

Some comments on establishing a PMO

By Brian Phillips

This is a huge topic, as there are so many variations to the concept of a PMO, and you should make sure you know where your PMO fits in the framework.

There is no 'one size fits all' solution. You should consider what the PMO is set up to achieve.

There are often people who will challenge the value of the PMO in terms of it being an overhead that needs to justify its own existence.

So the first thing is to clearly define the function of the PMO.

Will it be the keeper of the project management resources - tools, templates, methodology, processes, risks and issues registers, reporting repository, projects register?

Will all Project Managers report to the PMO? Or will they be resourced from the PMO and report into the relevant funding business unit?

Will your PMO provide mentoring, coaching and support services for Project Managers?

Or will you provide business units with advice on strategy, business case development, alignment of projects with corporate principles and strategies?

We work with a range of clients including government agencies that are beginning to establish PMOs. For some, the PMO reports to a lower divisional manager and looks after standards, tools, templates and the corporate internet as a source of methodology and processes.

For others, the PMO is a corporate resource unit across a whole department, providing strategic insights into program and project selection. For others again, the main role is providing trained and supported project managers for other departments to use across projects.

We have some clients with several PMOs, some in IT, others in the business and in one case, confusion about the use and application of the corporate project management methodology and the reporting processes. This client is now reviewing the range of services with a view to consolidate and streamline into one multi-function PMO.

We would recommend you get some good advice about your specific PMO requirements and then be assertive about the roles and functions you will develop and support.

There are also a range of interesting books on the subject.

We work with US and UK materials for our clients. Both are worth investigating. Eg, Kendall & Rollins "Advanced Project Portfolio Management and the PMO"; Letavec "The Program Management Office".

From the UK, there is a new P3O model under development - I have included a link to an interesting file and you can follow the links.

<http://www.best-management-practice.com/Knowledge-Centre/News/P3-Offices-News/>

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