

5 Tips for Effective PMO Strategic Plans

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PMO Research Team

Initiatives:[Program and Portfolio Management Leaders](#)

As questions abound about the value of the PMO in digital business, PPM leaders must ensure they have effective strategic plans in place. Through conversations with hundreds of senior business and IT leaders and corporate strategists, we identified five tips for effective strategic planning.

Strategic planning is [a vital PMO activity](#), but many PMO leaders struggle to produce actionable strategic plans that further [business goals](#). The average business partner believes that two-thirds of strategic planning time is a waste, and only half think their company produces high-quality, growth-oriented plans. At a time when questions abound about the value and [role of the PMO in the digital business](#), PMO leaders must ensure they have [effective strategic plans](#) in place.

Through our conversations with hundreds of senior business and IT leaders as well as corporate strategists, we have identified five tips for effective strategic planning:

- 1. Go Strategic First, Then Tactical.** The best strategic plans drive toward a “north star” that has strategic implications for the enterprise, stretches the organization, yet is also attainable. This strategic focus sets the groundwork for execution at the tactical level, which includes the underlying goals, initiatives and actions of the plan.
- 2. Advance the Enterprise’s Strategy.** Other functional leaders can pull PMO strategic plans in different directions. PMO strategy must “cut through the noise” to focus on achieving enterprise goals, rather than business unit-level ones, and create transparency with [stakeholders](#) to gather buy-in for the plan. Leading PMOs engage business partners early on in the planning process and proactively strive to understand their priorities through [timely, structured interviews](#). They use the [PMO Charter Template](#) to help them assess the extent to which current PMO capabilities support business goals and build plans that take changing stakeholder expectations and external business conditions into account.
- 3. Communicate Assumptions.** Be aware of the assumptions being made in the planning process and make them explicit. This focuses the strategy on cause-and-effect relationships and guides others to question the strategy only insofar as underlying beliefs are not true. As a result, PMO leaders, PPM staff and stakeholders remain more committed to the validity of the strategy and are likely to only change their views if new evidence surfaces.
- 4. Iterate.** As the lines between the business and IT strategy blur and the pace of [change](#) intensifies, the strategic planning process must become much more iterative. Rather than

ignoring the complexities or attempting to oversimplify them, PMO leaders can think of strategic planning as moving from the “conceptual realm to the concrete realm” through a process of iterative prototyping. ¹

5. **Establish Accountability.** Without clear accountability for goals, PMO strategic plans are rarely enacted. Segment messages from the PMO strategy for specific [stakeholders](#) and explain key stakeholders’ accountabilities to drive strategy execution.

By putting these five tips into practice rather than simply updating last year’s plan, you’ll make sure you are creating clear goals with a tangible impact for both the PMO and the enterprise.

To help you and your team fast-cycle the strategic planning process, we have put together [a step-by-step guide](#) with tools and templates for establishing and communicating strategic objectives for the PMO.

Good luck with creating or updating your strategic plan. Don’t hesitate to contact your account management team if you need help with any of the steps above or if you would like to speak with one of our strategic planning experts.

Recommended by the Authors

- [“Build an Elevator Pitch for Your PMO”](#)

This tool will help you create a compelling and concise description of the value your PMO provides to the overall organization and communicate it to your key stakeholders and team.

- [“PMO Strategy on a Page”](#)

The best PMOs plan multiple years into the future to anticipate change. This customizable tool helps communicate a clear strategy that clarifies the PMO’s current state, future direction and path to get there.

- [“Ignition Guide to Strategic Planning for the PMO”](#)

This guide will help PMO leaders establish strategic objectives for their function, build a strategic plan and communicate the strategy to win support for execution.

- [“PMO Scorecard Builder”](#)

This tool will allow you to measure the performance and communicate the value of your PMO more effectively.

Endnotes

¹ ["Strategy Is Iterative Prototyping,"](#) Harvard Business Review.

Recommended For You

[Develop a Stakeholder Analysis for Effective PMO Communications](#)

[Toolkit: Estimating Initial PMO Staffing Requirements](#)

[Toolkit: Confirm the PMO Function With a PMO Charter](#)

[5 Books Your Peers Are Reading This Season](#)

[Customer-Focused Improvements of Internal PMO Services \(Progressive\)](#)

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