



# Building a PMO that Works for Your Organization



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## Cara Henegar

VP, National Project Delivery Leader, Verdantas



- Joined Verdantas in 2017
- Prior to moving to operations, progressed from Civil Engineer → Project Manager → Senior Project Manager
- Committed to continuously improving project management practices to stay agile, support seamless team integration during heavy acquisitional growth, enhance profitability, and foster a people-centric culture.



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## Jordan Volk

Principal Associate and Regional Discipline Leader -  
Water/Wastewater, Colliers Engineering & Design



- With CED since 2018
- PMP since 2014
- Involved in the CED PM training programs
- Lead creation of a proposal pricing tool



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## Purpose and Learning Objectives

**Purpose of Today's Session:** To empower participants with the knowledge, tools, and strategies needed to design, implement, and align a Project Management Office (PMO) that drives organizational success.

### Learning Objectives

- Recognize the strategic value of a PMO
- Apply frameworks for designing and implementing an effective PMO
- Define key roles and responsibilities within a PMO structure
- Develop strategies to align the PMO with organizational goals
- Gain practical tools and insights to apply in your own organization



## Session Overview

- Understand the core purpose and functions of a PMO.
- Identify essential elements for building a successful PMO framework.
- Define critical PMO roles and responsibilities for organizational clarity.
- Recognize how to align a PMO with business strategy and goals.
- Learn best practices and common pitfalls in PMO implementation.
- Leave with actionable steps to start or improve a PMO within your organization.





**Good management is the art of making problems so interesting and their solutions so constructive that everyone wants to get to work and deal with them.**

**— Paul Hawken**

## What is a PMO?

A Project Management Office (PMO) is a dedicated organizational unit that:

- ✓ Standardizes project management practices
- ✓ Provides guidance, tools, and resources
- ✓ Ensures governance and oversight
- ✓ Supports successful project delivery across the organization

(Source: PMI, APM)



# Why Establish a PMO?

## Standardization

Establish common processes, templates, and methodologies across projects.

## Improved Governance

Strengthen oversight, compliance, and risk management.

## Resource Management

Optimize allocation of people, budget, and tools across projects.

## Strategic Alignment

Ensure projects directly support organizational goals and priorities.

**Organizations with a PMO report 38% more projects meeting original goals and business intent compared to those without one.**

— PMI, Pulse of the Profession Report



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# Types of PMOs

## Enterprise Project Management Office (EPMO)

An EPMO operates at the corporate level and sets standards, processes, and delivery methods for projects across the entire organization. It has maximum strategic influence and ensures alignment between projects and business priorities. Often found in large organizations.

## Departmental PMO

Supports multiple projects within a single department (e.g., IT, Finance). It integrates initiatives of varying sizes and complexity, often handling both short-term and multi-year projects. Focused on consistency within a business unit.

## Individual PMO

Built to support a single large or complex project. Sets basic standards and manages planning and control activities. This type is often temporary and project-specific, providing structure to high-stakes or long-duration efforts.

## Supportive PMO

Acts as a consultative function, offering guidance, templates, and best practices. Often reactive rather than directive. Best suited for organizations starting their PMO journey or smaller firms needing minimal oversight.

## Controlling PMO

Enforces compliance by requiring specific frameworks, templates, and tools. Often conducts audits and mandates process adherence. Known for "top-down" control, this type is common in AEC firms where governance is essential.

## Community of Practice/Excellence

An informal or transitional step toward a formal PMO. Focuses on knowledge sharing, tools, templates, and collaborative learning. Helps establish foundational PM practices before formalizing into a full PMO.



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# Characteristics of a Successful PMO

## ✓ Clear Vision and Mission

- Establishes a clear purpose that aligns with organizational goals.
- Communicates the PMO's value proposition across all levels of the organization.

## ✓ Executive Support

- Backed by strong leadership commitment and advocacy.
- Ensures access to resources, budget, and authority necessary for success.

## ✓ Defined Metrics

- Tracks and measures project performance using clear KPIs (e.g., on-time delivery, budget adherence, stakeholder satisfaction).
- Provides transparent reporting to stakeholders to demonstrate PMO value.

## ✓ Flexibility to Evolve

- Adapts frameworks and processes based on organizational growth and changes.
- Continuously improves by gathering feedback and responding to new challenges or strategic shifts.



# Building a PMO Framework

1 Recognize the Need

2 Define Your Foundation

3 Defining roles and Responsibilities

4 Aligning PMO with Organizational Strategy

5 Launch with Intention





# PMO Framework Key Components (Deep Dive)

## Governance

- Defines how decisions are made and who holds authority.
- Establishes policies, procedures, and oversight structures.
- Ensures compliance, accountability, and risk management.



## Governance – Matrix of Authority (MOA)

What is the MOA?

- Formal governance framework that defines who has decision rights at each level of the organization
- Clarifies approval authority, escalation paths, and accountability across projects and portfolios
- Aligns project decision-making with risk, financial exposure, and strategic impact

*The MOA gives clarity on when escalation is required and PMs confidence to act.*



## Governance – Authority Ladder

PM – Within Contract & Standard Risk

Area Leader – Moderate Risk or Fee Impact

Region Leader – High Risk or Non-Standard Terms

Executive Leader – Material Risk/ Strategic Impact



## Governance – Matrix of Authority (MOA)

Decision Area	Project Manager (PM)	Area Leader	Region Leader	Executive Leadership
Contract Execution	Execute contracts up to \$250K using standard templates	Approve contracts up to \$1M or higher client risk	Approve large/complex contracts	Strategic clients or material firm risk
Change Orders	Approve COs up to \$250K, within scope & margin	Approve COs exceeding PM limits or impacting margin	Approve major scope expansions	COs with strategic or reputational risk
Write-Offs/Write-Ups	Minor corrections within tolerance	Moderate financial impact	Significant project recovery actions	Material write-offs or trend exceptions
Project Reserves	Identify and recommend reserves	Approve reserves within area limits	Approve large or escalating reserves	Firm-level exposure decisions
Non-Standard Contract Terms	Not authorized	Review and recommend	Approve elevated risk terms	Approve material deviations
Indemnification/Liability Caps	Not authorized	Not authorized	Approve limited deviations	Approve significant deviations
Insurance/COI Exceptions	Flag and escalate	Review & recommend	Approve minor exceptions	Approve major exceptions or waivers
Fee or Scope Adjustments	Internal reallocations only	Client-facing adjustments	High-impact delivery changes	Strategic concessions
Project Close-Out	Certify technical completion	Approve financial close-out	Close-out with unresolved risk	Close-out with material exposure
Escalation Triggers	Identify issues	Act when tolerance exceeded	Act when risk is high	Act on strategic or material exposure



## Governance – Matrix of Authority (MOA)

### PMO Value Add

- Acts as the system owner of the MOA
- Trains PMs and leaders on how to use it correctly
- Monitors adherence and identifies patterns of risk or exception
- Uses MOA data to inform portfolio-level governance and leadership decisions





## Methodology

- Standardizes the project management approach across all projects.
- Defines project lifecycle stages (initiation, planning, execution, closure).
- Introduces consistent practices such as Agile, Waterfall, or Hybrid models.



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## Created PM training program on CED project lifecycle

- Designed for newly promoted PM's as well as PM's coming from other firms
- Created with accounting based on our financial system



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## Tools and Templates

- Provides standardized templates for project plans, risk logs, status reports, etc.
- Selects and implements project management software (e.g., MS Project, Asana, Jira).
- Promotes efficiency, consistency, and ease of reporting.



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## Web Based Proposal Pricing Tool

- Integrates with our financial system
- Allows collaboration between divisions on proposals
- Approximates profit based on labor costs and overhead
- Ability to add scope per task to help build letter proposal



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## Performance Metrics

- Identifies key success indicators (KPIs) such as on-time delivery, budget adherence, quality, stakeholder satisfaction.
- Creates dashboards and regular reports to track PMO and project health.
- Uses data to drive continuous improvement and justify PMO value.

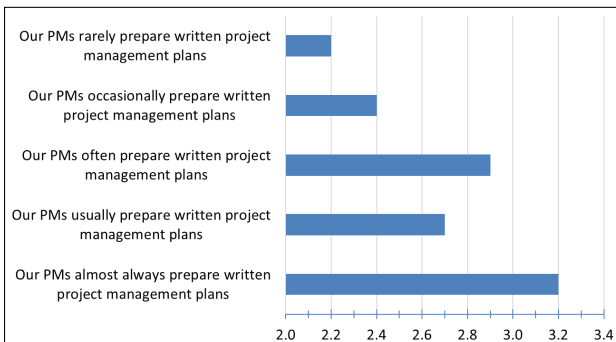


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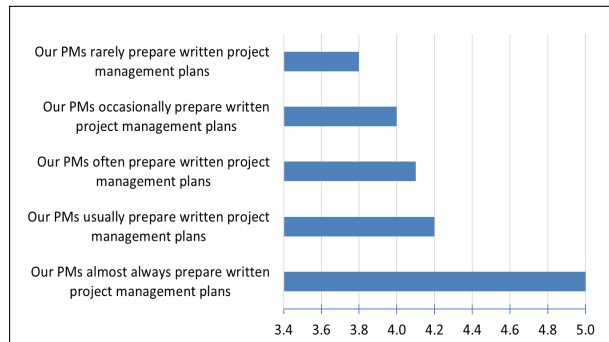
## PMs Who Prepare PMPs Get Much Better Budget Performance

## ...and They Have Happier Clients

Average Budget Satisfaction



Average Client Satisfaction



Source: PSMJ study of 106 A/E firms' project management practices

PSMJ Resources, Inc.



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## Most PMs Do No Formal Risk Management. But...

### PMs Who Help Clients Manage Their Project Risks Have Happier Clients

#### Average Client Satisfaction



### PMs Who Manage Their Firm's Risks Have Better Financial Performance

#### Average Budget Satisfaction



Source: Recent PSMJ survey of best project management practices

PSMJ Resources, Inc.



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## Common Pitfalls When Setting Up a PMO

- **Lack of Leadership Buy-in:** Without executive support, the PMO struggles to gain authority and resources.
- **Overcomplicating Processes:** Heavy, rigid processes can discourage project teams.
- **Poor Change Management:** Resistance to new practices can derail adoption efforts.
- **Unclear Value Proposition:** If the PMO's purpose isn't obvious, it will be seen as bureaucratic.
- **Failure to Adapt:** Organizations evolve—static PMOs become irrelevant.
- **Ignoring Organizational Culture:** Failing to align with company culture creates friction.
- **Inadequate Resource Allocation:** Understaffing or underfunding the PMO limits its effectiveness.



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## Best Practices for Long-Term PMO Success

- **Conduct Regular Reviews:** Assess PMO performance and adjust as needed.
- **Engage Stakeholders Continuously:** Communicate regularly and involve stakeholders in decision-making.
- **Adapt to Organizational Change:** Evolve PMO structures, processes, and tools as business needs change.
- **Promote PMO Wins:** Publicize successful project outcomes and demonstrate the PMO's value.
- **Develop Talent:** Invest in training and upskilling for PMO staff and project teams.



## Recap

- PMOs are vital for standardizing and aligning project success with business strategy.
- Effective PMOs have strong leadership support, clear frameworks, and measurable outcomes.
- Flexibility and continuous improvement are critical for long-term success.
- Avoid common pitfalls — stay adaptable and engage stakeholders throughout the journey.
- Start small but strategic: early wins build long-term credibility.





# QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION



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