Knowledge Article

The Misconception of the Term "PMO"

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PMO, the global acronym for Project Management Office or Organization, is the project management terminology overused equivalent to what *Synergy* is to any organization looking to foster better teamwork and coordination. "PMO" is also the most misunderstood and, often times, maligned service or function in the project management delivery. If you are reading this and likely affronted from a sudden attack to your understanding of what PMO entails, please stick with me. If you're shaking your head in agreement, please humor me by reading on. It will all make sense shortly without a bunch of annoying acronyms.

PMO is colloquially understood in its simplest form to be a "body shop" of project managers or staff augmentation. While this certainly can be one aspect of the services and demonstrated competencies of a PMO, it is usually the only understanding of the services that a PMO can provide. The "P" can be for Portfolio, Program, or Project which are hierarchical management levels for each type of PMO. The "type" of PMO can be 1) Directive, 2) Controlling, and 3) Supporting or a combination of the three. Please see the chart below for a brief description of the various types of PMO's that can be functionally applied to any organization.

Level	PMO Type	Directive PMO	Integrated Organizational Improvements, Competence Improvements	Controlling PMO	Supporting PMO
0	Enterprise PMO	Strategic Plan Business Plan Portfolio Plan	Enterprise Integration	Monitoring & Controls; Procedures; Roles & Responsibilities; Competence Improvements	Best practices, lessons learned, templates, etc.
1	Portfolio PMO	Portfolio Plan	Portfolio Integration	Portfolio Controls	Same
2	Program PMO	Program Plan	Program Integration	Program Controls	Same
3	Project PMO	Project Plan	Project Integration	Project Controls	Same

Directive PMO: Take control of the portfolio/program/project by directly managing the portfolio/program/ projects. Level of control is high. Example is traditional staff augmentation for project management.
Controlling PMO: Support and require compliance through various means. Level of control is moderate. Examples are adoption of PM frameworks and/or methodologies, use of templates & forms, & governance.
Supporting PMO: Provide a consultative role to portfolios/programs/projects by supplying templates, best practices, training, etc. A repository. Level of control is low.

Effective PMO services can provide so much more. Think, if you will, of a five-dimensional model. I get it, it's difficult and can be confusing, but so too can be the most effective PMO approach. The "X" axis of this model represents the time aspect: the life cycle or phases of a portfolio, program, or project. Those phases include project start, engineering/design planning, procurement, construction, and closeout.

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The "Y" axis of your PMO model represents those core and facilitating management systems of an initiative consisting mostly of:

- Integration
- Health
- Safety
- Security
- Environmental
- Scope
- Time

- Cost
- Quality
- HR
- Communication
- Risk
- Procurement
- Stakeholder

- Financial
- Claims
- Information
- Construction
- Facilitating Disciplines
- Others as required

The "Z" axis of the PMO model represents the performance areas of PM which serves to integrate both the phasing and the management systems. Performance areas include integration of initiation, planning, execution, monitoring & controls, and closeout & transition. The fourth dimension is the application and integration of personal and interpersonal skills which include Leadership and Management; an all too often overlooked component of any portfolio/program/project management effort because it is rarely and effectively applied in project management applications.

Now the "fifth dimension" is the orchestration dimension. It determines the optimum application and utilization of those "tools" in those four (dimension) toolboxes; applying those high return on investment project management devices that provide instant success and improvement. Consider the "scale of 1 to 5" maturity scale and deliverables; determining which is the optimum toolset for each specific customer.

So, in direct violation of my previous aversion to a bevy of acronyms, welcome to OPM or Organizational Project Management. OPM seeks to establish unique (tailored) models that are designed to be optimum for each specific customer requirement(s). Capitalizing on the OPM approach as well as integrating a number of industry standardized systems such as PMI project management, AACE project controls and PM, CMMI maturity models, and a standardized organizational effectiveness structure, Mesa stands prepared to assess, develop, and implement whatever "PMO services" may be required or requested by a client.

The tailored organizational governance model used at Mesa is provided below as an example for OPM implementation.