

## Recession Proofing through the Project Management Office

We all wish to protect our businesses during periods of uncertainty caused by recession. In difficult times many organisations lose sight of their core objectives and potentially talk themselves into recession.

During these times it is of utmost importance to work towards strategic objectives aligned to the needs of the business to deliver real benefits.

Although most companies have adopted a management by projects approach there still remains a disconnect between what the organisation wants (the benefits) and what is delivered.

This is where the Project Management Office (PMO) delivers real value to an organisation, by asking questions such as; Are the projects still in line with the strategic objectives? How will this project help us achieve those objectives? Should we continue with this project if they don't?

Organizations differ greatly in their approach to and use of Project Management practices.

At one extreme are organizations that have no formal Project Management process at all. In these organizations projects are dealt with on an ad hoc basis with whatever staff and skill that happens to be available at the time. In general, project success in these organizations is truly a hit or miss proposition.

At the other extreme are organizations that have integrated Project Management process into their very fabric. Project Management process is full integrated into all other corporate systems and the entire staff is engaged in continuous improvement of every aspect of Project Management. Project success in these organizations is a more routine occurrence.

Essentially a PMO centralises, coordinates and oversees the management of projects and programs. The PMO provides both operational and strategic support and facilitate current and future projects and the mentoring of programme and project management skills and techniques.

PMOs should take their strategic plans to everyone, ask them what their problems are and what solutions they can come up with. That's how you build buy-in and ownership of the management process.

PMOs are not ends to themselves, but rather vehicles through which organisations pursue their strategic objectives. To be effective they need a sound business case, to enjoy strong executive support from the organisation, have strong leadership within the PMO and be willing to challenge the way things are done currently to create something better.

The PMO must deploy repeatable project management best practices and processes to drive down project cycle time, flow more projects through the organization and work towards enhancing project manager success through training, coaching and mentoring. This includes the development and utilization of tools, templates and checklists. Additionally the PMO should establish metrics to measure the performance and risk of the projects and focus on continuous improvement.

An effective PMO addresses project governance, stakeholder management and benefits realisation, thereby significantly enhancing their organisation's ability to deliver results that positively impact corporate performance ... essential during recessionary times.