



PMO Growth Path:

From Project Execution to Organizational Impact



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1. Executive Summary

Over the past two decades, the Project Management Office (PMO) has become a common organizational structure across industries. Organizations increasingly rely on projects as a primary mechanism to implement strategy, drive innovation, and manage complex change initiatives. This growing reliance on projects—often referred to as *projectification*—has led organizations to establish institutional structures capable of coordinating project activities and ensuring governance across portfolios (Wagner et al., 2026).

Within this context, PMOs have emerged as organizational entities responsible for centralizing, coordinating, and supporting project management practices across an organization. They provide governance mechanisms, methodological standards, and operational support to ensure that projects are executed effectively and consistently. However, despite their widespread adoption, many PMOs struggle to demonstrate their strategic contribution to the organization. In practice, PMOs are often perceived primarily as administrative or reporting functions focused on compliance, documentation, and project monitoring. While these roles are important for maintaining operational discipline, they rarely translate into visible organizational impact.

At the same time, expectations toward PMOs have expanded significantly. Modern organizations increasingly expect PMOs not only to support project delivery but also to contribute to broader strategic outcomes such as portfolio alignment, resource optimization, and benefits realization. This shift reflects a broader transition in management thinking—from focusing solely on operational efficiency toward emphasizing value creation and strategic impact.



Despite this shift in expectations, many PMOs remain positioned primarily on the operational side of project management. As a result, organizations often experience a gap between project execution capability and organizational impact.

This white paper introduces the concept of the PMO Growth Path, a conceptual model that explains how PMOs evolve as their capabilities mature and their organizational role expands. The model proposes that PMO development follows a progression from an execution-focused role, centered on governance, standardization, and delivery support, toward a broader role that contributes to strategic alignment and organizational impact.

The PMO Growth Path does not suggest that operational capabilities become less important. Instead, it emphasizes that operational excellence forms the foundation upon which higher-level PMO contributions can emerge. As PMOs mature, their mandate, capabilities, and influence may gradually expand—from supporting project execution to enabling portfolio-level decision making and strengthening the organization’s ability to realize strategic objectives.

By clarifying this growth trajectory, the PMO Growth Path provides organizations with a conceptual lens to understand how PMOs develop, why many PMOs remain confined to operational roles, and what conditions enable PMOs to evolve into more strategically relevant organizational systems.

Ultimately, the PMO Growth Path offers a practical perspective for executives, PMO leaders, and practitioners seeking to understand how PMOs can progress beyond project oversight and become meaningful contributors to organizational performance and long-term strategic outcomes.



2. The PMO Paradox

Over the past two decades, the Project Management Office (PMO) has become an increasingly common organizational structure. As organizations rely more heavily on projects to implement strategy, coordinate complex initiatives, and manage transformation, the need for centralized oversight and coordination has grown accordingly. This phenomenon—often referred to as the projectification of organizations—has led many companies to establish PMOs to manage the increasing volume and complexity of project activities (Aubry et al., 2008).

In principle, the rationale behind establishing a PMO is straightforward. Organizations expect the PMO to improve project delivery, strengthen governance, standardize methodologies, and support project managers across the organization. In many cases, PMOs are also expected to contribute to better resource coordination, portfolio visibility, and strategic alignment. Research has consistently shown that PMOs can play a significant role in aligning project objectives with organizational goals, facilitating communication among stakeholders, and supporting effective project governance (Umasekar, 2024).

Yet in practice, the reality often looks quite different.

Despite their widespread adoption, many PMOs struggle to demonstrate clear organizational value. In numerous organizations, the PMO becomes primarily associated with reporting, compliance, documentation, and methodological enforcement. These functions are important, but they often reinforce the perception that the PMO operates mainly as an administrative control unit rather than as a strategic contributor.

This situation creates what can be described as a PMO paradox:

Organizations establish PMOs in the hope of improving strategic project outcomes, yet many PMOs remain confined to operational support roles.



Several studies have highlighted this tension. Aubry and Hobbs (Aubry & Hobbs, 2011) observed that PMOs often evolve over time as organizations experiment with different expectations and mandates, reflecting the difficulty organizations face in defining the PMO's role. Similarly, Schibi (2013) argued that many PMOs fail to reach their potential because their mandate remains unclear or limited to operational oversight rather than broader organizational contribution.

In practice, many PMOs become highly effective at “delivering projects right”—ensuring that projects follow defined processes, meet reporting requirements, and adhere to governance structures. However, they are less frequently involved in ensuring that “the right projects are delivered.” Decisions about portfolio prioritization, strategic alignment, and value realization often remain outside the PMO's scope.

This distinction is important. Managing project execution effectively is necessary, but it does not automatically translate into organizational impact. A portfolio of well-executed projects may still fail to generate meaningful value if those projects are not aligned with strategic priorities.

The growing emphasis on value creation in project management has further intensified this discussion. Contemporary perspectives increasingly highlight the importance of linking project management practices to organizational outcomes and benefits realization rather than focusing exclusively on traditional performance metrics such as cost, schedule, and scope (Martinsuo & Anttila, 2022).

As expectations toward PMOs continue to expand, organizations face a fundamental question:

If PMOs are expected to contribute not only to project execution but also to strategic outcomes, how do PMOs evolve to fulfill this broader role?

Understanding this challenge requires moving beyond the traditional view of the PMO as a static organizational structure. Instead, it is necessary to view the PMO as an evolving system whose capabilities, responsibilities, and influence change as organizational maturity increases.



The PMO Growth Path proposed in this white paper emerges from this observation. Rather than assuming that all PMOs should immediately operate at a strategic level, the concept recognizes that PMOs typically develop progressively. Many begin with an execution-focused role and gradually expand their capabilities as organizational expectations, leadership support, and institutional maturity evolve.

Recognizing this developmental trajectory helps explain why many PMOs remain operational—and why only some successfully transition toward broader organizational impact.

3. The Evolution of PMO Roles

The role of the Project Management Office has never been static. Since PMOs began appearing more widely in organizations in the late 1990s and early 2000s, their functions, structures, and organizational positions have evolved considerably. Rather than representing a single standardized model, PMOs have taken many different forms depending on the needs, maturity, and strategic priorities of the organizations in which they operate.

Early studies on PMOs already highlighted this diversity. Hobbs and Aubry (Aubry et al., 2007), for example, identified dozens of different PMO functions across organizations, ranging from administrative support and methodology management to portfolio coordination and strategic advisory roles. This variation indicates that the PMO is not a fixed organizational structure but rather a flexible mechanism that organizations adapt to address different project management challenges.

At the early stages of PMO establishment, the role of the PMO is often primarily operational. Organizations typically introduce a PMO to bring discipline and consistency to project execution. In this stage, the PMO focuses on establishing project management standards, providing templates and methodologies, coordinating reporting processes, and supporting project managers in day-to-day project delivery. These functions help improve transparency, consistency, and governance across projects.



As project activities increase in scale and complexity, the PMO may gradually expand its responsibilities. Beyond supporting individual projects, the PMO may begin to coordinate project portfolios, monitor resource allocation, and facilitate communication between projects and senior management. In this stage, the PMO starts to play a more integrative role within the organization, helping to connect project execution with broader organizational priorities.

Over time, some PMOs evolve further toward a more strategic role. In this configuration, the PMO contributes not only to project execution but also to strategic decision-making processes related to project selection, portfolio prioritization, and benefits realization. The PMO may provide analytical insights to senior management, support portfolio governance structures, and help ensure that projects collectively contribute to organizational objectives.

Research consistently indicates that PMOs can play a critical role in aligning project activities with organizational strategy. By providing governance structures, facilitating information flow, and supporting portfolio-level coordination, PMOs can help organizations manage complex project environments more effectively (Umasekar, 2024).

However, the transition from operational support to strategic contribution is not automatic. Many PMOs remain concentrated in operational functions even after several years of existence. Studies have shown that the mandate, authority, and organizational positioning of the PMO strongly influence whether it evolves toward a more strategic role or remains focused primarily on project execution.

One reason for this variation is that organizations often establish PMOs with immediate operational goals in mind. Improving reporting consistency, strengthening project governance, and supporting project managers are tangible and urgent needs, particularly in organizations where project management practices are still developing. As a result, the initial design of the PMO frequently emphasizes execution-related functions.

While these operational roles are essential, they also shape how the PMO is perceived within the organization. When the PMO becomes strongly associated with reporting, documentation, and compliance, it may be difficult for the function to later reposition itself as a strategic partner in decision making.



Understanding this dynamic evolution is critical for interpreting the broader role of PMOs in organizations. Rather than asking whether a PMO is operational or strategic, it is often more useful to view PMO roles as part of a developmental trajectory. PMOs typically begin by strengthening project execution capabilities and, under the right conditions, may gradually extend their influence toward higher-level organizational outcomes.

The concept of the PMO Growth Path, introduced in this white paper, builds on this perspective. It proposes that the evolution of PMOs can be understood as a progression in which operational execution capabilities form the foundation upon which broader organizational impact can emerge.

4. Introducing the PMO Growth Path

The discussion so far highlights a recurring pattern in how PMOs develop within organizations. Many PMOs begin with a strong focus on improving project execution—establishing governance structures, standardizing methodologies, and supporting project managers in delivering projects more consistently. Over time, however, expectations toward the PMO often expand. Organizations begin to look to the PMO not only for operational oversight but also for broader contributions such as portfolio coordination, strategic alignment, and organizational impact.

Yet this evolution does not occur automatically. While some PMOs gradually extend their influence beyond operational functions, many remain concentrated on execution-related activities for long periods of time. Understanding why this happens requires a clearer perspective on how PMO capabilities develop as organizations mature.

The PMO Growth Path provides a conceptual lens to explain this development.

Rather than viewing PMOs as either operational or strategic, the PMO Growth Path suggests that PMOs typically evolve through a gradual expansion of capabilities. In the early stages of their development, PMOs primarily strengthen the organization's ability to execute projects effectively. As their capabilities mature and their organizational mandate expands, PMOs may begin to contribute to broader organizational outcomes, including portfolio performance and strategic alignment.



This perspective aligns with broader research in project portfolio management, which emphasizes the importance of linking project activities with organizational strategy and value creation. Projects are increasingly recognized not merely as delivery mechanisms but as vehicles through which organizations implement strategic change and realize benefits (Martinsuo, 2022).

Within this context, the PMO Growth Path can be understood as the progression of PMO capabilities from execution-oriented functions toward organizational impact.

At the execution stage, the PMO focuses primarily on strengthening project delivery discipline. Typical responsibilities include:

- Establishing project management methodologies and standards
- Coordinating project reporting and monitoring mechanisms
- Supporting project managers with tools, templates, and guidance
- Ensuring governance and compliance with project management processes

These activities help organizations improve consistency and transparency in project execution. In many organizations, this stage represents the primary justification for establishing a PMO in the first place.

As PMO capabilities mature, the scope of the PMO may begin to expand beyond project execution. The PMO may start to facilitate portfolio-level coordination, improve visibility of project performance at the executive level, and support decision-making processes related to project prioritization and resource allocation.

In this stage, the PMO increasingly contributes to organizational coordination across projects, helping leadership understand how different initiatives interact and compete for limited resources.

At more advanced stages, the PMO may play a broader role in enabling organizational impact. Rather than focusing exclusively on monitoring project delivery, the PMO may support portfolio governance structures, facilitate strategic alignment discussions, and provide insights that inform executive decision-making regarding investments in projects and programs.



Importantly, the PMO Growth Path does not imply that execution capabilities become less important as PMOs evolve. On the contrary, strong execution capabilities remain the foundation upon which higher-level contributions can be built. Without reliable governance, standardized practices, and effective project delivery, it is difficult for PMOs to develop credibility within the organization.

Instead, the model emphasizes that execution capability is the starting point of PMO development, while broader organizational influence emerges as PMOs accumulate experience, trust, and institutional legitimacy.

By framing PMO development as a growth path rather than a binary distinction between operational and strategic PMOs, the concept helps explain why PMOs across organizations appear so different. Some PMOs are still strengthening execution capabilities, while others have already expanded toward broader organizational roles.

The following sections of this white paper examine the implications of this growth path in more detail, including why many PMOs remain concentrated on execution functions and what conditions enable PMOs to expand their contribution toward organizational impact.

5. Why Many PMOs Remain on the Execution Path

Although many organizations expect PMOs to contribute to strategic outcomes, a significant number of PMOs remain concentrated on execution-related activities. Even after years of operation, their primary responsibilities often continue to revolve around reporting, governance enforcement, methodology management, and administrative coordination. While these functions are essential for maintaining discipline in project environments, they do not necessarily translate into broader organizational impact.

Several factors help explain why this situation occurs.

First, the original mandate of the PMO is often operational in nature. Many organizations establish PMOs in response to immediate challenges related to project control, inconsistent reporting, or lack of standardized methodologies. In such cases, the initial objective of the PMO is to stabilize project execution rather than to influence strategic decision making. As a result, the PMO's structure, resources, and performance metrics tend to focus primarily on delivery oversight.



Second, organizational expectations toward PMOs are frequently ambiguous or evolving. Research on PMOs has long noted that organizations often experiment with different PMO configurations over time, adjusting their roles as organizational needs change (Aubry et al., 2008). This fluidity can create uncertainty regarding the scope and authority of the PMO. Without a clearly defined mandate that extends beyond operational support, the PMO may find it difficult to position itself as a strategic contributor.

Third, the PMO's authority within the organization may be limited. In many organizations, the PMO operates as a coordinating or support unit rather than as a decision-making body. Strategic decisions related to project selection, investment prioritization, or portfolio composition often remain the responsibility of senior executives or other governance structures. Without formal involvement in these decision processes, the PMO's influence tends to remain focused on monitoring project execution rather than shaping organizational direction.

Another factor relates to capability development within the PMO itself. Operational PMO functions—such as reporting coordination or methodology management—typically require strong project management discipline but relatively limited strategic analysis. In contrast, contributing to portfolio prioritization or strategic alignment requires additional capabilities, including business analysis, portfolio analytics, and strategic communication with executive leadership. If these capabilities are not developed within the PMO, expanding its role becomes difficult.

Perception also plays an important role. When the PMO becomes strongly associated with compliance monitoring and reporting activities, other parts of the organization may begin to view it primarily as a control function. This perception can unintentionally limit the PMO's ability to engage in broader strategic discussions. Once the PMO is institutionalized as an operational oversight mechanism, repositioning it as a strategic partner can be challenging.

These dynamics help explain why many PMOs remain concentrated on execution-related responsibilities even when organizations aspire to broader outcomes. The issue is not necessarily that PMOs lack potential to contribute strategically. Rather, it is that organizational structures, expectations, and capabilities often keep the PMO anchored in its original operational role.



Recognizing these structural constraints is essential for understanding the PMO Growth Path. The transition from execution-focused functions toward broader organizational impact does not occur simply by redefining the PMO's responsibilities. It typically requires gradual changes in mandate, capability, leadership support, and organizational trust.

In other words, the movement along the PMO Growth Path is not automatic. It emerges as organizations and PMOs collectively expand the scope of what the PMO is expected—and enabled—to do.

6. Moving Toward Organizational Impact

If many PMOs remain concentrated on execution, an important question follows: what enables some PMOs to expand their role beyond project delivery and contribute to broader organizational impact?

The transition along the PMO Growth Path typically does not occur through a sudden structural change. Instead, it tends to emerge gradually as PMOs accumulate credibility within the organization, develop broader capabilities, and gain the trust of executive leadership. In many cases, the expansion of the PMO's role reflects an increasing recognition that project success alone does not guarantee organizational success.

Projects may be delivered on time and within budget, yet still fail to generate meaningful benefits if they are not aligned with organizational priorities. This realization has led many organizations to pay greater attention to portfolio-level decision making and benefits realization, areas where PMOs can play an important integrative role.

One important shift involves moving from project monitoring toward decision support. In many organizations, the PMO initially focuses on collecting and consolidating project data for reporting purposes. As the PMO matures, however, the same information can become a basis for more informed decision making. By analyzing portfolio performance, resource allocation patterns, and interdependencies between projects, the PMO can help leadership better understand how different initiatives contribute to organizational objectives.



Another shift involves expanding the focus of project performance measurement. Traditional project management metrics—such as cost variance, schedule variance, and scope compliance—remain essential indicators of project delivery performance. However, organizations increasingly recognize that these metrics alone do not capture whether projects are generating the intended organizational benefits. As a result, some PMOs begin to incorporate benefits realization and value-oriented indicators into portfolio oversight processes.

This evolution also requires strengthening the PMO's ability to facilitate strategic alignment across projects. When organizations manage multiple concurrent initiatives, ensuring that these initiatives collectively support strategic priorities becomes a complex task. PMOs are often well positioned to support this coordination because they operate at the intersection of project execution and organizational governance.

Research suggests that PMOs can play a critical role in aligning project objectives with broader organizational goals and improving coordination across large-scale project environments (Ershadi, 2021; Umasekar, 2024).

By providing structured governance mechanisms, facilitating information exchange among stakeholders, and maintaining visibility over project portfolios, PMOs help organizations navigate increasingly complex project landscapes.

However, expanding toward organizational impact does not mean abandoning the operational foundation of the PMO. Effective governance, standardized methodologies, and reliable project monitoring remain essential. In fact, these execution capabilities often serve as the basis upon which the PMO builds credibility with senior leadership.

Instead, the transition along the PMO Growth Path can be understood as an expansion of scope rather than a replacement of functions. Operational excellence provides the foundation, while broader analytical and coordination capabilities allow the PMO to contribute to higher-level organizational outcomes.

**In practice, this shift may manifest in several ways:**

- The PMO becomes more involved in portfolio governance discussions.
- Project information is used not only for reporting but also for strategic analysis.
- The PMO facilitates cross-project coordination and resource visibility.
- Leadership increasingly relies on the PMO as a source of insight regarding project performance and organizational priorities.

When these conditions emerge, the PMO begins to move beyond a purely execution-focused role and gradually becomes part of the organization's strategic management infrastructure.

Understanding this transition is central to the PMO Growth Path. It illustrates how PMOs can expand their influence over time—not by abandoning their operational responsibilities, but by building upon them to support broader organizational objectives.

7. The PMO Growth Path Model

The discussion in the previous sections highlights an important observation: PMOs do not evolve simply by expanding their scope of activities. Their development is largely shaped by the capabilities they build over time. As organizations mature in managing projects and portfolios, the role of the PMO gradually expands along what can be described as a PMO Growth Path.

The PMO Growth Path Model explains how the evolution of PMOs is closely linked to the development of core PMO capabilities. Rather than viewing PMO roles as fixed categories—such as operational or strategic—the model suggests that PMO influence grows as specific capability domains strengthen within the organization.



Empirical findings from this research identify five core PMO capability domains that shape this development:

- Strategic Alignment
- Governance & Standardization
- Performance & Value Management
- Delivery Support
- Capability Development

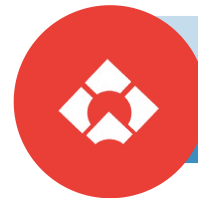
Together, these capabilities represent the functional foundation through which PMOs support project environments and influence organizational outcomes.

Within the PMO Growth Path Model, these capability domains do not develop with equal intensity at all stages. Instead, they tend to emerge along two interconnected trajectories.

The first trajectory can be described as the execution-oriented path. This path is typically dominant during the early stages of PMO establishment. In this phase, organizations prioritize capabilities that strengthen project execution discipline. The most visible capabilities along this path include Governance & Standardization and Delivery Support. Through these capabilities, the PMO helps organizations establish consistent project management practices, monitor project performance, and provide operational support to project managers.

These capabilities are essential for stabilizing project environments. Without clear governance structures and standardized practices, organizations often struggle with inconsistent reporting, fragmented project information, and limited visibility of project performance.

As execution capabilities mature, the PMO may gradually expand its scope toward a second trajectory that focuses on organizational impact. Along this path, the development of Strategic Alignment, Performance & Value Management, and Capability Development becomes increasingly important.



Strategic Alignment capabilities allow the PMO to connect project initiatives with broader organizational objectives. Performance & Value Management capabilities strengthen the organization’s ability to understand how projects contribute to portfolio performance and organizational outcomes. Capability Development enables the PMO to continuously improve project management competencies across the organization.

Together, these capabilities allow the PMO to move beyond operational coordination and contribute to higher-level organizational processes such as portfolio prioritization, resource allocation discussions, and strategic oversight of project investments.

Importantly, the PMO Growth Path Model does not imply that PMOs abandon execution-focused functions as they evolve. Instead, execution capabilities remain the operational backbone of the PMO. Governance mechanisms, standardized methodologies, and delivery support continue to ensure that projects are executed reliably and consistently.

What changes along the growth path is the scope of influence of the PMO. As additional capabilities develop, the PMO’s role expands from managing project execution to supporting broader organizational coordination and decision making.

This perspective helps explain why PMOs across organizations appear highly diverse in their roles and responsibilities. Some PMOs operate primarily along the execution path, focusing on governance and project delivery oversight. Others have developed additional capabilities that enable them to operate closer to the organizational decision-making level.

The PMO Growth Path Model therefore provides a conceptual framework for understanding how PMO capabilities evolve and how these capabilities shape the PMO’s ability to influence organizational outcomes.

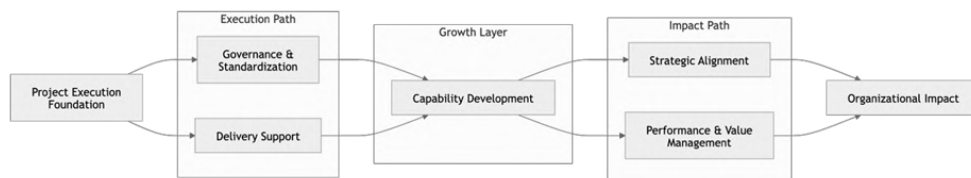


Figure 1. PMO Growth Path Model



How to Read the PMO Growth Path Model

The PMO Growth Path Model illustrates how the role of the Project Management Office evolves as organizational project management capabilities mature. Rather than depicting PMO development as a rigid sequence of stages, the model highlights how different capability domains gradually expand the influence of the PMO—from supporting project execution to enabling broader organizational impact.

At the base of the model lies the Project Execution Foundation. Most PMOs are initially established to improve project delivery discipline within the organization. In this early phase, the PMO focuses on creating structure and consistency in project environments.

Two capability domains are typically dominant at this stage:

- Governance & Standardization, which establishes project management frameworks, methodologies, and reporting structures across projects.
- Delivery Support, which provides operational assistance to project managers through tools, templates, and coordination mechanisms.

Together, these capabilities help organizations ensure that projects are executed in a structured and controlled manner. The primary objective at this stage can be summarized as delivering projects right.

As the PMO gains experience and organizational trust, its role may begin to expand. The model shows Capability Development as a bridge between operational execution and broader organizational contribution. Through capability development, the PMO helps strengthen project management competencies across the organization, promotes knowledge sharing, and supports continuous improvement of project management practices.

This capability plays a critical role in enabling the PMO to move beyond operational coordination toward a more influential organizational role.



At the upper part of the model lies the Impact Path, where the PMO begins to contribute to broader organizational outcomes. **Two capability domains become increasingly important in this stage:**

- Strategic Alignment, which connects project initiatives with organizational strategy and ensures that project investments support strategic priorities.
- Performance & Value Management, which focuses on monitoring portfolio performance and understanding how projects contribute to organizational objectives.

At this level, the PMO's role expands from monitoring project delivery to supporting portfolio-level coordination and executive decision-making processes.

Importantly, the PMO Growth Path Model does not imply that operational capabilities become less important as the PMO evolves. Governance structures and delivery support remain essential foundations for effective project management. Instead, the model shows how these operational capabilities provide the stability upon which higher-level contributions can be built.

In essence, the PMO Growth Path illustrates how PMOs grow from execution-focused support units into organizational integrators that help connect project activities with strategic outcomes.

8. Implications for Organizations

Understanding the PMO Growth Path has several important implications for organizations that rely heavily on projects to implement strategy. Rather than viewing the PMO as a fixed organizational structure with predefined responsibilities, organizations may benefit from recognizing that the role of the PMO often evolves over time as project environments and organizational needs change.



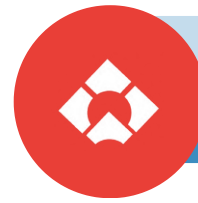
One implication is that expectations toward the PMO should be aligned with its current level of capability and organizational mandate. In many organizations, PMOs are expected to contribute to strategic decision making almost immediately after being established. However, without a strong operational foundation, such expectations can be difficult to fulfill. Effective governance structures, reliable project reporting, and consistent project management practices are often necessary before the PMO can credibly expand its role.

Organizations may therefore consider the development of the PMO as a progressive capability-building process. In the early stages, strengthening execution discipline—such as standardizing project management methodologies, improving reporting consistency, and supporting project managers—can significantly improve transparency and control in project environments. These improvements provide the basis upon which broader PMO contributions may later emerge.

A second implication concerns organizational positioning and leadership support. The ability of a PMO to contribute beyond operational oversight is strongly influenced by how it is positioned within the organizational structure. When the PMO has limited access to executive-level decision processes, its influence may remain largely confined to monitoring project delivery. Conversely, when the PMO participates in portfolio governance discussions or strategic planning processes, it becomes more capable of connecting project execution with organizational priorities.

Leadership support is therefore critical. Executive sponsors play an important role in defining the PMO's mandate, clarifying its authority, and ensuring that project information produced by the PMO informs organizational decision making.

A third implication relates to capability development within the PMO team. Operational PMO functions typically require strong project management knowledge and coordination skills. However, contributing to portfolio-level decisions and strategic alignment requires additional competencies, including analytical capabilities, portfolio management expertise, and the ability to communicate complex project information to senior leadership.



Developing these capabilities allows the PMO to move beyond reporting activities and become a source of insight for organizational leaders.

Another implication involves the use of project information within the organization. In many PMOs, project data is collected primarily for monitoring and compliance purposes. However, when aggregated and analyzed at the portfolio level, the same data can provide valuable insights into resource allocation patterns, project interdependencies, and overall portfolio performance. Organizations that leverage project information in this way can strengthen the role of the PMO as an integrative mechanism between project execution and strategic decision making.

Finally, the PMO Growth Path highlights the importance of organizational learning in project environments. As organizations gain experience in managing multiple projects and programs, the PMO can serve as a mechanism for capturing lessons learned, institutionalizing best practices, and continuously improving project management capabilities across the organization.

By recognizing the developmental nature of the PMO role, organizations can avoid unrealistic expectations and instead support a gradual expansion of the PMO's contribution. Over time, this progression allows the PMO to evolve from a structure focused primarily on project execution toward a broader organizational capability that supports coordination, learning, and strategic impact.

9. Future Direction of PMOs

The role of the PMO continues to evolve alongside broader changes in how organizations manage projects, programs, and portfolios. As organizations face increasing levels of uncertainty, technological disruption, and strategic complexity, the environment in which PMOs operate is also changing.



One notable trend is the growing emphasis on portfolio-level visibility and decision support. Organizations are increasingly managing dozens or even hundreds of concurrent initiatives, making it difficult for executives to maintain a clear overview of project performance and resource allocation. In such environments, the PMO can play a critical role in consolidating information and facilitating portfolio governance processes.

Another emerging trend is the integration of digital tools and data analytics into project management environments. Advances in project management information systems, data visualization technologies, and analytics platforms allow PMOs to move beyond static reporting toward more dynamic portfolio insights. These capabilities may further strengthen the PMO's ability to support organizational decision making.

In addition, organizations are placing greater emphasis on benefits realization and value-oriented project management. Rather than evaluating projects solely on traditional performance metrics such as cost, schedule, and scope, organizations increasingly seek to understand how project investments contribute to broader organizational objectives. This shift reinforces the importance of portfolio-level coordination and strategic alignment, areas where PMOs can provide valuable support.

The role of PMOs in supporting organizational transformation is also becoming more visible. As organizations implement large-scale change initiatives—such as digital transformation programs, infrastructure modernization projects, or sustainability initiatives—the coordination of multiple interrelated projects becomes increasingly complex. PMOs may serve as integrative structures that help organizations navigate these complex change environments.

Despite these developments, the operational foundations of project management remain essential. Effective governance, standardized practices, and reliable delivery processes continue to provide the structural stability required for managing projects successfully.

The PMO Growth Path provides a useful perspective for understanding how PMOs may adapt to these evolving expectations. Rather than abandoning execution-focused responsibilities, future PMOs may expand their role by building upon operational excellence to provide broader organizational coordination, portfolio insights, and strategic support.



10. Conclusion

The increasing reliance on projects as vehicles for implementing organizational strategy has significantly expanded the importance of effective project governance and coordination. Within this context, the Project Management Office has become a key organizational structure for supporting project environments.

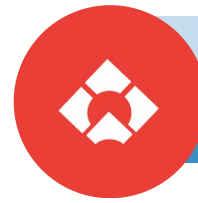
However, the role of the PMO is often misunderstood. While some organizations expect PMOs to contribute directly to strategic decision making, many PMOs remain concentrated on operational functions such as reporting, methodology management, and governance enforcement. This situation reflects not necessarily a failure of the PMO, but rather the natural progression through which PMO capabilities develop.

The PMO Growth Path introduced in this white paper provides a conceptual lens for understanding this progression. It proposes that PMOs typically begin by strengthening project execution capabilities and may gradually expand their role toward broader organizational impact as their capabilities mature and their mandate evolves.

Execution capabilities—including governance, standardization, and delivery support—form the essential foundation of the PMO. Over time, as organizations gain experience and trust in the PMO's role, these operational foundations can support broader contributions such as portfolio coordination, strategic alignment, and decision support for executive leadership.

Recognizing this developmental trajectory helps explain why PMOs across organizations appear so diverse in their responsibilities and influence. Rather than representing fundamentally different organizational structures, many PMOs simply occupy different positions along the same growth path.

For organizations seeking to strengthen the role of their PMO, the key challenge is therefore not to immediately transform the PMO into a strategic entity, but to support the gradual expansion of its capabilities. By building strong execution foundations while progressively extending the scope of coordination and insight provided by the PMO, organizations can enable the PMO to evolve into a meaningful contributor to organizational performance and long-term strategic outcomes.



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