform and align with the budgeting exercise, operational business planning, and setting individual KPIs. In the case of mature organizations, these processes are not synchronized just from the annual calendar perspective, but in the sense of coherent decisions, and lead to synergies.

04

The Ability to Simultaneously Manage Short-Term and Long-Term Goals

This refers to being able to define, review, and reimagine the long-term future, without losing sight of it while you address short-term needs.

05

Embracing Emergent Strategic Planning

Emergent planning is the ability to integrate unplanned ideas and opportunities into your deliberate strategy. It is about adapting your objectives and initiatives according to new insights.

06

High Strategy Awareness

Once approved, the strategy is effectively communicated to all layers of the organization and constantly reinforced by updating everyone on progress, changes, and achievements. Organizations use town hall meetings, strategy awareness sessions for smaller groups, individual talks, monthly internal newsletters, videos, posters, etc.

07

Strong Leadership Commitment

Leadership plays a crucial role in driving strategy maturity. Committed leaders make a strong contribution during the planning sessions. They take ownership for achieving objectives and KPIs, and allocate the right resources for strategy execution.

Cristina's insights show that while foundational practices are essential, reaching higher maturity requires a mindset shift—one

that transforms strategy from a fixed series of plans to a continuous, adaptable process.



Performance Measurement: The Analytical Lens

Where strategy sets the direction, measurement provides the compass. As organizations evolve, their approach to measurement becomes more intentional, more inclusive, and more data-informed. To learn more about this subject, we asked [Doina Popovici](#), Head of Maturity Assessment Services, and Head of Certifications & Faculty Oversight at the GPA Unit. She ensures the effective implementation of assessment frameworks while upholding rigorous evaluation standards, bridging service excellence with faculty development.

According to Doina, the clearest signals of readiness for a higher level can be seen in how organizations treat KPIs. These organizations see KPIs as more than mere metrics, but as tools for decision-making and continuous improvement.



An organization's readiness to progress in the maturity of its performance measurement capability is best demonstrated by a shift in how it approaches KPI management: from simply tracking performance to actively optimizing it. Instead of asking, 'What should we measure?', leadership begins to ask, 'Are we measuring the right things, in the right way, and using the right insights to drive improvement?' Organizations at higher maturity levels embrace a systematic and inclusive approach to performance measurement.

This shift is pivotal, and it begins with the way KPIs are selected, defined, and managed.



At lower maturity levels, organizations may select KPIs in an ad-hoc manner, often dictated by leadership without structured methodologies or stakeholder input. In contrast, as maturity increases, KPI selection is driven by formalized techniques, stakeholder consultations, and relevance assessments, ensuring that chosen KPIs are meaningful, aligned with strategic objectives, and adaptable to internal and external changes. Beyond selection, mature organizations document KPIs using a standardized template before implementation, ensuring clarity in definitions, formulas, data sources, and calculation methodologies. KPI documentation is maintained in a digital, centralized database, ensuring easy access and real-time updates. Rather than being a one-time effort, it is a dynamic and continuously evolving resource, adapting to changes in strategy, operational processes, and market conditions. When it comes to KPI target setting, organizations at lower maturity levels often rely on managerial experience and subjective judgment. However, mature organizations adopt a formalized, data-driven approach, utilizing techniques such as benchmarking, historical trend



analysis, and forecasting. Targets are set through collaborative processes that involve key stakeholders, ensuring alignment across teams and enhancing commitment to performance outcomes.

Once this foundation is in place, maturity shows up in how measurement is applied. Measurement evolves from a process to a system: real-time, automated, well-visualized, and governed by clear roles and standards.

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A key milestone in performance measurement maturity is the transition from manual data collection to automated systems. Lower-maturity organizations struggle with fragmented, labor-intensive data collection methods, increasing the risk of errors and inefficiencies. In contrast, advanced organizations invest in automated data collection and integration across systems, enabling real-time performance tracking and minimizing human bias and inaccuracies.

Mature organizations also prioritize effective data visualization to ensure performance insights are easily interpretable. Instead of generating generic reports, they apply best-practice visualization principles, such as ensuring clarity, using the

right chart types for different data sets, avoiding information overload, and maintaining consistency in design. Dashboards are customized for different audiences, ensuring that executives, managers, and employees receive the insights most relevant to their roles. Finally, an organization's performance measurement capability reaches higher maturity when it develops a robust governance structure. This involves defining clear roles and responsibilities, such as KPI owners, data custodians, and performance managers, who oversee the implementation, monitoring, and refinement of KPIs. A well-defined governance framework ensures that performance measurement is embedded within organizational processes, that KPI-related policies are established and regularly updated, and that all stakeholders receive continuous learning opportunities to enhance their capability in managing performance data.

But even the best-designed measurement systems rely on people to bring them to life. This is reflected in how they engage with goals, respond to feedback, and turn data into daily action.



Performance Improvement: The Transformation Lens

As performance is measured, gaps are identified and opportunities for improvement are revealed. This is the catalyst for transformation. To understand this process, we reached out to Mohamed Elmasry, a GPA Unit Accredited Assessor and Associate Management Consultant at The KPI Institute.

Mohamed has firsthand experience in helping organizations take their performance measurement process to the next level. According to him, a sure sign of an organization's performance improvement maturity is the presence of robust data analytics. Data-driven decision-making is crucial for performance improvement as it facilitates accurate reporting and structured performance reviews.



When organizations transition to higher levels of maturity in performance management, the shift is evident in their holistic approach to continuous improvement. Rather than sporadic interventions, performance improvement becomes an integral, proactive discipline seamlessly embedded within the organization's operations, strategic planning, and daily decision-making.

A foundational sign of advancing maturity can be observed through enhanced **data analysis** capabilities. Organizations moving beyond basic maturity levels shift from retrospective data review towards proactive analysis using sophisticated tools such as predictive analytics, enterprise resource planning (ERP) solutions, and business

intelligence (BI) platforms. This advanced analytical capacity allows organizations to identify emerging trends, forecast potential issues, and proactively adjust strategies, significantly reducing reactive problem-solving and enhancing operational agility.

Closely tied to data analysis is the transformation in **reporting practices**. Mature organizations evolve their reporting from simplistic summaries to comprehensive, strategically informative documents. Performance reports adopt a storytelling approach, integrating visual analytics with contextual insights and actionable recommendations. Rigorous quality-assurance measures ensure accuracy and reliability, empowering stakeholders at all levels with trusted, timely insights that directly inform strategic and operational decision-making.

The evolution of **performance review meetings** further underscores this maturity. These meetings transition from informal, retrospective updates into structured forums essential for strategic alignment and action. Mature performance review sessions follow clearly defined agendas, involve all related stakeholders, and rigorously document decisions, assigning explicit ownership, deadlines, and follow-up

checkpoints. This structured discipline fosters accountability, ensures alignment with strategic goals, and enhances organizational responsiveness.

What other signs of performance improvement should we look out for? Mohamed says it's how structured and formalized the organization's systems are. Moreover, there should be a focus on learning, from which all improvement stems. Governance is also a good sign of maturity as it establishes role clarity and fosters accountability.



Another critical area reflecting increased maturity is **initiative management**. Initially, improvement initiatives often lack standardized documentation, clear ownership, and alignment with organizational objectives. In contrast, organizations achieving higher maturity implement structured initiative management practices, adopting standardized documentation templates detailing objectives, timelines, risks, and milestones. Initiatives are systematically consolidated into centralized digital portfolios, providing clear visibility into progress and strategic alignment, significantly improving coordination, execution, and impact measurement.

The maturity journey also includes systematic investment in **learning and improvement**



Performance Culture: The Behavioral Lens

mechanisms. Organizations advance by embedding practices such as lessons learned logs and changelogs to systematically capture, analyze, and disseminate knowledge gained from previous performance cycles. Structured innovation frameworks are established to encourage continuous improvement, actively sourcing and evaluating ideas from internal teams and external stakeholders. These practices ensure continuous learning, reduce recurring errors, and embed a sustainable culture of proactive improvement.

Lastly, the maturity shift is solidified through robust performance system governance. Clearly defined governance frameworks articulate roles, responsibilities, and accountability mechanisms within comprehensive performance improvement manuals. Communication plans that detail the frequency, channels, and content of performance-related information ensure consistent transparency with internal and external stakeholders. Regular training and capacity-building programs reinforce governance effectiveness, ensuring all the teams across the entire organization are equipped and motivated to sustain continuous improvement

To understand how performance culture evolves as organizations move up the maturity ladder, we turn to [Teodora Gorski](#), Head of Partnerships and Growth at the Global Performance Audit Unit (GPA Unit). With over a decade of experience in designing and implementing performance management systems globally, Teodora focuses on the deep-rooted behavioral shifts that signal when performance grows from simply being managed to being lived.

In organizations at lower levels of maturity, performance culture is often rule-bound. There's a formal system, but engagement is limited, feedback feels forced, and recognition is transactional. According to Teodora, the real transformation begins when performance moves beyond structured cycles and becomes part of how people think, act, and collaborate every day.



An organization is ready to advance in performance culture maturity when performance stops being something managed and starts being something that naturally happens—through the way people think, act, and collaborate.

So, what are the signs that an organization is stepping into a higher maturity level? Teodora shares five cultural markers that reveal when performance excellence is becoming embedded:



1. Performance becomes a ripple effect, not a checklist.

In mature organizations, high performance isn't driven by policies or checklists; it's contagious. People see excellence in action, adopt it, and amplify it. Feedback, improvement, and ownership are part of the daily rhythm rather than scheduled events.

2. The culture welcomes discomfort.

Strong performance cultures aren't built on agreement. Instead, they're built on challenge. In mature organizations, people don't avoid tough conversations; they expect them. Disagreements refine ideas, not egos. The best cultures prioritize learning over certainty and push past comfort zones.

3. The right metrics drive behaviour, not just reports.

Numbers exist to create action, not just to be reviewed. Instead of obsessing over outputs, mature organizations track decision speed, collaboration strength, and the ability to turn insights into results. Performance becomes about what moves the business forward.

4. People wear the mission, not just the job title.

Employees embody the

company's purpose. They don't need corporate slogans to tell them what matters; they live it. Performance and identity become inseparable.

5. Recognition is a habit, not a formality.

Great work is recognized in the moment. Influence isn't tied to job titles but to who actually moves the needle. It's a meritocracy, where high performers rise based on impact rather than hierarchy or politics.



Employee Performance Management: The Enabling Lens

Last but not least, employee performance management is the fifth capability of the Integrated Performance Management Maturity Model developed by GPA Unit, and thus, crucial to assess when it comes to growth in maturity. [Muhammad Ali Moustafa](#), Management Consultant at The KPI Institute, describes the evolution of employee performance management maturity from low to high levels, as follows:



An organization's readiness to advance in EPM maturity is best reflected in a shift in its fundamental approach to performance management. Instead of asking, "How do we track employee performance?",

leadership begins to ask, “How do we enable it?” This change in perspective signals that performance management is no longer seen as just an HR process but as a strategic enabler of both business success and employee growth.

One of the clearest signs of readiness is when performance ownership moves beyond HR and becomes embedded in how the organization operates. At lower maturity levels, HR is responsible for driving performance processes, ensuring compliance, and keeping managers on track. But as maturity increases, managers take the lead in performance conversations, using them as tools for alignment, coaching, and continuous improvement. Employees, in turn, stop seeing performance management as a passive exercise and begin actively shaping their own development, seeking feedback, and adjusting their goals dynamically.

Another key indicator is the organization’s ability to evaluate performance beyond just output. Lower maturity levels often focus narrowly on what employees did—measuring success in tasks completed or KPIs met. At higher levels, however, performance is assessed holistically, incorporating competencies, skills, and behaviors that contribute to long-term success.

Who an employee is—how they collaborate, problem-solve, and lead—becomes just as important as what they achieve.

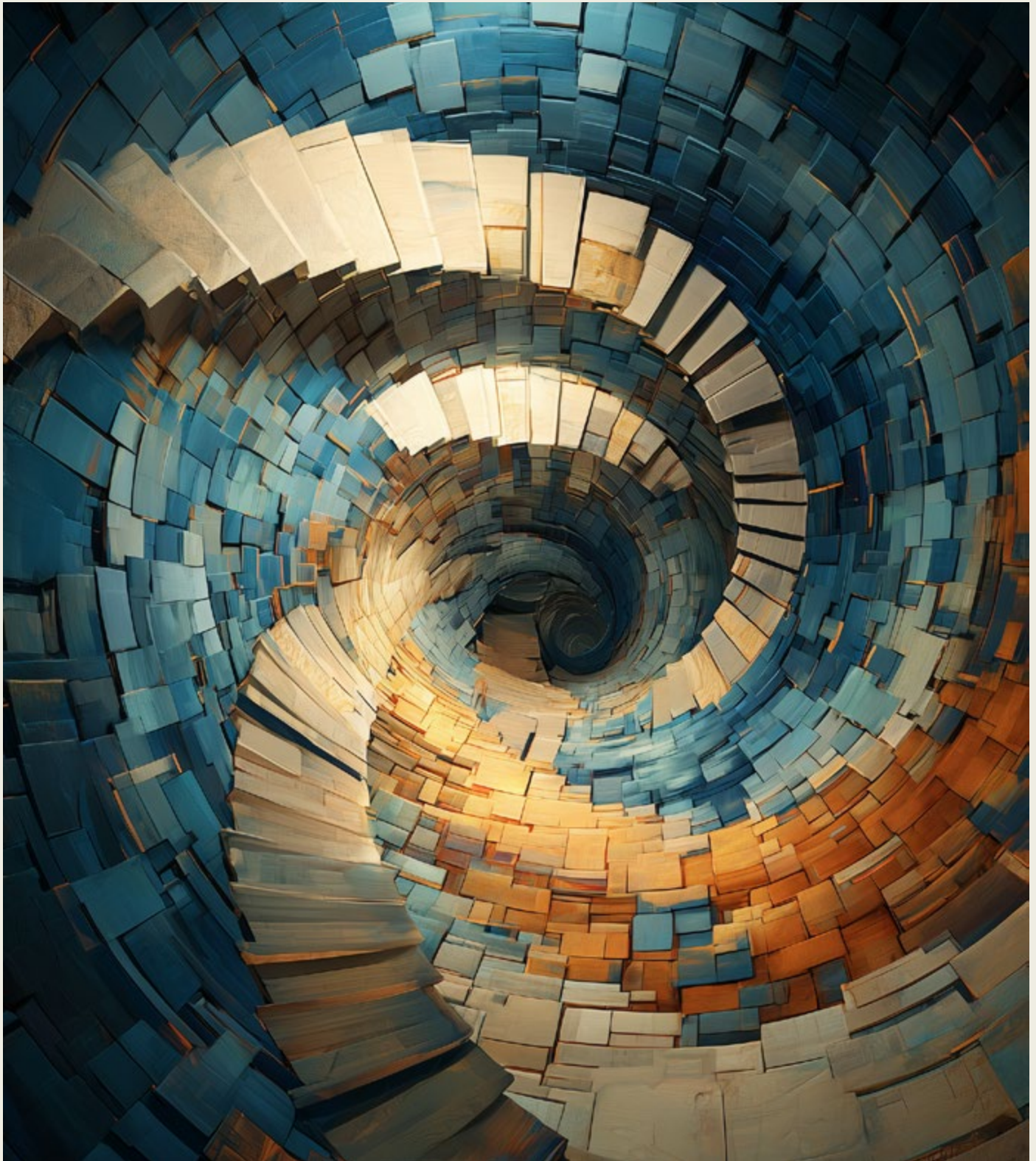
Ultimately, an organization is ready to transition when performance management is no longer about compliance but about creating an environment where employees are empowered to succeed, learn, and contribute to a shared purpose.

Recognizing the Shifts

You can tell an organization is maturing when performance no longer needs to be pushed. Strategy shifts from being a document to a way of thinking. Measurement moves from reporting to insight. Culture stops relying on process and starts living in behavior. These are real signals—ones you can see in the way teams align, improve, and stay accountable without being told.

These transitions don't occur in isolation. They are interdependent and collectively contribute to a holistic enhancement of organizational performance. Recognizing these signs is crucial for leaders aiming to foster a resilient and high-performing organization. By embracing these changes, organizations position themselves to adapt to evolving challenges and proactively shape their future success.

Special thanks to Cristina Mihăiloaie, Doina Popovici, Teodora Gorski, Muhammad Ali Moustafa, and Mohamed Elmasry for sharing their perspectives. Their observations remind us that the signs of progress are there—you just have to know where to look.



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The Ladder aims to become a leading voice in advancing performance excellence through strategic insight, thought leadership, and maturity-driven knowledge. It empowers professionals and organizations by curating forward-thinking content, expert analysis, and real-world perspectives that illuminate the path to strategy execution and performance maturity. It does so by valuing insightfulness, excellence, credibility, relevance, progressiveness, and empowerment.