



## Project Office Do's & Don'ts

*The emergence of Project Offices on the Information Technology (IT) landscape has been driven by need for formal project portfolio management processes, to provide consistent approach to project delivery, improved resource allocation, and cost control. It is also driven by the need to improve the success rate of projects that are continually becoming more complex, as many organizations find themselves faced with the short-term need for project recovery on failing projects.*

*This paper provides insights in implementing project office' best practices, and to how to avoid the common pitfalls and shortcomings many organizations have experienced.*

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## Introduction

As the practice of project management ["PJM"] has been growing, so has the demand for a systematic method of projects implementation. Given the mixed results to date, organizations have acquired and implemented project-scheduling software, sent employees to project management training programs, and have started to demand project management degrees or accreditation in addition to experience. Organizations have started to do something else to enhance their success with project delivery - establish a project management office to support a coherent approach to managing projects across the organization.

The role of a Project Management Office (commonly referred to as "PMO") is quite often confused with that of a Program Management Office (which is also called a PMO). While both are accountable with the delivery of project results, they have two distinct purposes that need to be understood before the appropriate role of the Project Office can be discussed and defined.

### Role of a Program Management Office<sup>i</sup>

Programs are the means of implementing strategy in support of business transformation or infrastructure initiatives **with impact across organizational boundaries**.

Programs usually comprise the management of multiple projects, each charged with facilitating systems development, and organizational/process changes. Within a program, its constituent projects are typically inter-dependent as their outcomes are building blocks to deliver the program's intended goal - **support strategy implementation**. Most programs also require the allocation and coordination of resources from multiple organizational units.

As such, program management **is an alignment process** and goes beyond Project Management Institute's five fundamental process groups of its Book of Knowledge<sup>ii</sup> ("PMBOK") - Initiate, Plan, Execute, Control, and Close. It is both about making sure projects deliver their expected objectives and benefits, but it is also about evaluating options and making the 'right' decisions that will enable project managers to deliver these. The task of defining priorities among stakeholder objectives and identifying alternatives, which will enable project managers to make trade-offs, is part of a program management process.

### Role of a Project Office

In contrast, project management is about delivering a specific set of outcomes with a limited set of resources, within a defined timeframe and budget, many of which are confined to satisfying the needs of an organizational unit. Most projects are not based upon or produce results from other project outcomes, they are independent, and usually there are no trade-offs amongst them as they are focused on satisfying the unique requirements of functional units.

Since project management **is a performing process**, is the role of a Project Office to manage projects or just to oversee that appropriate methods and practices are coherently applied? This is a critical question, which needs to be answered before establishing it.

Since most organizations do not have formalized PJM processes, it is usually left to the whim of the organizational units that sponsor them, and the experience of people they retain to deliver them. Therefore, the application of PJM methods and practices are inconsistent from project to project, and best practices are often ignored due to the urgency and pressure to deliver the project at whatever cost.

When organizations establish project offices, most PO managers make the deadly mistake of trying to secure authority and control over all projects, micromanage, and start meddling and directing the scope and approach employed in their delivery, whether they are knowledgeable in the subject matter or not. Since most projects are conceived to satisfy unique functional needs of organizational units, a wise PO manager leaves the accountability for results to the sponsoring functional unit. Doing otherwise leads to alienation, mistrust, and the eventual demise of the PO manager, leaving the entire organization without a coherent project management culture and processes.

The role of an effective Project Office should be limited to ensure the coherent application of policy, methods, and practices to govern the execution of independent, non-interrelated projects. As such,



the best approach is to use terms such as Project Administration Office (PAO), Project Supervision Office (PSO), or simply Project Office (PO), and not Project Management Office (PMO). This avoids the confusion around the use of the term PMO that usually applies to program management as well as to provide clarity of purpose.

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## **Project Management Components**

In recent years, PMI's PMBOK has been considered the most generally accepted reference. While the PMBOK is not tailored specifically to application development and maintenance of IT projects, it handles them well. The PMBOK lists nine knowledge and discipline areas of projects, which have been widely accepted in the industry:

*Integration Management:* these disciplines include aligning projects with all other activity of the enterprise ensuring that projects are well planned and executed.

*Scope Management:* these disciplines create identifiable boundaries of a project, highlighting the work required, and eliminating work that is not necessary to accomplish the project's objectives.

*Time Management:* these disciplines ensure that projects complete consistently on time. This includes identifying and time boxing all significant activities so those milestones can be appropriately anticipated.

*Cost Management:* these disciplines ensure that all project costs are included, estimated, and managed against an approved budget.

*Quality Management:* these disciplines ensure that project processes are operating satisfactorily against predetermined standards.

*Human Resource Management:* these disciplines ensure that project personnel are effectively utilized.

*Communications Management:* these disciplines ensure that all stakeholders are properly informed of project information relevant to their position in the organization.

*Risk Management:* these disciplines address identifying, analyzing, and taking action upon adverse factors that affect the project from achieving its objectives on time and within budget.

*Procurement Management:* these disciplines ensure that all goods and services required for the projects are obtained fairly and expeditiously under an agreed contract.

For those organizations that need to introduce improvements on any or all of the above project management disciplines, it is recommended to focus their gradual implementation in four stages as follows:

*First Stage* Integration Management.  
*Second Stage* Scope, Time and Cost Management.  
*Third Stage* Risk and Quality Management.  
*Fourth Stage* HR, Communications, and Procurement.

Since projects vary in size, complexity, and risk, the application of a complete set of formal methods and processes is not required for all projects. The Project Office must establish criteria that qualify them for varying degrees of formalization – this should be one of its fundamental roles.

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## **Project Office Accountabilities**

The greatest difference a Project Office can make to an organization is to provide structure and leadership to establish a project management culture and coherent processes. In implementing a Project Office, an organization needs to assign its most experienced project manager, ideally with senior/executive management experience. Management and leadership abilities are fundamental to provide direction and effectively communicate project-related issues in business terms that executives can understand and act upon.

Coordinating the execution of multiple projects requires project managers/leads to work under consistent processes and best practices to provide consistent results. In order to achieve this goal, the accountabilities of a Project Office should include the following:

### **Infrastructure & Culture:**

- Policies
- Methods and best practices
- Reference library & communications
- Software & tools
- PJM documents repository
- Mentoring, training & compensation

### **Administration:**

- Portfolio administration
- Project initiation
- Work authorization
- Resource pool coordination
- Procurement & contracts administration
- Business Benefits administration

### **Performance:**

- Projects performance review & audit
- Project documentation management
- Run-away projects recovery

The following provides a review of the scope involved in the above functional accountabilities.



## **Policies**

Implementing project management culture and processes across an organization, supported by methods and accepted practices that everyone follows is the first step. Enforcing adherence is more difficult. It requires senior management commitment and support to create and maintain a project management environment within the organization.

As such, a corporate policy requiring that all functional units have project managers co-ordinate their projects with the Project Office, and report their status according to defined processes goes a long way toward enforcement.

The Project Office must insist on the use of a minimum set of PJM processes (via checklists) and guidelines, and maintain a focus on process improvement. It is not a process for process sake but a process that focuses on deliverables and results. The project management environment must also provide the foundation for ongoing training and mentoring, a necessary condition for improvement.

## **Methods & Best Practices**

Competent project leaders/managers do not need 400-page PJM process guides. Most projects need checklists, management tools, and techniques that are simple to apply; so making them too complex will cause non-acceptance.

The Project Office has to emphasize that the broad based and consistent application of a basic set of processes will eventually get better project results. To achieve this, the Project Office has to document practices that work based on the results from prior projects and industry wisdom.

The methods and practices applied need to be discussed, selected/developed, and agreed upon for use by all concerned. However, at times it is necessary to impose certain requirements such as content of charters, status reports, time & expenses, which form the foundation for process reviews and audits as discussed later.

## **Reference Library & Communications**

Establishing a Project Office web page containing Project Office information is not sufficient – it must create and maintain a pro-active communication plan. The com-plan has to emphasize the value of a consistent process and lessons learned.

Access to reference information – particularly best practices – must be readily available and constantly updated. The Project Office has to establish a broadcast network to all project managers informing them of new lessons learned, templates, and tools available for their use.

## **Software and Tools<sup>iii</sup>**

The Project Office has to ensure that all project teams have the requisite software and hardware to implement PJM processes consistently. This is essential if the Project Office is to be responsible for supporting multiple projects.

Project management tools need to be consistently applied across PMI's nine knowledge areas. These must be simple tools for complex people. The tools should differentiate between small to complex/large projects so as not to create unnecessary burdens. This simple but effective environment must include essential elements to control the projects, depending on size and complexity, to facilitate the early identification and warning of project delivery issues and impending problems.

## **Documents Repository**

For the Project Office to function effectively, it needs to establish a repository of project management related information and control documentation. A well run office will go one-step further by implementing a document management system with versioning and revision controls.

The repository should be organized in accordance with the nine knowledge disciplines and each discipline in accordance with the five project execution processes – Initiate, Plan, Execute, Control and Close.

- <project>
  - Integration Management
    - Initiate
    - Plan
    - Execute
    - Control
    - Close
  - Scope Management
  - etc.

Tools to be used to satisfy the process requirements must be allocated to the above directories (via shortcuts to the master templates) to ensure that the right and most recent tools are utilized. Defining documents naming conventions and standards is a second step to ensure that the stored documents can be archived, organized, and retrieved in the proper sequence.

## **Mentoring & Training**

The Project Office must secure short-term results and maintain a long-term vision to justify its existence and provide value to the organization.

The Project Office is initially concerned with project manager identification, the communication and



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implementation of consistent processes and practices and then, with their development. The implementation of a project management culture is a long-term vision that has to get underway early.

To maintain a consistent project management approach, the Office should be concerned with the development of existing and future project managers. Identifying the project managers and being concerned with their development can be another politically explosive issue, particularly in organizations where the project managers belong to the business units. It can also become a turf issue with personnel and training departments.

Recently, there has been a greater awareness that "accidental" project managers are too costly to the organization's effectiveness and financial stability. Where a gap exists between training programs and workplace reality, organizations are turning to mentoring. The Project Office is ideally suited to provide mentoring support. Mentors are used to help project managers achieve the steep project management learning curve in a shorter time.

Mentoring fulfills the individual's development need and reinforces the training program via informal and formal sessions. The informal mentoring session is a one on one discussion with the project manager. A formal mentoring session would be similar to a class to discuss a certain subject that seemed to be a problem on everyone's project, usually delivered in "lunch-box" sessions.

The mentor goal is to reinforce the training and project management process. The mentor should evaluate these project managers periodically, based on the observations and analysis of progress reports to management. The Project Office must be watchful that the mentor is not perceived as a spy because of the information captured through progress status reporting. A mentor is supposed to help not to judge!

Periodically, the Project Office should ask the project managers to report on the effectiveness of the mentoring and on areas for improvement.

The Project Office can play a greater role in project manager development in small organizations that do not have large personnel and training departments. It can fulfill the important role of promoting and facilitating project management certification training to employees in the organization.

In organizations where training departments exist, the Project Office can carry out this role by working with the training department to develop courses that would be offered through the training department; alternatively, the Project Office can conduct the courses or identify and select outside vendors that would develop and deliver the course material.

Fortune magazine has identified project management as a career path of choice. As such, the Project Office should also promote appropriate compensation levels, commensurate with the responsibilities they have and market practices. The organization must be aware of the difficulties and challenges a project manager has to go through, and establish appropriate compensation levels and rewards.

Tom Peters, in his book Liberation Management, suggested that project management is a key to organizational survival and success into the [next] millennium. Project Offices can help organizations to assure that, as they struggle to survive and thrive in the turbulence, they can get it right!

### Portfolio Administration

One of the primary roles of a Project Office is to monitor the projects status, expenditures and earned value of all projects under its watch. It should not be the role of the PO to make decisions in regards what projects need to be funded or terminated - that should be the role of a cross-functional projects portfolio review committee.

The first challenge in developing a project portfolio process is finding out how many projects exist and how they are initiated. Assessing how project selection is presently accomplished and complementing the process with best practices is a prudent way to start.

Project	PJM Status Assessment	Scope Changes	Financial Status	Schedule & Deliverables	Team Resources	Sponsor Expectations	Management & Bus Unit Support	Risks / Inter-dependencies	Other Issues
Project 1	Y	Y	Y	G	G	G	G	G	G
Project 2	Y	G	Y	Y	Y	G	G	G	G
Project 3	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	Y	G
Project 4	R	Y	R	Y	Y	Y	G	G	Y
Overall Status	R	Y	R	Y	Y	Y	G	Y	Y

Figure 1 – Portfolio Performance Status

The Project Office should provide administrative support and its leader should chair quarterly project portfolio review meetings, to report to senior management on its status. For these meetings, project data is gathered and summarized, and each project manager then presents the data to the portfolio review committee, whose purpose is to verify status against approved plans and determine if there is a need to conduct a more formal review or audit.

Traditionally, project schedule, budget, and cost variances are tracked and used to project success based on the industry-standard concept of the triple constraints - cost, time, and quality. Projects should also be examined against an



extended set of key performance indicators to provide an overall view of how the projects are doing. The best reports are those that provide a graphical representation of the status of the projects (as shown in Figure 1), supported with detailed and appropriate status information that back up each assessment.

The program completion status should be reported on the basis of the completion of status gates and not based on the traditional measurements of effort against plan or dollars spent against budget.

Project	Initiate	Plan	Resource	Requirements	Design	Build	Transition	Close	Evaluate	% Complete
Gate Weight:	1%	4%	2%	10%	20%	35%	20%	5%	3%	100%
Project 1	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	100.0%
Project 2	C	C	C	C	C	C	S			82.0%
Project 3	C	C	C	S						12.0%
Project 4	C	S								3.0%
Overall Status	1.0%	3.5%	1.5%	6.3%	10.0%	17.5%	7.5%	1.3%	0.8%	49.3%

Figure 2 – Portfolio Progress Status

The above chart provides a simplified example of the status of a program by assigning 50% of the weighted value of a gate when the work for the gate is in progress and 100% when it has been deemed closed and accepted by the stakeholders. In reality, not all projects are equal and they may have a different weighting regarding their relative complexity, thus providing a better and more accurate status on all approved projects.

The mix of the entire project portfolio should provide the organization with a composite view of all projects and their combined ROI. This is particularly useful in times of financial and resource constraints, ensuring that projects with the highest ROI remain fully resourced, avoiding the traditional approach of bleeding all of them to death by a thousand cuts.

With adequate information about the projects status, the portfolio review committee is in a position to recommend the termination or delay a project and seek other opportunities. Reducing the number of active projects in the portfolio by delaying or terminating them in times of crisis can have a positive affect on other projects and enhance the Project Office's reputation, providing it remains neutral.

### Project Initiation

*"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure"*

Many organizations are incapable of completing projects within the triple constraints, and runaway projects are the norm rather than the exception.

Projects do not fail overnight - they normally fail a day at a time. It is safe to say that if the project begins correctly it has a better chance of success. As such, the Project Office must focus on the projects that are starting to avoid future failures and the need for recovery. Often the project's off course drift is so slight that it is difficult to recognize. The Project Office doesn't want to continue to chase symptoms so it must get to the root cause of project failures. Therefore, the Project Office has to start assisting new project start-ups immediately to gain a reputation of valued service.

The Project Office can deliver the most value by managing the appropriate initiation of projects. This is the role where the word "manage" is used to indicate a level of authority and accountability given to the Project Office to ensure the projects are properly initiated. For years, organizations have exhibited the tendency to launch projects without conducting due diligence; ensuring that the business case, project plan, charter, and resources are allocated and accounted for prior to the project's start.

Initially, the Project Office must install a simple project management process and checklists for all new projects, including estimating and risk management. The Project Office must encourage the functional sponsors and project managers to use the minimum essential tools and techniques to define and control the project, thus facilitate the early warning of impending problems. Tools to control the project and maintain vigilance are developed during the planning stages of a project and reviewed at each subsequent status meeting. Nothing developed in the project planning stage should be ignored or discarded during project execution. The key to success is an emphasis on simplicity and the minimum essential tools to monitor the project execution.

One of the major causes of project failure is poor and inconsistent estimating. The use of the work breakdown structure (WBS), with bottom up estimating, provides a simple and desirable means of applying consistent estimating to a project. Along with an estimating process, the Project Office must install a simple risk identification process that compares the probability of an occurrence against the consequence of that occurrence. The mere thinking of project risk at start-up is helpful. The use of the "RAID" acronym is a simple reminder to get project managers to start identifying Risk, Assumptions, Issues, and Deliverables. Additionally, the Project Office should take the lead and investigate software



packages that fulfill the organization's estimating and risk management needs.

### **Work Authorization Tracking**

The Project Office should be the keeper of the project portfolio authorizations for expenditure (AFE). Once a project has been commissioned and funded, project expenditures approved by the project manager/sponsor are tracked against the AFE via the projects monthly status reporting process by providing:

- Project name and AFE
- Sponsor information
- Original budget
- Budget changes (from change controls)
- Current budget
- Actual expenditures in effort and money
- Forecast
- Variance, and
- Percent complete

This process, combined with the portfolio administration tracking process, should provide early-warning signs of trouble based on the run rate the project is incurring against budget.

### **Resource Pool Coordination**

The biggest challenge facing most organizations today is allocating skilled personnel to get projects executed in accordance to approved plan. This situation is often exacerbated by the demands placed on the organizational units' subject matter experts (SMEs), and the increase in the number of projects demanding their involvement.

On most projects, the largest expenses are related to personnel costs, which may contribute to the staffing difficulty. Numerous studies have shown that about 75% of an IT related project budget is personnel. Although personnel costs may not be as high in projects like building and airplane construction, it is nonetheless significant and worthy of better control.

Matrix management has been offered as a cure for scarce personnel resources but it has significant drawbacks. Matrix management is difficult to apply in a multiple-project environment without centralized coordination of personnel [SME] resources. Compounding this problem is the finding that about 40% of the IT organizations were working on projects not relevant to supporting the business goals and priorities.

In summary, many organizations have a shortage of personnel resources relative to the number of resources needed to work on projects. These facts indicate a need for better resource allocation control. In a multiple-project environment, the problem is more severe. Competition for scarce personnel resources can become very keen. There will be examples of resource hoarding by some

project managers while other project managers are scurrying to find the right skills or simply doing without. Corporate politics can often blur the real issue and many turf battles can erupt.

The Project Office can be of great assistance to the organization by taking a central view and coordination of the personnel [SME] resources that are available or assigned for project work. Getting an understanding of all the skill and competence of all resources that may be available for project work is a challenging task in most organizations. It will also prevent the situation of over allocating the SME's time and affect their day-to-day responsibilities.

The Project Office is in a good position to persuade senior management that a centrally administered and coordinated project resource pool is a prudent decision to prioritize the allocation and ensure the success of all approved projects. This information is also essential in an effective project portfolio administration.

### **Procurement & Contracts**

Most functional units and project managers do not have the experience or competence to implement effective procurement and contract administration processes, for human and material resources required by projects.

While it is a common and desirable practice to have the project sponsors assume the leadership for conducting contractual negotiations for project resources, often, important contractual documents get misplaced or lost, preventing the organization from having an appropriate understanding and handling of its financial and legal encumbrances.

The Project Office has an opportunity to provide meaningful value to the organization by working with the finance department to provide focused administration for procurement and associated contracts, complementing the work authorization and administration process. The office should be limited to implementing processes for evaluating proposals and not be involved in making the decisions – this is the role again of the functional units. The same goes for the approval of invoices and expenditures.

### **Business Benefits Administration**

Most organizations are notorious for not tracking and documenting the actual benefits derived from projects implementation against those outlined in the business cases that justified their approval.

The Project Office is in the best position to implement processes aimed at tracking benefits realization, as documented in the original project charters. The process for tracking benefits on every project should be formalized at the project's initiation stage. However, the project sponsors



should be the ones accountable for capturing, documenting, and demonstrating benefits realized by projects, against the original business case.

### Performance Reviews & Audit

*"What we learn from lessons learned is that we don't learn from lessons learned"*

Experience indicates that very few organizations use lessons learned properly, resulting in continuous mistakes.

Project performance reviews and audits are different from project status and project portfolio reviews. The Project Office should be the proponent of project reviews and audits as ways to improve project delivery and performance. They are also used to provide early warning of potential disasters.

Informal project reviews should begin during the planning stage and continue throughout the project via weekly status reports. During the planning stage, a review team composed of experts that are not directly involved in the project can provide valuable insight and guidance. Formal project reviews and audits are conducted more frequently during the vulnerable early stages of the project, if it is not making the expected progress as documented in the plan and status reports. The effort associated with formal reviews and audits should be included in the project plan, since they will take time away from the project, and have impact on project staff time, schedule, and costs.

Formal reviews are not find-fault-hunts but are directed at monitoring and confirming the health status of all projects, and to assist the project manager where problems may be developing. As the project matures, the reviews can be changed from monthly to quarterly intervals.

Audits, on the other hand, are in-depth reviews used to examine the adherence and appropriate and complete application of approved methods and practices. An audit should be done at the end of all projects, and lessons learned from these audits should be shared among other project managers and used to update the project management process, the training curriculum, and the mentoring program. Additionally, the project office should post the lessons learned on their web-based home page.

### Project Documentation Management

When projects are completed, they typically leave a vast array of hardcopy and electronic documents, which, more often than not, are archived and

eventually lost – also, a lot of irrelevant trash clogging servers' space.

The Project Office can perform a vital role of allocating resources to select and classify documentation that must be kept, archiving it and indexing it for future use, as part of the closing process of a project. This effort should tie-in with the contracts administration to ensure that no loose ends are left, as the projects are wound-down.

### Run-away Projects Recovery

The Project Office should not interfere with the decisions and execution of any project unless it is showing signs that it requires intervention to rectify deficiencies identified via reviews, audits or the infamous office gossip.

To get immediate results, the first action that should be taken by the Project Office, with support of the project sponsor, is reining in runaway projects. Getting a runaway project back on track can enhance the reputation of the Project Office. If the organization is in denial, look for warning signs of runaway projects. Some common warning signs are listed below.

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| <p><b>Run-away Project Signs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Uninvolved business sponsor</i></li> <li>• <i>No steering/stakeholder committee</i></li> <li>• <i>The scope cannot be agreed upon</i></li> <li>• <i>Poor reporting &amp; communications</i></li> <li>• <i>Infrequent status meetings</i></li> <li>• <i>Frequent scope changes</i></li> <li>• <i>Consistently late deliverables</i></li> <li>• <i>Abrupt/constant scheduling changes</i></li> <li>• <i>Too many team meetings</i></li> <li>• <i>Project plan not being followed</i></li> <li>• <i>Consistent red flags in status reports</i></li> <li>• <i>Resourcing, stakeholder support issues</i></li> <li>• <i>Top performers leaving, low morale</i></li> </ul> |
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Figure 3 – Signs of Project Trouble

Once the project office has identified signs of a runaway project, the next step is to provide help. If there is more than one runaway project, the project office should focus on the one with the highest priority. Normally a project that supports a critical business objective commands most of senior management's attention.

Not all project managers welcome help. Simply because a project is in trouble does not mean that the project needs intervention or the project manager needs or wants help. The Project Office must be aware of all circumstances, evidence, atmosphere, and situation plaguing a runaway



project. The way the Project Office intervenes can have serious consequences to its future effectiveness, and the morale of the team that, ultimately, needs to deliver the project.

While project managers in run-away projects often believe that their problems are temporary and will soon be resolved, pride is often a contributor to a project's pending failure. Arrogance on both parts can have a more detrimental effect than the remedy. Particularly when the Project Office assumes that the project is beyond recovery and the project must be thoroughly restructured and re-planned without giving the opportunity to the team to develop a plan rectify it.

Given the green light to proceed, the Project Office can help a runaway project in a number of ways.

1) The Project Office conducts an "independent" assessment and provides the results to the project sponsor and project manager for implementation. Although appealing and less threatening, this approach seldom works because the project team does not own the solution to the problem, is already demoralized, and more often than not is already overtaxed.

2) The Project Office provides direct assistance in the form of facilitators or mentors to work with the project sponsor, stakeholders and the project team to review the issues and to jointly identify and formulate an acceptable outcome, recovery action plan, and if necessary to assist in the plan implementation. The recovery plan must be scheduled along with the other project tasks. Unfortunately, while this approach builds buy-in it introduces further delays to the expected delivery date and may cause more consternation with stakeholders, unless they have accepted it.

3) The hardest thing to do is to realize that an acceptable outcome and plan cannot be formulated to meet stakeholder expectations and come to the realization that the project may have to be stopped at some point to regroup, possibly restructure, and re-start it altogether. The decision to stop the project should rest on the shoulders of the portfolio review committee.

Recovering a project is more an art than science and the PO must exercise utmost care and concern, particularly if the reputations and livelihood of those involved may be impacted. What may look like a good move can be a reputation killer in the end.

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## **Project Office Deadly Moves!**

The worst mistakes made in establishing project management/support offices are:

4) **If you build it, they will come!** - The Project Office is implemented as a "center of excellence" and limited to provide project support

on demand, with no teeth or accountability for project performance monitoring. This "field of dreams" approach eventually leads to its demise because no one can prove its value.

5) **My way or the highway!** - The project office has a centralized grip on project management and control, whereby all project managers report to and are accountable to the project office, instead of the organizational unit that sponsors the project. Centralized project management may give a lot of control to the PO, but the reality is that centralized control leads to political upheaval with the inevitable effect of having the best leave the projects leaving the PO with the blame.

6) **The PO has all the answers!** - The manager of the project office or its consultants start directing, mandating, critiquing, meddling, and getting involved in forcing decisions about the project scope, and approach to its implementation, rather than leaving it to the project sponsor and stakeholders. Who is the one accountable for results?

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**PRSL's Perform™** Program & Project Management Methods and Practices provide a comprehensive set of management tools (from basic to advanced) that allow a project/program manager to track a project or program status with minimal effort.

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## **References**

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- <sup>ii</sup> Project Management Institute - Book of Knowledge – 2000 Edition (<http://www.pmi.org>)
- <sup>iii</sup> PRSL's Perform Method provides over 170 templates to support the management of projects from basic to advanced - [http://www.prsl.ca/method\\_toolkit.html](http://www.prsl.ca/method_toolkit.html).