Accelerating Strategy Execution:

Effective Portfolio, Program and Project Management

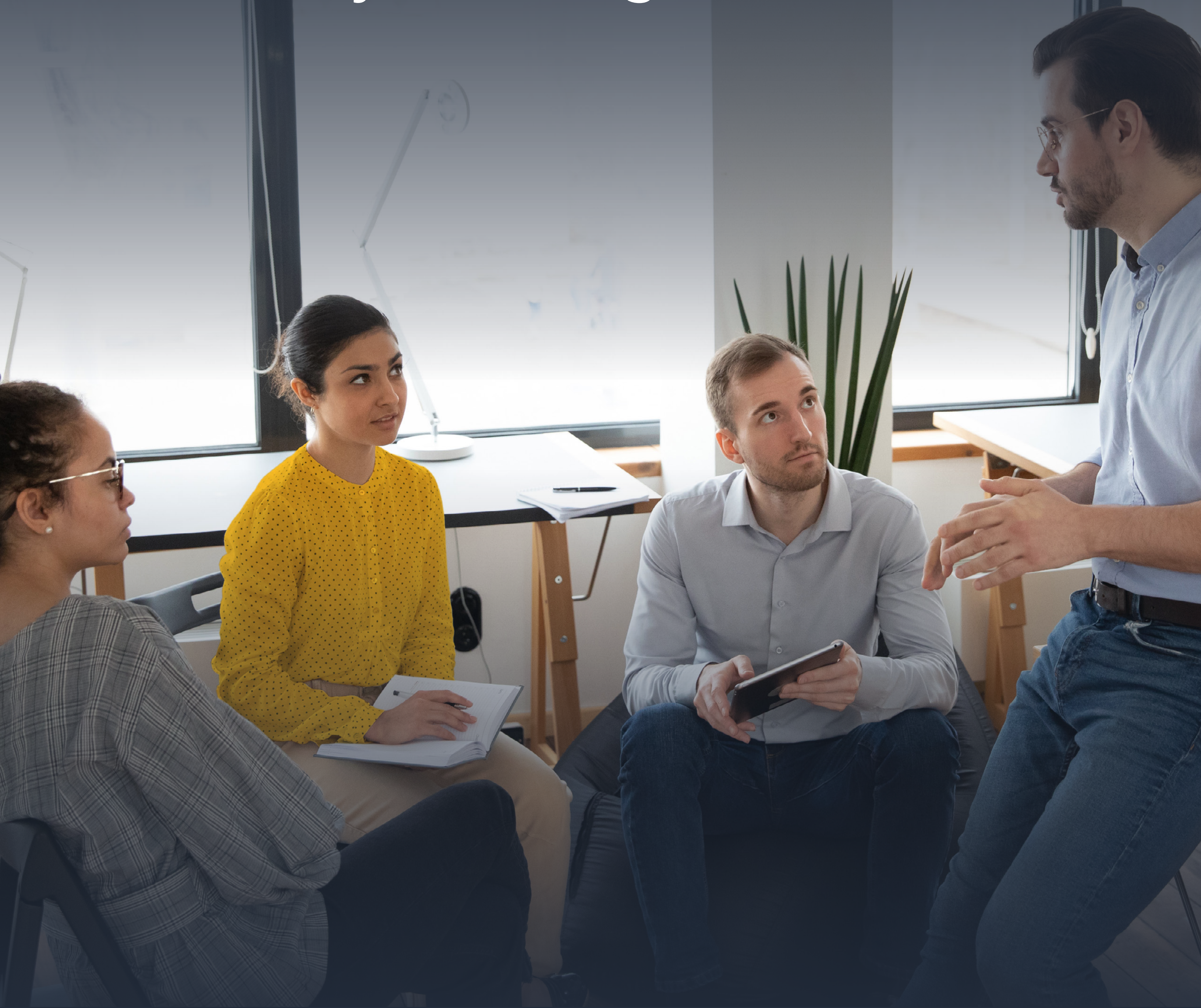


TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Being flexible while turning strategy into business value, products and services has become challenging. Companies can have the best business strategies in the world, but if they can't deliver the desired outcomes, those strategies are worthless.

In fact, recent studies have pointed to anywhere from 48 percent to 67 percent of business strategies failing due to poor execution. And according to Gartner, 38 percent of project management office (PMO) leaders surveyed stated that a "misalignment between enterprise strategy, investment decisions and day-to-day execution" led to the creation of a PMO at their company.

The level of disruption and pace of change continues to accelerate rapidly within companies due to economic challenges, the latest trends in technology, intensifying customer expectations and digital transformations reshaping how people perform work.

INTRODUCTION

Business leaders know that change is no longer a phase — it's a constant. As a result, program and portfolio management (PPM) offices are evolving to be more dynamic, tech-enabled, and value-driven. To thrive in today's environment, leaders must shift from reactive to strategic, driving value from investments through integrated portfolios that support enterprise-wide transformation.

Delivering high-value initiatives is more essential and complex than ever. Companies must manage increasing interdependencies, changing stakeholder expectations, and faster innovation cycles.

Success depends on more than frameworks and governance. You must equip your modern PMOs with strong leadership, clear communication strategies, and change management skills — all supported by technologies such as AI and automation. While once known for being process-heavy and slow to adapt, today's PMOs are focused on agility, business alignment, and delivering measurable outcomes.

Still, many organizations encounter persistent barriers in executing their strategy. These obstacles include both internal and external forces that can hinder strategic delivery.

INTRODUCTION

Here are some shared challenges that companies often meet during the strategy execution process:

1. They are challenged to produce a 360-degree view of strategic initiatives and project portfolios across the organization.
2. Their project portfolios are not realigned with rapidly shifting organizational strategies.
3. They are challenged to decide the value of projects for prioritization.
4. There is a lack of collaboration and communication between departments due to siloed structures or limited cross-functional collaboration.
5. Their PMO provides limited value and is slow to adjust.
6. Change management approaches aren't integrated.
7. They are challenged to measure strategy execution and provide actionable data insights.

When programs and portfolios don't align with business goals, organizations fall short — no matter how skilled the delivery teams are. Many PMOs remain underused as strategic partners. But when given the tools, mindset and trust to lead transformation, they can shift from tactical execution to value-focused leadership.

To overcome modern challenges, companies must reimagine the PMO as a poly-skilled, insight-driven function — one that supports strategy execution with both human intelligence and smart technology.

A Framework to Deliver Value

The value delivery framework below is designed to help companies enhance their efficiency and effectiveness, enabling them to drive strategy execution and value delivery with greater speed and impact. The framework is based on optimizing processes, streamlining operations and enhancing collaboration across teams, and it can be facilitated by the organization's PMO.

By implementing business capabilities, such as portfolio, program and project management to drive strategic execution, companies can minimize time-consuming tasks and focus on value-added activities. This will result in faster delivery cycles, improved resource allocation and enhanced productivity.

End-to-End Value Delivery Framework

Value Strategy Alignment	Value Definition and Planning	Value Design	Value Delivery	Value Realization
PMOs play an active role in developing the overarching policy that helps the organization transform a strategic plan into actionable implementation plans that optimize resource use and maximize value return.	PMOs evaluate the priorities for initiatives and strategic projects by considering stakeholder analysis, other investments and resource capacity to drive continuous strategy execution with realtime updates.	PMOs help leaders adjust strategy design and delivery during execution. In addition, modern and adaptive business capabilities — including strategic initiative formulation, portfolio, program and project management — play a critical role in prioritizing, managing, governing, and bringing visibility to change efforts across the enterprise.	Like value engineering, PMOs support leaders as they change the strategy's design and delivery. They ensure solutions are designed to deliver maximum value through experimentation and effective change management.	PMOs provide direct support during value capture, enabling the company to achieve its expected results and benefits following the value strategy. Defining the objective measures of value ahead of time will focus the organization on value which translates performance to financial metrics. The PMO's ongoing value management will significantly enhance the organizations value realization in alignment with its strategic plans and desired business outcomes.

A value delivery framework helps guide, track and continuously improve strategy execution while aligning portfolio, program and project management with your organization's culture. It ensures you embed delivery capabilities into how your business operates, not add them on after the fact.

To elevate your PMO into a strategic, adaptive organization, start by assessing your ability to deliver a portfolio of strategic initiatives. Many PMOs already sit at the center of project and portfolio activity, with existing relationships, systems and influence. The opportunity lies in evolving that foundation.

Begin by asking: Does leadership view your PMO as a strategic partner or administrative overhead? Do your projects clearly align with business goals? Are you using tools like AI or automation to generate insights and automate manual tasks?

These are only a few questions to consider when evaluating your PMO's current state. A clear-eyed assessment helps identify gaps, surface opportunities, and shift your PMO from process-focused to value-driven.

Five Approaches to Elevate Your Portfolio, Program and Project Management Business Capabilities

We recently worked with a leading medical insurer to help them assess why the company was struggling to complete projects on time. Without the ability to monitor project budget expenditures, it struggled both with budgets and resource allocation.

Across the organization, teams operated in silos and didn't collaborate across departments. They needed a way to holistically manage project demand and provide transparency and governance over project execution so they could achieve value and results from their project efforts.

In our assessment, we worked to better understand the current state so that we could define how a PMO would function for them. We recommended a PMO to enable value delivery and bring more standards, methodologies and best practices to the company's portfolio of projects.

Their PMO now helps the organization's team members collaborate across all departments, starting with the C-suite and throughout all management levels. They've set up a prioritization process and a scoring model to reduce what was once a six-hour meeting into a two-hour meeting about project priorities. The new project management methodology and consistent use of project management methods and tools have helped the organization achieve desired project outcomes faster.

To achieve similar results leaders must put their plan into action to advance their portfolio, program and project management to a more strategic orientation — beyond tactical norms. As you create a roadmap, here are five critical approaches to consider:

1. Reposition portfolio, program and projects to strategy within your organization
2. Reimagine the PMO
3. Provide enterprise-wide visibility and coordination
4. Drive new ways of working
5. Expand the PMO's role in enabling organizational change.

1 REPOSITION PORTFOLIO, PROGRAM AND PROJECTS TO STRATEGY WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION

As a core business capability, you can apply portfolio, program and project management processes more broadly across the organization to improve the speed and governance of the enterprise-wide portfolio. It directs and guides the enterprise by developing and implementing the value delivery framework to realign, deliver and attain value from the strategic portfolio — blurring organization silos with an iterative approach.

To reposition portfolio, program and projects to strategy within your organization, you must show a sharp vision, build trusting relationships and embrace transparency.

You will need to decide whether your organization requires a role or an office (such as the PMO) to execute your vision and to facilitate the value delivery framework, or if you can achieve your vision, with a cross-functional group of representatives from each business area.

Here are five tactics that can help:

1. Validate the needs and bring the shared vision forward to the rest of the organization.
2. Create a change management strategy to implement the vision.
3. Advance portfolio, program and project management with your company's strategic goals and key performance indicators (KPIs) to show a return on investment (ROI).
4. Communicate a policy that elevates portfolio, program and project management to a more strategic role, including how it will generate value for the company, and set expectations for the PMO to be a central hub.
5. Give the PMO a seat at the table for company-wide strategic planning and annual or quarterly planning efforts.

The key to this approach is to establish trust and ensure each department works toward the same goal. The PMO is the organizational navigator enabling strategy delivery by connecting strategy to the planning and delivery processes needed to bring the company's vision to fruition.

Repositioning the PMO to align with strategy plays a crucial role in driving initiatives aligned with changing strategies. Effectiveness requires guidance and leadership in implementing the value delivery framework throughout the organization to drive strategy execution faster.

2 REIMAGINE THE PMO

PMOs must evolve to become more strategic, as an enterprise-level entity and focused on a portfolio of strategic initiatives. Organizations face challenges due to unclear business strategy, limited senior executive support and ongoing organizational ambiguity surrounding their intended role and goals. The outlook for roles in portfolio, program and project management continues to increase as companies progressively rely on running and growing the business and the projects needed to support them.

Two-thirds of all PMOs were created within the last five years. And two out of three times, organizations that set up temporary PMOs transition them to more permanent functions. In addition, many companies are transitioning to product-based operating models to manage their work's more circuitous nature.

This evolution is affecting all areas of portfolio, program and project management. To help enable it, PMOs must reinvent themselves from delivering control at a project level to supporting strategy at an enterprise level, financial planning and business value realization.

PMOs give organizations an independent perspective on advancing business changes through organizational alignment and projects while fostering collaborative relationships across teams. They apply consistent portfolio, program and project management practices to achieve outcomes. To do this, PMOs need the right tools, methods and the ability to tell a story with their data.

Evolving PMOs plays a crucial role in driving initiatives aligned with changing strategies. Effectiveness requires they continuously review changes, adjust to maximize value and have the skills to drive strategy execution faster.

Here are five tactics that can help:

1. Name the executive-level position that will oversee the PMO and make it part of the job description, along with clear goals on the purpose and objectives of the PMO.
2. Evaluate whether existing operating models and organization structures align with and advance portfolio, program and projects to strategy. Consider centralizing the delivery program and project oversight for more significant impact and consistency. You can do this by bringing PMOs into a single organization or setting up teaming agreements between decentralized PMOs.
3. Assess your PMO with an outside-looking-in perspective to help you find gaps between your capabilities and create benchmarks for best practices.
4. Leverage facilitation and relationship management skills to unite disparate delivery teams in coordinating and managing dependencies.
5. Provide useful metrics, reporting and analytics tools that emphasize impact, urgency of projects and joint accountability between the organizations to deliver the desired outcomes.

3 PROVIDE ENTERPRISE-WIDE VISIBILITY AND COORDINATION

Enterprise environments are complex due to today's level of disruption, organizational structures, manual processes and tacit knowledge. In an ideal environment, leaders understand the bigger picture to ensure their companies meet business strategy goals.

To stay effective, modern PMOs need real-time access to project and portfolio data. But with growing volumes of distributed and inconsistent data, leaders often struggle to make sense of it all. That's where AI and automation come in. When combined with structured inputs and smart workflows, these technologies can reduce manual effort, identify bottlenecks, and deliver meaningful insight, fast.

PMOs are now using AI to enhance visibility, automate repetitive tasks and increase focus on strategic initiatives. Tools like large language models (LLMs), including Copilot and ChatGPT, help turn raw project data into status narratives, steering committee updates and risk logs, all with less effort and greater clarity. As PMO expert Rick Morris puts it, "AI doesn't replace project managers — it replaces their worst tasks."

3

PROVIDE ENTERPRISE-WIDE VISIBILITY AND COORDINATION

How PMOs Are Using AI to Elevate Their Impact

According to Capterra's Most Impactful PM Tools Survey, 63 percent of project managers report increased productivity and efficiency integrating AI. These gains are becoming more tangible as AI matures and is more deeply embedded into everyday workflows.

PMOs Are Using AI To:

- ***Generate executive-ready reports:*** *Structured data from Jira, Smartsheet, or spreadsheets can be transformed into concise summaries, helping stakeholders quickly grasp key updates and variances.*
- ***Automate risk analysis:*** *AI assigns RAG status, flags incomplete mitigations, and highlights timeline concerns, enabling earlier intervention and smarter prioritization.*
- ***Draft steering decks and status slides:*** *Prompts tuned for executive communication deliver slide content, speaker notes, and action points without starting from scratch.*
- ***Model project scenarios:*** *Predictive analytics simulate budget and performance outcomes to guide faster, more informed decisions.*
- ***Reduce time spent on low-value tasks:*** *Freed from manual updates, PMO leaders can reinvest time in coaching teams and solving problems.*

Of course, while AI offers significant advantages, it also brings challenges. Data privacy, governance and human oversight remain essential. PMO leaders must ensure employees review AI outputs for alignment with both ethical standards and business context to fully realize AI's potential — without compromising trust.

3 PROVIDE ENTERPRISE-WIDE VISIBILITY AND COORDINATION

In addition to leveraging AI, you will need to work collaboratively on data capture by jointly reviewing business cases for viability and feasibility. Evaluators should categorize and evaluate priorities relating to other investments and examine available capacity and internal capabilities to perform the work. You should also link metrics with business outcomes to emphasize joint accountability between departments and deliver business results.

The key to enterprise visibility and coordination is to build trust and strong working relationships across the enterprise. Set your business priorities and metrics, along with the impact they can have. A **business-first mindset** will energize your team as solutions drive insight and productivity.

The good news is the emergence of advanced tools and technologies, such as AI and machine learning, has created opportunities to aggregate data that was previously unavailable or heavily manual. Providing enterprise-wide visibility and coordination eases decision making. Effectiveness requires that decision makers continuously provide visibility into changes with modern technologies, adjust to maximize value and have the skills to drive strategy execution faster.

Here are five tactics that can help:

1. Track everything in one place and ensure your data insights are actionable.
2. Safeguard data quality by requiring regular reviews and using technology and analytics to unlock the data's full potential in an automated, self-service manner for real-time visibility.
3. Stand up a cross-functional group to reduce organizational silos by working on common goals and problem solving in a highly collaborative fashion.
4. Leverage organizational change management (OCM) to help people trust new processes and data visuals for decision making with a **communication plan**.
5. Be fully transparent on misalignments, risks and bottlenecks.

4 DRIVE NEW WAYS OF WORKING

PMOs are shifting and adapting to new and changing demands. These offices are now expected to be dynamic and adaptive, in addition to driving new ways of working within organizations. Think of PMOs as your organization's "orchestra conductor" that aligns, coordinates and brings people and work together, allowing delivery teams to rapidly deliver products and services.

PMOs are leading the adoption of "best fit" methodologies and best practices across the organization. They provide guidance, training and coaching to project teams on methods, principles, standards and tools. They do so by implementing routines, standards and guardrails that help teams move quickly and safely — and by building trust, showing empathy among teams to continuously gain insights and feedback.

PMOs also promote collaboration and knowledge sharing across hybrid and remote working teams by facilitating communities of practice and organizing forums where project managers can share their experiences and best practices. These offices ensure remote teams have the necessary resources, training and support to effectively manage projects in a distributed environment.

During times of notable change, companies must be ready to pause or scrap specific projects, incorporate new products, or accelerate services that were previously on the back burner.

Lastly, PMOs create alignment between business strategies, projects and the value they want to deliver. As a result, they must develop rigor around their approaches to approving and prioritizing projects. Developing a high-impact project portfolio is the result of a long-term, iterative process that evolves alongside the business.

By driving new ways of working, PMOs help companies adapt to change, increase project success rates and drive value. They are seen as catalysts, enabling their organization to deliver projects more effectively. Effectiveness requires the adoption of standardization, best practices, knowledge sharing and continuous improvement efforts to drive strategy execution faster.

Here are five tactics that can help:

1. Continuously evaluate projects based on business value, time criticality and risk.
2. Coordinate and align the organization's strategic priorities and gain buy-in across stakeholder groups and departments to ensure project portfolios are aligned.
3. Assess the ability for teams to work together and apply principles and methodologies for faster delivery.
4. Ensure business operations are part of the process and understand it requires effort and investment via involvement, feedback and behavioral change.
5. Consider shifting your resourcing and budget models for delivery to a more flexible model so your organization can quickly respond to changes. Static (or stable) cross-functional teams with steady backlogs can help with this move.

5 EXPAND THE PMO'S ROLE IN ENABLING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Elevated portfolio, program and project management capabilities can help PMOs step into various roles — facilitator, storyteller or champion — to drive change and adoption.

As leaders, PMOs can help set up an operating model and adapt the organizational structure. The office can even help manage initiatives that adopt new practices, technologies or functions to support transformation. To do so, the office would work closely with OCM teams and integrate OCM into its capabilities.

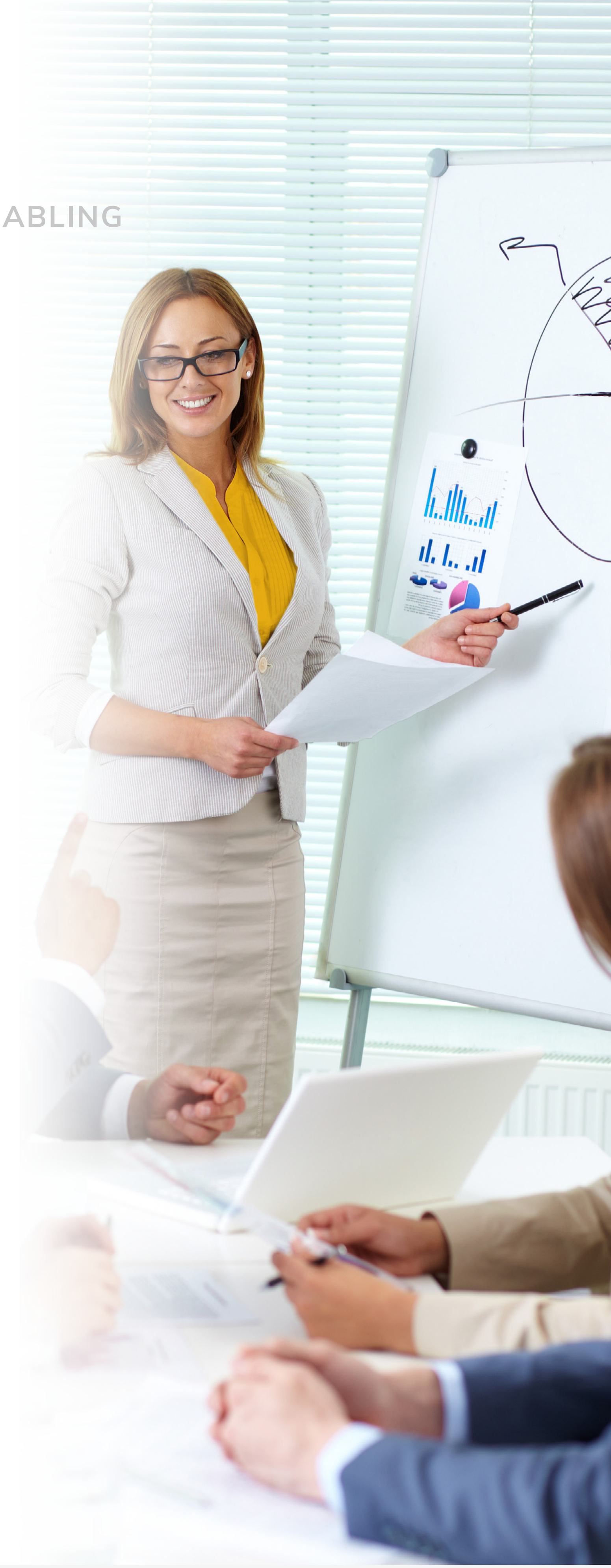
PMOs can also set up a network of interdependent, accountable teams by focusing on change, communication planning, coordination and execution across the enterprise and within program and project management offices.

As an organization's capabilities evolve, PMOs should become more involved in advising, orchestrating and coaching. Their portfolio, program and project management ability, coupled with their understanding of organizational dynamics, position them to support change. They can help create aligned and active change leaders, model and promote transparent communication and enable prompt and relevant recognition.

Given their role in facilitation and relationship management, PMOs are well-positioned to establish training programs, implement tools and create templates. PMOs should also use these new capabilities to develop project management centers of excellence that can train project managers and teams with the new skills needed to deliver value successfully.

When people feel informed, inspired and involved in changes taking place in an organization, it propels greater engagement — and greater trust — between leaders and their associates. By expanding the PMO's role in enabling organizational change, you can help mitigate negative reactions to change by preparing stakeholders for the long haul. Effectiveness requires PMOs to increase stakeholder adoption and support change initiatives to drive strategy execution faster.

5 EXPAND THE PMO'S ROLE IN ENABLING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE



Here are five tactics that can help:

1. Add organizational change management to the PMO capability as a core function and ensure project plans incorporate change-related activities.
2. Help set up an operating model and adapt the organizational structure as needed.
3. Train your PMO and project managers on organizational change management practices.
4. Use the PMO as a facilitator, storyteller or champion to help manage change initiatives.
5. Develop centers of excellence that can train project managers and teams with skills needed to deliver value.

By adding organizational change management as a business capability to strategy execution, PMOs can help set up an operating model and adapt the organizational structure as needed. These offices can even help manage strategic initiatives that adopt new practices, technologies or functions. Effectiveness requires the PMO to work closely with organizational change teams, integrate OCM into its capabilities or both to more quickly drive strategy execution.

MOVING FORWARD

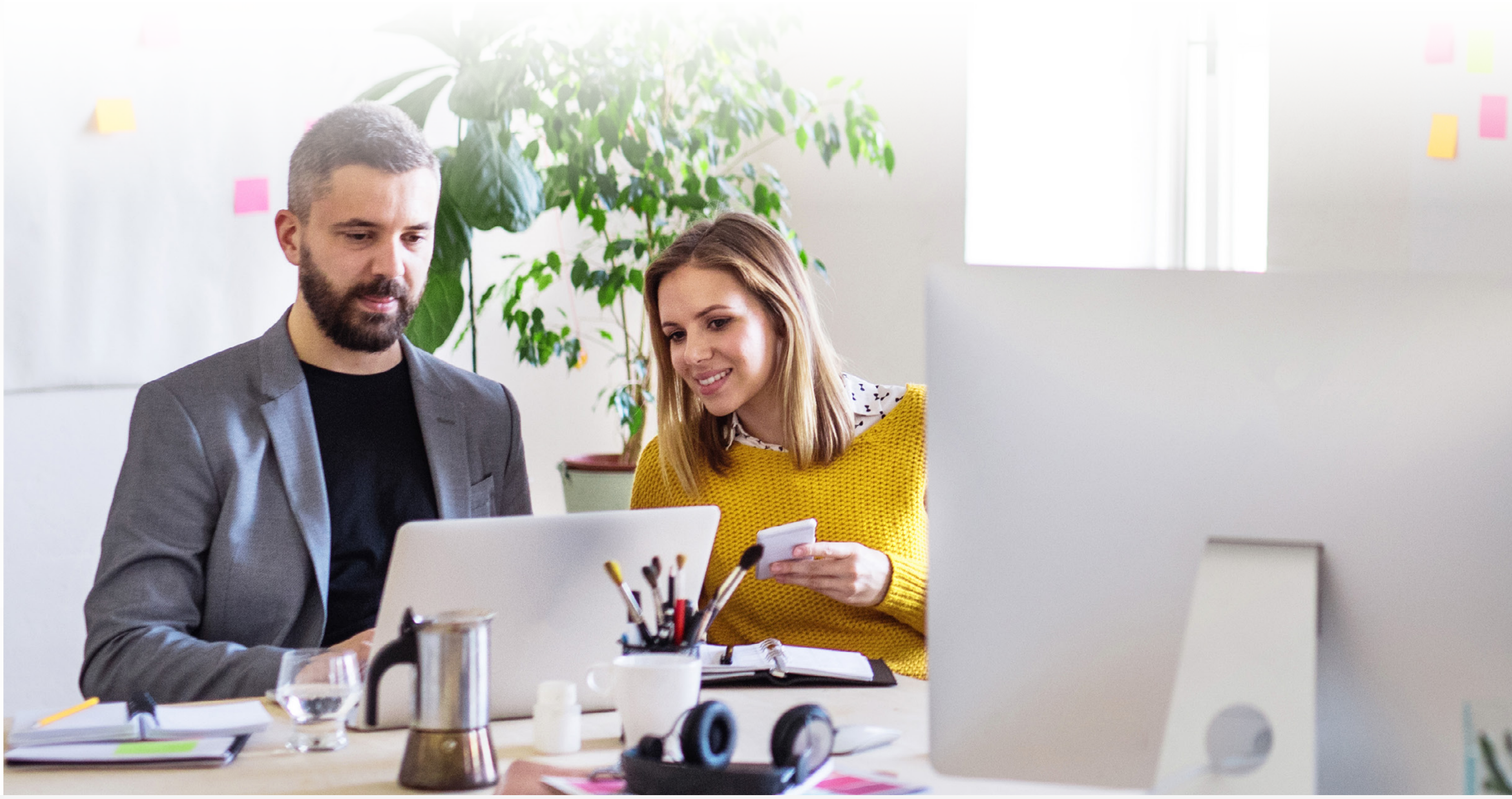
As the pace of change and disruptions make planning more challenging, companies have recognized the need to evolve their portfolio, program and project management capabilities from a supporting (or administrative) function to a core business capability focused on end-to-end strategy execution and value realization.

Imagine having your portfolio, program and projects aligned to organizational outcomes, focused on what's material to strategy, and executed to fully realize maximum benefits.

Building business capabilities is no longer a "once every two to three years" event, but rather it's ongoing.

Here are five ways to know you are moving forward:

1. You will gain improved visibility into — and alignment between — strategy and execution.
2. The work is categorized into different buckets (ex: enterprise, operational, bug fixes) and shared transparently to bring execution focus.
3. Your organization's focus will transition from managing technical activities to managing strategic interactions, integrations and outcomes.
4. You will have better communication, collaboration and coordination across business units and teams.
5. Your company will see greater change adoption throughout the organization.



What's at Stake

Airlines Reporting Corporation is the industry leader in air travel intelligence and distribution, helping travel companies connect with their customers via data and insights. The company has helped settle transactions between airlines and travel agencies for more than 50 years.

Given the airline industry's difficulties over the years, the company had to quickly pivot to help its customers see a future. They were looking for a partner with knowledge of running PMOs and organizational change management expertise.

We worked with this company to transform its internal and external technology and culture by pivoting from control and governance to "best fit" approaches to give the teams more autonomy while keeping adherence to deadlines. Now, the organization can work quickly to exceed customer expectations. But embracing today's shifts is not an easy change.

Not all companies can shift focus to a different aspect of their business. Many struggle to respond to necessary market shifts due to a lack of business agility and portfolio, program and project management practices, which prevents the delivery of critical business strategies and required changes.

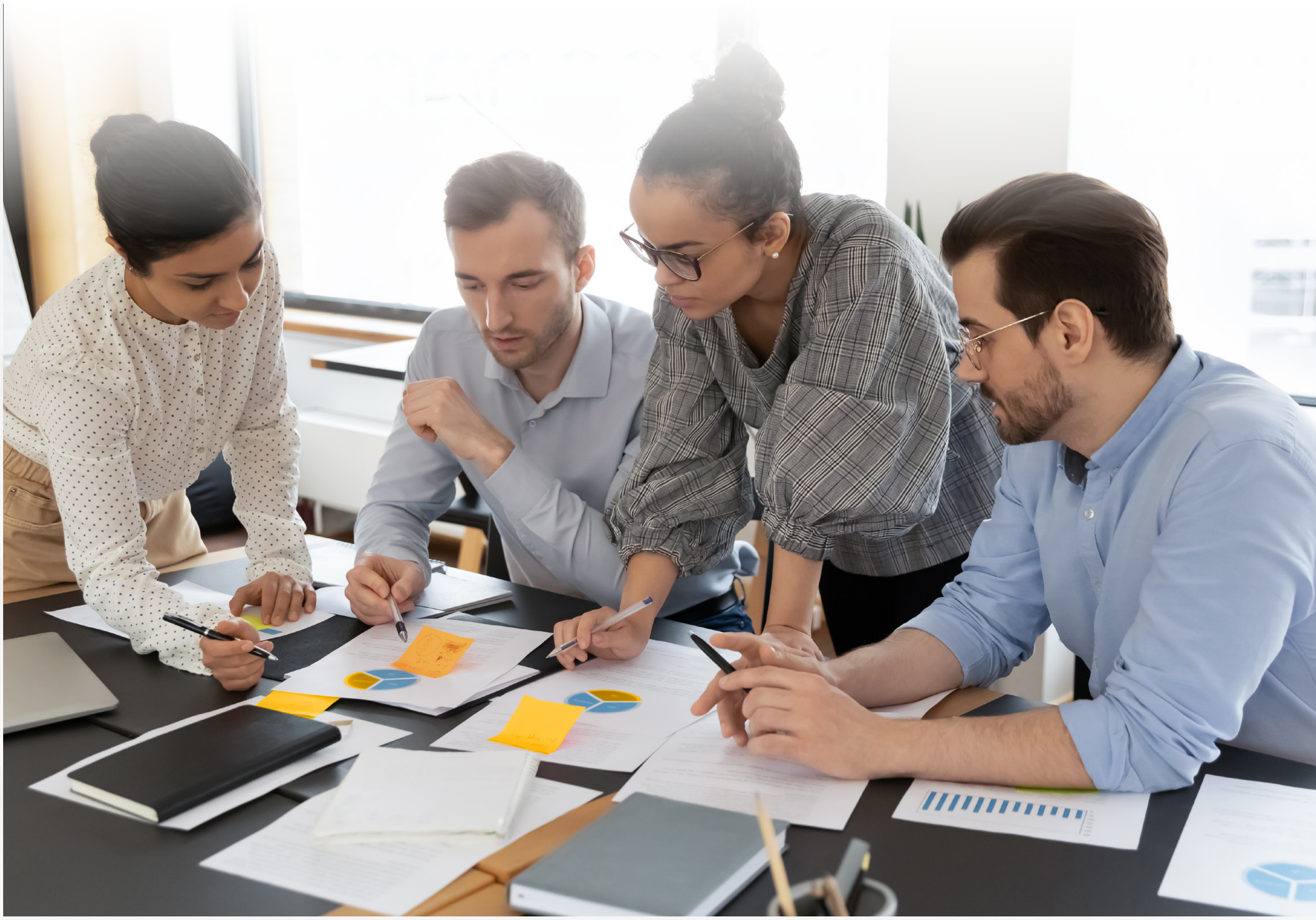
Seize the Opportunity

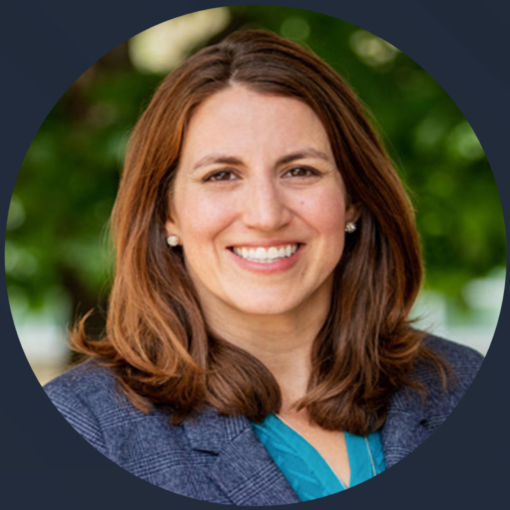
Ready to propel your organization toward faster and more successful strategy execution?

Whether your organization is responding to an economic downturn, market changes or new customer expectations, your portfolio, program and project management practices must transform the business to be more consultative and adaptive.

In today's dynamic landscape, speed is the name of the game. You must continuously watch the market, decide, reevaluate your visions and strategies, improve your core business capabilities, build a culture of accepting change, and implement incremental value releases. Quickly adapting and iterating is key to staying competitive and achieving success in such a dynamic environment.

Enhancing your organization's portfolio, program and project management capabilities can be complex and affect your ability to grow and scale. Take the time to evaluate your status, recognize the steps you need to improve and invest in a partner or coaching team who can lead you the rest of the way. With intentionality, you will accelerate your strategy execution faster.





MEET THE AUTHOR

Joyce Meyer-Warren

National Service Offering Lead

Business Consulting Services

joyce.meyerwarren@centricconsulting.com

Joyce Meyer-Warren is a National Lead for Centric's Enterprise Portfolio, Program and Project Management practice with more than two decades of professional experience in management consulting and industry. She successfully manages and delivers large, complex engagements that involve designing and implementing business and technology transformations.

Joyce brings her extensive expertise in people, process and technology solutions to the table to help companies navigate their business problems. She started her career in big consulting and left for local opportunities and to spend more time with her husband, two children and three dogs.

Connect with her on LinkedIn

((CENTRIC))

ABOUT US

Centric Consulting is an international management consulting firm with unmatched expertise in business and digital transformation, hybrid workplace strategy, technology implementation and adoption. The firm has established a reputation for combining the benefits of experience, flexibility and cost efficiency with the goal of creating tailored solutions centered on what's best for your business. Founded in 1999 with a remote workforce, Centric has grown to 1,500 employees and 14 locations across the country and India.

Visit www.centricconsulting.com to learn more.