PM impact

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PMO With Impact: How PMOs Turn Strategy Into Results

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PMI Germany Chapter e.V.
Pappelallee 78/79
10437 Berlin / Germany
Email: info@pmi-gc.de

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Represented by the Board, including:

Wolfgang Friesike (President)
Alexandra Bruckschen (Vice President Volunteering)

Responsible pursuant to § 55 para. 2 RStV:

Alexandra Bruckschen (Vice President Volunteering)
c/o PMI Germany Chapter e.V., Pappelallee 78/79, 10437 Berlin

Editor-in-Chief:
Alex Bruckschen, Paula Wenzel

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A Good PMO Can Be Uncomfortable

Editorial

Organizations like things to run smoothly. Projects should move forward, decisions should be made quickly, conflicts should be resolved, and progress should be visible. A good PMO supports exactly that.

But perhaps impact sometimes arises precisely where things don't go smoothly.

When someone asks whether a project that was decided long ago would still be approved today. When a green light isn't enough because the expected benefits have become questionable. When, behind a supposedly clear priority, it becomes apparent that the budget and resources actually tell a different story. Or when enthusiasm for automation and AI clashes with the question of which decisions we actually want to delegate to technology.

These aren't particularly comfortable moments. But they may be precisely the moments when a PMO delivers its greatest value.

Many articles in this issue explore the question of what defines a PMO with impact today from a wide variety of perspectives. An interesting pattern emerges for us: impact doesn't arise solely from better methods, more data, or more sophisticated governance. It arises where information leads to consequences.

This also involves allowing for productive friction.

A PMO should not artificially slow down processes or create additional bureaucracy. But it should resist when speed becomes an end in itself, when investments are continued simply because a lot has already been invested, or when reporting documents activity without triggering a decision.

Perhaps that's why one of the most exciting questions for modern PMOs isn't: **How can we make organizations even more efficient?**

But rather: **Where should we ensure that they pause for a moment and ask the better question?**

Because impact doesn't mean that everything always runs smoothly. Impact means that an organization takes a closer look in the right places, makes better decisions—and then acts consistently.

We hope you enjoy reading, questioning, and perhaps even a little productive friction.

Alex Bruckschen & Paula Wenzel
Editor-in-Chief

As a Senior Project and Transformation Manager and AI expert, **Alex Bruckschen** manages complex cross-industry programs and develops scalable delivery and quality processes. Her expertise includes agile scaling, BizDevOps, AI implementation as well as performance management.

Paula Wenzel

Paula Wenzel holds a master's degree in project management with a focus on AI-supported methods and data-driven decision-making. Her work focuses on the healthcare sector and the development of practical approaches to sustainably improve clinical processes and healthcare systems.

The PMO Has to Earn Its Place

How PMOs create value through better decisions, governance and strategic focus.

INTERVIEW WITH DOUGLAS PULINI

PM*impact*: Your PMO at SPC Brasil has been recognized as one of the best in the world. But success can also create complacency. What did you deliberately change after receiving that recognition—and what did you realize you still were not doing well enough?

Douglas: The first message I gave my team was that the award described what we had already done; it did not guarantee what we would become next. I saw it as a risk: when a model is externally validated, people become more reluctant to question it. Our success had been built on the opposite idea—adaptability.

So one change was to become more critical of our own practices. Pick 'n Use and our custom-KPI approach had worked very well, but I did not want them to become dogma. We asked more aggressively: if we were designing the PMO again today, would we still do this the same way? The second change was greater external exposure: learning from other organizations, sharing our experience and exposing our assumptions outside SPC. Once you are recognized as a reference, benchmarking only against your own past becomes dangerous. But the most important realization was about benefits realization. We were strong at project delivery and measuring performance and value during execution, but less mature after transition to the business: were the expected benefits still materializing twelve or twenty-four months later? Who owned them? Were the original assumptions still valid?

That changed how I think about PMO maturity. A project can be green when it closes and still fail economically two years later. I am less interested in whether we delivered successfully than whether the organization became better because we delivered it. My academic research has reinforced that focus on governance and long-term value creation.

PM*impact*: Many PMOs say they are becoming "strategic." At what point does that claim become credible? What decisions must a PMO actually be able to influence before you would call it a strategic management office rather than a traditional PMO with a new label?

Douglas: For me, the claim becomes credible when the PMO influences decisions upstream of execution, not just decisions already made. I use three tests.

First, portfolio selection: can the PMO influence what enters the portfolio—and what does not? A traditional PMO receives projects and manages them. A Strategic Management Office connects strategic

priorities with investment choices, organizational capacity and portfolio decisions. At SPC Brasil, we helped structure the 2023–2028 strategic planning cycle, integrating the value chain, portfolio, budget, financial modeling, investment scenarios and KPIs—the mechanism through which strategic choices became investment and execution priorities. **Second, can the PMO challenge an initiative after approval?** A strategic PMO should be able to say: this project may be on schedule and budget, but its strategic rationale no longer holds. The PMO does not own the decision to stop or redirect it, but it must have enough credibility to trigger that conversation and recommend change. **Third, executive decision-making.** Does leadership use PMO information simply to understand status, or to decide priorities, resources, trade-offs and investments? Once dashboards and portfolio analysis become decision instruments rather than reporting artifacts, the role has fundamentally changed.

And one final test: you should not have to call yourself strategic. At SPC Brasil, our president and chairman described the PMO as a fundamental pillar for strategy execution and value generation. That matters more than the organizational label. A Strategic PMO is a title others give you because of the decisions you help improve—not one you give yourself.

PM*impact*: A strong PMO creates transparency—but transparency can also expose uncomfortable truths about investments, priorities, and executive decisions. Have you experienced situations where creating transparency actually reduced the PMO's political comfort or influence? How should PMO leaders handle that tension?

Douglas: Yes. That tension is almost inevitable once a PMO creates meaningful transparency rather than simply reporting project status. I have seen portfolio visibility challenge assumptions around strongly sponsored initiatives. An even more uncomfortable level emerges when you connect strategy, portfolio, budget and resources: sometimes the portfolio tells a different story from the strategy. The organization may call something a priority, but money, people and executive attention suggest otherwise. The PMO is then holding up a mirror to organizational choices.

I learned three principles. First, agree on the rules before information becomes uncomfortable. Strategic criteria, KPIs and governance thresholds should be aligned upfront, so deterioration is discussed against agreed criteria rather than the sponsor. The same standard should apply to every initiative. Second, no surprises in the governance forum. If an issue is developing, I discuss it with the sponsor first, understand the context and test the facts before formal executive discussion. That is not softening the truth; it is preserving trust. Transparency should never become ambush. Make the problem visible without making the person the problem. Third, never bring only the problem. If an initiative is no longer creating expected value, bring scenarios: continue, redesign, reprioritize, pause or stop—and explain the implications. Transparency without a decision path is exposure; with alternatives, it becomes decision support.

Transparency can reduce political comfort. But consistency creates something more valuable: credibility. Leaders learn that the PMO applies the same standard regardless of sponsor and brings uncomfortable information with context and options, not judgment. I would protect that credibility over short-term political comfort.

PM*impact*: Organizations are increasingly moving from project success to value creation as the ultimate measure of performance. But value is often ambiguous, delayed, and contested. How should a PMO deal with initiatives where the strategic value cannot be reduced to a reliable KPI or business case?

Douglas: I strongly believe in measurement, but not false precision. Not all strategic value fits into a reliable business case, and forcing it to do so can create fictional numbers that give uncertainty the appearance of certainty.

I approach this in three layers. **First, distinguish between value that is genuinely difficult to measure and value that is simply not yet measurable.** You may not have a credible ROI for a capability investment, regulatory initiative, platform or brand investment, but you can define leading indicators, risk reduction, capability creation and observable evidence that strategic assumptions are materializing. At SPC Brasil, this is why we tailor KPIs to each initiative's context and expected impact.

Read More

Second, when value is uncertain or contested, govern it as a hypothesis rather than a promise.

Make the theory of value explicit: what do we believe will change, why, what assumptions must remain true, and what evidence would show we were wrong? Create checkpoints to revisit that hypothesis. The question is not only 'did we hit the original number?' but 'is the strategic logic behind this investment still valid?' Strategic value cannot become an exemption from accountability. **Third, make uncertainty visible at portfolio level.** A healthy portfolio may contain strong financial business cases, regulatory necessities, capability bets, innovation options or long-term strategic investments. Leadership should consciously see those trade-offs. Uncertainty should influence how we govern an investment, not automatically disqualify it.

Where monetization is credible, I use it. Where it isn't, I prefer an honest evidence-based assessment to an ROI nobody believes. My doctoral research on ESG and firm value reinforced this: value can emerge through delayed, complex and context-dependent mechanisms. Uncertainty increases the need to be explicit about what we know, assume and what evidence would change our mind.

PM*impact*: You combine practical PMO leadership with academic research into governance, ESG and firm value creation. Looking at PMOs through that broader governance lens: What responsibility should a modern PMO have for challenging not only whether an initiative can be delivered, but whether the organization should pursue it at all?

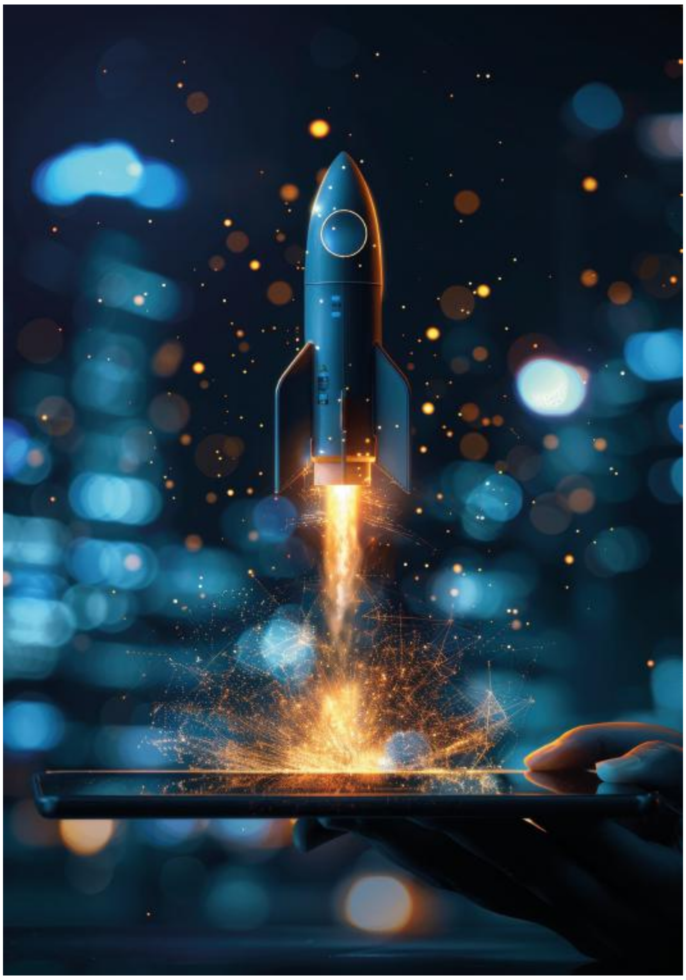
Douglas: Yes—but with clear decision rights. A modern PMO should have challenge rights, not veto rights. The decision to pursue an initiative belongs to the appropriate executives and, for material decisions, to the Board. If the PMO makes those decisions itself, it weakens governance. The traditional separation between 'the business decides what' and 'the PMO manages how' is no longer sufficient for an enterprise PMO. An SMO has a cross-organizational view of strategy, portfolio, resources and execution. At SPC Brasil, strategic planning connects the value chain, portfolio, budget, financial modeling, investment scenarios and KPIs. That visibility creates a responsibility to challenge decision quality, even when we do not own the decision.

I see three responsibilities. First, strategic coherence: before asking whether we can deliver an initiative, ask whether it genuinely advances the strategy and whether its assumptions remain valid. Strategic alignment should not become a label attached to a business case after the fact. **Second, opportunity cost.** Every yes is also an implicit no because it consumes capital, people, management attention and capacity. A business case says why an initiative may be attractive; portfolio governance should ask whether it is more valuable than alternatives not funded. The PMO should make that invisible trade-off visible. **Third, long-term consequence.** An initiative can be feasible, financially attractive and strategically aligned, yet create material regulatory, reputational, social or environmental risks outside the project horizon. The PMO need not be expert on all of them, but should ensure the consequences are surfaced, the right functions involved, and leadership understands them before committing resources.

So I would not give the PMO veto authority, but a formal obligation to challenge the 'should we?' decision at portfolio intake and major decision points, because assumptions change. That distinguishes an execution office from a governance institution. An execution office asks, 'Can we deliver this well?' A Strategic Management Office also asks, 'Should we still be doing this at all?'

PM*impact*: AI is rapidly entering project and portfolio management. Which part of today's PMO work do you expect AI to make largely obsolete—and, more importantly, which human capability will become more valuable precisely because AI is taking over analysis, reporting, and coordination?

Douglas: We're not really speculating about this at SPC Brasil—we're already seeing it. We use AI to generate project kickoff videos in minutes instead of hours, and our executive portfolio reports are delivered weekly with AI-generated narration that explains the status, key developments, risks, and decisions required across our portfolio of strategic initiatives. I have seen firsthand what happens when AI removes administrative burden from a PMO.



What I expect to become largely obsolete is the assembly layer: collecting status, consolidating information, drafting routine reports, summarizing meetings, reconciling schedules and producing first-pass analyses of risks and issues. AI and automation are making that dramatically faster and cheaper. If your PMO's main value is producing the report, AI is a threat. If it is helping leaders decide what the report means, AI is an amplifier.

The human capability that becomes more valuable is judgment under ambiguity—combining data, context, competing objectives and consequences when there is no objectively correct answer. AI may become very good at saying, 'Based on the evidence, this initiative should probably be stopped.' But it cannot own the organizational consequences. Someone must decide whether the strategic context justifies continuing, what trade-offs to accept, and be accountable for that decision. That judgment includes political and human intelligence. A recommendation can be analytically correct and still fail organizationally. You need trust, influence and stakeholder understanding to turn information into action. AI can generate analysis; it cannot automatically generate legitimacy.

Another increasingly important element is asking the right question. AI is becoming an extraordinary answering machine, so question quality becomes the bottleneck. 'Will this project finish on time?' is one question. 'Given what has changed, should we still be investing in this project at all?' is more important. The paradox is that the more analysis becomes automated, the more valuable the least automatable part of PMO leadership becomes—sitting with decision-makers, interpreting the evidence, framing the trade-off and taking responsibility for a difficult decision.

PM*impact*: Imagine a highly mature organization in 2030 where strategy execution, portfolio data, and AI-supported decision-making work exceptionally well. What would still justify having a PMO or Strategic Management Office—and what would be the strongest argument for abolishing it altogether?

Douglas: Let me take the abolition case seriously first, because a mature PMO should be willing to make parts of itself obsolete. A strong argument for eliminating the PMO is that many traditional activities exist because organizations have fragmented information, inconsistent management capability and high coordination costs. If by 2030 portfolio information is unified and real-time, AI identifies risks, dependencies and resource conflicts, and leaders connect strategy to execution themselves, a PMO that mainly consolidates information, coordinates work and enforces methodology may be unnecessary overhead.

One sign of PMO maturity is that it distributes capability instead of creating dependency. At SPC Brasil, part of our role has been developing project management, strategic planning, design thinking and agile capabilities across the organization. The objective is better execution without constant PMO intervention. If those capabilities are truly embedded by 2030, I would not defend a PMO because the organization has always had one. I would ask: what enterprise problem is this function still solving? If there is no convincing answer, abolish it. What could still justify a Strategic Management Office is a different set of problems. First, enterprise-level trade-offs. Perfect information does not eliminate competing legitimate interests: finance may favor one investment, a business unit another, risk management another, and long-term strategy may point elsewhere. AI can clarify those trade-offs, but cannot make them disappear or absorb accountability. Someone still needs to ensure choices are made through a consistent governance process. Second, coherence over time. Business units have narrower mandates than the enterprise portfolio. Even in a mature organization, someone may need to look across investments, capabilities, dependencies and time horizons and ask whether those decisions still add up to the strategy. Third, governance of the human-AI decision system. As analysis and recommendations become automated, organizations need clear rules around what we delegate to machines, where human judgment remains mandatory, how assumptions and bias are challenged, and who is accountable. That responsibility does not necessarily belong to the PMO, but it could become part of a future SMO responsible for the quality of enterprise strategic decisions.

So my answer is deliberately conditional. I would absolutely abolish the report-factory PMO. If a mature organization can achieve strategic coherence, portfolio governance and disciplined trade-offs better through distributed capabilities, I would be comfortable abolishing the PMO entirely. It has no right to exist by tradition; it must continuously earn its place by solving an enterprise problem better than the organization could without it.

Douglas Pulini, PMP, PMI-PMOCP, Head of Enterprise PMO, Process Excellence & Business Strategy at SPC Brasil, leading corporate strategy, portfolio management and transformation. With 15+ years of experience in global companies, he is recognized for PMO leadership and innovation. He holds a master's degree and is pursuing a doctorate in Business Administration at Insper, focusing on governance and firm value.

What PMOs Can Learn from NVIDIA's Strategic Decisions

ANDREA DE RUITER

NVIDIA's rise to become one of the world's most valuable companies is often explained by technological innovation or the rapid growth of artificial intelligence. Yet technology alone does not explain its success.

Years before AI became a strategic priority for most organizations, NVIDIA made a series of decisions that required extraordinary conviction. The company invested in accelerated computing, CUDA, a developer ecosystem, and data-center-scale infrastructure long before today's AI market fully validated the strategy.

Looking back, these decisions appear visionary. At the time, they were simply difficult.

This raises an important question for every Project Management Office (PMO): How can organizations make strategic decisions under uncertainty that enable long-term success?

For many years, PMOs were primarily responsible for governance, reporting, and project oversight. Today, expectations have fundamentally changed. Organizations increasingly rely on PMOs to align portfolios with strategy, provide transparency across initiatives, support executive decision-making, integrate AI-enabled insights, and demonstrate measurable business value. The role has evolved from an operational coordination function to a strategic partner supporting executive decision-making and strategy execution. But there is an important distinction.

Projects execute strategy. Decisions determine whether that strategy creates impact.

This distinction becomes increasingly important in an environment shaped by AI, accelerating technological change, competing priorities, and continuous disruption. Organizations rarely fail because they lack projects. More often, they struggle because strategic decisions are delayed, fragmented, inconsistent, or no longer aligned with the organization's strategic objectives. Execution can only be as effective as the decisions that shape it. NVIDIA demonstrates this remarkably well. Its competitive advantage was not created by one successful product launch. It emerged from a consistent ability to make and sustain strategic decisions over many years.

Several lessons stand out:

- Long-term strategic intent provided stability despite uncertainty.
- Investments were guided by future opportunity rather than immediate market demand.
- Hardware, software, developers, research, and partnerships were developed as an integrated ecosystem rather than isolated initiatives.

Most importantly, leadership maintained alignment between strategic vision and execution over time. These lessons extend far beyond the technology

industry. They illustrate a capability that every organization requires: the ability to consistently make high-quality strategic decisions and translate them into coordinated action. This is where the future PMO creates its greatest value. Rather than serving primarily as a reporting function or governance office, the PMO increasingly becomes the organizational capability that enables decision transparency, portfolio alignment, executive collaboration, and strategic coherence. In other words: The PMO of the future helps create the conditions in which better decisions do not happen by chance—they become repeatable.

It is from precisely this challenge that Decision Architecture™ emerged. Rather than focusing solely on projects or governance processes, it examines the organizational conditions that shape the quality of strategic decisions. It aligns strategic intent, context, governance, evaluation, and execution so that organizations are better equipped to make complex decisions with confidence. Artificial intelligence will undoubtedly strengthen this capability by generating insights, identifying patterns, and supporting scenario analysis. However, AI cannot define strategic intent, balance competing priorities, or exercise leadership judgment. Those remain fundamentally human responsibilities. As PMOs continue to evolve from governance functions into strategic business partners, their long-term impact may no longer be measured by the number of projects they oversee. Instead, it may be measured by something far more valuable: their ability to help organizations make better strategic decisions before execution begins.

Perhaps that is the most important lesson PMOs can learn from NVIDIA. Not that success depends on having the best technology.

But that lasting competitive advantage begins with the quality of the decisions an organization makes—and with the architecture that enables those decisions to become consistent, transparent, and repeatable. In the end, organizations do not transform because they run better projects. They transform because they make better strategic decisions.

Perhaps the greatest contribution of the PMO of the future is to help create the conditions in which those decisions become the natural outcome.

Andrea De Ruiter is a Strategic Business & Project Leader, Author, and Speaker for the PMI Germany Chapter. Through Decision Architecture™, her work explores how organizations can improve strategic decision-making, better connect governance with execution, and create lasting impact.

Sources: NVIDIA Corporation: NVIDIA History – A Timeline of Innovation, Unternehmensgeschichte; NVIDIA Corporation: CUDA Programming Guide – Introduction

PMOGA Community

Actively Shaping the Future of the PMO

PIERRE CORELL IN INTERVIEW WITH LARS ROSENBERG AND TIM VORFALT

Pierre: What trends and current challenges do you see for PMOs?

Lars: Simply enforcing project guidelines generates little added value and is no longer sufficient today. PMOs can and must make a much higher strategic contribution to corporate success by driving organizational transformations.

Tim: Today, the PMO takes on far more than pure governance tasks. It is increasingly evolving into a strategic enabler that bridges the gap between organizational strategy and operational execution. Alongside solid project management competencies, a deep business acumen and excellent stakeholder management are indispensable for this role.

Pierre: How must modern PMOs position themselves to meet these challenges?

Lars: PMOs need to transform from a "project police" into a service provider that does not merely control projects, but actively contributes to the success of the project, program, and entire portfolio.

Tim: To fulfill this expanded role, PMO teams today require a significantly more diverse competency profile than in the past. The skill set needs to be broader and flexibly aligned with the maturity level of project management so that the PMO can optimally unlock its contribution to business success.

Pierre: What must a PMO offer to deliver this added value?

Lars: That naturally depends on the company, its specific challenges, and especially its maturity level. I have had very good experience establishing the PMO as a Center of Excellence for project, program, and portfolio management, offering "Project Management as a Service" to the business units. In this way, the PMO takes direct accountability for project delivery—rather than just monitoring it. The PMO should also offer project selection through structured portfolio management as a service for executive management.

Tim: Alternatively, the PMO can create substantial value in a strategic advisory role, particularly when project management maturity is already high and, in an innovative R&D environment, the focus is primarily on optimal prioritization and achieving the right mix of projects with varying risk profiles.

Pierre: What does PMI offer to support PMO leaders and help them prepare for this transformation?

Lars: Since PMI integrated the PMO Global Alliance (PMOGA) a few years ago, there are numerous resources available for PMO professionals, such as the PMO Practice Guide, the corresponding certification as a PMI-PMO Certified Practitioner™ (PMI-PMOCP™), as well as conferences and webinars. Currently, the PMOGA Europe Hub is being established to bring together PMO enthusiasts across this region. Within the PMI Germany Chapter, we have already established a PMOGA Community where PMO practitioners meet once a month to exchange views on a wide range of PMO topics and benefit from the experience of other participants.

Pierre: What exactly is behind the PMOGA Community in the PMI Germany Chapter that you lead? What value can participants gain from this community?

Lars: Active collaboration rather than passive consumption of content is the focus of our community. Members take turns leading presentations, sharing practical case studies, or facilitating discussion rounds on selected PMO topics.

Tim: We deliberately focus on peer-to-peer exchange and create a forum where PMO practitioners can learn from the experiences of others. Since many organizations only have a single PMO, people often lack the opportunity to look beyond their own horizon. This is precisely where we deliver real value—with topics that are relevant to numerous PMOs.

Lars Rosenberg is Head of PMO at SunExpress Airlines and has 28 years of experience managing projects, programs, portfolios, and PMOs. For the past 10 years, he has been responsible for the company's project portfolio and has been effectively guiding the airline's associated transformation.

Tim Vorfalt has more than 15 years of international leadership experience in R&D, production, and organizational development at both large corporations and medium-sized companies. He currently works as a portfolio manager at AB Enzymes, where he leads programs from concept through to market launch.

Pierre Corell is PMO Ambassador, PMI-PMOCP™, PMP®, PBP®, P3GP®, lecturer, and speaker, working in a Cybersecurity PMO. He is actively engaged in advancing the project management profession.

The Team's Mindset

Can We Handle It? And How?

NAIRA GRABOWSKI

Despite the wide variety of personalities we encounter as individuals throughout our lives and work, teamwork—in different forms, roles, and interdependencies—has become an important part of our professional lives. This ability has become just as important for a good company as our professional expertise. It not only influences the quality of our working time but also determines whether a project will succeed or fail.

The first part of the title asks **whether** we can handle a team's mindset. And the answer is clearly yes. What matters is that this aspect is addressed again with every project, especially in a consulting environment, where the composition of the team changes with each new project. But **how** can you do this successfully as the person responsible for the project?

Normally, the focus is predominantly on external and internal stakeholders and decision-makers, as PMP stakeholder management teaches us. But what happens to the team that actually has to do all the work? B. Tuckman and his stages of team development (1965) immediately come to mind.

In 21st-century project management, however, this is not enough. Regardless of whether the person responsible for the project attends every meeting or merely receives a report on the current project status once a week, it is crucial to see yourself as a relevant part of the team and to act accordingly in the project work. This also applies to projects that repeatedly involve the same team. Without the team—and without you as a valuable member of that team—the profitable implementation of the magic triangle of time, scope, cost, and quality is hardly possible.

What should you do? When accepting a new project and after the first meetings with the team, take the time for an initial analysis using familiar methods, such as DISC and its behavioral groups, which have been described extensively in numerous books. This step is recommended both for newly formed teams and for established team environments in which people have known each other for years and have already worked together on several projects. Why? We often forget that employees learn from their experiences and continue to develop, even if you, as the person responsible for the project, do not always notice it. In this case, you will not only get to know the team better but also give your colleagues an opportunity to adjust—and, where appropriate, improve—the opinion they have already formed of you as the person responsible for the project. In this way, you create good conditions both for successfully completing the project and for productive collaboration on all sides.

The next steps address the question of how the team's individual behavioral characteristics can be transformed to benefit project success. And here, you have two options: manipulation and inspiration.

These two instruments accompany us in everyday life far beyond the work environment. In business, both are actively used and work very well, although in different directions and ultimately with different results. This article describes only three typical signs of each approach:

- Manipulation deliberately triggers feelings of guilt.
- Manipulation (intentionally) calls another person's perception into question.
- Manipulation (constantly) shifts responsibility away from oneself.

- Inspiration, by contrast, is mindful and attentive toward team colleagues.
- Inspiration is patient with the team.
- Inspiration always finds something you can regularly do for your colleagues on the team.

Every reader will immediately recognize their own experiences in this list. Ultimately, as the person responsible for the project, you decide which approach appeals to you and/or which one you are best at applying in your daily work. But the following should always be kept in mind:

Manipulation usually works once or a few times, until other colleagues notice the approach. It leads colleagues on the team to contribute minimally and passively or potentially change their current workplace or employer. Yes, a few successes may be achieved, but they are short-lived, and you often put your own reputation at risk.

Inspiration requires considerably more effort and is not easy to achieve, but its success is more sustainable and has a positive effect in every respect—not only on you as the person responsible for the project, but also on the team, project, program, portfolio, and, accordingly, the company as a whole.

So, the choice is yours.

Naira Grabowski, Lead Consultant at NTT DATA, has more than ten years of professional experience as a customer manager, project manager, and project leader. Her expertise spans various industries, ranging from the automotive sector and certification projects to the IT field.

Picture: studioline Holding GmbH

Global Construction Project Management Conference 2026

Together Across Chapters

ALEX BRUCKSCHEN

Eight PMI chapters, 17 speakers and panelists, and perspectives from multiple continents: The Global Construction Project Management Conference 2026 highlighted the topics that will shape the future of construction project management—and the impact that arises when PMI communities combine their expertise and networks across national borders.

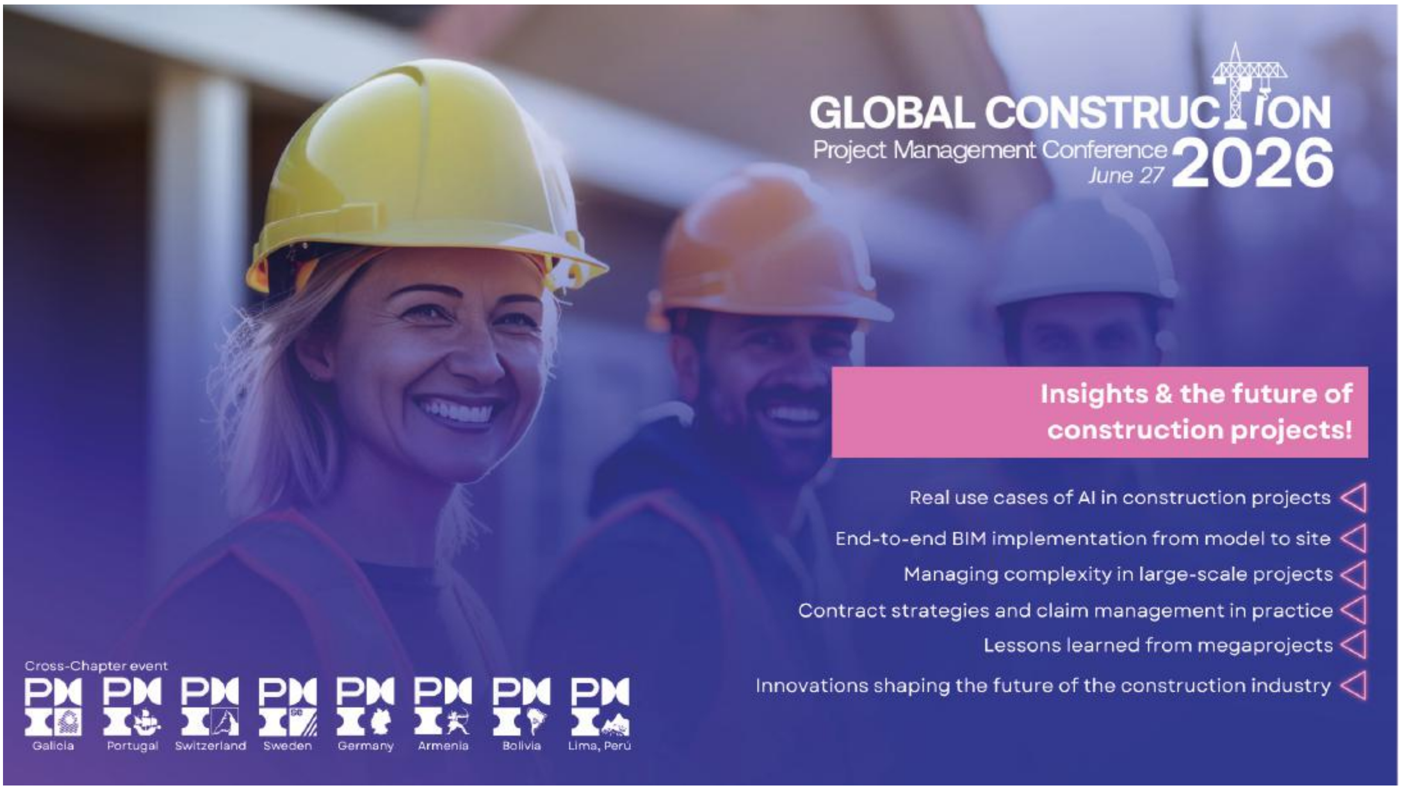
On June 27, 2026, project professionals, engineers, construction leaders, and subject matter experts gathered for a virtual conference. Under the theme “Building the Future of Construction,” the event focused on the technological, methodological, and human challenges of construction project management. Eight PMI chapters jointly organized the conference: Galicia, Switzerland, Germany, Lima, Sweden, Bolivia, Portugal, and Armenia. PMI Galicia took on project management and hosting duties. PMI Switzerland coordinated collaboration with the speakers, while the PMI Germany Chapter was responsible for marketing and communications. Together, we took responsibility for the conference’s content and organizational structure. The other chapters contributed their networks, perspectives, and communication channels.

Global Challenges Require Global Perspectives

The construction and infrastructure industry is undergoing profound changes. Digitalization, sustainability, artificial intelligence, Building Information Modeling (BIM), new contract models, and project complexity are influencing how construction projects are planned, managed, and executed. The program reflected this breadth of topics. The presentations covered topics including artificial intelligence in construction project management, BIM and digital transformation, advanced planning and control, lean scheduling, budgeting, contracts and claims, risk management, and mega- and giga-projects. Technical presentations alternated with panel discussions. Strategic perspectives were combined with operational project work, and research was linked to on-site practice. One thing became clear: technology is driving the transformation, but leadership, trust, stakeholder management, and robust decision-making structures remain crucial.

Cross-Chapter Collaboration as a Foundation

The conference’s particular strength lay not only in its program, but also in how it came to be. Eight PMI chapters collaborated on its preparation and execution, taking responsibility for the program, speaker coordination, communication, outreach, and organization. The added value of this approach was



particularly evident in marketing. Instead of promoting the event solely through a single chapter's channels, it was publicized across multiple countries, networks, and communities. Consistent design elements, coordinated messaging, and early and ongoing communication formed a unified marketing engine. The focus was not on the visibility of a single chapter, but on a consistent, unified presence for all participating communities. The challenge was to translate the technical diversity into a coherent conference narrative and to connect communication across national borders.

International Diversity with a Practical Focus

A total of 17 speakers and panelists from various regions and disciplines participated. Civil, mechanical, and electrical engineering intersected with digital construction planning and virtual design and construction. Project managers engaged in discussions with PMO leaders, researchers, governance experts, and international PMI representatives. This mix provided insights into different markets, project cultures, regulatory frameworks, and approaches.

To be continued in 2027

Following the success of its inaugural event, the Global Construction Project Management Conference will continue in 2027. The next edition is intended to deepen international collaboration, involve additional communities, and establish new areas of professional focus. The 2026 conference was thus not only a forum for the future of construction project management. It was itself an example of how international project work can function: with a shared goal, clearly defined responsibilities, diverse perspectives, and a willingness to share knowledge, reach, and success with one another.

For me personally, it was a great pleasure to represent the PMI Germany Chapter on this international team. It was particularly valuable to experience how eight chapter networks can come together to form a single community—united by a common theme and the conviction that the future of construction project management is best shaped collectively.

Alex Bruckschen, PMI-CP™, serves as a Global Construction Ambassador and supports the PMI initiative to establish project management standards in construction and megaprojects.

Strategy Tells You Where To Go

A PMO Tells You How You Actually Get There

DIPMALA THAKUR

The first time I sat in a project review where three time zones tried to agree on one delivery date, I understood something that no strategy slide had ever taught me: a good plan is only as strong as the rhythm that carries it forward. Strategy tells you where to go. A PMO tells you how you actually get there, one Tuesday at a time.

That distinction matters more than it sounds. Executive strategy usually lives at 30,000 feet: “expand into new markets”, “cut time-to-commissioning by 20%”, “scale this platform across sites”. Nobody on the shop floor, or in the weekly supplier call, argues with those goals. The trouble starts the moment someone has to turn them into Tuesday’s agenda.

I have spent the last few years close to exactly that seam, working on multi-country industrial projects where a customer’s strategic ambition had to survive contact with three engineering teams, two time zones, and a dozen suppliers. Watching PMOs operate in that space taught me that their real value rarely shows up on a road map. It shows up in three quieter things: cadence, visibility, and ownership.

Take a rollout I was part of some years ago: a manufacturing line being redesigned and relocated across two countries, with mechanical, electrical, and control workstreams running in parallel, plus a customer who needed to sign off at every major step. The project had already slipped once, and commissioning was now fixed to a date, the customer would not move. On paper, the strategy was simple: commission the line on time, without surprises. In practice, five different teams were each convinced they knew what “on time” meant.

What changed the outcome wasn’t a new strategy document. It was a communication architecture the PMO put in place. It began by settling the unglamorous questions most projects leave implicit: which teams actually needed to talk to each other, what had to stay visible, who owned each decision, and how an unresolved issue would reach someone who could settle it. From those answers came the three things that carry a project. Cadence came from a weekly internal design sync so engineering issues surfaced before they became customer issues, and a separate, tighter cadence with the customer so nothing arrived as a surprise. Visibility came from one shared reference, open to everyone. Ownership came from that same reference making explicit who owned which decision and by when. Meetings had names, durations, and owners instead of vague “syncs.” Escalations had a path instead of an inbox. Suddenly “on time” stopped being a slogan and became a series of dated, owned commitments that people could actually be held to. The line was commissioned, and the customer escalations that usually build toward go-live quietly fell away.

That is the translation work a good PMO does. It does not usually invent the strategy, and it rarely gets credit in the boardroom. But it decides whether “reduce time-to-market” becomes a lived weekly discipline or stays a phrase in a kickoff deck. The measurable impact—fewer schedule slips, faster decisions, a customer who stops escalating because they already know what is happening—is simple strategy, made visible often enough that nobody can quietly ignore it.

I am not a PMO professional by title. I sit on the commercial side, managing key accounts in automation manufacturing, which means I experience PMO impact mostly as its customer: I feel the difference between a project that has a rhythm and one that does not, usually in the tone of the email I get on a Friday afternoon. That vantage point has convinced me of something PMO practitioners already know but rarely say out loud: The discipline of naming a cadence, assigning an owner, and making progress visible is not administrative overhead. It is the actual mechanism by which strategy stops being a sentence and starts being a result. The distinction worth keeping is between cadence and calendar-filling: a rhythm earns its place only when it moves a decision forward, and the moment a meeting or a report stops changing what someone does next, it has slid back into the overhead everyone rightly resents.

If there is one habit worth borrowing from strong PMOs, it is this: Before asking whether the strategy is right, ask whether it has a rhythm. Strategy without cadence is just an opinion about the future. Cadence, ownership, and visibility are what turn that opinion into something you can measure—and defend—a quarter later.

Dipmala Thakur is a Key Account Manager at Automation Industry GmbH and drives business development in the European automotive and manufacturing industries. With experience in C-level support, she combines process expertise with account management and is pursuing an MBA in Leadership & AI.

Three Challenges of Agile Work in Everyday Project Management

OLAF SCHWEIZER

Agile work is considered a recipe for success when it comes to flexibility, customer focus, and fast results. Accordingly, Scrum, Kanban, and hybrid approaches have found their way into companies. In reality, however, alongside the opportunities, there are also challenges that should be recognized and actively managed.

The selection of these three challenges is based, on the one hand, on the article by Daniel Raymond (Projectmanagers.net, 2025) and, on the other hand, on challenges encountered in personal practice.

Remarkably, regardless of the content of the article, the experts from the Stuttgart Project Management Roundtable identified these same challenges when the author introduced the topic to them in general terms. It is also important to mention that both the group and the author are open to and positive about agile ways of working.

1. Difficult Decision-Making and Dependence on Personalities

Agile teams make decisions together. Depending on the team, this can sometimes lead to lengthy discussions in practice. This may happen, among other things, when roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined. Or when team members do not yet feel confident enough to make decisions, or when team members repeatedly try to seek reassurance before acting. When examining this issue more closely, the question of corporate culture arises. To what extent are personal responsibility and a culture that embraces mistakes already practiced? Or to what extent has agile work been introduced while management is unable to relate to its underlying values?

Raymond also describes "Team Dependency." This means that agile work functions only as well as the team itself does. In his view, competence, experience, and group dynamics are decisive. If know-how is lacking or individual team members dominate, quality suffers.

My conclusion from this is the following: In traditional projects, when corresponding problems arise, they are delegated to managers to make decisions and, where necessary, impose sanctions, etc. Likewise, in the examples mentioned above in the context of agile work, managers need to provide the appropriate impulses at the right moment. This paragraph should not be misunderstood, as it assumes managers who embrace a culture that accepts mistakes and who promote personal responsibility.
Another aspect in the context of lengthy discussions and difficult decision-making is having the courage to question whether meetings may be overregulated. A pragmatic approach would be to ask: What is really needed? Dailies, reviews, retrospectives? The sheer number of them can be counterproductive, and the processes sometimes represent old mechanisms for seeking reassurance reproduced through current methods.

From my perspective, one central question is how strongly the value of "trust" is established. To what extent is this trust authentically experienced, and how do employees perceive "trust"? In my opinion, this has a considerable influence on decision-making.

2. Inadequate Documentation/Quality

"Working software over comprehensive documentation" is an agile principle that is often misunderstood. The result: There is too little documentation, and knowledge remains in people's heads. At the latest, when team members change or a project is handed over, it becomes apparent how costly this gap can be. Raymond lists this disadvantage as "Inadequate Documentation." My practical approach to solving this is that documentation should not be understood solely as an obligation for audits. Instead, documentation should be understood as a commitment to the team. Following the principle: I do it so that if I am unavailable, it is easier for the team to continue working. And I do it so that my pile of work after vacation is not as large because my documentation made it easier to answer questions, forward information, etc.

However, the question is how to get a team to actually do this. From my perspective, this can be achieved through workshops in which the team commits to it. Whether individual team members approach it according to the principle described in the previous paragraph, whether one person or team member takes responsibility for it, or whether it is created using AI are, in my view, individual approaches that may be more or less suitable depending on the situation.

Almost the same applies to inadequate testing: Short iterations in particular carry the risk of neglecting quality assurance. One possible approach would be to include testing in the Definition of Done as well and, just like documentation, establish it as a mandatory part of the delivery.

3. Cost Overruns and Contract Design

Agile projects are considered flexible. This flexibility can become expensive. Frequent changes or insufficient controlling can easily lead to cost overruns. Raymond explicitly refers to this as "Cost Overruns." One possible approach: In traditional projects, plans are used to ensure strict adherence to a defined cost framework. In agile projects, this appears to be more difficult. However, as with the point "Inadequate Documentation/Quality," a type of "ROI review" could be incorporated into the Definition of Done (DoD) to determine whether the tasks implemented contribute added value to the product or project outcome.

Another aspect from practical experience: Agility requires flexible contract models that allow for changes. Scrum assumes a Time & Material contract. This describes the scope of the work to be performed without specifying a concrete deliverable. When companies understand projects as investments, the question of the profitability of the capital employed becomes relevant. Accordingly, contracts for work and services are preferred, which generally provide for a specific deliverable and delivery date in return for a fixed amount. Raymond does not address this point, but in many projects, it represents an initial and relevant hurdle. A practical approach would be to communicate extensively with one another, build mutual trust, and perhaps start with a small trial to see how it works and how it feels.

Conclusion

Agility is neither automatic nor an end in itself. The challenges described—from a lack of goal orientation and team dependency to cost risks—show that agile methods must be applied consciously and then with discipline.

Personally, I remain a fan of agile ways of working because they actively involve the project team and enable communication on an equal footing. Overall, both approaches fit together for me. In line with the recommendation of the PMBOK, choose the method that best fits the situation ("choose your way of working").

Dates and links for the upcoming meetings of the local groups in fall / winter:

September 25, 2026 at 6 p.m. - Link to Event

October 23, 2026 at 6 p.m. - Link to Event

November 20, 2026 at 6 p.m. - Link to Event

Olaf Schweizer is the Lead Strategic Project Manager at S-Communication Services, a PMP®, Agile Coach, and instructor. His focus is on effec-tive project management, agile methodologies, and knowledge transfer.

Source:
https://projectmanagers.net/top-10-cons-or-disadvantages-of-agile-methodology/

PMI Infinity™

Why Do We Need a Project Management Coach in Addition to the Well-Known GenAI Models?

BERNHARD KONRAD SCHWAB AND WOLFGANG FRIESIKE

At the virtual workshop of the PMI Germany Chapter's Community of Practice Artificial Intelligence on July 20, the focus was on a tool that is available to PMI members free of charge, but whose capabilities are still often underestimated: **PMI Infinity™**.

A lively discussion quickly developed during the workshop. The participants were less interested in how to use the tool than in a more fundamental question: **What added value does PMI Infinity™ offer compared with ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, etc.?**

This discussion gave rise to the idea for this article.

What Is PMI Infinity™?

PMI Infinity™ is the Project Management Institute's generative AI assistant. However, it is not a Large Language Model (LLM) of its own. Instead, PMI uses several leading language models—including models from OpenAI, Google Cloud, and Cohere—and supplements them with project management-specific knowledge.

The real strength of PMI Infinity™ therefore lies not in the underlying language model, but in its domain-specific enhancement. PMI combines modern AI technology with its extensive expertise from the PMBOK® Guide, Practice Guides, standards, thought leadership, and other curated content from the global PMI community.

The result is an AI assistant that not only answers questions in natural language, but also interprets them within the context of professional project management.

Language Model or Application?

During the workshop, it became clear that two things are often confused with one another.

ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini are, first and foremost, language models or AI applications based on powerful foundation models. They offer impressive general capabilities for writing, analyzing, and summarizing text.

PMI Infinity™ takes a different approach. The tool uses various foundation models and enhances them with project-specific expertise as well as project management-related functions and agents—for example, for creating a risk management plan.

Put simply: ChatGPT answers general questions.

PMI Infinity™ answers project management questions based on PMI standards and a very extensive specialized knowledge library.

The difference is similar to that between a general practitioner and a specialist. Both have medical knowledge—the specialist, however, has additional expertise in a specific field.

What Can PMI Infinity™ Do?

Its range of capabilities now extends well beyond those of a traditional chatbot.

Key functions include:

- Answering project-related questions with source references
- Creating typical project artifacts such as stakeholder analyses, communication plans, or risk registers using prebuilt agents
- Analyzing and summarizing your own project documents

- Generating templates, checklists, and reports
- Supporting planning, decision-making, and reflection
- Providing a specialized prompt library and AI agents for typical project management tasks

PMI Infinity™ therefore sees itself less as a search engine and more as a methodological companion throughout the entire project life cycle.

When Is PMI Infinity™ Worth Using?

One of the most interesting discussions during the workshop centered on which tool is the best choice for which task. For general knowledge questions, brainstorming, writing emails, or creating presentations, ChatGPT or comparable tools often already deliver excellent results. PMI Infinity™, by contrast, demonstrates its particular strength wherever sound project management knowledge is required:

- Interpreting the PMBOK® Guide and PMI standards
- Selecting appropriate approaches and tailoring
- Creating PMI-compliant project artifacts
- Reflecting on complex project situations
- Preparing for PMI certifications
- Learning and professional development in project management

Especially when it comes to questions about applying standards or best practices, PMI Infinity™ often provides significantly more substantiated answers than a general-purpose language model.

PMI Infinity™ Does Not Replace a Project Management System

Another point of discussion concerned the future role of PMI Infinity™ within organizations. At first glance, one might assume that PMI intends to develop its own project management platform. In reality, however, a different picture is emerging. The strategic direction instead appears to be to establish PMI Infinity™ as an intelligent project management coach. Project managers will continue to plan and manage their projects using tools such as Jira, Microsoft Project, Planview, SAP, or other enterprise platforms. PMI Infinity™ is not intended to replace these systems, but rather to support project managers—through methodological guidance, reflection, and context-specific recommendations.

For organizational solutions, PMI is currently working on integrating company-specific methods, governance models, templates, and knowledge bases. The goal is to provide answers not only on the basis of PMI standards, but also by taking the respective organization's methodology into account. At the same time, integrations with enterprise systems have been announced to enable better consideration of the project context.

Conclusion

PMI Infinity™ does not see itself as a competitor to ChatGPT or other AI assistants. Rather, it complements them with something that a general-purpose language model, by its very nature, cannot provide: sound, curated project management knowledge.

While ChatGPT remains the versatile generalist, PMI Infinity™ positions itself as a specialized coach for project managers—with a clear focus on standards, best practices, and methodological guidance.

This could ultimately prove to be its greatest strength in the long term: not as just another AI tool, but as an intelligent sparring partner for everyone who wants to plan projects professionally and deliver them successfully.

Bernhard Konrad Schwab is a subject matter expert and speaker in project management, specializing in automation and artificial intelligence. Drawing on his many years of experience, he combines strategic vision with operational execution and offers new perspectives on challenging project environments.

Wolfgang Friesike is the President of the PMI Germany Chapter. He studied industrial engineering at the Technical University of Berlin and has spent his entire professional career working on the design and implementation of projects and project portfolios. Today, he works as a freelance mentor and organizational consultant.

More Domain Expertise. More Value. More PMI Germany Chapter.

ALEX BRUCKSCHEN AND WOLFGANG FRIESIKE

How do our members benefit when we place an even greater focus on domain expertise within the PMI Germany Chapter?

The short answer: more relevant knowledge, more guidance, more opportunities for exchange—and more chances to further develop and contribute your own expertise. That was exactly the focus of a Board workshop in July. We took an in-depth look at what "domain expertise" means for the PMI Germany Chapter, what role it plays for our members and our public image, and how we can anchor it even more firmly in our offerings going forward.

Global Knowledge Meets Local Practice

PMI provides an enormous knowledge base worldwide: standards, guides, frameworks, studies, research findings, tools, and thought leadership. This knowledge also forms the foundation of our project management domain expertise in the Germany Chapter. However, our ambition goes a step further: We want to make this knowledge accessible and practically applicable to the German context—while simultaneously bringing experiences and new ideas from our community back to the international PMI community. We therefore explicitly view professionalism not as a one-way street.

PMI provides a strong foundation. In the Germany Chapter, we combine it with the experiences, questions, and challenges of our members and the German project management community.

What Does This Mean Specifically For Our Members?

Domain expertise should reach where it creates value: in our members' day-to-day work.

To this end, we want to further strengthen our communities and networks as places for knowledge exchange and professional dialogue. Members should be able to learn from one another, share experiences, discuss new developments, and build expertise together. At the same time, our offerings should help even more effectively in applying PMI knowledge to daily project practice and in supporting members' own professional development and career advancement. This also means that not every format automatically creates value simply because it deals with project management. In the future, common quality criteria will help us align our offerings even more closely with relevance to the project management domain, timeliness, practical value, interaction, knowledge transfer, and connection to PMI.

This should make it even clearer to members and interested parties: Wherever you see "PMI Germany Chapter," you can expect relevant, high-quality project management expertise.

Focus on Relevant Future Topics

Project management continues to evolve—and with it, the demands placed on project managers are also changing. Artificial intelligence, sustainability, power skills, PMOs, and standards and guidelines are just a few of the topics we're currently focusing on. In the future, we aim to highlight key professional themes even more specifically across our various offerings. For example, a topic can be discussed in a Community of Practice, explored in depth in a webinar, examined in an article, and linked to practical experiences at an event. In this way, individual offerings come together to form recognizable professional focal points that provide our members with guidance and the opportunity for deeper learning.

Members Are Not Just the Target Audience—They Are Cocreators

For us, greater professionalism explicitly does not mean imparting knowledge exclusively "from above." On the contrary: our members' expertise is one of our

community's greatest strengths. Anyone who has in-depth knowledge of a topic from their own professional practice, wants to share experiences, or wishes to discuss new developments should have the opportunity to actively shape our areas of focus—for example, through Communities of Practice, events, publications, or other knowledge-sharing formats.

At the same time, we want to gain an even better understanding of the topics and challenges that matter to our members. After all, it is not solely the Board of Directors that decides which topics are relevant. The needs of our members, developments in project management practice, and insights from PMI must all come together. This creates a cycle: PMI contributes international knowledge, our community connects it with practice in Germany—and from this practice, in turn, new experiences and ideas emerge for the international PMI community.

Our Goal: Domain Expertise That Makes an Impact

As the PMI Germany Chapter, domain expertise is one of the essential pillars of our identity.

Our mission can be summarized simply:

PMI's expertise forms our foundation. We make this knowledge applicable to the German market, combine it with our members' expertise, and together develop new ideas for the project management community.

For our members, this should result in one thing above all: tangible added value. Relevant knowledge. Guidance on emerging topics. Exchange with other experts. Opportunities for personal and career development. And a community where you do not simply consume expertise—you can actively help shape it.

Or, in short:

Global knowledge. Local practice. Shaping the future.

As a Senior Project and Transformation Manager and AI expert, **Alex Bruckschen** manages complex cross-industry programs and develops scalable delivery and quality processes. Her expertise includes agile scaling, BizDevOps, AI implementation as well as performance management.

Wolfgang Friesike is the President of the PMI Germany Chapter. He studied industrial engineering at the Technical University of Berlin and has spent his entire professional career working on the design and implementation of projects and project portfolios. Today, he works as a freelance mentor and organizational consultant.

Peak Performance in Project Management

What Project Organizations Can Learn from Elite Athletes

RENÉ GÖLDNER

Project managers know these situations: A critical go-live is imminent, important stakeholders expect results, time is running short, and responsibility is high. Biologically speaking, there is hardly any difference from an athlete immediately before a competition.

Our nervous system responds to both situations with the same mechanisms. Stress hormones are released, attention is focused, and energy reserves are mobilized. For the body, it initially makes no difference whether the challenge is a marathon or a strategically important transformation project. This insight is highly relevant for project organizations. Because project success often depends less on methods, governance structures, or digital tools. It is often forgotten that these instruments are used by people whose performance is subject to natural limits.

The Real Problem of Modern Projects Is Rarely the Method

Agile process models, hybrid approaches, AI-supported planning tools, and PMO structures offer fundamental prerequisites for successful project work today. Far more often, projects fail due to overload, lack of focus, unclear priorities, or limited decision-making ability under pressure. In other words: The challenge often lies less in project management than in performance management.

What Elite Athletes Do Differently

Elite athletes have an exceptional level of self-awareness. They know very precisely the conditions under which they can best realize their potential, which kinds of stress they can handle, which factors promote their performance, and which ones require regeneration. This self-awareness is not a “soft factor,” but an essential component of their performance strategy. In project management, this aspect is often underestimated. Many professionals learn how to plan projects, manage budgets, and handle risks. Much less often do they learn how to strategically manage their own performance and that of their teams.

The Greatest Performance Lever: Self-Regulation

Individual performance can only be realistically assessed by the person themselves. The decisive competence is therefore self-regulation. Successful project team members and project managers know their strengths and limits. They recognize early signs of overload and take responsibility for managing their own energy and stress. Although the brain accounts for only about 2% of body weight, it requires around 20% of the available energy. Under prolonged stress, fewer resources are therefore available for complex thought processes. Energy levels decline, cognitive functions deteriorate: analytical thinking, creativity, problem-solving skills, decision quality, and communication. Professional energy management is therefore not a feel-good topic. It is a decisive success factor in complex project work.

Performance Is Not a Sprint, but a System

A widespread misconception is that every continuous crisis mode can be handled. In the short term, this works. In the long term, however, it leads to performance losses, quality problems, and increasing risks.

In elite sports, no one would expect athletes to train permanently at competition intensity. Peak performance emerges through a systematic alternation between stress, recovery, and targeted further development. High-performing project organizations know clear priorities, recovery phases, and realistic resource planning.

Performance Emerges Between Ability and Willingness

As a conceptual model, this relationship can be represented in a highly simplified form using a formula:

Performance = Competence × Energy × Motivation

If energy is lacking due to chronic overload or motivation due to a lack of purpose, results will fall short of expectations despite professional capability. For project managers, this leads to an important insight: Managing projects involves not only deadlines, costs, and risks, but also the development of competence, energy, and motivation within the team, as well as the development of physical attributes that make performance possible in the first place.

▶ Conclusion: The Underestimated Success Factor in Project Management

Companies invest considerable resources in processes, tools, and methods, but relatively little in humans. What remains decisive, however, is how capable the people are who use these instruments every day. Elite athletes systematically develop their ability to self-regulate, regenerate, and remain capable of performing under the pressure of competition. Those who strengthen people's performance simultaneously increase the performance of projects.

The future of successful project management will be determined by the ability to understand Human Performance as a strategic success factor and to develop it systematically.

One insight runs through all of my work: People want to understand how they can better manage their performance, energy, and focus.

René Göldner, Dipl.-Ing., combines international project management with competitive sports. As a project manager, owner of projectmanagementlikeapro.com, and lecturer he helps companies successfully implement projects and achieve sustainable performance—drawing on experience that extends all the way to the Ironman World Championship.

Value-Adding PMOs

Interviews with PMO Mentors

PIERRE CORELL IN AN INTERVIEW WITH THORSTEN SIEMERS, JÖRG FALTIN, AND ANDREI ELOVSKIKH

Pierre: Why are you a mentor in the Chapter's PMO Mentoring Program (PMO-MP)?

Thorsten: I have been a PMI member since 2015 and, throughout my career and in the various roles I have held, I have always benefited from PMI content. Wherever I can, I am happy to give something back.

Jörg: I have more than 20 years of experience in a rather traditional large corporate structure and have seen transformation become visible. I would be pleased to share some input and, in doing so, also learn from others in the PMO-MP.

Andrei: I live by the motto of the famous quote that something is only truly understood when you can explain it to someone else in simple terms (Richard Feynman, note by the editors). I have been looking for a new opportunity for some time to get involved, and I really wanted to take part in the program.

Pierre: How do you recognize that a PMO actually creates value for the organization?

Thorsten: According to the PMOGA definition, when I can demonstrate an ROI. It is not always easy, but it definitely has to be possible to provide the necessary skills and continuously measure them with internal customers and other improvement groups. Customer satisfaction is always a good indicator. Always keep in mind: Perception is Reality.

Jörg: The added value of a PMO should be more than just its ROI. For me, added value is, for example, the request from a plant manager or member of the Board of Directors to accompany an upcoming project steering committee. Transparency of decisions and information for everyone, including colleagues in production, creates trust in the work of the PMO: the best added value and priceless.

Pierre: What role should a PMO play in Benefits Realization—and does it get real responsibility?

Thorsten: I think this varies from PMO to PMO. There are PMOs that are not yet far enough along in their maturity, or they need the Benefits Realization elsewhere and have a different focus. If Benefits Realization is in focus or included in the PMO Service Catalog and booked, then I naturally see the service to be provided as the responsibility of the PMO. One look at the PMOGA definition reveals the following: "Managing and measuring the realization of benefits from an organization's portfolio of programs and projects to ensure they deliver the expected value to the organization." What "managing" means in concrete terms must be defined. Governance is required for this.

Pierre: What criteria do you use to decide how much governance, documentation, and control a project or program actually needs?

Thorsten: In my experience, this is something the Governance Board has to decide. First, there are different projects and programs with different Business Impact. Second, there are also different risk classifications and, third, of course, also the resource question. I think the Governance Board is well staffed and has different levels that can answer these questions for themselves and as a "policy" define them.

Jörg: The fundamental KPIs for a project are always Safety, Scope, Budget, Schedule. And every project manager will be able to show in which area the project needs support. I do not see a PMO as an administrative body. A PMO should improve the performance of projects. Controlling the company is the best control for successful effort by the PMO. From my perspective, the PMO is not a project, except during the implementation phase. Yet some project managers themselves want to go further.

Pierre: Do you have a concrete example?

Jörg: In one plant, different projects in the individual departments are handed over to the process and production engineers. Every engineer gives their best and wants to move the company forward. Unfortunately, however, this quickly leads to excessive workloads for employees, so prioritization inevitably has to be carried out—there is simply too much competition for resources. This is where a PMO can fully unfold its impact: Which projects receive which resources? And: Reporting all company-wide projects to operations management. The PMO was then reorganized accordingly.

Pierre: What is the main responsibility of a PMO with regard to reporting when it reports to management?

Andrei: A major turning point for me was when I realized that reporting shouldn't be retrospective, but forward-looking. It's good to show management the past—for example, through CPI and SPI. But management should be steering the course, not looking back. For example: It's August 7, and we're reporting as of July 31. The project is on budget, on schedule—everything's fine—but that's a snapshot of the past. What will the situation be at the end of August or the end of September? Do we need to make any decisions? PMOs must put the future up for discussion. To me, a PMO is therefore the one who creates the framework so that stakeholders can think about important issues.

Pierre: There are various KPIs that can be relevant in reporting. Which numbers are underestimated by management?

Andrei: I place a strong focus on numbers. This creates Self-Awareness, as I recently discussed at the Local Group meeting in Mainz. Numbers do not lie; they support planning and decision-making and are an indicator that enough time has been devoted to analysis. If you know the scope and the circumstances of the project precisely, you have the valuable metrics. The methodological knowledge that you bring from the PMP® is crucial here. If you combine numbers with management experience and represent them, you guide decisions while remaining project-neutral. Reporting plays a decisive role, project progress and forecasts must be substantiated—and numbers are the ultimate discipline for this.

Read More

Pierre: Are processes the backbone of a PMO? Does a PMO need to optimize processes?

Thorsten: My DNA screams for processes, so: Yes! Continuous improvement works as a process. A PMO consists of services that are also represented as processes. Therefore, a PMO must first establish its own processes and continuously improve them. If I put myself in the customer's shoes to look at their processes, that is a good step toward close and trusting collaboration that can create added value.

Jörg: Absolutely, yes: A PM Office (O) without structure and defined processes will not create added value for the company. How does the PMO get to its decision-making bodies? How are these communicated? Two simple questions that cannot be answered without the processes of the PMO. But: The scope of processes can be controlled! And an experienced process employee will "always" optimize the PMO. The perfect PMO does not exist, as the company itself must constantly transform.

Pierre: How does the PMO support the organization in deciding not only to implement projects correctly, but also to prioritize the right projects—and, if necessary, terminate them?

Thorsten: This is a classic Portfolio Management / Demand Management topic. Anyone acting at this level in strategic consulting at the corporate level must keep an eye on which initiative makes which contribution to which corporate objective, in relation to the corporate strategy, and also delivers it sustainably (Benefits Realization). Anyone who, as the winner of the PMO of the Year, wants to have a say there and understands what it is all about—top-down support is everything.

Jörg Faltin is the Infrastructure Project Manager at the University Hospital of Halle (Saale) and is involved in quality and project management. Prior to that, he worked for over 20 years in process management and the PMO at a U.S. glass manufacturer in Saxony-Anhalt. The philosophies of Koch and PMI had an early influence on him.

Thorsten Siemers is a PMO lead with experience in sales, strategy, and project management. He uses systemic thinking, AI-driven approaches, and team enablement to design modern, effective project environments and translate complexity into clarity. "For me, trying new things and sharing knowledge are key to good collaboration."

Pierre Corell is PMO Ambassador, PMI-PMOCP™, PMP®, PBP®, P3GP®, lecturer, and speaker, working in a Cybersecurity PMO. He is actively engaged in advancing the project management profession.

Andrei Elovskikh has been working in project management for 11 years and has been serving as an external PMO for the past 3 years. His areas of expertise include governance, automated reporting, and structured project coordination.

(created with ChatGPT (OpenAI))

(created with ChatGPT (OpenAI))

The PMO Makes Leadership Effective

ANGELOS KIRIANES

Transformation today is faster, more complex, and more resource-intensive. Companies are simultaneously running digitalization programs, AI initiatives, reorganizations, cloud projects, and regulatory projects. The problem arises where no one knows anymore which projects truly contribute to strategy, which resources they tie up, and which initiatives should therefore no longer be pursued. This is exactly where the Project Management Organization becomes effective. After my experience of more than 25 years of responsibility for international programs and organizations, it is no longer just a common administrative project management office with status reports, templates, and escalation lists. This view is too narrow. The Project Management Organization is more than a single office. It is an enterprise-wide governance and management system and therefore has a leadership function.

As Global Head Project Delivery at T-Systems International GmbH, from 2012 to 2017 I built an end-to-end project delivery organization and established a global PMO based on the follow-the-sun model. Since 2018, I have been deepening this perspective through my work in PMOGA. My conviction: Project Management Organizations create greater value not through more reports, but through better decisions.

Three Perspectives on a PMO with Impact

The term PMO stands for both Project Management Office and Project Management Organization. The office is a concrete unit. The Project Management Organization encompasses governance, decision-making processes, resource management, and the connection between projects and portfolios with strategy and value contribution. For "PMO with Impact," I therefore combine three perspectives: My organizational model views the Project Management Organization as the hypothalamus of the corporate organism—it regulates and supports the balance of priorities, resources, and decisions. The PMI PMOGA approach understands PMOs as internal service providers whose functions are aligned with stakeholder expectations and benefits. The Business and Leadership Perspective makes visible which initiatives contribute to strategy and which decisions management must make.

The Project Management Organization as Hypothalamus

In my book "Die Wirbelsäule des Erfolgs", I describe a company as a living organism. I functionally classify the Project Management Organization as the hypothal-

Organism	Organization
Hypothalamus	Project Management Organization (PMO)
Regulates homeostasis	Keeps the organization at a stable level of performance
Collects information from different areas	Bundles information from executive management, leadership, and operational units
Controls energy distribution and balance	Controls prioritization and resource allocation
Acts as a feedback and regulatory center	Acts as a feedback loop and coordination body

Figure 1: Organism vs. Organization (A. Kirianes)

amus. This keeps central balances upright. Applied to an organization, the Project Management Organization takes on a comparable regulatory function: It collects signals, evaluates deviations, makes tensions visible, and supports decisions. Its actual performance consists not in controlling data, but in activating it. It turns data into reliable information and information into decision-ready knowledge.

From Data to Leadership Decisions

In companies with many silos, areas compete for specialists, budgets are claimed multiple times, and dependencies become visible too late. A central Project Management Organization creates shared governance and connects information from projects with management priorities.

It makes decisions possible: What contribution does a project make to strategy? Which projects have priority? What should be postponed or terminated? These are not methodological questions of detail. They are leadership questions.

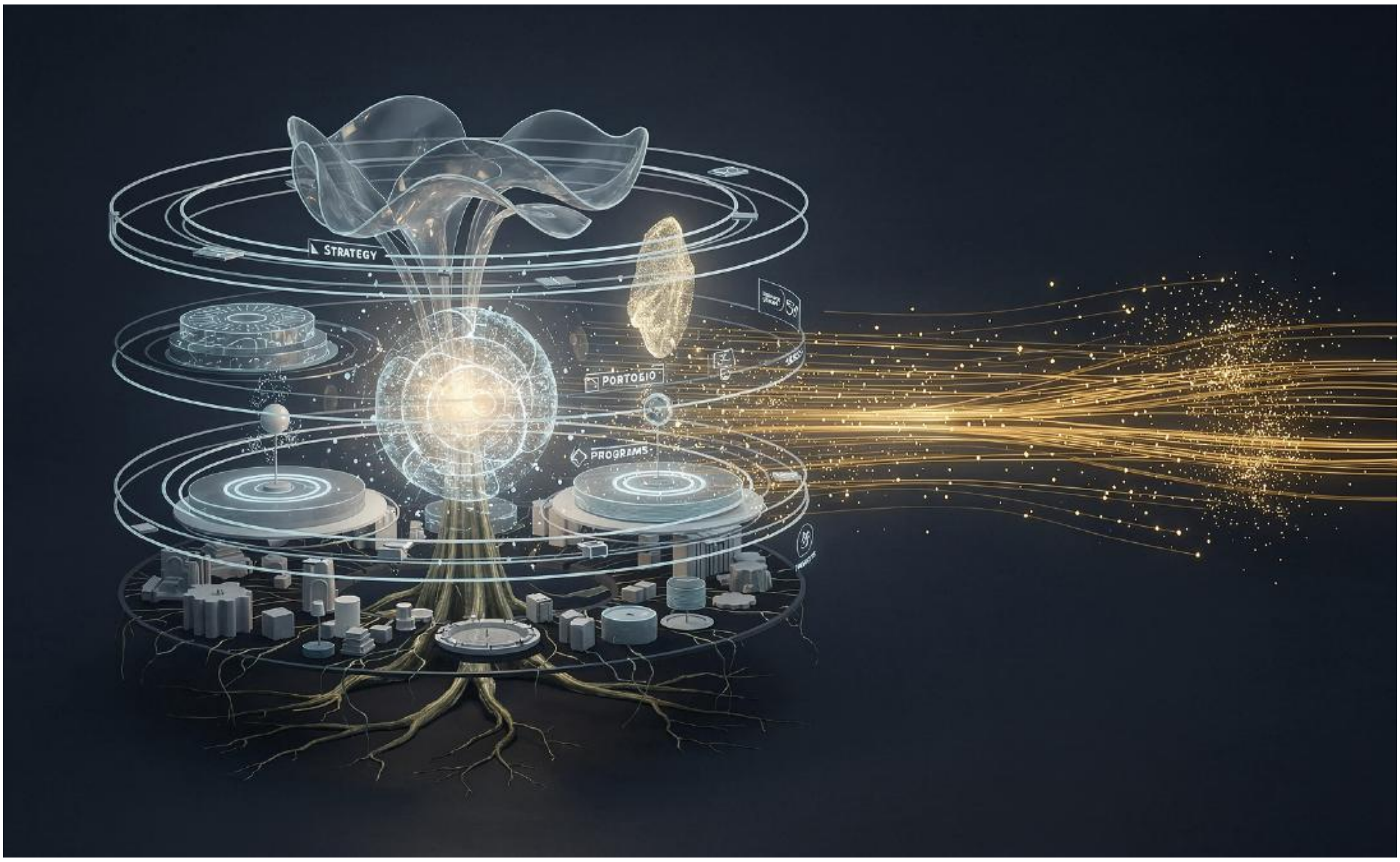
Impact Instead of Activity

Governance is then perceived as bureaucracy when it is limited to approvals and reports. Good governance creates clarity about who makes which decision and what information is necessary. It does not protect budgets, but also the organization's inability to make decisions.

The number of ongoing projects is not proof of progress. A project completed on time is not automatically successful if it does not make a relevant contribution to strategy. A Project Management Organization with Impact therefore asks: What impact should this project create—and what decisions do we have to make today so that this impact actually occurs?

The Project Management Organization is not the nerve center that decides everything itself. It is the hypothalamus that regulates the system so that leadership can make decisions and the organization can act effectively.

Angelos Kirianes is a transformation and IT executive with international interim and portfolio management experience in organizational change and large-scale IT projects worldwide. He is PMI- and IPMA-certified, as well as certified in CISO, ITIL, and Cynefin. He is the author of the bestsellers "The Backbone of Success" and "The Backbone of the Future". He lives in Munich but feels at home anywhere in the world.



Source: Image created with FLUX2 [pro]

The Governance Trap

ALEXANDRA ERREA

Most PMOs are built primarily with the goal to improve governance: status reports, RAG traffic lights, process templates and meeting cadences are some of the tools that a PMO Manager can have in their framework tool. This is true and valid especially for supportive PMOs and for a long time, I believed that if I simply got the governance right, impact would follow automatically and be immediately visible to the stakeholders. Unfortunately, it turns out that this is not enough. Executives don't wake up grateful for a well-formatted status report; instead they wake up needing to know whether the organization's strategy is actually being executed, and whether they need to step in if it isn't.

I've spent over 20 years in portfolio delivery across various industries and spent the last several of them building a PMO from the ground up at global software companies. Throughout this experience, I learned something that could apply to any PMO setup: the function's real impact isn't measured by how well we, as PMO leaders, track projects. It's measured by how visibly we can connect delivery to what matters most and that is strategic outcomes. Making that shift from governance to strategic enablement is not a one-time initiative, rather it is a mindset of continuous improvement.

Focus on Visibility, Not Just Structure

When I started building PMOs, the situation in most organizations was familiar: all the projects had various tracking mechanisms, inconsistent reporting, and the highest risk was that the departments had a very limited view of the portfolio and what the projects were actually delivering. The first instinct was of course to introduce structure, meaning playbooks, gate reviews, templates and a robust change management process. However, structure, on its own, only tells us what should be documented. It doesn't show what is actually happening, or why it matters to the business right now. In that sense, creating the governance framework could be perceived as adding more control and overhead, but by adding one more factor, I feel we changed the game. This key factor was actually adding visibility.

Adding visibility meant that after designing standardized, PMI-aligned processes and templates, I took the next step and consolidated the reporting into different dashboards. These dashboards weren't built just as a reporting exercise, added to a slide deck, only to be forever forgotten. These reports were customized according to the needs of the executives or the key project team members and became the shared language that we could use in critical meetings, in order to make actual investment and prioritization decisions.

For example, on an IoT sensor project, the portfolio dashboard made it clearly visible that the cost of delivering the MVP prototype on a fast-track timeline had increased due to rising manufacturing material costs, to the point where the resulting profit margin would be minimal. Since that data was consolidated and visible in one place, rather than buried across separate, inconsistently formatted status updates, the executive sponsor could see it immediately and was able to make the difficult decision to rework the timeline and scale of the project.

There were multiple similar cases where I saw first-hand how PMO dashboards can truly become a decision-making tool that shapes the organization's strategy, instead of being perceived as an administrative overhead.

Governance as Influence, Not as Administration

Another reason that a PMO function may be perceived as an administrative burden is if it only reports upward. It is very important to keep in mind that any governance forum like weekly reviews, lessons learned sessions, steering committees or quarterly portfolio reviews, should not be treated as a box to tick off a list, but as the venue where the PMO can earn influence among its customers: not only executives but also delivery teams.

In my personal experience, the fact that the PMO function runs frequent governance reviews with project teams and steering boards with C-suite and VP stakeholders shows that it is present at every decision point, not just reporting on outcomes after the projects are over. Introducing structured overviews paves the way to understand why the project progress matters, which in the end gives the PMO function a genuine hand in shaping what the organization pursues.

Impact Multiplies Through People

Of course, none of the above scales through dashboards and frameworks alone. A PMO's impact has a shelf life if it depends only on one person holding all the context. This is why I felt it was important to focus on the project managers as well, by building standardized onboarding processes, by mentoring the team, and by shaping a genuine culture of continuous improvement. Mentoring means holding frequent sessions, especially with the newly hired project managers, where we can discuss topics like stakeholder management or potential framework improvements. This approach showed up in concrete terms too, as the time that the new project managers needed to become fully effective was usually about one month shorter than previously expected. The PMO's impact becomes therefore visible through multiple members and can offer long-lasting strategic enablement to leadership and project teams.

Impact Means Trust

As a conclusion, if there's one thing I'd want another PMO leader to take from this, it's that the function's impact should not be merely based on a maturity-model score or the number of templates that are in use. It should be based on whether leadership trusts the PMO's view of reality enough to take hard decisions, and whether that trust is built consistently into the team of project managers delivering outcomes. This, more than any dashboard or framework, is what real impact looks like.

So the question worth asking should not be restricted to "How mature is our governance?" It should be expanded to: "How can we build more trust with our customer base?"

Alexandra Errea is a PMO Manager and Technical Program & Portfolio Management professional with 20+ years of experience across telecommunications, IoT, and software. She holds the PMI-PMOCP™ certification and is an active PMI member.

Gantt, Granger, Gandalf

Who Can PMO Leaders Really Learn From?

DR. ANDREAS BERNING

Let's be honest—these days, if you want to learn more about specific issues related to PMO leadership or effectiveness, you're probably using AI chatbots like PMI Infinity, ChatGPT, Claude, Copilot, Gemini, Perplexity, and other AI tools, right? The bookshelf—once the go-to resource, packed to the brim with professional literature on topics like maturity models, portfolio management, strategy execution, organizational development, or the latest PMO standards—has long since had its day. But maybe you should just look elsewhere on the bookshelf—further up on the right (or down on the left, depending on the shelf)—in the fantasy section. Because good leadership, along with effective strategy execution, isn't just described in management literature. It's told. In stories. In novels. Through characters who overcome complex challenges, bring people together, and provide direction.

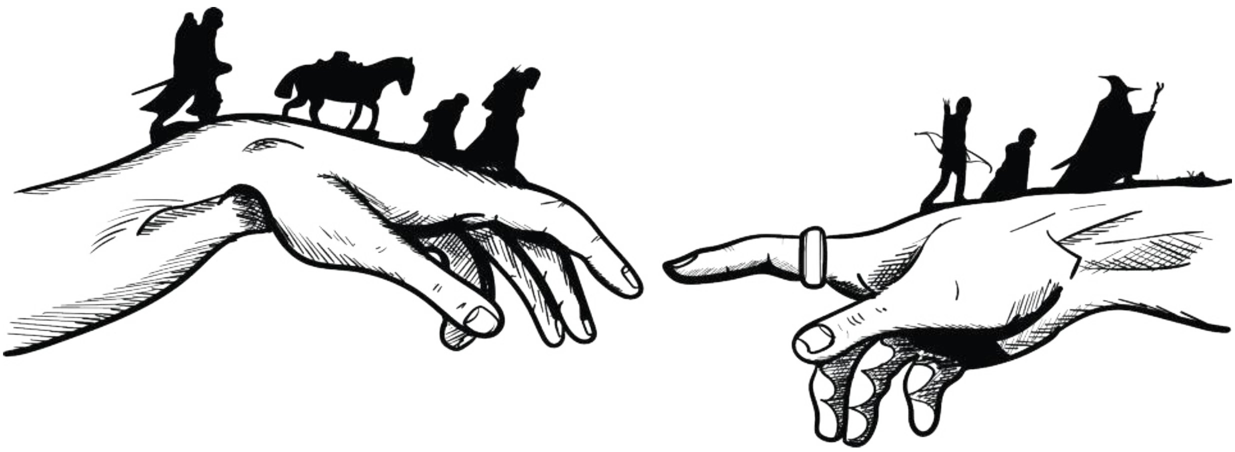
Two characters stand out in particular. ***Hermione Granger*** from the ***Harry Potter series*** embodies methodological excellence, preparation, and knowledge management. ***Gandalf*** from ***The Lord of the Rings*** embodies strategic leadership, stakeholder management, and the art of rallying people behind a shared vision. Neither is a project manager in the traditional sense, and that is precisely why they offer surprisingly apt illustrations of the role of a modern PMO.

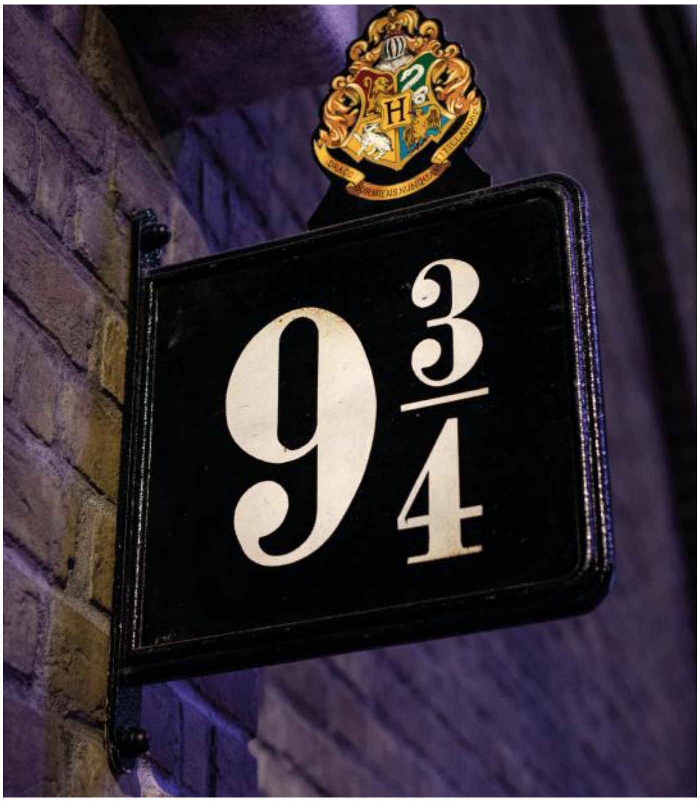
Of course, there is neither an enterprise PMO at Hogwarts nor a portfolio steering committee in Middle-earth. Gandalf doesn't produce status reports, and Hermione Granger certainly doesn't maintain a KPI dashboard. And yet, many organizations would benefit from precisely these two characters. For in very different ways, both embody what a modern PMO should achieve: providing direction, preparing decisions, facilitating collaboration, and effectively translating strategy into action.

Hermione Granger – The Master of Preparation

From the very first book, Hermione Granger impresses with her extraordinary combination of analytical thinking, a thirst for knowledge, and an almost boundless zeal for preparation. While others are still debating what the actual problem is, she has long since done her research, identified connections, and thought through possible solutions.

This becomes particularly clear in ***Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets***. Hermione is the first to realize that a basilisk is behind the attacks at Hogwarts. Although she herself is turned to stone, she leaves Harry and Ron the crucial clue. Her insights thus continue to have an impact—even without her personal presence.





This is precisely where the parallel to the PMO begins. Knowledge alone does not create added value. Only when it is documented, shared, and available at the decisive moment does it have an impact. An effective PMO therefore ensures not only that information is available, but also that it can be used independently of any individual.

Hermione demonstrates a completely different strength in ***Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix***. With Dumbledore's Army, she organizes far more than just a secret study group. She creates structures, establishes secure communication channels via the enchanted galleons, and ensures that many individuals come together to form a community capable of taking action.

This, too, is one of the true strengths of modern PMOs. They do not lead projects to success on their own. Rather, they create the conditions for success. Methods, standards, and governance are not ends in themselves, but means to an end: they provide guidance, facilitate collaboration, and help the organization become more effective.

What PMO Leaders Shouldn‘t Emulate from Hermine

It is precisely her weaknesses that make Hermione such a credible role model.
In ***Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban,*** she tries to take nearly every class at the same time with the help of the Time-Turner. Her drive to do everything perfectly ultimately leads to burnout, stress, and declining performance.
The temptation is just as strong in the PMO. Oversee every project. Track every metric. Perfect every template. However, the result is rarely greater impact—but all too often more bureaucracy. A good PMO is therefore not defined by doing everything, but by consistently prioritizing and focusing its energy where the greatest strategic benefit—and thus the greatest impact—is achieved. Hermione also evolves over the course of the story in how she deals with rules. At first, she often considers regulations sacrosanct and occasionally confuses compliance with the actual goal. Only later does she learn to sensibly combine principles with pragmatism.
This is precisely where an important insight lies for PMOs as well. Governance should enable strategy implementation—not hinder it. Standards provide guidance, but they must never become more important than the benefits for projects and the organization.

Gandalf – The Strategic Orchestrator

If Hermione stands for methodological excellence, then Gandalf embodies the strategic side of effective PMO work.

A particularly striking example is provided by the Council of Elrond scene in ***The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring***. Representatives of a wide variety of peoples, interests, and perspectives come together to deliberate on the fate of the One Ring. Gandalf does not decide alone. Rather, he ensures that information is gathered, risks are openly discussed, and ultimately a common course of action is found.

The scene seems surprisingly modern—almost like a portfolio board meeting. This is exactly how an enterprise PMO should operate: not as the actual decision-maker, but as a body that prepares decisions, brings together different perspectives, and creates a solid foundation for sound decisions.

Gandalf demonstrates a second strength in his dealings with King Théoden in ***The Two Towers***. After Théoden was freed from Saruman's influence, Gandalf did not permanently take over leadership. Instead, he empowered Théoden to resume his responsibilities on his own. Perhaps that is precisely one of the most important tasks of a modern PMO: not to manage as many projects as possible itself, but to empower people and organizations. A PMO has its greatest impact when executives and project managers become more successful because they are provided with better conditions.

What PMO Leaders Should Critically Examine About Gandalf

But even Gandalf is not a flawless role model. On several occasions, he initially keeps important information to himself and only explains his motives much later.

Read More

While his intuition often leads him to the right conclusion, his decisions are not always transparent to those around him. For a PMO, this would be problematic. Good governance thrives on transparency. Decisions should be prepared, documented, and communicated in a way that is easy to understand. Only then can trust and acceptance be fostered.

There is another weakness as well: so much depends on him personally. After Gandalf's apparent death in the Mines of Moria, the Fellowship initially lacks direction because knowledge, experience, and leadership were heavily concentrated in him. It is precisely this kind of dependency that PMOs should avoid. Methodological knowledge, networks, and decision-making processes belong within the organization—not in the minds of individual people. Sustainable strategy implementation can only succeed when responsibility is broadly embedded and knowledge is permanently available.

Two Figures—Two Perspectives on Effective PMO Work

Hermione Granger and Gandalf could hardly be more different. And that is precisely why they complement each other so well as role models. Hermione embodies analytical strength, knowledge management, and methodological excellence. She reminds us that successful projects are built on thorough preparation, structured work, and consistent learning. Gandalf, on the other hand, embodies the strategic dimension. He demonstrates that effective strategy implementation depends less on perfect plans than on clever orchestration, persuasive stakeholder management, and the ability to rally people behind a common goal.

However, the limitations of both characters are at least as valuable. Hermione's perfectionism reminds PMOs to value impact over completeness. Gandalf's strong focus on people demonstrates how important resilient structures are—ones that function independently of individual personalities.

Perhaps that is precisely the real message: A modern PMO needs both—the methodological clarity of a Hermione Granger and the strategic foresight of a Gandalf.

Conclusion

A modern, effective PMO is far more than just a reporting unit or a body that sets methods. It translates strategy into effective implementation, creates transparency regarding projects and portfolios, supports well-informed decisions, develops standards with sound judgment, and empowers people to successfully assume responsibility. Its effectiveness stems not from control, but from guidance, coordination, and the ability to make complexity manageable.

Hermione Granger and Gandalf demonstrate, in very different ways, how these tasks can be accomplished—and where typical pitfalls lie. One reminds us that excellence is based on preparation, knowledge, and structure. The other illustrates that lasting impact arises above all where people are brought together, decision-making is facilitated, and responsibility is consciously delegated.

And perhaps that is the most beautiful insight from this little excursion into literature: You don't have to travel to Hogwarts or carry a ring to Mordor to learn about good PMO work. Sometimes it's enough to simply open a good book—provided you read between the lines not only for magic and adventure, but also for leadership, collaboration, and effective strategy implementation

And who knows?

Perhaps the next big innovation in the PMO isn't in the PMBOK® at all, but somewhere between a talking hat and a wizard who, surprisingly, rarely asks for project status reports.

Andreas Berning—PMP, PMI-ACP, DASSM, GPM-b—has been working on projects in the financial services industry for 25 years, ranging from IT and finance to compliance and initiatives to combat financial crime. He was active in the PMI from 2016 to 2024 (Frankfurt and Germany Chapters; founding member). His motto: "Never stop learning."

PMI Continues to Shape the Future of Project Management

PM*IMPACT* REPORTS

Standing still is not part of the Project Management Institute's philosophy. With new standards, further-developed certifications, and a stronger focus on the challenges of modern project work, the Institute continuously adapts its portfolio to the needs of practitioners. The latest developments make one thing clear: Project management is becoming more strategic, more complex, and more strongly focused on measurable value.

This development is particularly evident in the revised PMP® certification exam, which has been in effect worldwide since July 2026. While traditional competencies such as planning, management, and leadership continue to form the foundation, topics such as value creation, strategic business success, sustainability, and the responsible use of artificial intelligence are receiving greater emphasis. The weighting of the exam domains has also been adjusted: The Business Environment domain now accounts for more than a quarter of the exam, underscoring that successful project managers today are no longer expected simply to manage projects but also to actively contribute to the implementation of corporate strategy. At the same time, the new exam places greater emphasis on practical scenarios that reflect real-world decision-making situations and require not only professional knowledge but, above all, sound judgment and situational decision-making.

PMI is also working on new development opportunities for experienced project managers. An Advanced Certification is currently in a pilot phase. It is aimed at professionals responsible for highly complex projects, programs, or enterprise-wide transformations. Requirements include an active PMP® certification, a peer review by a PMI-accredited organization, and an additional standardized exam. The goal is to make competencies visible that go beyond managing individual projects and are particularly relevant to strategic initiatives. The pilot phase is currently underway with selected organizations; further information on a broader rollout is expected after its completion.

There are also changes to the preparation requirements for PMP® certification. PMI has announced adjustments to the requirements for the mandatory 35 Contact Hours for live training. Starting at the end of 2026, these hours will only be recognized if the training is provided by a PMI Authorized Training Partner (ATP), a China Registered Education Provider (REP), or an accredited academic program. Training courses already completed will, of course, remain valid. However, anyone planning to pursue PMP® certification should already take these changes into account when selecting a training provider.

The latest developments once again highlight PMI's commitment to continuously adapting project management to the demands of a changing world of work. Strategic thinking, a focus on value, and the ability to actively shape change are becoming increasingly important—both in practice and in PMI's international standards.

From Project Office to Strategic Partner

The Evolution of PMOs

PIERRE CORELL (PEER-REVIEW: DR. MARTINA GERST)

PMOs (Project Management Offices) have existed for nearly 100 years. What began as purely administrative and controlling units have evolved into centers of excellence with diverse focus areas—ranging from value creation to actual project execution, prioritization, and process quality.

The “P“ in PMO can fundamentally stand for Project, Program, or Portfolio team focusing on one of the P3M domains. Additional purpose-driven designations are common, such as TMO for Transformation, XMO for Excellence, or VMO for Value Management Office. What PMOs share is the goal of maximizing benefit and decision-making capability through targeted governance and enablement within their sphere of influence.
The first known PMO dates to 1930—as the U.S. Air Force’s ”Project Office,” it monitored the complex construction of aircraft. During the Manhattan Project and the emergence of scientific management methods, PMOs gained notable relevance in the 1950s. ”System Project Offices”managed weapons development projects and executed supportive functions, such as training and logistics coordination. Driven by the IT revolution, PMOs became established in construction, software development, and other industries starting in the 1980s.[1]

In the 1990s, institutes (PMI, IPMA, PRINCE2) published professional PM certifications and standards, leading to a rise in the number of practitioners. PMOs gained momentum due to their ability to steer diverse initiatives—driven by increasing organizational demands and growing complexity.

Starting in 2010, PMOs began to be typologized and categorized into versatile archetypes. Twenty-four critical PMO functions were identified. Perspectives differentiated by factors such as level of authority, project involvement, and the number of internal project managers within the team became established, revealing significant diversity among PMOs. Monteiro et al.[2] summarized sixty distinct types of PMOs in 2024. They attributed an evolving nature and increasing adaptability to PMOs. Nevertheless, the top three PMO functions remained unchanged: executive project status reporting, monitoring and controlling, and project documentation.

Monteiro et al. succeeded in identifying four core types based on task domains ranked by increasing authority:

- **Project Office,** primarily tasked with reporting functions and administrative support;
- **PM Center of Excellence (PMCoE)**, actively supporting project management disciplines;
- **Controller/Governance PMO**, responsible for performance monitoring and ensuring adherence to OPAs and EEFs;
- **Enterprise PMO (EPMO)/Strategic PMO**, holding multiple responsibilities within senior management and portfolio prioritization, consequently possessing strategic relevance.

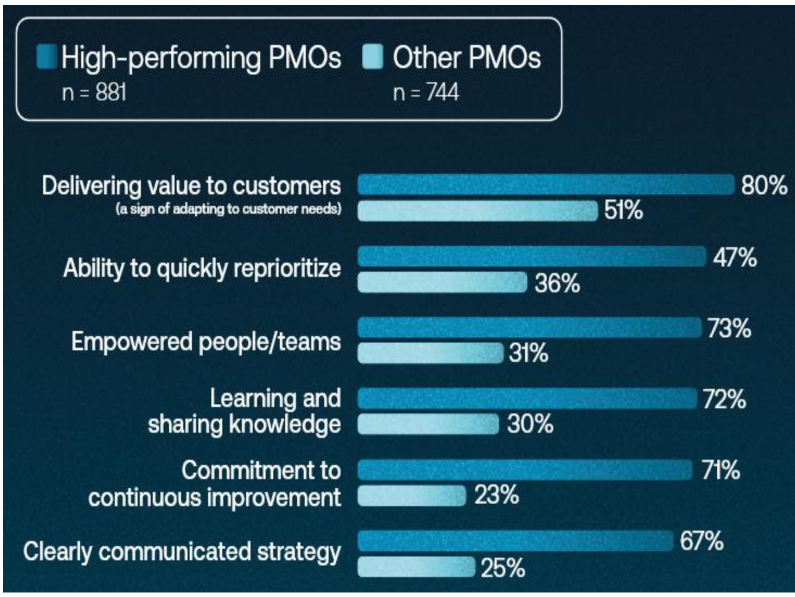


Figure 2: PMO Benchmark. Built to Thrive. p. 12. 2025. PMI.[4]

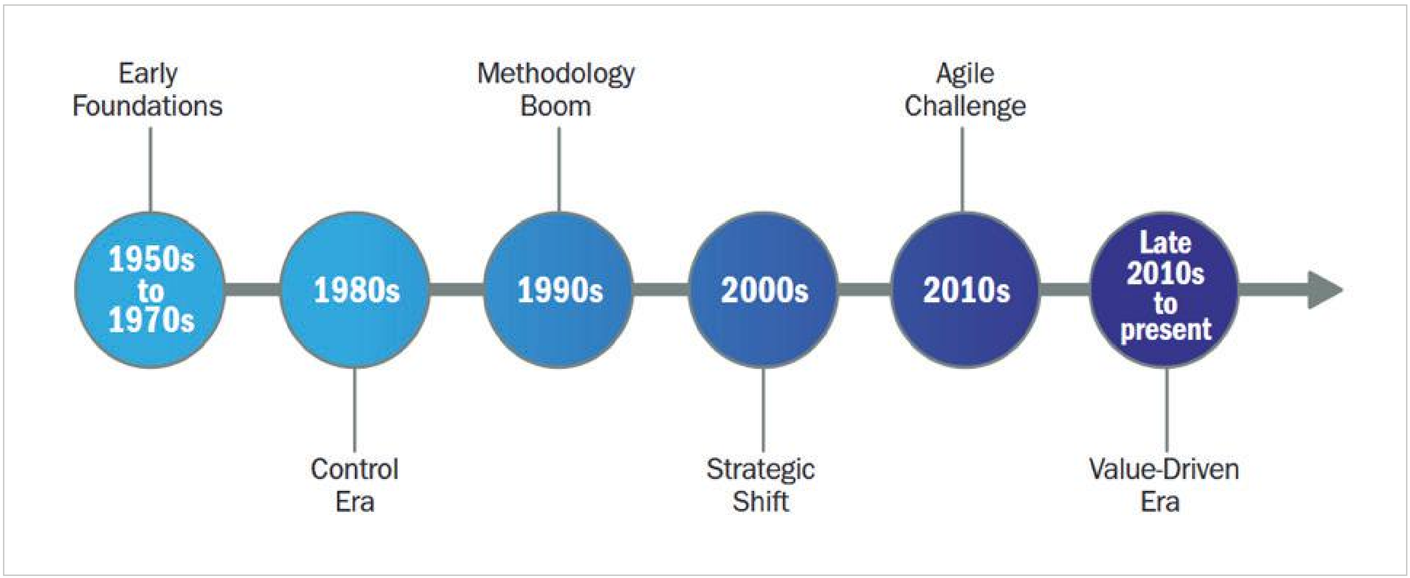


Figure 3: PMO Timeline. PMO Practice Guide. 2025. p. 20. PMI.[6]

In 2022, a study by the Swiss Business School and IPMA revealed that nearly 40% of the 219 surveyed organizations operated between two and five PMOs.[3] Although only 11.4% of companies maintained PMOs with five or more employees, the proportion of PMO personnel with more than five years of dedicated PMO experience was already measured at 60.8%. Furthermore, the PMI report "Built to Thrive"[4] demonstrated that 80% of today's high-performing PMOs intentionally leverage technology to generate value.

A key factor for successful PMOs, as concluded in PMI's 2026 "Bridging the Gap" report[5], is mastering the necessary capabilities—understood as functions and services—required to deliver value to PMO stakeholders. Strategic alignment is currently prioritized as a key objective by 68% of PMO leaders, representing a 10% gap compared to the perspective of senior management.

With the PMO Value Ring® framework, the PMI-PMOCP™ certification and an explicit focus on value and benefits management were standardized in 2025. We covered this in detail in our March 2026 issue (p. 24). The accompanying PMO guide establishes that there are no empirically proven, universally ideal, or consistently superior PMO types. Existing classifications—such as agile, directive, and supportive PMOs—should be viewed as a palette of options tailored to achieve specific organizational goals.

Pierre Le Manh, President and CEO of PMI, succinctly captures the focal point of modern PMOs in his foreword to "Bridging the Gap": "As we move deeper into the 21st century, organizations face sustained pressure from technological disruption, shifting markets, and rising societal expectations. Continuous evolution is often no longer optional. [...] PMOs must evolve to become true partners in strategy execution".

Pierre Corell is PMO Ambassador, PMI-PMOCP™, PMP®, PBP®, P3GP®, lecturer, and speaker, working in a Cybersecurity PMO. He is actively engaged in advancing the project management profession.

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[4] Project Management Institute. 2025. Built to Thrive: PMOs That Elevate Innovation and Power Transformation.

[5] Project Management Institute. 2026. Bridging the Gap: Positioning PMOs as Indispensable Partners in Strategy Execution: What must-have capabilities elevate PMO performance?

[6] PMI. 2025. Project Management Offices: A Practice Guide. Project Management Institute, Inc.

PMO with a Sales DNA

More control or better support?

BERNHARD KONRAD SCHWAB

Understanding Stakeholders As Customers, Acting As a Service Provider, Creating Value, And Achieving Impact

I have experienced PMOs that were excellently organized. The templates were clean, reporting lines were clear, and governance meetings were properly scheduled. Only one thing often did not work: supporting the projects.

Do Projects Need More Control or Better Support?

A PMO should set standards, make risks visible, and prepare decisions. It becomes critical when the PMO confuses its processes with the value they are meant to provide. A report does not automatically create transparency. A standard does not automatically create quality. And an additional governance body does not automatically lead to better decisions.

An Example From Practice

At one company I had the opportunity to support, the PMO had been in place for around ten years. Its leadership was deeply involved in operational projects. Decisions were made despite a lack of proximity to the customer, the industry, and the specific project. Project managers were required to implement the instructions as given and without deviation. Yet responsibility still remained with them. When one of the most important strategic projects failed, the project manager was immediately identified as the person to blame. A convenient explanation. But not a helpful one.

The Real Problem Was the PMO's Understanding of Its Own Role

Together with the executive management team, we analyzed the situation. It quickly became clear that there was no shortage of processes or reports. If anything, there were too many. Toward senior management, the PMO conveyed the impression that everything was under control and that it was the sole source of expertise in project management. Within the projects, the reality was different. What was missing there was direction, support, and an understanding of the challenges faced by those involved. Experienced employees became frustrated and left the company because of the ongoing conflicts.

A PMO with a Sales DNA Makes the Difference

This does not mean sales in the traditional sense. It is about a mindset. A PMO with a sales-oriented mindset does not view its typical responsibilities as mandatory exercises, but as services for its internal customers. It listens, understands the requirements of executive management, project managers, and functional departments, and derives appropriate offerings from those needs. The central question is not: “Which reports and requirements do the projects have to fulfill?” Instead, it is: “What information, structures, and support services do our stakeholders need to make better decisions and deliver projects more successfully?”

Executive management needs reliable information as a basis for decision-making. Project managers need support with risks, escalations, and priorities. Functional departments expect clarity regarding effort, value, and dependencies. A standard offering for everyone will rarely meet all of these expectations.

From Control Function to Supporter

At the company, one simple question became part of leadership meetings: “What has your department contributed this week to the success of employees and the company?”

For the PMO, this meant a change in role. Processes were no longer evaluated according to how thoroughly they were documented, but according to whether they helped the projects. Reports were shortened, decision-making paths were simplified, and services were aligned more closely with actual problems. Within one year, satisfaction within the projects increased measurably. At the same time, cycle times in several project management processes were reduced. The PMO was no longer seen as a disruptive control function, but as valuable support for the projects.

A Sales-Oriented PMO Needs Backbone

A sales-oriented PMO must not become "Everybody's Darling." It understands requirements, but does not fulfill every request out of a misguided desire to please. Instead, it also asks uncomfortable questions, demands reliable information, and makes risks transparent. Customer proximity does not mean blindly following the customer. It means aligning stakeholder interests with the company's objectives.

Governance therefore remains indispensable. Standards and controls are valuable when they create transparency, ensure quality, and improve decision-making. This requires self-reflection, clarity, and, above all, consistency.

Conclusion

A modern PMO needs both proximity and distance. It must understand the reality of projects while also supporting strategic decision-making.

Its value is not reflected in the number of templates, status reports, or governance meetings. It is reflected in whether stakeholders make better decisions, projects operate more effectively, and the company achieves its objectives more reliably.

A PMO may control many things. It just should not lose its connection to reality in the process.

Bernhard Konrad Schwab is a subject matter expert and successful speaker in project management, specializing in automation and artificial intelligence. Drawing on his many years of experience and his holistic, strategic perspective, he offers fresh insights into challenging project environments and bridges the gap between strategic direction and operational implementation.

Strategy Identified. Implementation Not Yet Documented.

MANUEL DIERLINGER

Senior management has decided: Strategically important projects will be managed through a shared portfolio going forward. The PMO is clarifying roles, creating templates, and organizing the kick-off. Three weeks later, the departments continue to submit their favorite projects directly to senior management. Risks remain yellow until they turn red. A new customer inquiry has swept four priorities off the table.

In my book "Die Macht der Muster" (The Power of Patterns), Ronny would make an appearance: a robot in a suit and the control center of automatic behavior. He stores what people repeat frequently. He checks whether the process still makes sense with about as much diligence as a voice recorder.

"New strategy identified. Old procedure still stored as the standard."

A strategy describes what an organization intends to do in the future. A pattern describes what people actually do under familiar conditions. New goals based on old standards result in the same old routine with a new label. Good PMOs are familiar with work packages, milestones, and escalation paths. Looking at behavioral patterns starts earlier: Which process keeps cropping up? What triggers it? What short-term benefit does it offer?

Ronny distinguishes three tipping points.

1. Getting Started: No one knows what to do next

People put off filing their tax returns, calling Mom, and doing household chores. A coworker is still a human being at work, too. There, the tasks are called "developing prioritization criteria," "engaging stakeholders," or "developing a communication strategy."

It sounds important. But it's far from feasible.

Large, vague tasks create uncertainty. So people do some research, schedule another meeting, or tackle the small tasks first. That feels safer than a potentially flawed first draft.

Ronny's diagnosis: "Goal established. First actionable step missing." The work package is: "Develop prioritization criteria."

The starting point is: "On Tuesday from 9:00 to 9:30 a.m., Julia and Mehmet will compile a list of the existing criteria for the four areas. The result may be incomplete."

The time, participants, action, and initial result are clear. This baby step doesn't solve the task yet. It gets people involved.

2. Staying on Track: The project is underway. Heading somewhere.

On Friday, 37 messages were sent, seven conversations took place, and a presentation was revised three times. The decision memo still looks the same as it did on Monday. "High level of activity observed. Progress cannot be conclusively determined," Ronny would note in the minutes. The bottleneck often lies between two

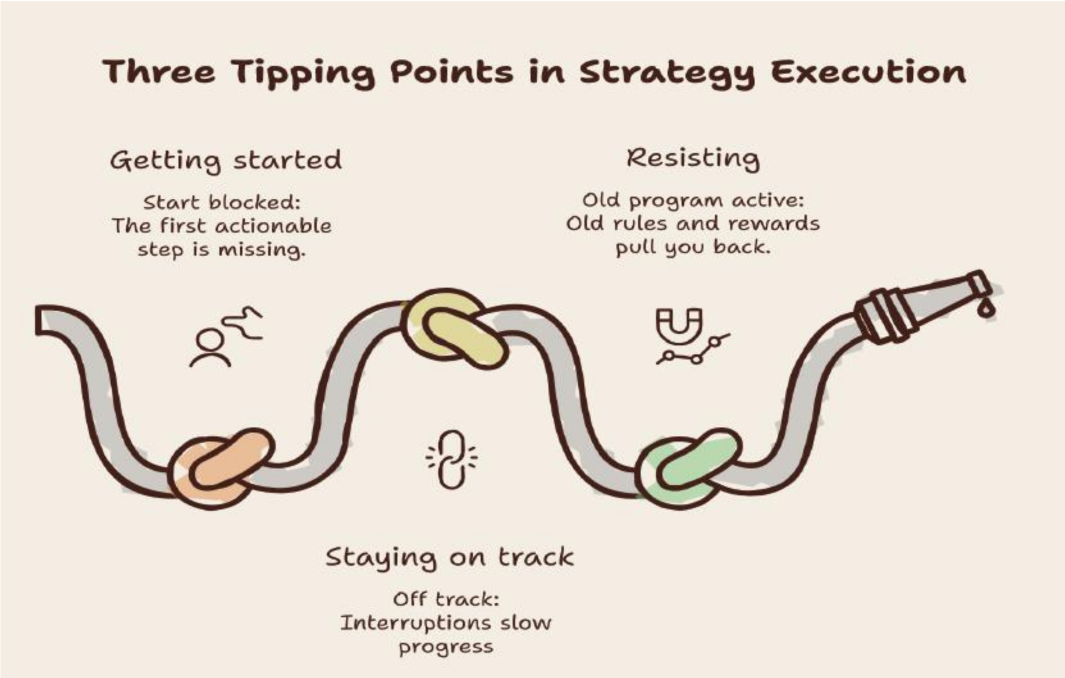

Figure 4: Three Tipping Points in Strategy Execution (M. Dierlinger)

milestones: during interruptions and when switching between tasks. That's why we need reliable interim status updates and checkpoints. Before an interruption, the team documents: Where do we stand? What's left to do? What's the next step?

For example: "Five criteria selected. Weighting to be determined. Next step: test both variants with three projects." This takes two minutes and saves 40 minutes of getting back on track later. Activity shows work. An interim status shows progress. A checkpoint makes it possible to continue.

3. Resisting: Something else pulls you in a stronger direction.

When you stick with it, you lose your way along the way. When you resist, the path is clear, but something else tempts you. And that temptation can be loud: an email with three exclamation points, an assignment from management, an idea that "just needs to be checked out quickly." Then the portfolio needs a clear entry point. Who's reprioritizing? Which project is on hold for this?

Without this counter-question, project magic takes over: tasks pile up, while capacity supposedly stays the same. The second temptation is quieter. It feels like normalcy. The strategy calls for cross-functional decisions, but the same department heads continue to sit in the preliminary meetings. Risks are supposed to be identified early, but yellow flags trigger rounds of justifications. Resources are supposed to be allocated strategically, but managers continue to assign tasks directly to the team.

Ronny's assessment: "New goal loaded. Old triggers, rules, and rewards still active."

That's why the PMO is restructuring the framework: New requirements go through the portfolio process, early risks trigger support, and additional assignments are evaluated against existing priorities. This makes the new behavior easier—and a relapse more difficult.

From Decision to New Standard

A strategy becomes effective when it takes concrete form in everyday work: Every project proposal goes through the same intake process. Every reprioritization specifies what must be put on hold as a result. Every work phase ends with an interim status update and a checkpoint.

This is how a PMO translates strategy into reliable processes. What happens regularly eventually becomes the norm.

Ronny would report: "Strategy recognized. New standard being implemented."

Manuel Dierlinger is a speaker, author, and habits expert. In his non-fiction book "Die Macht der Muster", he explores why people know what would be good for them—yet still do something else. Humorous, practical for everyday life, and free of motivational fluff.

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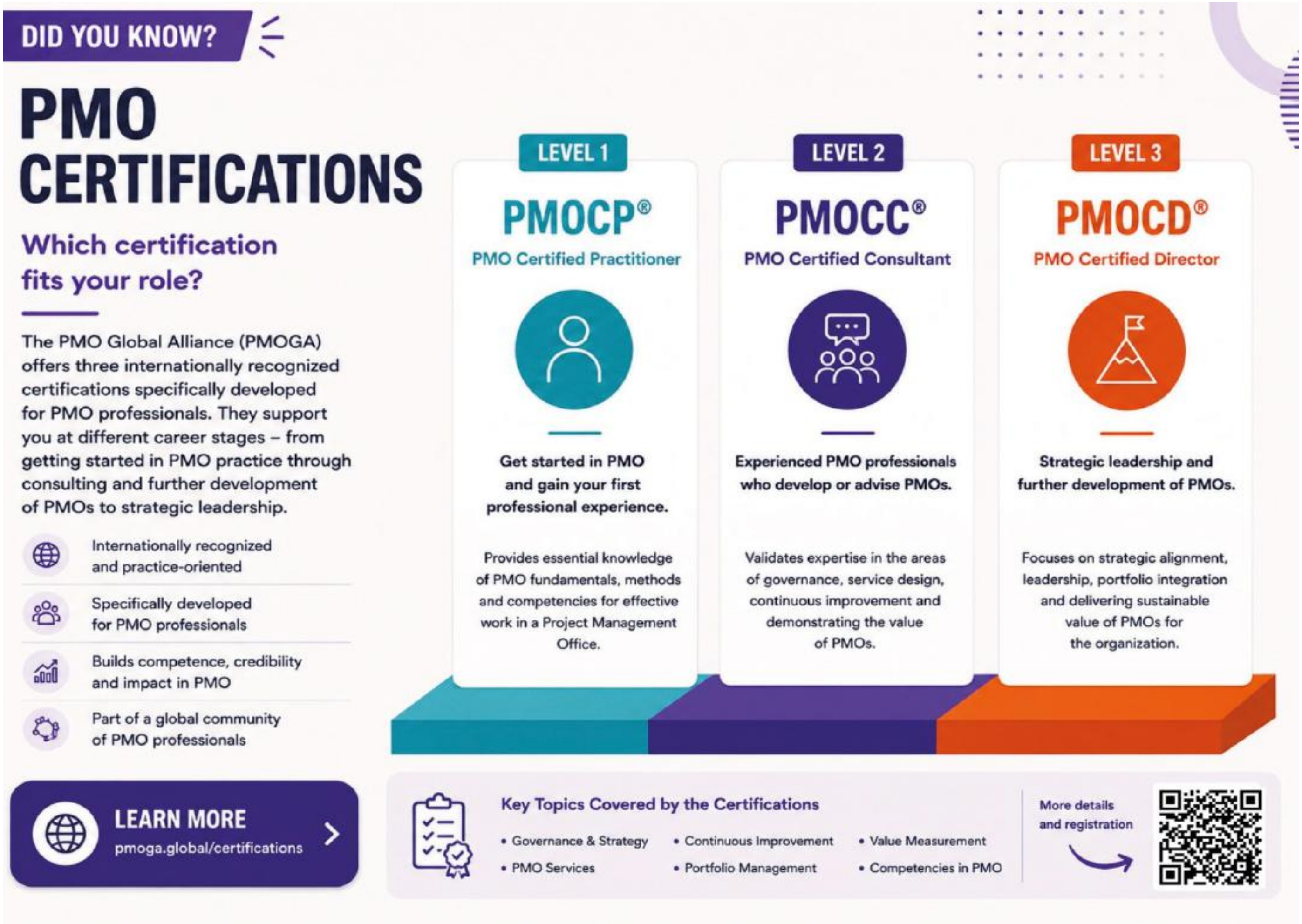

(created with ChatGPT (OpenAI))

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Managing Consequences, Not Just Projects

The Second-Order PMO

RICHA AGARWAL

The steering committee dashboard is green. The project is delivered on time and within budget, the agreed scope has been delivered, and the solution is live. But three to six months later, a different picture begins to emerge. Employees are working around problems manually. There are more support tickets than before. Operations teams are struggling with new dependencies. The expected benefits are taking longer to materialize.

The project was successful. Why, then, does it seem to have failed for the organization? Many PMO professionals are familiar with this scenario. The classic metrics of "on time, on budget, and on scope" continue to be important. They only show, however, whether a project was successfully delivered. Go-live is not the destination. It is the beginning of second-order effects.

This is where the Second-Order PMO comes into play. This approach moves away from simply measuring our outputs—did we deliver what we planned?—toward managing consequences: What did the delivered item change, weaken, or enable? It manages these consequences with the same rigor with which traditional PMOs managed the project itself.

Expensive Consequences of First-Order Thinking

When a PMO works exclusively in a project-oriented way, the consequences are usually absorbed by Business and Operations.

The "successful" CRM project: A global sales team switches to a new CRM system. The implementation is completed on time, within budget, and with the agreed scope. The Second-Order Effect: The new process requires significantly more manual data entry. Some employees return to using Excel spreadsheets. Data quality declines, the sales pipeline becomes less visible, and management begins to question its forecasts. The system was successfully implemented, but the business benefits were not achieved. The cost reduction program: An organization successfully reduces costs. The financial targets are achieved. The Second-Order Effect: Employees who had been redeployed or laid off were responsible for regulatory, escalation, and transformation programs. Implementation slows down. Knowledge is lost and remaining teams become overloaded. One strategic goal was achieved, but the ability to implement other strategic goals was weakened.

Automated procurement: Manual approval steps in supplier onboarding are eliminated. Processing time decreases. The Second-Order Effect: Insufficient controls lead to duplicate supplier data. Exceptions in the payment process occur more frequently and require additional manual controls. Such effects are barely visible on the project dashboard. They only become apparent after implementation—in behavior, workload, support needs, data quality, capacity, and the performance of other projects.

How a Second-Order PMO Works

To avoid these blind spots, the Second-Order PMO integrates consequence management directly into the project and portfolio lifecycle. Three practices are central.

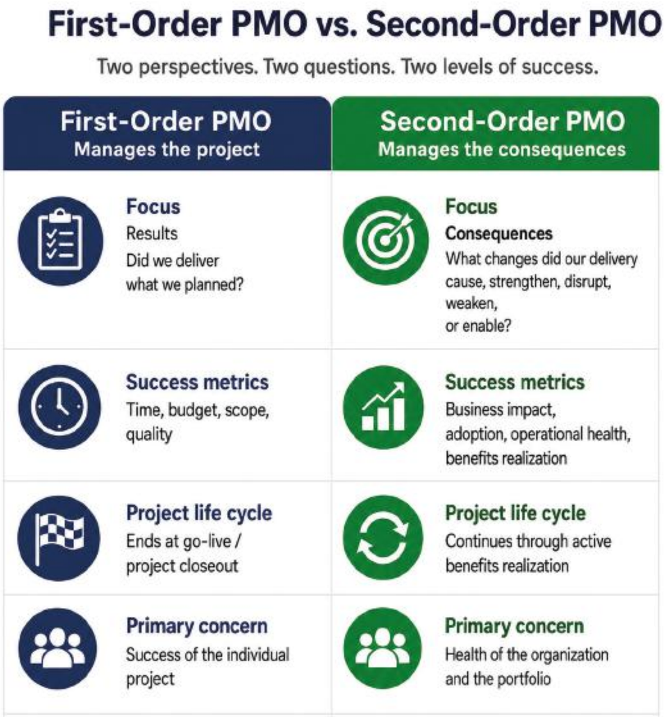

Figure 5: First-Order PMO vs. Second-Order PMO (created with ChatGPT (OpenAI))

1. Pre-Mortems and “Blast Radius” Mapping

Before project approval, the PMO conducts a pre-mortem: “Imagine the project has failed six months after go-live. What went wrong, but the organization was already aware of it?” The project team determines the “blast radius”—functions, systems, processes, customers, suppliers, competencies, and other projects that could be affected. The analysis does not stop at project boundaries. It examines whether multiple projects influence the same process, require the same experts, or affect the same business teams. Measures to reduce risk are developed before budget approval.

2. Longer Realization Periods

In a Second-Order PMO, “go-live” does not mean the end of governance. Projects enter an “active realization” phase for a defined period. The PMO monitors help desk and support requests, user acceptance, process deviations and workarounds, workload and capacity, dependencies between projects, and realized business value compared with the business case.

The goal is not to keep projects open forever, but long enough to determine whether the organization has successfully absorbed the change.

3. Metrics Linked to Consequences

Project managers are no longer evaluated solely on the basis of delivery metrics. Success also includes the condition of the organization after implementation. A project may have been delivered on time and still requires attention if support needs increase, productivity declines, operational dependencies increase, or another strategic project is slowed down.

The Second-Order PMO therefore views success from two perspectives: Delivery Health: Did we deliver what we promised? Consequence Health: Has the organization become more robust as a result of what was delivered?

Complex changes also produce consequences that cannot be predicted. The real failure lies in not recognizing these consequences.

Conclusion

There is no isolated project. Projects are part of a complex system in which every change affects people, processes, technology, operational workflows, and other strategic issues. A First-Order PMO delivers what was planned. A Second-Order PMO additionally asks whether the cumulative effects of the portfolio continue to serve the strategy. Every project in the portfolio can appear green while the organization simultaneously loses the ability to manage change. If the PMO manages consequences with the same rigor as schedules, budgets, risks, and scope, it evolves from a pure reporting and delivery function into a true guardian of enterprise value.

Because project success does not depend solely on what is delivered. Project success depends on what happens as a result of what is delivered.

Richa Agarwal is an expert in AI and digital transformation, with a focus on governance and modern project implementation. She has over 11 years of experience in banking, healthcare, and technology.

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