

The role of a Project Management Office

In this lesson, you are learning about different types of organizational structures. Project managers serve key functions in both Classic and Matrix organizations. Within both of these types of structures, there is sometimes a group devoted specifically to project management in the organization: the **Project Management Office**. In this reading, we will discuss the purpose and functions of a Project Management Office.

What is a PMO?

A Project Management Office, or PMO, is a group within an organization that defines, sets, and helps maintain project management standards and processes throughout that organization. It often acts as a coordinated center for all of the organization's projects, helping them run more smoothly and efficiently.

An organization's project managers may operate within the PMO itself or within other departments. At Google, for example, there are project managers who work in a PMO focused on operational excellence, but there are numerous project and program managers in other departments throughout the organization, as well.

What are the functions of a PMO?

PMOs offer guidance and support to their organization's project managers. They share best practices, project statuses, and direction for all of the organization's projects while often taking on strategic projects themselves. The main functions of a PMO include:

Strategic planning and governance

This is the most important function of a PMO. This involves defining project criteria, selecting projects according to the organization's business goals, and then providing a business case for those projects to management.

Best practices

PMOs help implement best practices and processes within their organization. They also share lessons learned from previous successful projects. They help ensure consistency among their organization's projects by providing guidance about processes, tools, and metrics.

Common project culture

PMOs help set common project culture practices by training employees about optimal approaches and best practices. This helps keep project management practices consistent and efficient across the entire organization.

Resource management

PMOs are often responsible for managing and allocating resources—such as people and equipment—across projects throughout the organization based on budget, priorities, schedules, and more. They also help define the roles and responsibilities needed on any given project. PMOs provide training, mentoring, and coaching to all employees, but project managers in particular.

Creation of project documentation, archives, and tools

PMOs invest in and provide templates, tools, and software to help manage projects. They also play an important role in maintaining their organization's project history. Once a project closes, they archive all of the documents created during the project for future reference and to capture lessons learned.

Key takeaway

To recap, the key purposes of a PMO include: strategic planning and governance, implementing project management best practices, establishing common project culture, resource management, and creating project documentation, archives, and tools. PMOs support their organizations in managing large numbers of projects and help keep all employees working in the same direction towards the organization's goals.

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