

PMO Best Practices

What to Know, Do and Think about when establishing a Project Management Office

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Whether your organization is in crisis or simply desires to remain competitive, your business plan requires multiple phases over periods of time. Your plan may include tactics for achieving financial success. Another component may be to be regulatory-compliant. Another component may involve cultural change within the organization, while another may focus on product development. These tactics translate into projects, which are complex, demanding and messy. Projects are the critical building blocks in achieving an organization's strategic plan.

About ten years ago, there was a major push in organizations to establish Project Management Offices (PMOs) with the goal of introducing much-needed project management discipline in every department across the enterprise. The need to define and standardize project management practices, facilitate project portfolio management and institutionalize repeatable practices was a sure way to enable organizations to quickly move from vision to results.

Interestingly, many PMOs don't survive or never receive the executive support necessary to earn its place on the corporate map. Regardless of where your PMO will reside, here's a list of nine things to consider when starting a PMO:

1. Power:

Understand the power/organizational structure/decision-making ways and means.

Why?

To understand who the PMO is serving and to develop an infrastructure that works.

2. Problem Solving:

Be clear about the problem(s) to be tackled through project management; be clear about what it is not.

Why?

To develop the appropriate tools and methods and to understand the PMO's focus and deliverables.

3. Launch:

Take advantage of the power of a new approach and the new organizational structure of the PMO.

Why?

To make it clear that it really matters and to create "magic star dust" of Executive support for the PMO.

4. Infrastructure:

Build the basic PMO infrastructure.

Why?

It's all about smart infrastructure. Clear executive support, great staff, sensible approach and the mountains will move...

5. Roles & Responsibilities:

Understand the different roles and responsibilities of all involved in project management.

Why?

While individual stars can pull off a project, it takes a village to move an entire project agenda.

6. Tools:

Provide both Executive reporting tools and tools/methods to manage projects.

Why?

Simple, effective reporting and meaningful review of the report almost by itself creates the incentive for behavioral/cultural change to move the entire agenda.

7. Project Start-up:

Provide direction, support, education, and tools on successful project start-up.

Why?

This is one of the base core value-adds of a PMO.

8. Priorities:

Require Executive decision-making to prioritize the project agenda

Why?

Less is more. Focus means success. Moving a few key projects hard and fast will create momentum and results.

9. Post-Launch:

Provide post-PMO launch services and activities that add value

Why?

Be creative with building the common understanding of the project agenda and the work involved. Communicate, communicate, communicate – you just can't do it enough.

Remember to keep your goals focused, your requirements simple and your activities methodical. Shout out each and every accomplishment – with volume and pride.



About the Author:

Lisa DiTullio is a renowned thought leader and recognized international speaker on project management. She is the principal of Your Project Office, a PMI® Registered Education Provider and consulting organization dedicated to introducing project management as a business competency and enabling organizations to improve decision-making, instill accountability, and enhance communications.

Lisa is the editor of ProjectBestPractices, a quarterly newsletter from ProjectWorld, a regular contributor to the Silicon Valley PM, Project Connections, and Enterprise Management Association blogs, a contributor to PM Network and a distance instructor for Prodevia Learning. She is the author of Simple Solutions: How "Enterprise Project Management" Supported Harvard Pilgrim Health Care's Journey from Near Collapse to #1 and Project Team Dynamics: Enhancing Performance, Improving Results.