

# IS YOUR FINGER ON THE PMO PULSE?



**When executed correctly, a PMO (Project Management Office) function is one of the most valuable elements within a change organisation. The control, governance and accountability it brings is worth its weight in gold.**

**This month, James O'Sullivan, Director of Consulting Services, shares his experience of PMO.**

## INTELLIGENT PMO

Looking back, and in the context of PMO, I have been lucky enough to be involved in several significant £multi-billion budget transformation programmes, a number of which were seminal moments in my career. They changed my understanding of the value an intelligent PMO can bring to a change agenda.

Clearly the underlying data a PMO provides has to be accurate, to provide you with recommendations that are data-driven, removing the layer of subjectivity and enabling you and your business to be in control of your own destiny. This ensures the function pays for itself by reducing slippage and cost overruns, enabling organisations to deliver more of the right things, faster.

## THE INTERVENTION

As we emerge from Covid-19 hibernation and face into its repercussions, a recession, EU exit and the climate change agenda, businesses will regroup to focus on their immediate change agendas. Having understood the impact on revenue generation and balance sheet position, ask yourself whether your PMO is ready to support you in selecting the right valuable projects, programmes and transformations to stand back up. Are their views objective and independent? Will you be able to effectively track and report progress to ensure the confident delivery of financial and non-financial benefits to support your recovery strategy?

A small but highly effective, intelligent PMO team, acting independently, could be the difference to whether you survive and thrive in the coming months and years ahead.



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## IT'S JUST CRANKING THE HANDLE, ISN'T IT?

When you hear the term PMO, what comes to mind? Be honest... I'll hazard a guess that in a good number of cases it won't be that positive and may include phrases like post-box, handle-cranking and admin support.

In the past, I was no different and for the first 10 years of my change career, I would have shared the same opinion. There is no one-size-fits-all when talking about a PMO.

Fundamentally, a PMO exists to provide governance and control within a specific hierarchy. Be that a project, programme or enterprise level, each of which will have different requirements. However, the underlying purpose is to ensure the right decisions are made, by the right people, at the right time, based upon the available information.

Through the use of a PMO, an organisation is looking to affect risk management, through the tracking and reporting of underlying activities.

The key is not to introduce bureaucracy for bureaucracy's sake, but rather transparency, traceability and ultimately holding change teams accountable for their committed delivery.



## BACK TO THE FUTURE

Whilst programme hierarchies are easy to understand, the complexity of collating a simple update on progress across multiple workstreams, vendors, geographies and time zones, let alone the analysis of the underlying data, would leave the best of us scratching our heads.

In my early experiences, the solution originally involved lots of PMO analysts walking the floor, making numerous calls and video conferences to manually update a central file, which would then travel onwards to any number of Boards. With time-consuming processes, this meant that by the time a report got to its intended audience, it was already out-of-date.

Later solutions introduced some automation and intelligence, with hub-and-spoke access databases, where you were able to upload your latest plan in near-real-time; which churned out reports of any deviation to plan – this kept us programme directors on our toes!

Wind forward to today and we have transformed the amount of effort and time required to get the optimal set of outcomes, through automating repeatable processes and removing manual reports. The latest versions now utilise robotic process automation to process the information in a fraction of the time a human would take, across multiple data sources, such as PPM toolkits and finance systems.

Likewise, the PMO is adapting to our new ways of working, particularly Agile. This requires us to adjust our approach and focus on areas such as coordinating the dependencies between and across the value streams; or supporting the programme execution and delivery patterns; and play more of a prominent role in the adoption of operational excellence and continuous improvement.

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## IT'S NOT ALWAYS YOUR CUP OF TEA

I've always been an advocate of a business focussing on what it does best and outside of this, looking to an appropriate partner to support its needs. Change management has professionalised significantly over the past 20 years, as the volume, value and need for continual, critical change has increased exponentially.

This has spawned many expert and managed services, which can benefit small and large organisations alike, allowing them to scale PMO solutions within their business. This type of arrangement provides best practice and a proven solution, that will accelerate the adoption curve and success of the function. Importantly, it will automate and assimilate the most critical information required for management and Board level decision-making, which is often the difference between programme success and failure.

## KEY BENEFITS OF A PMO

I'm passionate about what the real value an effective and intelligent PMO can bring to bear. In today's world, more change is delivered via a global ecosystem and having an effective PMO is fundamental to delivery surety. I see the key benefits as being:

- A simplified operating model
- Ensuring clear accountability
- Removing unnecessary process and bureaucracy
- Creating unambiguous outputs within straightforward governance.

## DO YOU NEED CHANGE EXPERTISE?

These are my personal views, based on my experience, but I'm really keen to hear your opinions and how you approach this topic.

If you are thinking about how you govern and control your change agenda as we emerge from the mist and would value a chat, please get in touch, I'd be delighted to share our experience and learnings over a virtual coffee. [James.osullivan@projectone.com](mailto:James.osullivan@projectone.com)