

# PMO Research Paper

**Types of People Working in the PMO  
and the Communication and  
Engagement Styles Used**

**Team Animation |  
PMO Flashmob  
September 2016**



On the 8th June 2016 in London, the second PMO Conference was held – a hugely successful and sold out event attended by over 350 PMO professionals. An incredible achievement for a community of volunteers but not any volunteers, PMO professionals! The demand demonstrated the latent demand for a professionally designed and delivered event to share knowledge from across the community and deal with topics that impact the success of the PMO function.

The conference session Team Animation's Donnie MacNicol delivered was "People Power – Increasing the Effectiveness of Your PMO through People" which focused on how the differences in people is reflected in how you sell, design and deliver the services of your PMO.

You can view details of the presentation sessions at [www.pmoflashmob.org/pmo-research](http://www.pmoflashmob.org/pmo-research)

# Types of People Working in the PMO and the Communication and Engagement Styles Used \\ PMO Research

The results of the survey

How was the data collected?

- from invite to PMO Conference delegates + general request via a LinkedIn post
- only those that saw it
- only those that chose to complete it
- my minor level of interpretation from those who did not put PMO or PMO Conference
- 136 completions by 9.15pm on 7/6/16.
- Therefore hugely statistically significant and robust!

Surprised? What do you think the results would be?

What are your thoughts / immediate insights?

What do you think is the make up of your PMO function? What are the implications?

The PMO Conference

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44	22
31	39

# \\ The Research

As part of ongoing research by Team Animation to better understand the impact that individuals, teams and organisational culture has on project delivery and success, and in association with the organisers of the PMO Conference, initial research was carried out in advance of the PMO Conference. This was preliminary research which both parties will build on later in 2016

The interest areas worth exploring both in the research and during the session was:

- Is there a typical “type” of person who works in a PMO? What insights can we draw from this and what are the implications?
- Is there any significance to the communication and engagement style as to how individuals perceive, adopt and practice project management?

# \\ The Diagnostic Used - iMA

The research was limited to PMO members and professionals, whether at a project, programme or portfolio level, to complete a simple diagnostic which has 10 questions.

The diagnostic used is called iMA which identifies a person’s communication and engagement style.

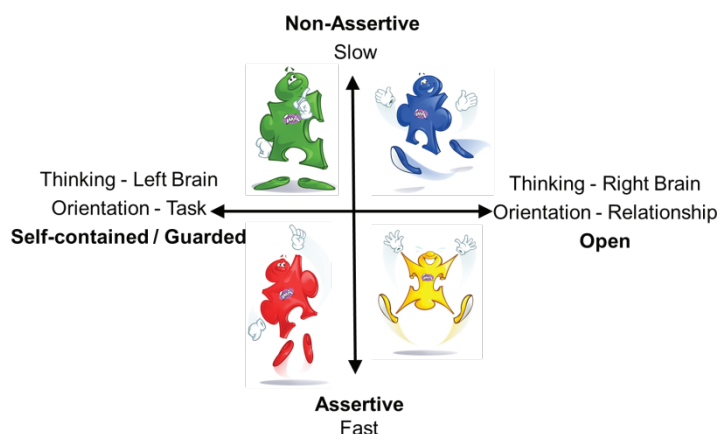
The respondents were asked to visit [www.ima-pm.co.uk](http://www.ima-pm.co.uk) to complete.

The request was made to delegates and via an earlier LinkedIn Post.

iMA is simple and free to use. It has been used extensively by Team Animation with a range of organisations and has proven many times that it provides sufficient insight and distinction for valuable discussions and improvements to performance to be made.

The iMA Diagnostic aims to identify 2 distinctions thereby providing 4 colour profiles. The distinctions are:

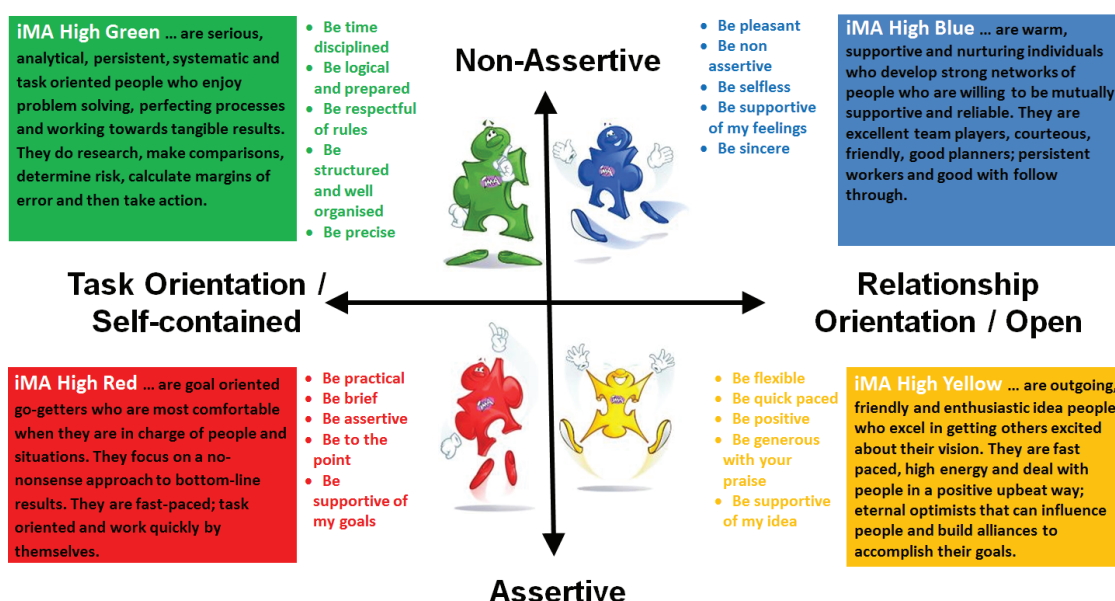
- Level of assertiveness
- Orientation towards task or relationships



By defining preferred style along these axes iMA™ segments four ‘types’, each with their own typical characteristics, behaviours and preferences.

You can complete this at [www.ima-pm.co.uk](http://www.ima-pm.co.uk). This is represented visually below and a description of each colour style is provided in the table at the end.

Understanding the preferred style of different personnel within the project environment is important both in terms of what is delivered and in the way it is achieved. For example, if the PMO Manager is a High Red and the senior executive a High Blue, it would be important for the PMO Manager to understand that they may appear pushy and insensitive to the senior executive if delivery of outcomes is all that is focused on during their discussions.



The iMA Diagnostic refers to each Colour Style as “High” as the creator was conscious we are a mix of all colours but we typically have a preference and comfort zone.

## \\ The Results

A total of 140 people completed the Diagnostic up to the day of the conference from a range of industries, of varying PMO related roles and levels of seniority.

The results are presented in Figure 1.

As with any self-selecting group who complete the Diagnostic, the results will be impacted by the type of people who chose to complete it. In total there were 140 respondents by 8/6/16 which was excellent and provides a reasonable level of statistically significant. For an iMA High Yellow that is pretty significant (as you will see)!

Feedback from completion was positive with a number of people commenting on its relative accuracy given the simplicity of the underlying question structure and the time needed to complete.



# \\ The Results

The outcome to the completed Diagnostic gives us a number of areas to think about and to reflect on:

## 1. The individual perspective is of most value

Firstly from an individual perspective the result is of most value as it helps a person to identify their preference for what they do and how they do it. This allows a PMO professional to modify and adapt to better suit the context (e.g. the type of project, organisational culture) and those they work with (levels of seniority, different business roles).

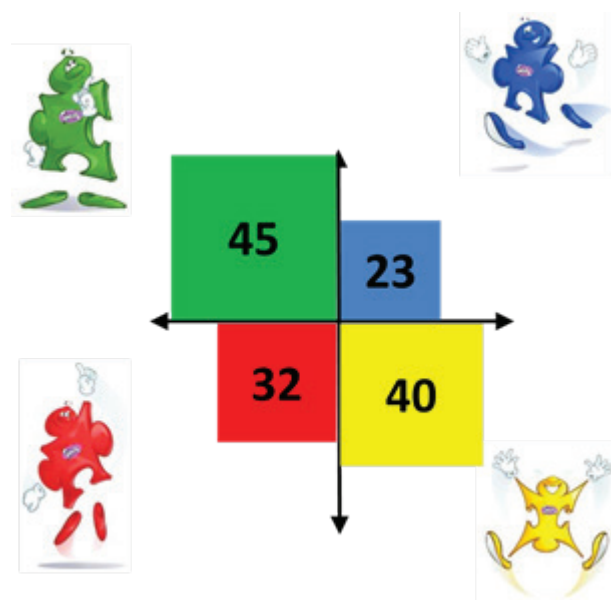


Figure 1 - PMO Practitioners Outcome

## 2. There is a broad mix of profiles

PMO professionals are now a diverse mix of not only roles but also types of people as shown through the results. This has come about through the maturing of the profession - the advance in different types of PMO functions and the attraction of many different types and skill levels of professionals.

## 3. The collective profile has changed over the years

We would postulate that the PMO profession has changed considerably in the last few years with a change in:

- Shift to more of a business support, whether at a project, programme or portfolio level – focusing more on supporting the achievement of outputs, outcomes and value or benefits.
- Shift in the skills and capability required in PMO practitioners to provide more than just command and control services.
- This ties up with a general industry movement towards the same with much of the project management professional stepping up the value ladder.

## 4. Task trumps relationships

There are a proportion of Colour Styles focused on tasks versus relationships (77 versus 63) likely explained by the typical focus of a PMO of developing, implementing and monitoring of ways of working. As mentioned earlier, the differential is not as great as we would have thought but the whole projects world is becoming far more people focused.

## 5. NO strong assertion either way

There was an almost equal mix of profiles between non-assertive and assertive (68 versus 72). Historically we would imagine that there would be a lower level of assertiveness as the PMO was often positioned as a PSO with an emphasis on the “Support” role, typically requiring a lower level of assertion.

## 6. The traditional stereotypical perspective of a PMO professional is outdated

This was clearly demonstrated through the calibre and energy of those who attended the conference and the continued growth and success of the PMO FlashMob.

# \\ Insights from the Session

During the actual session delivered by Donnie Mac-Nicol at the conference there were a number of additional insights gained by those attending. These included how to:

1. Adapt your own communication and engagement style to improve your personal effectiveness
2. Communicate and report in a way that is engaging to individual stakeholders and broader audiences (including selling the value of a PMO)
3. Assess the collective style and strengths of your PMO providing you with a basis for improving the team's performance
4. Set up a PMO to best fit with the organisations culture and get the best out of all those involved by identifying and playing to their strengths
5. Design structures and processes that work for different types of people and increase the level of adoption and sustained use of processes
6. Develop your PMO staff and identify how the organisation can best support PMO leaders.



Figure 1 - PMO Practitioners Outcome

## \\ Reflection

For those working in a PMO today, the simplicity and usefulness of the Diagnostic tool should be something of interest. For a while now the PMO landscape has been changing and the results of this research has given a greater insight into how they are changing.

Historically PMO practitioners would be seen as a strong Green - very process driven and analytical. Command and control style PMOs need this type of resource to provide accurate information that can be acted on. However, the strong Yellow result also shows that process and analysis is not the only requirement in a PMO practitioner - influence, energy, creativity and passion are also needed.

Further research is required to drill down into the detail which will bring greater insight and answer some of these questions that this initial research has provoked:

1. Is there a certain colour profile that works well in different types of PMO?
2. Does the colour profile change as people advance in their careers?
3. What colour profiles work well in different sized organisations - different sectors and industries?
4. Is there a difference in gender? In education and training levels?
5. Is there a typical colour profile for different roles within the PMO?
6. Is there an ideal colour profile mix for a whole PMO team?
7. Is it possible to see what makes a successful PMO in terms of an ideal mix of colour profiles?

# \\ The Next Steps

Given the interest in the subject from the PMO community and the ongoing research and development by Team Animation, research to answer some of these questions is open to all PMO practitioners.

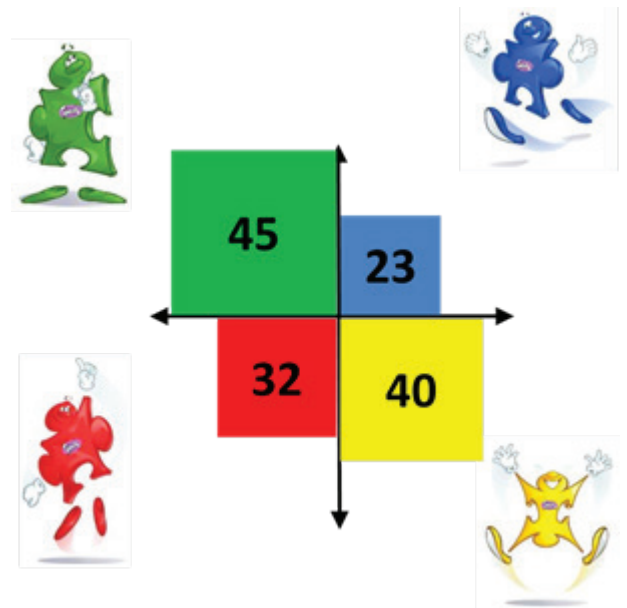
## \\ How to Get Involved

In the first instance you need to complete the iMA Diagnostic (takes three minutes) to obtain your own colour profile.

1. Visit [www.ima-pm.co.uk](http://www.ima-pm.co.uk)
2. In the organisation box, use "PMO"
3. Take the diagnostic, receive your colour profile.

Now you're ready to take part in the next stage.

1. Visit <http://tinyurl.com/pmoresearch>
2. Start the survey by choosing your colour profile
3. Complete the survey.







# \\ More Information - The Colours

Effective collaboration and teamworking are key to success in delivering change and projects in today's challenging business environment. However teams are made up of individuals, each of whom have their own communication and work style. Having awareness of personal and team styles will provide insights to improve connectivity and performance. This will also be used to provide guidance as to how to effectively work with and use the structures and processes described in this document.

Below is information on each of the iMA styles followed by some insight regarding the impact of the specific colour type on the adoption and use of processes, a critical insight that can help those running a PMO to look at improving performance. This concept is being further developed by Team Animation in association with the Praxis Framework, details of which will be communicated through the usual PMO FlashMob communication channels.

# \\ The Colours

	Description	Impact on the adoption and use of processes in IMG
<b>iMA High Blue</b> 	<p>... are warm, supportive and nurturing individuals who develop strong networks of people who are willing to be mutually supportive and reliable. They are excellent team players, courteous, friendly, good planners; persistent workers and good with follow through.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Readily adopt and apply the way of working</li> <li>• Desire to involve others in the process</li> <li>• May not readily make decisions</li> <li>• Supportive of others in using the approach</li> <li>• Good planners – commit the time necessary</li> </ul>
<b>iMA High Green</b> 	<p>... are serious, analytical, persistent, systematic and task oriented people who enjoy problem solving, perfecting processes and working towards tangible results. They do research, make comparisons, determine risk, calculate margins of error and then take action.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt and apply if they perceive the way of working as logical and robust</li> <li>• May have a tendency to work in isolation on processes such as planning and risk management</li> <li>• Require time to plan</li> <li>• Produce detailed and comprehensive plans</li> <li>• Will challenge the output if it is not thought to have been robustly thought through</li> <li>• Will not make decisions unless provided with sufficient quantity and quality of information</li> </ul>
<b>iMA High Red</b> 	<p>... are goal oriented go-getters who are most comfortable when they are in charge of people and situations. They focus on a no-nonsense approach to bottom-line results. They are fast-paced; task oriented and work quickly by themselves.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May be a potential to see rigorous processes as bureaucratic</li> <li>• May wish to adapt to suit the situation</li> <li>• Will be happy making decisions, often with all information being available</li> <li>• Typically wish to lead the process and decision making</li> </ul>
<b>iMA High Yellow</b> 	<p>... are outgoing, friendly and enthusiastic idea people who excel in getting others excited about their vision. They are fast paced, high energy and deal with people in a positive upbeat way; eternal optimists that can influence people and build alliances to accomplish their goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May wish to adapt to suit the situation and then work in a flexible manner</li> <li>• May not always apply the processes in full</li> <li>• Wish to involve others through group discussion and workshops</li> <li>• May make decisions based on gut feel and then look to back</li> </ul>





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