

## PM WORLD TODAY – VIEWPOINT – JANUARY 2012

## Does your company need a Project Council?

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On completion of projects, it is customary to convene a 'lessons learnt session', or conduct post implementation reviews. Both activities are regarded as an integral part of project closure, and in their simplest form examine whether or not the delivered outcomes are in accordance with the projects' objectives. The recommendations which accrue from such reviews are typically published in the form of reports and shared with specific audiences.

Usually, only a handful of people are privy to the contents of the report and benefit from its recommendations. Once these privileged few have finished with the report, it is either archived away, or ends up in a project knowledge base system, unlikely to see the light of day again. If the company has a number of projects that close in a similar fashion then the net benefit derived from such reports is negligible in the best of circumstances.

In most cases, the approach inadvertently enforces siloism and fails to prevent the wider audience from repeating mistakes. The aim of this article is describe an alternative mechanism that can really help companies benefit from the closure of their projects.

A better way to use project closure reports is to sift through the recommendations (from various projects) and then consolidate the recommendations into categories, which are then discussed and debated by a much wider audience. This audience should not be limited to the project teams, but must include shareholders, board members, executives, line managers, sponsors and project teams, quality assurance teams, vendors, regulators, environmentalists, customers, and other participants who are either beneficiaries of the project work, or affected by it. The centralised PMO should prepare the findings and recommendations, as well as the agenda for the meeting. The PMO should take care not to dilute, or conceal the veracity of the findings and recommendations collated from various project closure reports. Nor should the PMO employ prejudice, to make the finding and recommendations palatable for a particular group at the expense of other participants.

Nonetheless, the more difficult task is to establish a forum that can accommodate such a diverse audience, provide the meeting with structure and control and be able to contrive fruitful resolutions that leaves a lasting impact on improving the project delivery methodology. This requires the establishment of the Project Council that meets once or twice a year, to debate and adopt resolutions that encompass all aspects of project work. The aim of the Council is to improve the project experience for all the

stakeholders. The Chief Executive or the Project President should preside over the meeting. The resolutions adopted by the council should be divided into two categories; those that are binding on the company to implement; others that are non-binding and left at the discretion of CEO or Project President to enforce. The rules and regulations governing the Project Council together with the intended agenda should be made available to all the participants prior to the meeting.

The Project Council delivers several benefits. Firstly, it allows for the consolidated findings and recommendations to have a much wider exposure thereby reducing the probability of other project teams committing the same mistakes. Secondly, it encourages all stakeholders—large and small—to contribute in improving the overall project experience. Thirdly, the depth and breadth of public accountability vastly increases the likelihood for the findings and recommendations to be implemented in the form of resolutions adopted by the Project Council. Lastly, the diverse set of stakeholders ensures that no aspect of the project life-cycle is overlooked.

It can be argued that the edifice of the Project Council is cumbersome and slow in producing results. Nevertheless, the aforementioned benefits outweigh the anticipated tardy responsiveness of the Council. The Project Council would work best in large companies or organisations that have a large number of projects and programmes. In companies of smaller size, running fewer projects, a smaller scaled down version of the Project Council can also be implemented.

## About the Author

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**Abid Mustafa** is a seasoned professional with 18 years' experience in the IT and Telecommunications industry, specializing in enhancing corporate performance through the establishment and operation of executive PMOs and delivering tangible benefits through the management of complex transformation programs and projects. Currently, he is working as a director of corporate programs for a leading telecoms operator in the MENA region. Mr. Mustafa can be contacted at [corporatethinking@hotmail.com](mailto:corporatethinking@hotmail.com).