



TenStep Supplemental Paper

16 April 2004

The PMO Should Perform Audits and Assessments to Validate Progress

The PMO can validate whether all of this work is effective through a combination of project auditing and organization assessments.

Project-Level audits

Many of the services provided by the PMO, such as coaching and training, are designed to build capability and increase skill levels. The auditing service, however, serves two functions.

- You audit to check compliance. It is used to ensure that project managers are using the new project management processes. The results of the project audits will be used as input into the periodic organization assessments.
- Auditing can also be an opportunity for coaching. During the audit, you can help the project manager understand how the methodology is applicable to their project. If project managers are open-minded, a project audit could be an opportunity to learn new things about how the project management processes apply to them.

Project audits are one way for the PMO to validate that the project teams are utilizing the appropriate project management processes. It is one thing to provide training and coaching and have all the appropriate processes and templates defined. It is another thing for the new processes to actually be adopted and utilized by the project teams. If you want to change the culture and make sure that the new processes are sticking, you must make sure that the project teams are utilizing them correctly. The purpose of the auditing session is to determine how well the project manager and project team are utilizing the project management methodology. During the project audit, a member of the PMO asks a series of questions to ensure compliance with the required processes and procedures.

Some companies could utilize consultants in some (or all) of this project management deployment. Project auditing is another service that consultants can execute effectively. Although the internal PMO will handle this service in most companies, project auditing is a stand-alone service that outside parties can also handle effectively. In fact, there are companies that have special expertise in auditing. In some cases, having an outside party perform the audits gives the process an extra air of legitimacy that will cause senior management to pay attention.

Keep the Management Structure Responsible as Well

If your organization is set up with the project managers reporting directly into the PMO, then the adoption of project management processes is within the control of the PMO. However, in most organizations, the project managers continue to report into their functional organizations. In any culture change initiative, middle management plays a key role in overall success or failure. Middle managers can be a huge asset if they are behind the culture change. Unfortunately, they can also be the biggest obstacles to



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overcome if they are not totally on board. (Unfortunately, this is more typical of the general role that middle managers play.)

To help reinforce the responsibilities of the managers, the results of the project audit should be documented and sent back to the project manager, as well as the manager of the project manager. In addition, the results are summarized and sent to the project sponsor, Steering Committee and other management stakeholders. If a team is not using the standard processes, the senior managers and the sponsor ultimately need to ask questions. These questions to the managers are designed to make sure that the middle managers understand the importance of pushing the changes within their organizations.

Don't Audit All Projects

The auditing process can be time-consuming. Just as it is not possible to provide coaching for all projects, it is also not practical to audit all projects. Actually, you don't need to. As was discussed previously, much of the push to implement standard project management processes is going to come from senior and middle managers. If you audit a project in a certain department and it comes out pretty well, it is likely that the other projects in that same area will also come out well, since the functional manager is probably helping with the push. On the other hand, if you audit a project and find the standard procedures are not being followed, it is likely a sign that the manager from that area is not being supportive of the methodology, and other projects in that area will probably have problems as well. Raising visibility of the problem projects should bring organizational pressure to make the proper changes.

Organizational Assessments

Audits are done on a project-by-project basis. However, on a periodic basis (yearly or semi-annually), the PMO should look at the entire organization and assess how well the project management processes are being integrated into the work routine. This is a similar process to what was done at the beginning of the initiative in the Current State Assessment, although the follow-up assessments are not nearly as detailed or rigorous. The assessments can consist of feedback from project audits, interviews with key managers and stakeholders, anecdotal feedback and any metrics that are available. These assessments are compared to the prior assessments to gain a sense for the progress being made. This information is especially interesting to the sponsor and other management stakeholders who need to understand how the implementation is going and whether it is successful or not.

If you are implementing in a large organization, you will probably find that some areas are implementing the processes more effectively than others. For that reason, the assessment needs to be sure to cover all major departments or divisions.

By performing a number of assessments over time, the PMO can gain a sense of whether project management processes are being successfully integrated into the organization. Assessments also offer the opportunity to take corrective actions if the new processes are not being successfully integrated into the organization.

Summary



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It would be nice if you could develop a common methodology, train everyone, and then sit back and let the magic happen. Unfortunately, this rarely happens in a culture change initiative. The PMO must look at this project management implementation in a holistic manner; including following up in certain cases to validate that things are progressing according to plan. On a project level, this verification includes ongoing project audits to validate that project teams are utilizing the new methodology as expected. On a wider basis, the PMO should conduct periodic organization assessments and compare the results against the original Current State Assessment. These comparisons will point out the progress (or lack of progress) that has been made up to that time.