

<http://www.gowerpublishing.com/isbn/9781409418375>

Leading Successful PMOs

*How to Build the Best Project
Management Office for Your Business*

PETER TAYLOR

GOWER

Foreword

Chris Walters

Twenty years ago, when I first got my hands dirty in managing projects, the term 'PMO' didn't seem to exist. Attending a course on project management started to give me the tools to do the job I was entrusted with, and there was a very brief mention of a concept called 'project support', albeit brushed aside quickly as a luxury that real project managers (no doubt the 'eats girders for breakfast' type) could do without.

Coming back to the office, brimming with new concepts and strong resolve, I started to ask around for the infrastructure and templates that surely must have already been created. Some of that resolve turned to 'dissolve' as the stark realization hit home – if I wanted infrastructure, I (remember, still a novice project manager) would have to create them all myself. If only there was a PMO I could have gone to ...

Fast forwarding to today then, the PMO is now a widely used acronym, and many companies doing more than a couple of projects have a PMO in place. PMOs are also widely understood, and indeed there is a framework (P3O) from the same stable as arguably the most widely used project management framework, PRINCE2.

Although the visible part of the PMO is often operational in nature, the real value of a PMO is when it becomes transformational. This is where leadership becomes much more important than management.

Peter's book breaks new ground in looking at the leadership of PMOs. True, there is a smattering of management topics too,

to make sure that the day-to-day work of the PMO is neither neglected nor delivered inefficiently. But the thrust is about the right components of leadership required to not just change with the times, but to lead from the front and ensure that only the right projects are selected, they are delivered reliably and that the overall outcomes of the portfolio improve measurably over time.

The role of the PMO leader is one for a particular breed of individual. Be clear: this is a very senior position in any organization that takes project delivery seriously – the days of coordinating project administrators are over. PMO people are smart, articulate, expert, influential and business-focused these days, and they need a clear vision and strong leadership to thrive – the PMO leader has to provide this for them to be valuable. It's not enough to be inward-looking though, the PMO leader has to be an entrepreneur within their organization, selling PMO capability and delivering upon promises. It's all a finely-tuned balancing act – operation versus innovation, leading versus aligning and accelerating versus consolidating – and leading is all about making those choices.

xii

This book reflects on PMO leadership topics based on Peter's extensive experience in inventing and reinventing PMO functions in fast moving organizations. If you need a PMO (which you do, if you deliver projects) and you really care about your business (which I also assume you do), then you need a strong PMO leader. Reading this book will give you a fantastic vision for the role and the person that would fill it.

Chris Walters is the Chairman of the PMOSIG (<http://pmosig.co.uk/>) – the UK's only specialist interest group for all PMO practitioners. Through regular conferences and online interaction, PMOSIG is a great starting place for anybody leading or working in a PMO to share ideas, network and become professionally engaged.

Foreword

David Ayling-Smith

In this book Peter has provided an easy-to-read summary of the characteristics of a good PMO, the steps to build it and the characteristic to lead one. This is a useful and timely synopsis, as I suspect many organizations would benefit from a PMO but don't realize it yet or don't know how to start.

I have worked with Peter building two differently focused PMOs in the last ten years, and I am currently working with a third. Although the ambitions of each have not been the same, they all share similar positive characteristics which, from an executive sponsorship perspective, make them indispensable in my opinion.

Whichever sort of PMO you have, I believe that PMOs provide a vital role in driving alignment within an organization which accelerates organization improvement and change, often consolidating similarly focused activities that were previously competing for resources. It allows for simplification of process and better understanding of priorities. All this allows for a more engaged executive-supporting role that can accelerate decision making.

The supportive nature of the PMO should not be underestimated. There is the battle (and it is a battle) to make sense of a problem project and the nagging concern that there might be other similarly afflicted projects out there that you don't yet know about. Also the realization that you need to learn from your mistakes so this type of problem doesn't happen again all fit squarely within the scope of your PMO.

At times of growth (or retrenchment) a correctly positioned PMO is a crusading banner under which projects are helped, improvements are delivered, strategy is made real and your people are developed in a way that aligns with corporate goals.

However, it is a journey, there is always something else to be done and understanding the level of maturity of your PMO is an important principle. The gradual evolution of the PMO towards a defined goal is a very positive phenomenon and you can celebrate small wins and continually communicate success to help adoption. In contrast, where the PMO does not have a clearly articulated objective, it is vulnerable to the Yellow Brick Road Syndrome – when you don't know where you are going all roads will tend to lead you there. Such a PMO becomes increasingly hard to direct and can be a divisive rather than harmonizing organization.

xiv

In the words (almost) of Reggie Perrin,¹ 'I wouldn't have got where I am today without a PMO.'

My experience of PMOs has been completely positive – helping unify strategic intentions with operational necessities – but it is a mission that requires a leadership rather than management approach. Because you are dealing with people and ideas and future states, it does not become real until someone says it is real and that person might just need to be you.

David Ayling-Smith has held executive-level positions in various software organizations. He has sponsored three PMOs across three industry leading companies over the last ten years.

1 Leonard Rossiter, who as the original Reginald Perrin, had the insufferable boss 'CJ', who started many lines with 'I didn't get where I am today...'