

Secure the future of your PMO

The role of the project management office (PMO) is often challenged by everyone from project teams all the way up to senior management. So how can you silence some of the noise? Answer these six questions and you can help to ensure your PMO is valued across the organisation.



1. WHY?

Project management offices (PMOs) often have to defend their existence, especially when culling or postponing projects, so get used to being asked 'why?' and have an answer ready. Here are a few examples to help you prepare:

Why is the PMO required?

Reiterate the reason for setting up a PMO and its purpose by articulating the benefits and outcomes of the PMO's portfolio approach.

Why is the organisation delivering each project?

The PMO's portfolio management capabilities should be able to evaluate each business case in relation to the strategic function of the organisation.

Why allocate resources to one project and not another?

The PMO's resource management capabilities should be able to justify different projects' needs.

2. HOW?

Measure what matters so you have a solid understanding of the challenges and can then prioritise what needs to be done to inform your approach. To help with your decision-making, hold a team brainstorming sessions and put these questions forward:

How should the PMO deal with the organisation's projects?

Develop and embed a system of portfolio management that tracks performance and benefits.

How should the PMO approach challenges?

Consider the relationship and rapport between the PMO, the executive and the project practitioners.

How are we adding value to the organisation?

A PMO should have the oversight to help the organisation see the strategic benefit of each project it undertakes.

3. WHAT?

Be clear about the project management office's (PMO's) objectives and make a plan for how you will achieve them, including what the PMO will do, won't do, and how it can help people deliver projects. Ask yourself these questions:

What does the PMO do in this organisation?

What does the organisation need? If you don't know the answers, communicate with the stakeholders who will be in direct contact with the PMO. What do they want?

What resources do we need?

Consider personnel, time, funding, technology and office space.

What systems or tools should we use?

Are you able to co-opt some of the existing project tools in the organisation or do you need specific tools and systems to run as a PMO?

What does success look like?

How does the organisation function if the PMO works as intended?

“ Visibility matters. Organisations that regularly achieve all their business goals were 61 per cent more likely to have benefits very visible to executives than the survey average.¹ ”

¹ <https://docs.broadcom.com/doc/state-of-the-pmo-report>

4. WHEN?

For an effective project management office (PMO), timing is everything – from [setting up a PMO](#), to prioritising and scheduling projects so they are delivered at the optimum time. Use the following questions to help guide your approach:

When does the organisation need a PMO?

Often before it establishes one – find out which challenges in your organisation could be relieved by setting up a PMO.

When should we initiate a project?

The PMO's portfolio management capability should be able to tell you.

When should we cancel a project?

The PMO's resource management and benefits tracking capability should be able to tell you.

When should we be able to demonstrate the value of the PMO?

Track performance and benefits realisation for the PMO itself. Ensure key stakeholders and executives get what they need, when they need it. When that happens, promote the PMO's role in securing those benefits.

5. WHO?

A common mistake is failing to define the role of the PMO or set clear expectations in the organisations around its objectives and responsibilities. To avoid this trap, here are a few examples of 'who' questions that you should look to answer:

Who is in the PMO?

Ensure the PMO team has a discrete identity among project practitioners so there is a separation of powers.

Who does the PMO report to?

Who reports to the PMO? Be clear about responsibilities, authority and oversight.

Who are the key stakeholders?

You will need to build trust and rapport with them to secure buy-in and support. [Seven out of 10 organisations say sponsor engagement is a contributing factor to project success and almost half indicate other stakeholder engagement contributes to success.](#)

Who are the champions or influencers who can help?

If your PMO is struggling, find the people who have the power and influence to change hearts and minds within the organisation.

6. WHERE?

[Project management offices \(PMOs\) are increasingly performing a strategic role](#), which places them close to organisational leaders while remaining responsible for project delivery. Try posing these questions to your programme managers and senior leaders to determine the best place within the organisation for your PMO to operate:

Where is the PMO in the organisational hierarchy?

How does it interact with the executive and C-suite level?

How does it interact with project practitioners?

Where is the PMO needed most?

What function of the PMO is most important: strategic, supportive or governance?

Where can the PMO provide the greatest value?

PMOs evolve and the reason for setting up a PMO in the first place may no longer be relevant, so where else can it provide support?

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The PMO is one of the most scrutinised areas within an organisation, so it will serve you well to consider these questions and have your answers ready when asked. Above all, a PMO should be able to demonstrate consistent value to key stakeholders within the organisation at all times – this is the key to securing its future.

To find out the who, what, when, where, why and how of your PMO, [contact the experts at PM-Partners](#) or call us on 1300 70 13 14 today.