



# PROJECT MANAGEMENT

## *In the Geospatial Community*

By Raquel Charrois PMP, CP, CMS | VP

### The Project Management Professional (PMP)<sup>®</sup> and the geospatial profession—The project management office (PMO)

In recent years the idea of a project management office (PMO) has been gaining traction in the geospatial industry. Where there were once standalone project managers (if at all) there are now PMO's that serve to consolidate the project management efforts and discipline into a unified group that applies a unified approach to the managing of all the individual projects under the umbrella of what is known as a project portfolio.

As your organization's project management evolves you should keep in mind the idea of a PMO. The challenge is recognizing when the best time for such a change might be. As with all process change related items the ideal circumstance is to identify, develop and implement them immediately before they are required so that the moment they are needed, voila, there they are.

The PMBOK<sup>®</sup> describes the project management office as an organizational structure that standardizes the project-related governance process and facilitates the sharing of resources, methodologies, tools, and techniques. The PMO ultimately unites the approaches that are utilized within the project management group. This is true of process related items as well as more esoteric items such as applying company philosophies and standards to project management activities.

A PMO fundamentally consolidates the organizations projects into one portfolio and manages them from that perspective. The individual at the helm of the PMO ensures that the information from the organizations governance, relating to projects, are known, transparent and applied consistently. This way, the effect to all projects are considered when addressing the needs of an individual one. The organizations goals and objectives are combined and the impact to the entire portfolio is considered. This, as opposed to an individual project manager making a myopic decision that may not take into account the larger picture. The PMO balances the needs of the company and the needs of the customer.

#### PMO Office Pros

- **Unifies process and outcomes.**  
In general, if your organization struggles to have repeatable approaches to challenging project situations, finds that different project managers have different philosophies about their handling, and have noticed that project managers often have vastly different approaches and outcomes to the same hurdles it would likely benefit from a PMO.
- **Standardizes the project related governance and ideas of the organization.**  
Ensures that the larger ideas and considerations of the organization are known and considered in all project related actions.
- **Manages the projects from a portfolio level.**  
Ensures that the health of all the projects via the portfolio are maintained versus having a single advocate for each project
- **Single point of contact.**  
The individual in charge of the PMO is the single point of contact for process and idea changes that are to be applicable to all the projects and project managers.

#### PMO Office Cons

- **Can be burdensome if handled incorrectly.**  
As with most things, if incorrectly implemented the result is simply more work without the benefits of a great PMO.
- **May slow things down.**  
If poorly handled a PMO can unnecessarily slow down a project.

There are many indicators that an organization would benefit from a PMO, below are three key ones to note.

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### Key Reasons to have a PMO

- **You have shared resources that at times have conflicting needs.**  
Managing the project portfolio allows for improved management of shared resources.
- **The management team is interested in assessing/reviewing projects as a portfolio rather than on a project by project basis.**  
When your project management has evolved to a point that management no longer is looking at the smallest parts of each project and instead is looking for portfolio level analysis and key performance indicators (KPI's).
- **Organization governance is inconsistent or seems to “get lost”.**  
You would like to be certain that company philosophies and ideas are maintained on your projects.

As you consider whether the idea of a PMO is right for your organization, remember to assess whether you spend more time focusing on the individual project at the expense of all others. If you find that there are decisions being made within your organization that while they work for one given project they bring surprises and conflict to others, you may be well served by a PMO.

The PMO ultimately unites the objectives of the company and presents them across the portfolio. PMO decisions are transparent and shared amongst the PM's through a collaborative process. The result is that all the PM's are then moving in the same direction to support the needs of the organization and the customers from a portfolio perspective. A PMO can be a great tool to support your overall organization and project management efforts.

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Raquel Charrois is the vice president of operations at Continental Mapping Consultants, Inc., a Project Management Professional (PMP), and an ASPRS Certified Photogrammetrist.

Raquel is very focused on process based approaches that unite program and business objectives, resulting in portfolio success.

If you have questions or topics that you would like to see discussed, please email them to [PMP@asprs.org](mailto:PMP@asprs.org).

### Signatures

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### NETWORKING COUNCILOR



**Cody O'Dale** is currently a non-thesis Masters in Science Candidate at Idaho State University, studying Geographic Information Science. He has worked with NASA DEVELOP and Empire Unmanned on remote sensing projects.

Currently, he is helping maintain NASA Recover. Cody does enjoy the outdoors but also a loves a good game of Battlefield.

### DEPUTY NETWORKING COUNCILOR



**Briana Williams** attends the illustrious HBCU of Fayetteville State University, located in Fayetteville, North Carolina. Briana is a rising senior, pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics with a specialization in GeoSpatial

Intelligence Studies (GIS). Her research interest include big data management and electrical disturbances. In Briana's spare time she loves to travel internationally and write poetry. She hopes to bring her wonderful communication skills to connect students with seasoned geographers of today.

### COMMUNICATIONS COUNCILOR



**Anthony Campbell** is currently pursuing a PhD in Environmental and Earth Science at the University of Rhode Island. While at URI he has worked on research projects funded by the National Park Service. These projects have

included creating python tools to delineate Mean High Water shorelines and mapping salt marsh vegetation and change at several parks using high resolution satellite imagery and object-based methodologies. Anthony enjoys road biking and cooking.