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# Balance is the Key to a Successful PMO

The role of **Project Management Office (PMO)** continues to gain prominence and recognition.  It has been demonstrated that PMOs can solve many of the problems organizations face when managing portfolios, programs and projects.  When implementing a PMO, the first thing that must be done is  to select a structure type tailored to the specific needs of the organization, which is not an easy task, as there is no "one size fit all" formula.  Organizations can be very different from one another in their needs, size, structure and project management maturity and selecting the right structure type is the key to success.  To choose the right type of PMO structure, many factors must be considered, such as whether the organization is profit or non-profit, local or global, small or big, and its industrial sector, technical disciplines and the differences in project management maturity that can be encountered in different organizations.

### The Challenge lies in the Selection of the Right Type of PMO Structure
The following differentiates each type of PMO Structure.  Balance is the key to a successful PMO.

| The Supporting Structure | The Controlling Structure | The Directive Structure |
|---|---|---|
| provides methodologies, procedures, templates, best practices, training and other resources. | establishes procedures to ensure adherence to methodologies, through monitoring metrics and performance reporting to management. | Leads the recruiting of project management staff, assignment of resources to projects, project selection in alignment with the organization strategy, cancelation of failed projects, and resource management across projects. |
| The organization lacks methodologies, procedures and project management tools. | There is some level of project management mindset in the organization. | Progress has been made in implementing supporting and controlling PMO Roles. |
| Project management practitioners lack knowledge and skills in project management standard practices . | Project Managers have basic knowledge of project management standard practices. | Changes have been made to the executive management structure, as functional managers must give up some degree of control over resources management and project selection. |
| Project Managers have knowledge and skills in project management standard practices, but are not using common procedures and sharing knowledge. | The organization is accustomed to work in multidisciplinary projects . | The organization has adopted a project mindset. |
| Lack of procedures specifically oriented to identify project management skills and competencies among project manager candidates. | There is a clear support of senior executives to the implementation of standard project management practices. | The project management profession has been established as a clear career path within the organization. |
| Lack of training programs specifically oriented to develop project management knowledge and skills. | The Supporting PMO has been or is currently being implemented. | Metrics and controls have been established at the project, program and portfolio levels. |
| | You can start with very basic manual. | |
| | Monitoring and control can be exercised at the project, program and portfolio levels, each one with its own set of needs, metrics and reports. | |

To overcome this challenge, it is necessary to balance the supporting, controlling and directive roles to fit the situation of the organization. For example, in an organization that lacks defined project management procedures, it would be appropriate for the PMO to begin by adopting a supportive structure, focusing in process definition and training, and then move to perform controlling roles. However if that same organization have already recruited personnel with project management knowledge and skills, it would be more appropriate to focus more on process definition instead of training, and then move faster to a controlling role. Balance between supporting and controlling is key, too much focus on controlling could alienate the organization and cause resistance to change, while too much focus on supporting could end with tons of project management documentation that nobody follows.

Regarding the directive structure type, in our opinion should be reserved to more advanced levels of project maturity,

Steps to choose the right type of PMO structure for your organization

1. Gather Stakeholders to Assess Their Needs
The key stakeholders that are requiring the creation of the PMO can give you valuable information regarding current business concerns.
What are the main issues and concerns of the organization?
Does the organization run mainly operations or projects?
Is the organization not meeting its strategic objectives?
What are the root causes?
What actions are being performed to achieve strategic objectives?
Identify as many stakeholders as possible by identifying the departments that each interviewed people interact with, this way you can begin to acquire a sense of the internal workings and complexities of the organization.

2. Understand the Organization Size, Complexity and Culture
What does the company do?
What are its main products and services?
What technical disciplines are involved in the core business?
Is it a small, medium or large business?
Is the organization at the local, regional or multinational level?
What is the organizational structure?
Does the organization encompass various regional cultures and different countries? ty

3. Assess Organization Project Management Maturity

Does the organization have a Project Management Office (PMO) with clearly defined roles and authority?
Does the organization have personnel with specialized expertise in project management?
Have the organization documented its project management procedures and methodologies?
Is Strategic Planning in alignment with Project Management within the organization?
Do project managers have their own reporting structure?
Do project managers have control over project resources?

4. Select a PMO Structure Type and Roles Aligned with Current Project Management Maturity



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