

# Strategic Evolution of the Project Management Office

*Sensei*





# Contents

Overview .....	3
Key takeaways .....	4
Why PMOs are becoming more important than ever .....	5
Time to transform the traditional PMO approach.....	6
Enabling the strategic PMO .....	8
Where to now – roadmap to strategically evolve your PMO .....	13
Demonstrating PMO value & applying OKRs .....	15
Summary .....	18
About us .....	19
References .....	19



# Overview

Traditionally, the role of the Project Management Office (PMO) has been to establish a set of standards and best practices to ensure efficient project delivery for the organisation. Whilst in today's environments we are seeing that evolved PMOs are taking the next step and evolving themselves to support the business in achieving various organisational goals. In fact, Gartner predicts that by 2025, 75% of all PMO value measures will be based on strategic business value, rather than on project execution efficiency.

Though there are some PMOs that have been able to mature and evolve their strategic capabilities, enabling them to facilitate the organisational agility needed to achieve business objectives at speed, many traditional PMOs are struggling to close the gap between what their PMO is doing and what their organisation is expecting of them.

The purpose of this White Paper is to dive deeper into why transforming your traditional PMO approach may be one of the best steps forward for your PMO and how you can plan for the future and evolve your PMO into the strategic business partner your organisation needs.



## 75%

Gartner predicts that by 2025, 75% of all PMO value measures will be based on strategic business value, rather than on project execution efficiency.



# Key takeaways



Increased adoption of agile delivery practices and the disruption of digital transformations pose the biggest challenges for PMOs to date. But there has never been a greater opportunity to prove to organisations why they are so valuable.



PMOs are challenged to prove their value to their organisation. It is critical that a PMO provides clarity on the type of PMO needed and its ongoing focus, responsibilities and deliverables.



Traditional PMOs are limited by their approaches and tools and need to adapt to a more dynamic protocol to achieve desired growth while adding value to the rest of the business.



Evolved and valued PMOs advise leaders on which projects to undertake based on strategic objectives, resource capacity, risk, and other factors, and support execution to those objectives.



When evolving a PMO, the PMO leader must maintain and nurture strategic partnerships. Without the strong influence and guidance of business leaders, a directive PMO cannot evolve to the desired, dynamic state.



Many PMOs are now implementing Objectives and Key Results (OKRs), as a tool for measuring project management practices against business outcomes that are vital to the organisation's success.





# Why PMOs are becoming more important than ever

The often mysterious and underappreciated PMOs have been a staple of many organisations since the 80s and have responsibility for managing one of the most difficult challenges within any organisation; the need to report on and standardise the delivery of the entire project-portfolio for senior managers and executives.

In today's business climate, with the recent shift towards increased adoption of agile delivery practices and the disruption of digital transformations, PMOs now face their biggest challenges yet. But at the same time, there has never been such a great opportunity to prove to organisations why they are so valuable.

With the growing need to manage dispersed workforces and respond to changing business needs, a correctly structured PMO can add value to the organisation by achieving the benefits listed.

Today, PMOs are often expected to guide organisations successfully through the development of innovative products and services, digital and Agile transformations, changes in priorities, shifting demands, and much more.

These strategic capabilities can only be achieved by PMOs that are dynamic and flexible. As traditional PMOs are limited with their approaches and tools, they really need to adapt and evolve to achieve their desired growth and value-add to the rest of the business.

- 1. Ability to align project spend to strategic goals and communicate this to the wider business.**
- 2. Capability to determine and prioritise high level initiatives against organisational objectives.**
- 3. Efficiently assist execution teams to provide consistent and timely outcomes (projects, programs & BAU work).**
- 4. Embed compliance with corporate governance and provide accurate data to executives.**
- 5. Pivot quickly and effectively to meet changing business needs.**
- 6. Effectively evaluate the success of initiatives, providing best practices and standards for all future initiatives.**
- 7. Focus on achieving strategic goals, providing tangible, repeatable, long-term benefits to the business.**





# Time to transform the traditional PMO approach

Digital technologies and the accelerated pace of change across the business world are disrupting and transforming organisations, impacting their structures, their services, and their business models. PMO's are equally affected by these changes. According to the global non-profit organisation the Project Management Institute (PMI) the impact of technology on PMOs is vast and they need to keep pace with organisational change to remain relevant and value-adding.

Traditionally, an organisation would update its operating-model design once every 3 to 5 years. In a digital world, organisations are doing so more frequently and expect things to change on a regular basis. As per PMI research, more than 55% of PMO directors say the charter for their PMO has changed in the past five years. Traditional PMOs that have focused on overseeing the tactical activities of a program, project or portfolio, now face more reporting, more paperwork, and more meetings.

Unfortunately, many traditional PMOs fall short of their potential with this pace of change as they are stuck in a Directive PMO approach. They are not connected to the strategic direction of the organisation and find themselves lumbered with a traditional administrative role preventing delivery of real strategic value.



## 55%

PMI research shows that more than 55% of PMO directors say the charter for their PMO has changed in the past five years.



## Traditional PMOs are missing out on:



Strategic partnership  
with business  
leadership.



Collaboration and  
consistent communication  
between top management  
and the PMOs.



Top-to-bottom  
understanding of key  
business objectives and  
targets.



A structured approach to  
determine priorities and  
focuses.



The ability to quickly  
respond to changes.



Affirmation of PMOs'  
business value in the  
eyes of management.

Gartner advises traditional PMOs to “Modernize their use of enabling technology by introducing new technologies for portfolio management and execution – ones that promote strategic portfolio management decision making and promote adaptive project and work execution.” It is critical that at the heart of any project management structure, there is a PMO leader who understands the ever-developing landscape in which the PMO operates, and they are willing to do what it takes to evolve their PMO.

So how can a PMO leader evolve their PMO? How do we enable PMOs to be a proactive, strategic function that aligns to the goals of its organisation? What can a PMO do to support the achievement of business value and adaptive, continuous, and compliant delivery?

# Enabling the strategic PMO

The need to adapt to the accelerating pace of business environment changes has led to significant change from the perspective of project management. Rather than being departmental or functional initiatives, transformation projects tend to impact across many areas of the organisation and are closely tied up with the organisational strategy. This results in a need for these projects to be managed in line with strategic goals.

Once strategically aligned, the PMO is in an excellent position to ensure that project prioritisation is effective, and the right work is being delivered. It is likely that no other function of the organisation has this level of oversight and understanding of impacts to achieve this effectively. This helps the organisation to act efficiently with its project investments and respond to changing circumstances quickly.

So we know transforming your PMO is not only about your PMO surviving, but ensuring you are consistently evolving the PMO to provide ongoing value to your organisation as strategic needs and goals change. To determine the steps you need to take to advance your PMO, you need to first understand how your PMO currently operates and create the vision and roadmap for its evolution.



Today's PMOs need to be agile, focused on business outcomes and in tune with the organisation's overall strategy. An evolved PMO plays a critical role in ensuring an organisation is ready for any change the world throws at it and can adapt project activities quickly to meet these needs.





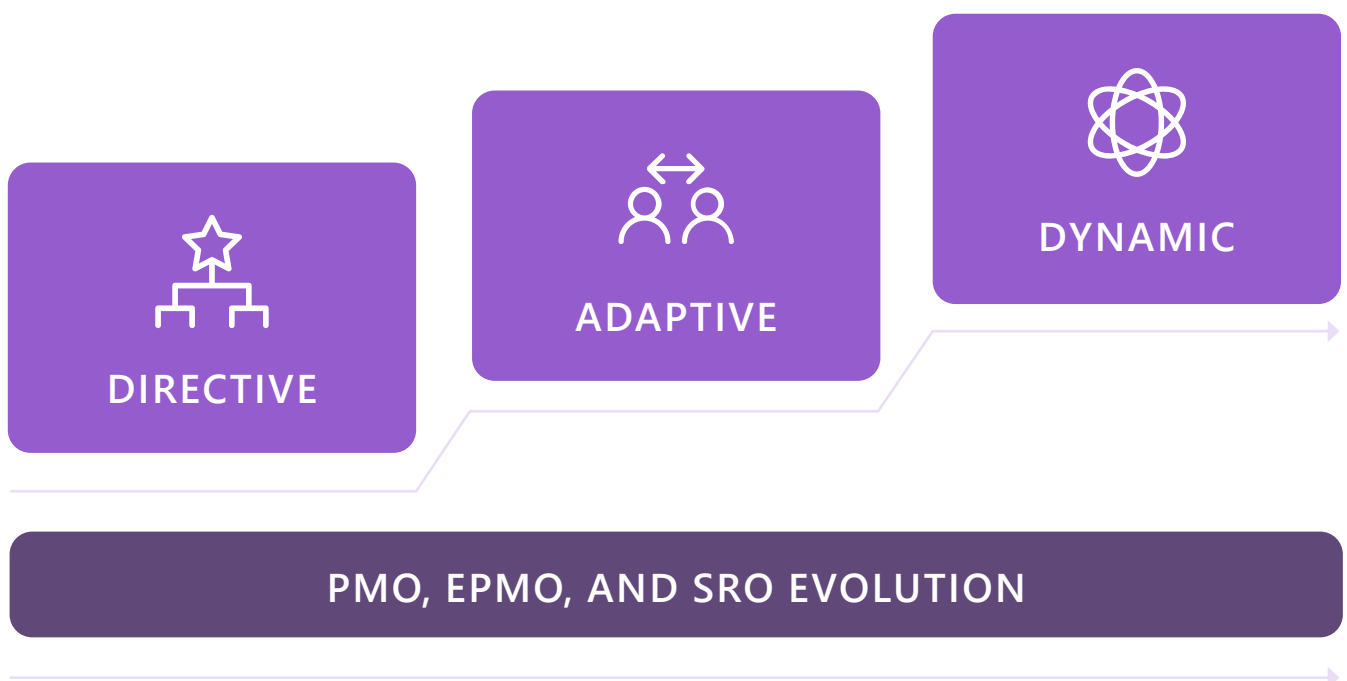
# Stages of PMO strategic evolution

A PMO is typically created within an organisation to address a few specific issues, often focusing on implementing basic project management processes, introducing simple tools, and aiding the professional growth and competency of its project managers. As it evolves, a PMO starts to perform a wider spectrum of activities and matures in both process and approach.

The three PMO evolution stages are indicative of an organisation's maturity in project management, with the PMO's role and responsibilities advancing from project management oversight and control at the lower end of the scale to strategic business alignment at the upper end.

So how can you identify the current stage of your PMO? We have outlined the key points of each stage below so you can do just that.

## Program and Portfolio Management Evolution



Source: Gartner, 2021 Strategic Roadmap Overview for the PMO



### Directive PMO

Do you find that your PMO relies too heavily on an established command-and-control approach?

Does your PMO have an overly bureaucratic model for managing programs and projects and typically does not match the time-to-value expectations of a modern business?

If your answer is yes to both of the above, then your PMO is functioning with a directive approach to PMO management.



### Adaptive PMO

Do your business leaders need continuous delivery and faster responses from your PMO?

Does your PMO encourage higher levels of engagement and collaboration to support continuous delivery and more readily meets the changing needs and requirements of the organisation?

If this sounds like your PMO then it is likely your PMO is currently working within an adaptive strategy, where your PMO adopts agile-like principles and approaches to work execution.



### Dynamic PMO

Is there a strong importance for your PMO to support the definition, tracking and realisation of organisational value in measurable terms?

Does your PMO achieve recognition as a value delivery function?

If yes to the above, then your PMO is operating as a dynamic function where your business views your PMO as a trusted partner that creates value directly tied to key business objectives and outcomes.



## Differences between stages of PMO strategic evolution

To successfully grow and keep up with the ever-changing business landscape, a PMO leader should have a primary objective of guiding their current PMO toward a widespread strategic business partnership, which can be achieved by evolving from directive and adaptive states to an effective, dynamic state.

Gartner has summarised the key differences between the directive PMO and dynamic PMO in the table below.

Directive PMO	Dynamic PMO
Lacks clear identity, value proposition and purpose	A recognised value delivery organisation
Has limited partnership with key business leaders	Has a strategic partnership with multiple business leaders
Is in a reactive state and overwhelmed with demand and severely constrained supply	Collaborates with business leaders for strategic portfolio management
Is constrained by the enterprise's organisational style	Utilises adaptive and efficient planning and execution
Cannot adapt easily to changing priorities	Extends its sphere of influence beyond the domain in which it resides
Cannot change its sphere of influence, which remains in the project domain	Adopts and uses a repeatable and scalable organisational change methodology
Is missing a repeatable and scalable organisational change methodology	Uses modern technologies to support effective planning and multiple methods of delivery
Uses stagnating or disparate portfolio and work management technologies	

Source: Gartner, 2021 Strategic Roadmap Overview for the PMO

By following the PMO strategic roadmap and migration plan outlined further in this white paper, your PMO will be able to successfully evolve and reap the benefits from doing so.



Throughout this white paper we have discussed why PMOs are becoming more important than ever, and the importance of why you need to continue to evolve your PMO, so how does it all come together? What can you do now to begin moving forward to evolve your PMO into a strategic business partner?

Well first, you need to close the gap.

### Closing the gap

To position your PMO as a strategic contributor of business value, PMO leaders must learn to close the gap between their directive PMO and the strategically focused, dynamic PMO.

PMOs that are stuck in the directive state and struggle to move forward and evolve, find themselves experiencing the issues outlined here.



An incomplete or missing strategic partnership with business leaders.



A lack of understanding and connection to key business strategies and desired business outcomes.



Poor collaborative portfolio prioritisation process between business leaders and the PMO.



Inconsistent or missing communication between business leaders and the PMO.



Inadequate PMO competencies supporting strategic portfolio alignment and continuous delivery.



Lack of strategy and tactics for communication and organisational change.



An inability of business leaders to affirm business value creation from PMO contributions.



A lack of modern technologies supporting strategic portfolio management and adaptive, continuous execution.



# Where to now – roadmap to strategically evolve your PMO

## Planning for the evolution

To evolve the PMO from directive to dynamic, PMO leaders must first acknowledge that the PMO needs to evolve and that failure to evolve may cause the PMO function to stagnate and become irrelevant.

PMO leaders must dramatically change the identity and purpose of the PMO, and they must do so in conjunction with the business.

Steps in the PMO migration plan are:

### 1. Form and use key strategic partnerships

**A strong partnership between PMO and business leaders can produce solid strategy to execution connection. The PMO leader must work towards:**

- Identifying strategic partnerships with key business leaders.
- Redefining the role of the PMO with business leaders.
- Establishing continuous communication and collaboration with business leaders.

**The PMO leader must maintain and nurture the PMO's strategic partnerships — a directive PMO cannot evolve to the desired, dynamic state without the strong influence and guidance of business leaders.**



This approach is supported by a recent report from PWC UK and the PMI, exploring the structure of high performing PMOs and their measures of success. It shows that a high functioning, dynamic PMO delivers against a range of organisational KPIs measuring the delivery of business value and contribution to achieving organisational strategic goals.

## 2. Enable strategic portfolio management and execution

Once PMO leaders and key business leaders have jointly created the blueprint for a redesigned PMO, both parties must continue to work together and:

- Create a collaborative portfolio prioritisation process.
- Enhance competencies based on the PMO's new role and purpose.
- Define business-value based metrics.

PMO competency enhancements should focus on maintaining strategic alignment, continuous value creation, delivery methods catering to the business's perception of time to value, effective change management, and the use of modern technologies to drive PMO dynamism.

## 3. Affirm business value and extend the PMO's sphere of influence

A strong partnership between PMO and business leaders can produce a solid strategy-to-execution connection. With this connection and the guidance of business leaders, a PMO can:

- Measure value creation with business leaders.
- Adopt technologies that support adaptive portfolio management and continuous delivery.
- Accelerate cross-functional contributions.

A dynamic PMO should gain further opportunities when the PMO leader maintains a strategic and engaging partnership with key business leaders who acknowledge the business value of PMO contributions. PMOs that consistently complete the strategy-to-execution life cycle will be in a better position to engage and more actively participate in cross-functional contributions. By exploiting a strong business partnership, a dynamic PMO will be able to extend its sphere of influence beyond the domain of which it is a part.





# Demonstrating PMO value & applying OKRs

## Demonstrating PMO value

PMOs are increasingly being challenged to prove their value to their organisation. Therefore, when establishing or evolving your PMO, you must ensure clarity on the type of PMO your organisation needs and its ongoing focus, responsibilities and deliverables, all of which should be agreed with the executive sponsor.

A successful PMO is typically measured based on delivering positive results leading to achievement of business strategy and outcomes.

According to the PMI, the following steps can be helpful in measuring and demonstrating PMO value to the wider organisation.



Gartner tells us that, “Not only do PMO leaders need metrics and measures to report their organisation’s activities accurately, but they also need to ‘sell’ the PMO’s usefulness and value to the enterprise.”



### Step 1: Clarifying the purpose of the PMO

The purpose of the PMO should be based on the overall context, business objectives, and strategy of the organisation. If everybody is not on the same page regarding the purpose of the PMO, it may lead to measuring the wrong things and focusing on initiatives that do not align to the purpose of the PMO and the wider organisation.



### Step 2: Identifying value and selecting appropriate metrics to measure it

The PMO needs to determine how it can address stakeholder needs and provide value to them. Metrics of how that value could be measured need to be discussed and approved collaboratively with the stakeholders.



### Step 3: Linking the metrics

It is critical to establish links to the metrics identified in the previous step to business objectives, this process is the practice of applying Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) which we detail further below in the white paper. Establishing links to the purpose of the PMO, business objectives, organisational context, and stakeholder needs is the key to showcasing the value of the PMO to the wider organisation.



### Step 5: Communicating and reporting

The reporting of the metrics should be planned and tailored for the type and level of the audience, as well as their desired frequency of receiving the reports. The most common method for showcasing reporting would be PMO Dashboards, which can show snapshots of any project, portfolio or work management data at a given time. The other choice would be Value Scorecards, which are used to show the alignment of the business objectives, to the value being provided based on agreed metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs).

There may be varying approaches that can be used to demonstrate PMO value, but best practice is to start with the stakeholders and engage them to understand their challenges and what value means to them.



### Step 4: Collecting and analysing

How the metrics are going to be captured needs to be determined and approved by all stakeholders. A profile of each measure needs to be charted including the definition of the measure, frequency, unit of measure, type of measure, calculation, data sources, data collection process, performance baseline, performance target, and performance enablers.



# 10%

**The recent UK report from PWC and the PMI shows that the top 10% of PMOs are utilising a much broader range of measures than ever before to ensure success. It is important to remember that to harness the elusive nature of PMO value, it is also critical to manage perceptions and perceived value.**





## Applying Objectives and Key Results (OKRs)

OKRs are collaborative goal-setting tools used by teams to set challenging, ambitious goals with measurable results to help set priorities, align outcomes, and achieve success in their organisation.

If properly planned and managed, OKRs essentially help organisation's structure and manage their strategic ambitions and cut project failures and poor use of resources. OKRs may be shared across the organisation with the intention of providing teams with visibility of goals to align and focus effort.

### OKRs should be:



**Measurable:** Able to be quantified



**Specific:** Easily understandable; clearly defined



**Time-bound:** Defined by a specific, realistic timeline



**Verifiable:** Able to be definitively confirmed; teams must be able to answer the question, "Did we achieve this key result?"

OKRs lay out specific, actionable requirements that the team (or individual) responsible for them either successfully or unsuccessfully completes – giving team members a clear-cut way of knowing whether they're making progress, and leadership a more objective way of assessing performance.



## PMO

For some businesses measuring project management practices against their business outcomes can be a difficult task. So to ensure the PMO is reaching the goals that are so vital to the organisation's success, many businesses are now implementing Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) into their planning.



# Summary

As the business world rapidly changes, so too must the function of the PMO to remain relevant and deliver strong business value. Managed correctly, the move from a directive, administratively focused PMO to a connected, adaptive and strategically aligned function will elevate its role, ensuring longevity and recognition as a driver of transformation and business value delivery. By planning the transition in conjunction with business leaders and implementing the correct processes and tools to support an effective function, the PMO can become a key value driver across the organisation.

## Getting started with your unique PMO transformation

A great place to begin is taking some time out to review where you are now, identify where you want to be and create the vision to get there.

If you're ready to take the next step in improving how your project management office contributes to your organisation's success, Sensei is here to help.

In our complimentary half-day Envision workshop, your PMO team is guided through a structured process to help uncover your organisation's goals and the best way to achieve them.

**Learn more about our Envision workshop >**





# About us & references

At Sensei, we work every day to refine our approach and improve the working world of those around us.

Since we began in 2009, we have focused on bringing world leading project and portfolio management solutions, based on the Microsoft platform, to our clients to help improve the way they work and enable them to reach their strategic goals.

## Connect with us:



[www.sensei.cloud](http://www.sensei.cloud)



1300 SENSEI



SenseiPPM



[letschat@sensei.cloud](mailto:letschat@sensei.cloud)



Sensei Project Solutions

1. Gartner, 2021 Strategic Roadmap Overview for the PMO
2. The Project Management Office: It's just not what it used to be 2017
3. <https://foundryco.com/tools-for-marketers/research-state-of-the-cio/>
4. <https://kissflow.com/project/gartner-project-management/>
5. <https://www.pmi.org/learning/library/pmo-evolution-9645>
6. Association of Project Management
7. PMI, Pulse of the Profession 2018
8. Standish Groups CHAOS report
9. Gartner PPM Summit
10. IBM Change Management Survey
11. PWC UK/PMI report
12. <https://www.pmi.org/learning/library/pursuit-elusive-pmo-value-6873>
13. OKRs: COOs Can Drive Sustainable Change with This Breakthrough Approach | Constellation Research Inc.



*Sensei*

© Copyright 2022 by Sensei Project Solutions. All rights reserved.