## **Gartner Research**

# Ignition Guide to Enabling Responsive Portfolio Reprioritization

PMO Research Team

22 February 2023



# Ignition Guide to Enabling Responsive Portfolio Reprioritization

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FOUNDATIONAL This research is reviewed periodically for accuracy.

PMO Research Team

Initiatives: Strategic Portfolio Management

With disruptions impacting organizations much more frequently, traditional calendar-based portfolio reprioritization processes are insufficient to stay ahead of changes. PMO leaders must enable their enterprise portfolio reprioritization processes to be responsive to changes as they occur.

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### **Overview**

### This guide will help you:

- Lay the groundwork to establish responsive portfolio reprioritization processes.
- Set goals for responsive portfolio reprioritization.
- Enable flexibility within the portfolios.
- Embed reprioritization processes within business leader workflows.
- Monitor progress on reprioritization objectives.

\*Time: 5-7 weeks

\*\*Effort: 4-6 FTEs

### Inputs:

- Characteristics of the current portfolio reprioritization processes (cadence, degree of stakeholder involvement, skills availability)
- Two to three portfolio managers as the core team to drive the creation of the new reprioritization process
- Feedback and data from product/development teams and business leaders on where current reprioritization processes have been insufficient
- List of current portfolio stakeholders

**ESSENTIAL** Steps marked as Essential have been identified as critical for the successful execution of this project.

<sup>\*</sup>Time refers to the total duration for completing the activity end-to-end.

<sup>\*\*</sup>Effort refers to the total number of FTEs required to execute the activity.

## **Steps**

Phase	Step
Plan	<ol> <li>Lay the groundwork to establish responsive portfolio reprioritization processes.</li> </ol>
Build	<ul><li>2. Set goals for the new reprioritization processes.</li><li>3. Enable flexibility within the portfolios.</li><li>4. Embed reprioritization processes within business leader workflows.</li></ul>
Monitor	5. Monitor progress on reprioritization objectives.

# Step 1 of 5: Lay the Groundwork to Establish Responsive Portfolio Reprioritization Processes

Prepare to establish portfolio reprioritization processes through early involvement and buy-in of key stakeholders.

## **Project Objectives**

Proj	ect Outcomes	Pro	blems Addressed
	Organizationwide ability to conduct off-cycle and ad hoc portfolio reprioritization with minimum disruptions to ongoing workflow Improved capability to pivot to	•	Cadence-based portfolio reprioritization (e.g., quarterly portfolio discussions) is insufficient for organizations to remain competitive in today's fast-changing markets.
	frequent disruptions — large and small — at an enterprise level  Continuous alignment between	•	Inability for organizations to flex resources and funding to enable off-cycle portfolio reprioritization.
	multiple portfolios at an organization level as well as between portfolios and enterprise strategy		A mismatch exists between enterprise and individual portfolio strategies.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

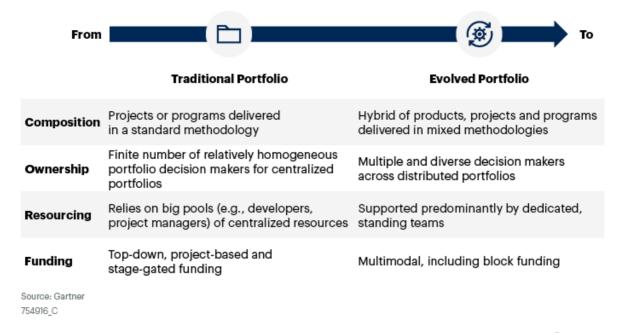
Role	Responsibilities
PMO leader (may also be an EPMO/SRO/DTO leader, depending on organization structure and responsibility allocation)	<ul> <li>Obtain early leadership buy-in and socialize the new responsive portfolio reprioritization processes by demonstrating that they overcome critical business challenges.</li> </ul>
	Ensure adoption of the new reprioritization mechanisms
Portfolio managers (core team)	<ul> <li>Coordinate with business leaders and other portfolio managers to set mechanisms that enable flexibility and alignment within and across the portfolio.</li> </ul>
C-suite	<ul> <li>Sign off on the new reprioritization processes and endorse changes top-down to enable quicker adoption.</li> </ul>
Business leaders	Provide portfolio managers with visibility into instances where previous reprioritization processes were insufficient and share any potential solutions.
	Provide feedback on new reprioritization processes.
Product/Program/Project managers and delivery teams	Provide ground-level perspectives (cross-cutting initiatives, waterfall, agile, delivery team) to the core team to increase likelihood of success of the new reprioritization process.

### **Before You Start**

Familiarize portfolio leaders with how portfolios have evolved with the adoption of new hybrid operating models. Facilitate self-reflection and/or hold a discussion with the core team working on the new portfolio reprioritization processes to build consensus on how portfolios have changed and the characteristics that make previous reprioritization processes redundant (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Characteristics of Traditional Portfolios vs. Evolved Portfolios

### Characteristics of Traditional Portfolios vs. Evolved Portfolios



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### **Advice From Peers**

"While portfolio prioritization goals haven't changed, the approach an organization takes to achieve them needs to evolve. For example, to achieve portfolio alignment to enterprise goals, we previously included large disruptions such as M&As in the annual plan. However, we now need to make sure that our portfolio inherently has flexible resources and funds to achieve the necessary alignment and flexibility to remain competitive."

Head of PMO, Large tech company

Sample Portfolios in a Product Model: Communication Tool

Plan to launch new portfolio reprioritization processes. Build stakeholder consensus to launch new portfolio reprioritization processes and ensure that all stakeholders understand the process, timelines, expected outcomes and their responsibilities.

### **Business Case to Enable Responsive Portfolio Reprioritization**

### Common Pitfalls and Keys to Success

Common Pitfalls	Keys to Success
Portfolio Reprioritization Is Limited to Being Reactive to Changes PMO leaders greatly focus their efforts on creating robust annual prioritization processes and limiting additional reprioritization efforts to an "as needed" basis in response to internal/external disruptions. This leads to organizations often having to play "catch-up" rather than staying ahead of changes.	Shift to Responsive Reprioritization With an increasing number of small disruptions, PMO leaders must set processes and help business leaders adopt mindsets that help them reprioritize when change occurs.
Over emphasis on Figuring Out the "Perfect Cadence" for Reprioritization PMO leaders often try to find the perfect cadence for reprioritization at their organization. This often leads to delays in responding to unanticipated changes.	Complement Cadence-Based Reprioritization With Off- Cycle Reprioritization PMO leaders should complement their reprioritization cadence (e.g., quarterly) with off-cycle changes by building inherent portfolio flexibility to shift resources and funds.
Reprioritization Occurs in Silos With the move to digital business, organizations provide senior executives with greater autonomy, and they choose to reprioritize in silos based on their business requirements. This leads to a lack of coordinated efforts across product teams.	Move to "Coordinated Autonomy"  While autonomy increases delivery speed, PMO leaders must facilitate coordination between product leaders through increased transparency across silos to avoid poor interdependency management, misaligned planning and rework.
Increased Focus on Improving Portfolio Flexibility Through Processes PMO leaders often try to overcome challenges with portfolio inflexibility by solely focusing on processes that increase flexibility. However, these processes are often insufficient as business/product leaders often continue to view initial allocation of resources or funds as permanent.	Shift Business Leader Mindsets for More Effective Reprioritization To enable flexibility within portfolios across the organization, PMO leaders should collaborate with business leaders to influence mindset shifts of leaders from cadence-based to responsive.

## Step 2 of 5: Set Goals for the New Reprioritization Processes

Get input from business-IT leaders and other relevant employee groups (project/program managers) to identify the objectives of the new portfolio reprioritization processes at your organization.

### **Tasks**

2.1 Identify portfolio subsections that need frequent reprioritization.

Work with the core team and other portfolio leaders to come up with a checklist of frequent disruptions experienced within their portfolios (see Flgure 2). Use this checklist to identify portfolios or portfolio subsections (e.g., transformative initiatives, digital foundations, customer service) that need to be reprioritized more frequently. Prioritize the parts of the portfolio that are frequently impacted by a larger number of disruptions when establishing practices on responsive reprioritization.

Figure 2: Sample Checklist of Portfolio Disruptions

## Sample Checklist of Portfolio Disruptions Illustrative Checklist of Portfolio Disruptions □ Digital Disruption □ Unpredictable Customer Behavior and Satisfaction □ Unanticipated/Increasing Costs □ Market Changes □ Team Changes — Workforce/Work From Home/Workplace Political, Social, Government, Regulatory Changes □ Changes in Supply Chain □ Changes in Manufacturing/Distribution Tip: Prioritize the new reprioritization process for portfolios that have experienced five or more disruptions in the past 12 months. Source: Gartner 754916 C

Gartner.

### **Disruption Assessment Template**

2.2 Surface stakeholder pain points with current reprioritization mechanisms.

Identify pain points within the current portfolio reprioritization mechanisms through a focus group consisting of eight to 12 portfolio managers, program managers and portfolio decision makers from different teams. Run the focus group, while ensuring that expectations are clear from the onset, discussions are open and honest, and participants feel comfortable during the discussion.

**Focus Group Discussion Guide** 

**Advice From Peers** 

"Most portfolios that are inherently inflexible at higher levels, even if they operate in products, are due to inflexibility of funding and resources across product silos. Identify what causes portfolio inflexibility at your organization to enable better off-cycle reprioritization."

Product category leader, Product engineering and manufacturing company

## 2.3 Define the objectives of the new portfolio reprioritization processes based on your organization's and industry's context.

Analyze the focus group discussion feedback to identify the areas that require most attention and use the information to define objectives for the portfolio reprioritization processes (see Table 1).

Table 1: Sample Objectives of Enabling Responsive Portfolio Reprioritization

Objective Type	Sample Objective of Enabling Responsive Portfolio Reprioritization
Flexible Resourcing	Create flexibility to redirect 5% of the total resources allocated across the portfolio.
Flexible Funding	Free up X% of funds from non-mission- critical product activities by Y date to reinvest in programs.
Cross-Portfolio Transparency	X% reduction in delays due to interdependencies.
Enterprise Mindset	Portfolio leaders work toward enterprise goals over portfolio goals.

Source: Gartner (September 2021)

How to Set Up for Success

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### Success Criteria Red Flags Focus groups are planned in advance Most parts of the portfolio to minimize disruptions in participant's demonstrate a high level of exposure workflow. to disruption in the last six to eight months. There are clear objectives that would have a positive impact on the Pain points identified have less to do organization, yet are achievable. with portfolio reprioritization processes and more to do with organization culture.

### Step 3 of 5: Enable Flexibility Within the Portfolios

Create portfolio flexibility by establishing practices that encourage off-cycle transferability of funds and resources across teams. Promote its adoption by driving business leader mindset shifts needed for it.

### **Tasks**

### 3.1 Create portfolio transparency across the enterprise.

Identify outcome and value metrics across product and nonproduct portfolios to assess progress against enterprise objectives. Track these metrics in a dashboard to drive annual resourcing conversations, influence reprioritization discussions and create performance visibility (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Sample Dashboard to Create Value Transparency

## Product Team Decisions Informed by Quarterly Portfolio Reviews



Source: Adapted From TD Ameritrade 714879\_C

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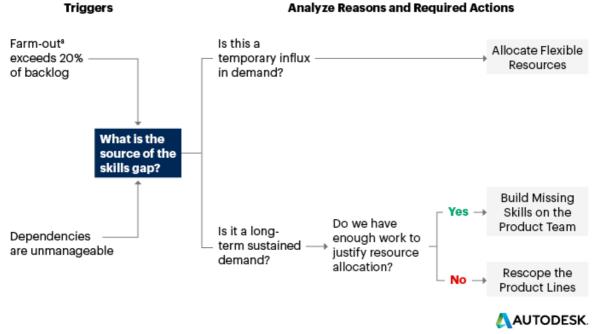
### Step-By-Step Guide to Enabling Portfolio Visibility

### 3.2 Create flexible resourcing plans.

Work with the core team to identify areas that need flexible resourcing (see Figure 4). Once ascertained, work with product leaders to create minimum viable standing teams within products that are complemented with flexible resources that demonstrate fungibility across products. For other areas that operate in projects, use a role-based resource map to identify roles and skills in demand.

Figure 4: Decision Tree for Flexible Resourcing

### **Decision Tree for Flexible Resourcing**



Source: Adapted From Autodesk

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### Role-Based Resource Map

### **Our Advice**

Maximizing product line stability and minimizing resource disruption, while also providing flexibility to reallocate resources is hard. To achieve this goal, organizations need to have two types of resources aligned to their portfolios:

- Fixed resources: These are dedicated to each product line to ensure stability and support the core capabilities.
- Flexible resources: These are allocated based on a product line's contribution to strategic priorities and can be reallocated.

Read the Autodesk Case Study linked in the Recommended by the Authors section for more details.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Autodesk uses a farm-out process to transfer infrequent work from a team that doesn't have the required resources to other product teams that have the necessary skills.

Figure 5 illustrates short- to long-term tactics that enable resource flexibility.

Figure 5: Tactics to Address Resource Gaps

#### **Tactics to Address Resource Gaps** Short-Term Long-Term Tactics Tactics Tactic Staff Training Hire Role Gig Economy Substitution Workers Augmentation Set up a training Use adiacent Use independent Use vendor Hire the role from the market. roles that have workers on an partners, program to upskill internal a similar set on-demand contractors or of skills or basis, including service providers resources. Description competencies freelancers, to staff the as substitutes contractors resource needs. to address the and temporary resource gap. workers. Time to < 1 week > 4 weeks > 4 weeks 6-8 weeks < 1 week Execute Best suited Best suited to Best suited Best suited to Best suited to to address to address address gaps in resolve gaps meet long-term in the skills and immediate gaps immediate. supplementary demands or the demand for in dedicated or short-term resources since competencies Suitability that are scarce supplementary and temporary one can easily emerging roles or of the Tactic resources. gaps in adjust resourcing in the niche skills (such supplementary to respond to organization as automation but are in engineer, data resources. changing priorities. high demand. scientist). Cannot be a Cannot be the permanent only tactic used solution when when addressing gaps in dedicated addressing gaps in dedicated resources since Key the knowledge of resources since Considerations the substituted the core capability may leave the resources may have other organization responsibilities. when the staff augmentation ends. Source: Gartner 754916\_C

Gartner.

### 3.3 Pilot a flexible funding model.

Conduct one-on-one discussions with C-suite and business leaders to determine their posture toward funding flexibility across product categories. Build an approach that enables you to reach the end goal of enabling off-cycle flexibility of funds across the enterprise.

### **Our Advice**

To enable flexible funding at your organization, you may establish one or more of the following practices:

- Provide options to business leaders to redirect funds to initiatives in other areas when shared benefits are identified.
- 2. Establish central venture capital funding for uncertain investments this way, business leaders do not have to allocate their run costs into experimental initiatives.
- 3. Set aside a pool of reserve funds centrally to allocate to new priorities midcycle.

Read the Johnson & Johnson Case Study linked in the Recommended by the Authors section for more details.

### 3.4 Promote flexible/responsive behaviors in portfolio decision makers.

Work with the core team of portfolio managers to identify a list of behaviors needed from business/product leaders to successfully enable a responsive reprioritization mindset. Build a manifesto out of these behaviors (see Figure 6) and socialize it during town halls and other meetings. Use the responses received in the focus group discussion, as well as any other channels of feedback you may have used to source information about current portfolio reprioritization processes.

Figure 6: Sample Manifesto to Enable Behavioral Shifts in Portfolio Decision Makers

### Sample Manifesto to Enable Behavioral Shifts in Portfolio Decision Makers



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### How to Set Up for Success

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Success Criteria	Red Flags
<ul> <li>Enterprise behaviors identified are aligned to strategies decided on for flexible funding and resourcing.</li> </ul>	It is difficult to achieve portfolio flexibility despite preexisting processes that aim to create off-cycle funds and resource flexibility.

## Step 4 of 5: Embed Reprioritization Processes Within Business Leader Workflows

Make off-cycle reprioritization a significant part of leadership responsibilities and organizational culture by establishing practices that make it part of business leader workflows.

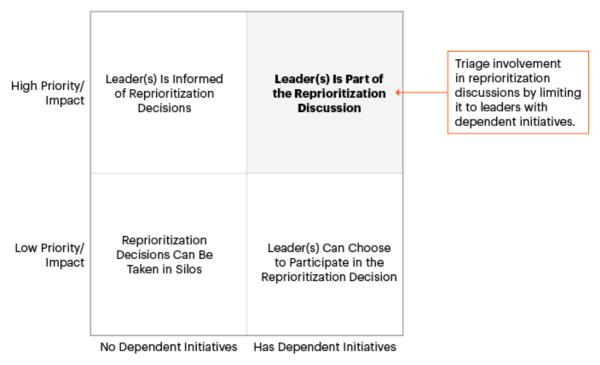
### 4.1 Triage stakeholder involvement in reprioritization conversations.

Work with the core team to identify when stakeholders do not need to be involved in reprioritization conversations (see Figure 7). By making the processes lightweight and ensuring that being involved is not time-consuming for leaders, organizations can ensure that leaders and delivery teams will be more actively involved in reprioritization conversations when they are needed.

Figure 7: Sample Framework to Identify Stakeholder Involvement During Reprioritization Conversations

## Sample Framework to Identify Stakeholder Involvement During Reprioritization Conversations

Illustrative



Source: Gartner 754916\_C

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### Advice From Peers

"Most often we used to tend toward top-down portfolio reprioritization. However, we saw a major improvement in terms of reduced interdependencies when we started capturing and using delivery team voice during portfolio review conversations"

Business leader, Large retail chain

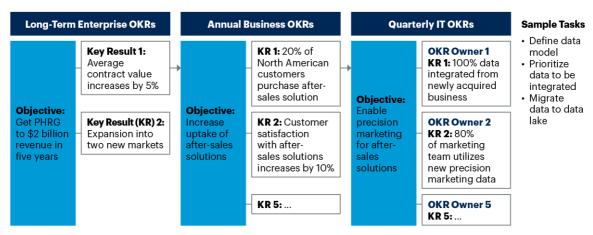
### 4.2 Cascade changes to delivery teams.

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Work with other business leaders to create a mechanism to cascade changes in enterprise strategy into performance metrics by which a team is measured (see Figure 8). This allows delivery teams to have more visibility into organizational goals and expectations.

Figure 8: Sample Tactic to Cascade Changes in Enterprise Strategy

## A Cascade of PHRG's Objectives and Key Results Illustrative



Source: Adapted From Power Home Remodeling Group 718045 C

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### 4.3 Establish triggers for off-cycle reprioritization.

Conduct a discussion with business leaders to identify triggers/leading indicators that would help anticipate when their portfolio needs off-cycle portfolio reprioritization. This would enable portfolio owners to reprioritize their portfolio in time and avoid misaligned goals.

### Sample Triggers for Off-Cycle Reprioritization

### 4.4 Empower teams to self-correct misalignments.

Establish light, non-time-consuming processes that help business leaders and delivery teams build a habit of diagnosing and self-correcting misalignments between team goals and enterprise objectives.

Tips to Identify and Correct Misalignments

How to Set Up for Success

Success Criteria	Red Flags
<ul> <li>Changes can be cascaded in the form of performance objectives.</li> <li>Teams adopt mechanisms to self-correct misalignments.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Triggers do not act as leading indicators for when portfolio reprioritization needs to occur.</li> </ul>

## Step 5 of 5: Monitor Progress on Reprioritization Objectives

Monitor the effectiveness of the portfolio reprioritization processes after one to two iterations of portfolio reprioritization to check whether current objectives, such as portfolio flexibility, alignment to enterprise outcomes and identifying opportunities for improvement, need to be tweaked.

### **Review Your Performance**

Gather feedback from stakeholders to continuously improve the portfolio reprioritization processes and continue to make them relevant to the organization's changing priorities.

### **Keys to Continued Success**

Key	Description
Maintain a constructive dialogue with business leaders.	Beyond formal feedback, assess the temperament toward the new processes to overcome any adoption challenges sooner rather than later.
Track the impact of disruptions.	While disruptions will always create changes in strategic plans, their effect on portfolio alignment to strategy should decrease.
Focus on off-cycle portfolio reprioritization.	Don't try to overengineer your process to get a perfect cadence to reprioritize the portfolio. Instead, look for a cadence that is suitable to most of the portfolio to carry out effective portfolio review conversations and complement it with the new flexible and off- cycle practices.

## **Recommended by the Authors**

Responsive Portfolio Management Decisions for Business Leaders (ElevenShift\*)

Infographic: Debunking Five Myths of Effective Portfolio Management

Effective Strategic Portfolio Management Drives Better Business Outcomes

Case Study: Fund Through Uncertainty to Drive Innovation (Johnson & Johnson)

Case Study: Providing Portfolio Visibility in Product Management (TD Ameritrade)

Case Study: Responsive Delivery Resourcing and Funding in Product Lines (Autodesk)

Ignition Guide to Conducting Portfolio Review Discussions

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Phase	Step
Plan	<ol> <li>Lay the groundwork to establish responsive portfolio reprioritization processes.</li> </ol>
Build	<ol> <li>Set goals for the new reprioritization processes.</li> <li>Enable flexibility within the portfolios.</li> <li>Embed reprioritization processes within business leader workflows.</li> </ol>
Monitor	5. Monitor progress on reprioritization objectives.

Project Outcomes	Problems Addressed
Organizationwide ability to conduct off-cycle and ad hoc portfolio reprioritization with minimum disruptions to ongoing workflow	<ul> <li>Cadence-based portfolio reprioritization (e.g., quarterly portfolio discussions) is insufficient for organizations to remain competitive in</li> </ul>
■ Improved capability to pivot to frequent disruptions — large and small — at an enterprise level	today's fast-changing markets.  Inability for organizations to flex resources and funding to enable off-cycle
Continuous alignment between multiple portfolios at an organization level as well as between portfolios and enterprise strategy	portfolio reprioritization.  A mismatch exists between enterprise and individual portfolio strategies.

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Role	Responsibilities
PMO leader (may also be an EPMO/SRO/DTO leader, depending on organization structure and responsibility allocation)	<ul> <li>Obtain early leadership buy-in and socialize the new responsive portfolio reprioritization processes by demonstrating that they overcome critical business challenges.</li> </ul>
	Ensure adoption of the new reprioritization mechanisms.
Portfolio managers (core team)	Coordinate with business leaders and other portfolio managers to set mechanisms that enable flexibility and alignment within and across the portfolio.
C-suite	Sign off on the new reprioritization processes and endorse changes top- down to enable quicker adoption.
Business leaders	Provide portfolio managers with visibility into instances where previous reprioritization processes were insufficient and share any potential solutions.
	Provide feedback on new reprioritization processes.
Product/Program/Project managers and delivery teams	<ul> <li>Provide ground-level perspectives (cross-cutting initiatives, waterfall, agile, delivery team) to the core team to increase likelihood of success of the</li> </ul>

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new reprioritization process.

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Common Pitfalls	Keys to Success
Portfolio Reprioritization Is Limited to Being Reactive to Changes PMO leaders greatly focus their efforts on creating robust annual prioritization processes and limiting additional reprioritization efforts to an "as needed" basis in response to internal/external disruptions. This leads to organizations often having to play "catch-up" rather than staying ahead of changes.	Shift to Responsive Reprioritization With an increasing number of small disruptions, PMO leaders must set processes and help business leaders adopt mindsets that help them reprioritize when change occurs.
Overemphasis on Figuring Out the "Perfect Cadence" for Reprioritization PMO leaders often try to find the perfect cadence for reprioritization at their organization. This often leads to delays in responding to unanticipated changes.	Complement Cadence-Based Reprioritization With Off-Cycle Reprioritization PMO leaders should complement their reprioritization cadence (e.g., quarterly) with off-cycle changes by building inherent portfolio flexibility to shift resources and funds.
Reprioritization Occurs in Silos With the move to digital business, organizations provide senior executives with greater autonomy, and they choose to reprioritize in silos based on their business requirements. This leads to a lack of coordinated efforts across product teams.	Move to "Coordinated Autonomy"  While autonomy increases delivery speed, PMO leaders must facilitate coordination between product leaders through increased transparency across silos to avoid poor interdependency management, misaligned planning and rework.
Increased Focus on Improving Portfolio Flexibility Through Processes PMO leaders often try to overcome challenges with portfolio inflexibility by solely focusing on processes that increase flexibility. However, these processes are often insufficient as business/product leaders often continue to view initial allocation of resources or funds as permanent.	Shift Business Leader Mindsets for More Effective Reprioritization To enable flexibility within portfolios across the organization, PMO leaders should collaborate with business leaders to influence mindset shifts of leaders from cadence-based to responsive.

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Cross-Portfolio Transparency	X% reduction in delays due to interdependencies.
Enterprise Mindset	Portfolio leaders work toward enterprise goals over portfolio goals.

Source: Gartner (September 2021)

Success Criteria	Red Flags
Focus groups are planned in advance to minimize disruptions in	Most parts of the portfolio demonstrate a high level of exposure to
participant's workflow.	disruption in the last six to eight months.
There are clear objectives that would have a positive impact on the	Pain points identified have less to do with portfolio reprioritization
organization, yet are achievable.	processes and more to do with organization culture.

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Success Criteria	Red Flags
Enterprise behaviors identified are aligned to strategies decided on for	It is difficult to achieve portfolio flexibility despite preexisting processes
flexible funding and resourcing.	that aim to create off-cycle funds and resource flexibility.

Success Criteria	Red Flags
<ul> <li>Changes can be cascaded in the form of performance objectives.</li> <li>Teams adopt mechanisms to self-correct misalignments.</li> </ul>	Triggers do not act as leading indicators for when portfolio reprioritization needs to occur.

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Key	Description
Maintain a constructive dialogue with business leaders.	Beyond formal feedback, assess the temperament toward the new processes to overcome any adoption challenges sooner rather than later.
Track the impact of disruptions.	While disruptions will always create changes in strategic plans, their effect on portfolio alignment to strategy should decrease.
Focus on off-cycle portfolio reprioritization.	Don't try to overengineer your process to get a perfect cadence to reprioritize the portfolio. Instead, look for a cadence that is suitable to most of the portfolio to carry out effective portfolio review conversations and complement it with the new flexible and off-cycle practices.

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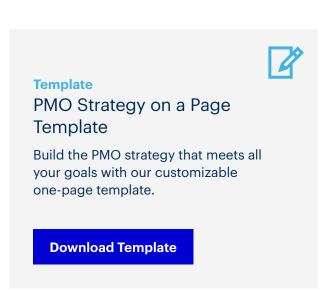
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