



Chapter XVI

Managing Multiple Projects

The best way to predict the future, is to invent it.

(Alan Kay)

Managing IT projects and being on an IT project team used to be simpler. PMs typically had one project to manage, and team members were on only one team. All the team members were located in close geographic proximity, and the work was all done at the workplace. Currently the project landscape has become much more complex, where everyone is concerned with multiple projects and teams may be spread out all over the world. The business needs of cutting costs and being quicker to market have increased the pressures on project teams and their managers.

According to the “Chaos Report” from the Standish Group (2004), unqualified IT project success only occurs in about one third of IT projects. To improve this success rate, many associations (such as the IT Governance Institute) and companies are investigating broad IT governance issues. In regard to project management, these broad issues include such matters as project portfolio management, corporate-wide comprehensive standard project policies and procedures, and project knowledge management. As a vehicle for such consolidation and standardization and to deal with the complexities of project teams, companies have started to establish a Project management office (PMO). The PMO, its key current functions, and the future role of the PMO in global projects, project management maturity, Web portals, and strategic planning are discussed further in this chapter.

The Project Management Office

The *program office* has been a common organizational construct in governments and companies for decades. A *program* is a group of projects managed in a coordinated way to obtain benefits not available from managing them individually (PMI, 2000). Program offices typically have some operational responsibility as well. Within a program office, the projects are all related in some way, typically advancing the goals of the overall program. For example, in the United States, a government agency would have program offices devoted to particular specific efforts generally funded by a specific source.

However, the *project management office* is an umbrella organization for all the projects in an organization and does not have any operational responsibility. The organization in question may be the entire corporation or one division, such as the IT division. In 2003, about two thirds of organizations with IT departments had PMOs, either inside or outside of the IT department (Hoffman, 2003). PMOs are sometimes called “project management support offices” (Powell & Young, 2004), and they are usually set up in one of two manners: with administrative authority or with a consultancy role. There may, however, be PMOs that have combinations of these basic roles. One definition of a PMO is that “a project office is a corporate management organization that evaluates, measures, and essentially enforces the performance and interaction of the implementation of IT project processes across a company’s business units” (Elkins, 2003). Whether a PMO is an administrative function or purely a consulting function, a common goal of the PMO is to foster the *discipline of project management* within the organization. As state in the *PMNetwork*: “The project office’s long-term vision is to transform project management knowledge throughout the organization so that it becomes part of the culture” (Block, 1999). According to Computerworld the roles of the PMO are as follows (Elkins, 2003):

- Eliminate project redundancies (across different departments or even divisions)
- Standardize the delivery process
- Access project ROI (both upon proposal and after project completion)
- Avoid the “latest and greatest” syndrome

CIO Magazine also itemized the roles for a PMO (Santosus, 2003):

- Project support: project management guidance
- Project management process/methodology
- Provide training
- Provide a “home” for project managers
- Provide internal consulting and mentoring
- Project management software tools (evaluate, select, configure, maintain)
- Project portfolio management

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