

PMO Flashmob: Inside PMO

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The Agile PMO: Developing Your Skills for an Agile PMO



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The Conclusions

1. Getting educated in Agile has to be a priority for the PMO - top recommendation is SAFe®
2. Reporting, business cases, benefits realisation are all major functions and services in an Agile PMO
3. The PMO has a role to play in the early days of Agile adoption as a *translator*
4. Coaching - not mentoring - is a key role for PMO practitioners in supporting Agile delivery
5. The PMO will be working in a hybrid delivery organisation - and using tools from both
6. 'Focus on value, deliver value early and often' a mantra for supporting Agile and being an Agile PMO
7. The PMO has a role to play in helping teams to work efficiently as well as helping the organisation shift its mindset to Agile and agility
8. The principles of our PMOs will help guide the functions and services we offer, especially in times when new approaches are needed



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PMO Flashmob: Inside PMO



November 2017 in the heart of London's Soho district at the Groucho Club and PMO Flashmob - the PMO networking group - hosted the third 'PMO Managers' Lunch'. These events bring together PMO Managers, from a number of different industries, to talk in-depth about a particular PMO topic. At this lunch, the subject was **"The Agile PMO"**.

Agile in terms of a framework or a mindset for project delivery or agile, in terms of business agility has been a talking point at PMO Flashmob for the last four years.

A large majority of PMO practitioners have begun to understand what it is yet there is still a lack of understanding as to what it means to their PMO; the project delivery organisation and the wider business.

The PMO Manager's Lunch was held to bring together PMO Managers who have been working with the realities of supporting an Agile mindset - often alongside the traditional methods of project delivery. These PMO Managers have also been responding to the calls from the business to deliver projects faster and smarter.

The report gives an insight into what they have learnt along the way, what new areas they have introduced and tips for making it a success.

The PMO Managers Lunch is a PMO Flashmob Plus event. With PMO Flashmob there are great conversations amongst different types of PMO people and this event gives us an opportunity to bring together leaders of PMOs - PMO Managers to discuss PMO topics which are relevant today

It is an opportunity for PMO Managers to talk to other PMO Managers in different industries. We also wanted the opportunity to understand what is happening in PMOs today - PMOs in the real world

We were also conscious that there is not a lot of PMO benchmarking available, either formally or informally and this is an informal benchmarking opportunity which brings insights that others from within the PMO community can share and use

This article provides those insights from the third PMO Managers Lunch held on the 17th November 2017

PMO Managers:

John McIntyre - Ticketmaster UK
 Emma White - Sanctuary Housing
 Chris Walters - PMO Espirit
 Selina Tallett - Vivify PMO
 Jon Ward - Beneficial Consulting
 Ben Beavers - Pcubed
 Rob Slaughter - V-Nova
 Richard Hendrickse - Nationwide
 Hosts: Lindsay Scott & Eileen Roden

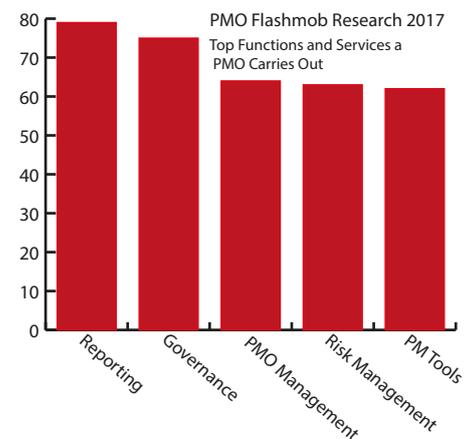


Setting the Scene - The Functions and Services of the PMO

The three-hour PMO Managers' Lunch on the Agile PMO was primarily hosted to answer the questions - what does an Agile PMO do differently and if it was possible, what would be the top five areas that PMOs would need to pay close attention to if they were going to change in some way to support Agile and/or agility?

Before jumping into the Agile conversations, we wanted to look at what are currently recognised as the top functions and services a PMO provides today. If we can baseline and agree on that, it could be a useful indicator of what activities will be still required in an Agile PMO and allow us to think about how these functions and services may have to change.

There were four pieces of research we looked at. The PMO Flashmob research of 450 PMO professionals who were asked which were the top functions and services they currently provided, the figure to the right.



We also pulled insights from Aubry and Hobbs (2010) Project Management Office (PMO) A Quest for Understanding which highlighted the following five; reporting status (83%); methodology standards (76%); monitoring project performance (65%); developing competency (65%) and operating the project information system (60%)

The PMO Value Ring from the PMO Global Alliance also highlights 26 PMO functions commonly offered - the most common being; conduct project audits; monitor and control projects; monitoring performance; provide the methodology and provide status reports to upper management. This research pulls heavily from the Aubry and Hobbs paper.

Finally we looked at the PMI's Pulse of the Profession Report (November 2017) which was less about PMO functions and services and more about the challenges that organisations have when they are looking to adopt agile approaches and become more of a hybrid organisation. The top five challenges for making a change were; shifting from a common and control culture; adapting the governance model for agile implementation; using accepted project management practices; adapting the PMO to an agile environment and implementing processes / framework without modification or tailoring.

It was against this back drop that we were keen to find out what functions and services the Agile PMO offers and if they change from the types of common functions and services seen in the research. We also wanted to find out if there had been any common challenges amongst the PMO Managers when it came to providing an Agile PMO, were there similarities and perhaps common solutions for overcoming them.

We started by understanding what their definition of Agile was.

What is Agile?

We kicked off the lunch by understanding what Agile meant to our PMO Managers, here are some of them;

- Agile is a way of developing software
- Agile is about being nimble, fleet of foot and flexible
- Agile is about focusing on value - deliver value early and often
- Agile is about a method, processes that can be implemented
- Agile is a mindset, how you can think about becoming more agile
- Agile is about a set of principles, using these (from the manifesto) to guide you
- Agile is about agility and applying tools and techniques away from traditional project management
- Agile is inherent flexibility at an enterprise level to be responsive to change based on customer feedback
- Agile is about taking the learnings and applications of Lean

Where Did Our PMO Managers Experiences Start?

Starting at the beginning, we asked, **“Who in your organisation said we need to go Agile? And did they know what they were talking about?”**

With a lot of the research about ‘using’ Agile in organisation, it typically starts at a team level. There is a conscious decision to try a different approach to delivery and in a lot of cases this change in approach gets the backing of the organisation. It’s a case of the organisation wants to do things quicker, leaner, faster and the Agile approach is a form of controlled experimentation, the organisation gives the authority to try it.

Once an Agile approach had been used at a project level, specifically in the case of some of our PMO Managers, used on technology and software development projects - it then raised the question of, where else could we use the approach in the business. Other examples of Agile adoption in an organisation have come from the experiences of senior leadership in other roles; if they have had prior knowledge of development projects, now they were in a position of authority they could push forward with their ideas and approaches to adopting Agile. Research, whitepapers, seminars and conferences have also played their part, firing people up to act, almost creating a kind of fear that they’re missing some crucial new delivery approach that will fix all their problems. Sometimes it’s an external demand, vendors and contractors are reluctant to work in a traditional mode of project delivery because of the inherent problems and risks they raise.

“Someone came in with a bright idea and released it with a big bang”

In the early days of Agile adoption, our PMO Managers recounted stories reminiscent of the Wild West. Delivery teams were giving authority or empowerment and were deemed untouchable. Getting work out quicker and more cost-effectively meant they didn’t have to conform to organisation best practice, engage with the PMO and didn’t have any accountabilities. This led to issues around transparency across the wider organisation - for people not directly involved in or having any understanding what an Agile approach meant plus resource management became a problem because teams were always allocated to work and unavailable.

Problems like these, raised alongside others such as adherence to audits, regulations, governance and the reporting of progress meant that things had to change. It exposed that the organisation wasn’t Agile ready in terms of the mindset required; understand how Agile really works within the business; and why end products weren’t always delivering the intended outcomes, customer satisfaction being the most important.



Key PMO Functions **Adding Value**

Thinking back to the scene we had set about the common PMO functions and services at the beginning of the lunch, we asked the question, “**What do you see as the key functions where the PMO can add most value to Agile delivery or moving to Agile delivery?**”. Here are the ones our PMO Managers picked out:

Reporting

Being able to provide the wider stakeholders and senior executives with a picture of where the projects are, and associated key data, is still important.

Business Case

There is much more focus on the business case. If this is currently a weak spot in your organisation, there’s a role for the PMO to help improve them.

Coaching

With sporadic Agile teams, there is a role for the PMO to provide a coaching role in the Agile approach, using Agile and being Agile ambassadors.

Resourcing

The PMO need to adapt to the “take the work to the people, not the people to the work” resourcing model in Agile environments. The PMO has a role to play in mobilising multi-disciplined teams.

Benefits Realisation

There is much more focus on benefits being delivered in Agile projects, perhaps now we’ll have more success with it.

Value

With more focus on “delivering value” the term “value assurance” has cropped up. The PMO is ideally placed to do this.

Finance

With a fixed budget on Agile projects, the PMO still has to understand how the project is progressing and it still has to work closely with Finance.

Risk

Risk management and checking risk activity remains a fundamental role for the PMO. Agile projects definitely have risks and education and action are needed by teams.



Key PMO Functions **Adding Value**

We go deeper into each of the key PMO functions to find out more about how each one is adding value from the PMO:

Reporting

1. Progress Reporting

Getting to grips with simple progress reporting can be difficult. One PMO Manager explains why: “From the experience I had, there was a massive gap between what the Agile delivery teams were doing versus the other parts of the organisation that were dependent on the deliverables. For progress updates and deployment dates we couldn’t use typical PMO metrics or engage in the same way because teams, or squads, or Scrum teams were reporting progress differently. What we can do as the PMO is work with the teams at the team level, not at strategic level and identify the best metrics and provide the cadence as well on when those metrics need to be gathered, when they need to be shared and how they need to be distributed across the whole organisation”

2. Is Agile Working For Us?

The PMO is not just reporting on the projects, they’re also reporting to the business on how well Agile is working as a delivery approach for the organisation.

3. The Metrics Changed

What you are reporting on has changed, the metrics are different and the frequency changes. The PMO must manage the expectations of stakeholders - they might not be getting the same detail they did before in a traditional waterfall project and they might not like it. Here is one PMO Manager’s take: “You might not get weekly reports any more, they might be biweekly. If you’re coordinating teams, you might have increments of between 8 and 12 weeks. The metrics might be different, in terms of how you evidence progress. You’ll be shown velocity which is how much complexity you’re delivering. This change in report can be very uncomfortable thing for a while”

4. Measuring the Minimum Viable Product

There is a predicament with how to measure if the minimum viable product is going to achieve the business outcomes? That can only come verbally in the show and tell. There are no metrics on that. The PMO and key stakeholder has to change its mindset around what needs reporting and what different ways there are to do that.

5. Focus on Reporting Value

Reporting on the value being delivered by projects is a good place to start. It also works if you’re working in a bimodal delivery organisation where both Agile and waterfall are being used. One PMO Manager stated that answers to three questions are often what senior executives are looking for when it comes to “management by exception” on projects. ‘*Are we doing what we’ve promised?*’ Which could be in terms of benefits, spend, schedule, velocity etc. and ‘*What help do you need?*’ and ‘*How is the organisation coping?*’ It’s a balanced scorecard approach, is the current rate of delivery sustainable?

6. Different Direction Reporting

A different perspective on reporting from the PMO, “we’ve been talking about reporting one way from the project to the business, but I think with agility, there’s a role for the PMO to be reporting the other way round, looking at the business metrics and feeding them back into the teams. And then you can get them in a position where they can self-innovate against them.”

Key PMO Functions **Adding Value**

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Business Case

1. There is a Big Focus on the Business Case

It all starts with the business case. The business case will highlight where the benefits are for delivering the project for the organisation and then how the project will run to deliver those benefits. The development of the business case has never been an easy task and in the Agile world it remains a challenge. The PMO offers support in the best practice construction of business cases - working closely with the sponsor, Project Manager, Product Manager or anyone else involved with the construct.

Upskilling on business cases may be a requirement for the PMO.

2. Project Sponsorship

Although not only related to Agile projects, the challenge of project sponsors picking up and performing the roles and responsibilities expected - including business case formulation - remains a challenge for many organisations. The PMO should be looking at how it can help improve this.



Coach

1. The PMO Can Work with Agile Coaches

There is obviously a lot to learn and the PMO should be learning all they can from Agile coaches employed by the business. Here's one PMO Manager's insight, "I spend a lot of time with the agile coaches and I now go around the organisation, teaching different parts of the organisation what we mean by agile."

2. The PMO Can Be the Coach

It comes with knowledge and experience but there is no reason why PMO practitioners cannot develop the capability if the organisation is fully invested in the Agile approach. With one of the Agile principles being focused on 'continuous improvement' there is a role there to help teams do just that, with the PMO acting as coach. As one PMO Manager stated, there is a shift in how the PMO operates, "It's a whole different skillset as it's all about coaching and interaction. It's no longer paper based."

3. Coaching Skills a Must

Developing the Agile knowledge and experience is only part of the story. The PMO also needs to develop coaching skills - and think about the different types of stakeholders that will require coaching. Here's one take, "One of our clients who comes from a manufacturing background have been implementing Agile and one of the biggest challenges is stakeholder coaching. We are providing scrum masters to help the teams work, coaches to provide oversight on how they should all work together and stakeholder coaches so the business understands what they mean when they push through Agile."

4. Resourcing

The PMO can also assist in co-ordinating where coaches are needed within the business - it's a resourcing role to deploy coaches as and when required.

Key PMO Functions **Adding Value**

We go deeper into each of the key PMO functions to find out more about how each one is adding value from the PMO:

Benefits Realisation

1. Yes, It Really is Important

Benefits realisation forms a big part of Agile projects - from the business case that states the benefits; throughout project delivery the team is focused on delivering them; they're continuously being realised through iterative development. The PMO has a role to play in making sure everyone understands the importance of benefits management and more importantly how the business knows benefits are being delivered.

2. Benefits and Backlogs

The PMO will be becoming more familiar with 'Agile ceremonies' and 'artefacts' which all point to the benefits being delivered. You'll be learning how the prioritisation of backlogs and the sprints work to deliver benefits.

3. Measuring Benefits

Measuring benefits delivered is one of the most important roles a PMO can provide in a portfolio. This experience may sound familiar, "Every project had been delivered on time and the costs were within 10% but they had cut back on benefits to deliver timelines and budgets, to the point where the project wasn't worth doing."

4. Sponsors

Sponsors must be accountable for the benefits otherwise the whole benefits management process just doesn't work. There is a role here for the PMO to ensure the governance was in place to hold sponsors accountable. One PMO Manager recounted that it took three years for benefits management to become embedded and the accountability of the sponsors was the key driver.

Value

1. Value / Benefits

Agile approaches place a strong emphasis on 'delivering business value'. Often we're hearing the terms 'value' and 'benefits' used interchangeably to mean the same thing which they are. Benefits = Business

2. Emphasis on Delivering Early and Often

The PMO needs to think about its own approach and principles which will make it an ideal partner in supporting delivery of value 'early and often'. Where can it show flexibility and nimbleness in its own activities? How can it help the Agile teams and remove blockers?

3. Value Assurance

A term that has started to crop up, 'value assurance' (ensuring value is delivered throughout the project lifecycle) which is project assurance by any other name. Who, other than the PMO, would be in the right position to pick up this work in an Agile world?

4. Value Stream Maps (VSM)

A term regularly used, 'value stream map' (analysis of artefacts (requirements, use case etc)) and information flow analysis. It is a recognised method from Six Sigma. PMOs will do well to understand and bring their knowledge up to date on VSM and demonstrate how they can be used in their organisation.

4. Value of the PMO

With all the talk of delivering business value, there is something to be said about the PMO thinking about its own remit and activities and asking the question, "do we deliver business value?" If the PMO is to be an exemplar of good practice for project delivery, do we lead by example?



Key PMO Functions **Adding Value**

We go deeper into each of the key PMO functions to find out more about how each one is adding value from the PMO:



Finance

Expect a challenge with the finance department

Here's an insight from one of our PMO Manager's, "The place I encountered a problem was in the finance function. The finance function wanted forecasts, costs and forecast of benefits but you've got 12 teams all producing that data all in different formats. One team was doing story points, another team was estimating in effort which had to be translated from story points into pounds and pence." Agile projects do have a fixed budget, but it is the tracking of the budget which changes and impacts how the PMO carries out this service. There was also a lot of talk about Agile projects helping to reduce costs for the business through more efficient projects. There is a role there for the PMO to act as translator; do the numbers and make sure that Agile projects are reducing costs for project delivery.



Resourcing

Agile projects still need effective resource management

Resource management remains a challenge for project delivery organisations regardless of the approach they're using to deliver projects. Our PMO Managers talk about Agile team resources being ring-fenced - the importance of them being able to remain a team until delivery has finished; that there is only a finite amount of resources available, so prioritisation remains, well, a priority. The allocation and management of utilisation role plus the view across the whole resource pool is still needed and that role still naturally falls to the PMO. One other aspect our PMO Managers have encountered is the behavioural change required to work with self-empowered teams - especially helping senior executives give that authority and ultimately trust to get on and deliver without utilisation tracking or looking over shoulders.



Risk

Risk management is a fundamental role for PMO

Risk management and tracking risk activity is a fundamental role for the PMO. Agile projects are like any other projects, they have associated risks that need managing - especially ones where customers are at the centre of delivery as stated in the Agile Manifesto. Although the environment is self-managed, there is still a need for an independent check. PMOs should be involved in show and tells and making sure the team are on the right track. There is also a role for the PMO to provide coaching and support on risk management techniques at the team level. The self-managing team must embed risk management thinking in their day-to-day work and the PMO has the right knowledge to impart here. The key is to focus on the coaching side of the role, rather than controlling.

Getting Started With Agile PMO

Here we take a look at what our PMO Managers did to understand what Agile really is, what it means to the organisation and how to develop knowledge to help them build and develop an Agile PMO.

SAFe® - Scaled Agile Framework

Our PMO Managers Recommend It

“SAFe would be my overall recommendation, it is a good course that tells you as a methodology how it would work and I think answers a lot of the questions that have been raised around what should a PMO do and on the course, you sit in there and go, wait a minute, that’s my job.”

“The Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe®) helps businesses address the significant challenges of developing and delivering enterprise-class software and systems in the shortest sustainable lead time. It is a freely available, online knowledge base of proven success patterns, for people building the world’s most important software and systems.”
scaledagileframework.com

“I did the SAFe practioners course quite early on and that gave me a really good feel for geography and language and what I also saw out of that was how Kanban fills lots of the gaps. So an understanding of Kanban is really useful.”

Professional Scrum Master™

Our PMO Managers Recommend It

“I found Scrum Master useful from a PMO perspective...we’ve tried to trial some of the things we learnt from that course. We started to structure things using the Scrum methodology way, using the sprint boards and the backlogs so we could trial the concept before we started rolling it out to other people, and what we found is that we’ve ended up using that, we manage the full portfolio, the non-project work as well, we’ve ended up working with teams to use the Scrum methodology for the non-project pieces of work”

“The Professional Scrum Master (PSM) course is about learning to use Scrum to optimize value, productivity and the total cost of ownership of software products. Tools are provided to enable students to relate to behavioral shifts, work with people and teams, coach and facilitate techniques, and address the organisation.”
scrum.org

“We’re building everything on Scrum, so in terms of certification, we’re looking at doing CSM – Certified Scrum Master”

Useful Resources

There’s a lot of information out there on the internet, so what is useful for PMO practitioners to read up on? These were some of the recommendations from the PMO Managers:

- Reports, articles and insights from McKinsey are worth reading (search McKinsey and Agile).
- Read the guides and materials on the website at Agile Business Consortium (ABC).
- The Government Digital Services (GDS) are leading the way in Agile practices, read their blog and papers.
- GDS’ service manual is also an excellent resource (search GDS service manual)
- The PMI Agile Practice Guide is worth a read (which was a surprise!)
- “Essential Scrum” if you’re big on reading books.
- Read about PRINCE2 Agile but the course is not really recommended.

The Role of Translator?

Many of our PMO Managers have experienced Agile in their organisations from the bottom-up. In the early days, essentially Agile started at a team level, "...what typically happens is a team starts, and a team tries to apply Agile and the organisation sees that it's a benefit and they then want to take it out further."

As Agile turns the heads of executives, attracted by the promise of cost reduction and efficiency gains, what happens next? How do we translate the hype about Agile into the business, so they understand the benefit of it? Also how do we address the challenges of implementation that need to be overcome to deliver those benefits?

Here's an insight into an early role for the PMO.

"I think the PMO is in a good place to say if we do projects in this way it will be better because of this, this and this. If you're delivering online services, then waterfall is probably not the best route as you get stuff late with no early benefits and it's not very flexible. Being able to translate that back into the business areas is very important."

The counter argument?

"This idea of PMO being the buffer and translating sits uncomfortably with me because if we're talking about Agile then the business should be up there close with the teams and if there's a translation layer, we're almost saying don't you worry about Agile, we'll still present it to you in this nice shiny way and the PMOs are only a translation service rather than facilitating Agile."

A response:

"The PMO role of translator takes place before the company is fully Agile and needs help to make the changes. The PMO needs to know what's good and where we are on the change curve, and recognise some of the rubbish that's spouted, being able to translate that back to people in their own business language so they can use it going forward. The translation service fades once Agile has been embedded and translation is no longer needed but if you start with no Agile with only a few people that talk Agile and a lot of people that only talk business you have to find a way to make that transition."

First Time Experiences

"My first Agile transformation support role was when an executive said "we've got this new initiative and a big programme we're working on." He was totally supportive of the concept of doing things in an Agile way. Not just how the delivery team were working but the whole delivery organisation from the top-down. The first thing he did was say I'm going to appoint a Chief Transformation Officer and they have the authority to drive us in an Agile way. The first steps included facilitating all the training and coaching and implementation of processes."



Tools

Is the PMO using any specific tools in supporting Agile project delivery?

Very often the PMO bring in tools to drive process improvement, drive maturity, rightly or wrongly. If an organisation has an established tool set, does much have to change? Are there new tools we need, or do we need to use them differently? Any specific challenges or changes in uses?

What is clear by the responses of the PMO Managers is that the environment they are working in is a hybrid - or as it is now being called - bimodal. Their organisations are delivering using both waterfall and Agile approaches. With existing PPM tools such as Clarity, the traditional reporting still exists and is still wanted by executives. The Agile delivery teams want the tools that allow them to track velocity and the issues (JIRA is popular). "The PMO have to straddle both of those or interpret between the two of them to get something sensible out to senior management who hadn't fully adapted to either... using a tool such as Jira and getting completely different metrics and trackable information or having gaps was uncomfortable". The role of the PMO as a translator raises its head again.

"We've got things in different systems, people always find new ways of doing things but we can say, here's your basic, you have to do a status report each week, tell us what the key messages are, what the next steps are." The PMO needs to think about what information is 'just enough' for each stakeholder.

"It's not what tools we use. I think you've got to answer a number of questions. Which tools are you looking to change and why? What are the benefits and challenges associated with changing those tools? Does it actually work, does it provide the flexibility, and does the existing or new tool provide the flexibility? Can we actually change it because if we're going to come across a block with the investors or something there's no point going any further with it anyway? Can we merge status reports? Can we have different reports or can we, as a traditional organisation, change to this new tool if it is better? These are the questions you want to ask and then you have a list of tools you are going to change or aren't and you can push off from that.

So developers are wanting Jira and they get it but the PMO has been asking for a tool for years and they never get it. SO what makes it different?

"There's technical information in it and it's a tenner a month for the first ten users. The number of teams that go out and buy it themselves, and then all the data's in there. It's really easy to install." Yet there are security issues; a lack of standardisation across teams and crucially GDPR - it's a data governance issue!

"I agree in some senses JIRA is the new MS Excel. It's such a flexible tool and it is coming up from the ranks, the engineers are coming up and they know how to use it and it's the tool they expect to use. So then you are looking at how to use it to do what you want and it's flexible enough to do whatever you want. We've been collapsing tool-sets into Jira as much as we can. I'm not using Clarity anymore, the last thing I was using Clarity for was time sheeting which made it the world's most expensive time sheeting tool"



Collective Wisdom

Our PMO Managers were asked to conclude - what advice have they got for other PMO practitioners?

“The really important piece is benefits realisation because you’re constantly delivering value. It’s not at the end of it so the PMO needs to be putting it in front of the business and going “look at the great things that the project is doing”. It will build the links between the Agile delivery teams and PMO because the PMO is helping and shining a light on them. The PMO can demonstrate they are adding value and it’s good for the business because it makes them aware that what they’re paying for is delivering value.”

“I boil it down to two things and its cliché but make sure you are doing the right thing and doing it the right way. For me the big thing is about portfolio prioritisation or management. Make sure you use the right method, you have the right metrics to report that you’re making progress and you stop doing it when it doesn’t need to be done anymore and it doesn’t break anything.”

“Understanding the benefits and the metrics that drives the prioritisation of projects”

“A lot of PMOs score own goals every day of the week by insisting people do things that don’t really add value if the PMO changes that mindset and says ‘how can I help you, how can I help you deliver quickly by doing the most important things for you’”

“I don’t think the PMO has any job with reporting. I believe the project team in taking on the self-management role, the team has to produce its own reports. What the PMO needs to do is produce a consolidated/ composite report which gives the status of the portfolio.”

“What can the PMO do for Agile teams to help them? What can the PMO do with the Agile teams to help themselves? If PMO is looking to help an Agile team, the three areas they should focus on is communication, getting out and talking to people, business analysis, there is a fundamental difference in the way that Agile creates and manages its backlog and its list of works so understand how that happens and methodologies, understand how the different methodologies differ and be able to give advice and guide Agile teams which way is the right way.”

“I think the one thing the PMO can do is manage the dependencies, you have to provide that overarching umbrella and the thing is with Agile if you’ve got more and more rapid deployments, you’ve got more dependencies to manage so it changes the responsibility completely.”

“There’s a massive piece about not worrying about the methodology, working out what your business needs and working backwards. Getting to the crux of the requirements and then figure out what your best methods are.”

“If there’s a gap, fill it, if there’s an opportunity take it”

“Do no harm.”

“Less mentoring, more coaching. It’s about enabling people rather than telling how we’ve done it in the past. Modelling Agile practices for Agile teams. There’s no reason why the PMO can’t be modelling Agile practices too”

In Conclusion

Agile projects are not a different beast, it's just a different version of the same beast and there's a lot of similarities in the services the PMO delivers.

We have highlighted eight of those services which PMO practitioners should explore in the context of their own organisation's approach to Agile delivery. What Agile has done is reinforce and mandate best project management practice which should already be present in our projects. It was recognised through the discussion that focused areas, such as the business case, benefits management and sponsorship are perhaps our weakest areas in project management, yet it is these that require discipline in Agile delivery.

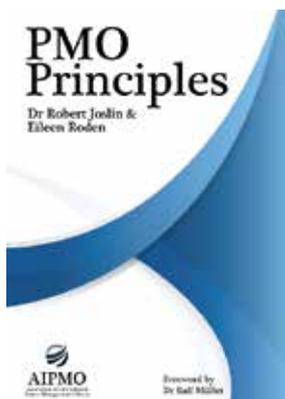
For the PMO today we need to undertake an exercise that looks at our PMO roles through an Agile lens and ask ourselves the question for each of the services we traditionally deliver - how does Agile do it?

If Agile uses the functions normally delivered by the PMO, we should be asking the question - how do they use them? The PMO may see that some functions and services are adequately managed by self-managing teams - the role switches from a doing role to a supporting or coaching role.

The role of the PMO as a coach cannot be underestimated and it will be a key skill in working with stakeholders and teams across the organisation. There is still a lot of confusion about Agile and what it is, how it can work, what people should be doing and ultimately making project delivery a success. The PMO can be unpicking the knotty issues and helping people to get informed and get onboard.

For the PMO to work effectively with the business, they too need to be educated in Agile - not just in formal training but also through the on-the-job coaching and learning that should come directly from Scrum Masters or Agile Coaches. Spending time with Agile teams, getting out there and understanding how Agile ceremonies are working; understanding what data the teams are generating; working out how to translate and inform senior stakeholders; noting where team inefficiencies are cropping up and smoothing the path ahead for them.

There is no set role for the PMO to play in Agile projects. In times where there are no rules or processes, the PMO should fall back on its PMO principles* to help guide the way. The principles of *Trusted Challenge Partner to Drive Value; Adaptive Capabilities and Services* and *Leads by Example* are just three of the principles which provide a foundation for the PMO and the functions and services it offers.



*Available through Amazon

When the organisation has approached the PMO with the question, "we want Agile, what do we need to do?" the PMO approach starts by asking the questions to really explore what the business needs. "Why do you want Agile?" challenges senior executives to really explore their thinking and expectations - and more crucially it starts the two-way conversation enabling the business and the PMO to work together to find the right approach for the organisation.

Keep this in mind always - focus on the value the PMO can offer, deliver that value early and deliver it often. An Agile PMO is one which not only supports the hybrid delivery organisation, it also embraces Agile principles and mindset in its own operations.

The Lunch Questions



-  UNDERSTANDING THE CURRENT FUNCTIONS AND SERVICES NEEDS REQUIRED FROM THE PMO
-  TAKE A LOOK AT THE CURRENT RESEARCH FROM
 - PMO FLASHMOB, PMO VALUE RING, AUBRY AND HOBBS, PMI
-  AGREEMENT ABOUT THE TOP FIVE FUNCTIONS AND SERVICES FROM A PMO TODAY



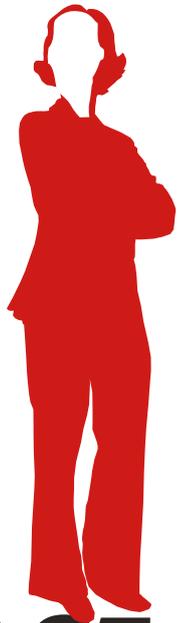
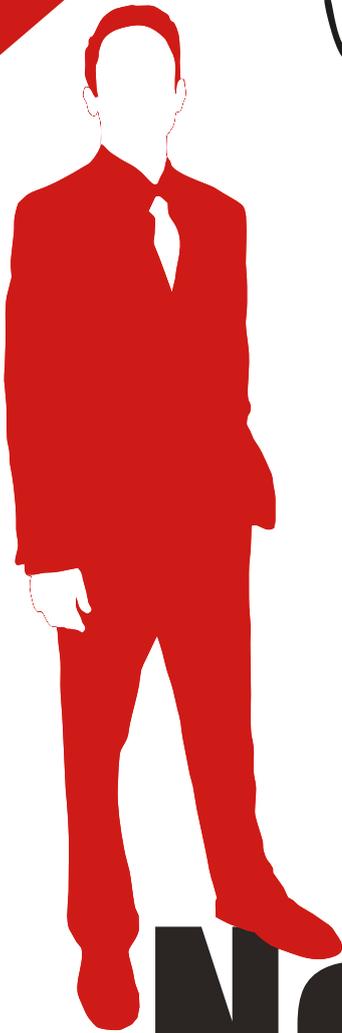
-  GETTING INTO AN AGILE STEADY STATE WITH THE PMO – CHALLENGES FOR THE PMO
 - WHO INITIATED THE CONVERSATION IN THE ORGANISATION AND AT WHAT POINT DID THE PMO GET INVOLVED AND WHAT WERE THEY ASKED TO DO?
 - SUPPORTING PROJECT – PROGRAMME OR PORTFOLIO LEVEL?
-  STEADY STATE PMOS SUPPORTING AGILE
 - FUNCTIONS AND SERVICES TOP FIVE
-  SUPPORTING QUESTIONS
 - WHAT'S STAYED THE SAME, WHAT'S CHANGED AND WHAT'S NEW
 - PEOPLE – PROCESS – TOOLS
 - DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ACROSS PORTFOLIO, PROGRAMME AND PROJECT



-  TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT REQUIRED
- ROLES IN THE PMO
- SKILLS
- RECOMMENDED READING, GUIDANCE, SIGNPOSTING

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About PMO Flashmob

PMO Flashmob is a networking and learning group dedicated to people who work within the field of PMO (Portfolio, Programme and Project Management Offices)

Networking events take place in various locations in the UK. We host both social gatherings and more structured learning events called PMO Mini-Masterclasses.

PMO Flashmob was created in 2013 and continues to support and champion the PMO community.

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