



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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Rounding out the PMO with Other Product and Service Offerings

It is difficult to address all the potential services having to do with PMOs, but here is an attempt to summarize some of them. Keep in mind that probably no single PMO will undertake responsibility for all of the services mentioned below. However, understanding the nature of the many services that can be offered will help you determine the most important areas that will be offered by your PMO.

Establish and Support a Document Repository

One of the value propositions to deploying common project management processes is the ability to reuse processes, procedures, templates, prior examples, etc. However, the ability to reuse documentation does not come about like magic. If project managers want to see whether there might be pre-existing material that would help them, they are not going to be expected to contact every other project manager. To facilitate process and document reuse, the PMO needs to establish and manage a Document Repository. This could be as easy as setting up a directory structure that everyone in the organization can access. It might also be more elaborate and multi-functional, like a tool specifically designed for document management. Depending on how you implement this facility, you need to properly set up a classification structure, make sure that only approved information is posted there, make sure the information stays current and relevant and make sure that the facility is actively marketed and utilized by the organization.

Convert Key Learnings to Best Practices

At the end of every project, the project manager, team, client and major stakeholders should get together in an end-of-project meeting to discuss what was planned and what actually happened. At some point in the meeting, you should turn your attention to lessons learned. The lessons should be collected and consolidated in the Document Repository. One problem, however, with lessons learned is that they typically only apply to that one project.

As the PMO collects more and more key learnings, they may start to see patterns emerge in the lessons learned. At some point, lessons learned from projects can be raised from the level of a best practice. A best practice statement implies that the benefit can be gained for all projects, not just the few that reported it.

Coordinating a Common Resource Pool

All companies need to have a process to staff projects. In some companies, the resources are allocated per business unit. In other companies, all of the project people are assigned to one central staff. Since the PMO is a focal point for all project management-related activities, it is the right place to manage these common resource pools. The resource pool could be for project managers only, or it could be for all potential project team members. Creating a common resource pool involves taking a skills inventory of all shared resources and keeping track of when each person will become available from his/her current project. The PMO can then have the information available as new projects are



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ready to start, or the PMO can, in fact, have certain projects started based on the availability of skillsets.

Document Review Service

Document reviews can be offered on a stand-alone basis to help ensure that project managers are utilizing the standard templates as they were intended and that they are being completed clearly and consistently. This service basically just involves project managers sending in project deliverables to receive a quick review and feedback. The PMO is not “approving” the document, but they are providing feedback on the content, format and readability of the specified document.

Defining the Role of Contractors on Projects

Most companies utilize contractors for some portion of their workload. The question that your company must answer is how best to utilize contractors and how best to utilize employees. There is not one answer that fits all companies. Each company and each organization must determine the things that are most important to them and create an overall policy for utilizing contractors within that context. For instance, one company might decide that their business runs on their legacy systems, and they are not going to trust contractors to keep these applications running. Another company may decide that the legacy systems represent the past, and that new projects represent the future. In that company, they may decide to rely on contractors for support, but they may prefer to utilize employees for new projects. Likewise, some companies insist that all senior positions be staffed with employees. Other companies do not have a problem placing contractors in any position where they are short of employees or do not have the right employee available. The PMO can help determine the right policies for your company.

Benchmarking

As your company becomes more sophisticated at utilizing metrics, you might realize that collecting internal data on internal projects is valuable, but can only take you so far. You don't really know how efficient and effective your project delivery is unless you can compare how you deliver projects against other companies. Benchmarking studies (one-time) and benchmarking programs (longer-term) are a way to compare your organization against others. Benchmarking requires that you gather a set of predefined metrics that describe the result of very well-defined processes. The resulting metrics that are captured from other companies, using the same set of processes and definitions, can be used to create benchmarking statistics that allow you to compare your organization against others. This information can be evaluated to determine if there are changes that can be made in your organization to achieve similar results.

Benchmarking is an area that few companies want to try to start on their own. It requires a lot of work, and the processes you define need to be applicable to a range of outside companies. If you are going to benchmark, you are generally going to need to utilize an outside firm that specializes in benchmarking. This company may already have the core set of processes, metrics and benchmarks defined. They can also spend the time to get



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other companies involved, they can conduct the study and they can help interpret the results.

Summary

Many companies are finding that they must build project management capabilities if they are going to meet business challenges in the future. The next important observation is that project management processes should be implemented consistently across the organization. This leads to efficiency and helps to deliver projects even better, faster and cheaper. The next question is to determine how best to identify the common project management processes and make sure that they are leveraged as needed by the entire organization.

Many companies give this responsibility to one or more people in a Project Management Office (PMO). There are many structures for a PMO and many types of services that the PMO can offer. Each organization must first determine the services that are important to them and then create an overall approach for implementation. Since this is a culture change initiative, the effort can be time-consuming and difficult. However, the rewards are also large. If the PMO is established with a clear vision, strong sponsorship and a solid approach, it can be a vehicle for creating a tremendous amount of value for the company.