Leadership in the Project Office – Action Research Academic Report

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Executive Summary

Where does leadership exist in the Program Management Office (PMO) and is there a place for it; is the main topic of this action research report. This report explores the softer side of the internal department that is charged with the smooth running of projects and offers four hypotheses in bringing some understanding to the topic.

Action Research follows an academic process to achieve greater understanding of the finer details of an issue from a broad knowledge. The structure of this document is academic and utilises the action research model of McMurray-Ryan – Tier 2 and the natural systematic and continuous loops of the Stringer model have been combined for greater detail through the journey of this collaborative data collection and analysis.

Data was gathered together through emailed questionnaires and verbal discussions. The thinking and results from this process in the first phase (loop) of data collection shaped the action and development of the second phase (loop). While the topic was generally clear, other unexpected themes emerged through the process of the research including the theory of internal bordered leadership and the real threat of internal conflict stagnating organisation. As these new channels of thought materialised, a third loop of discovery could have been taken and to build another report on the PMO.

Action Research Brief

The design, construction, revitalisation and implementation of the Project Management Office (PMO) come about in many forms and are typically different from one organisation to the next. It is primarily designs as a centre for project excellence in facilitating the organisations short and long term goals.

This report uses the academic term of '*action research*'. This defines the methodology and theory in the gathering and analysis of data over multiple research phases (loops) to drill down to an issue or question from a higher level. It seeks to get to the 'right question'. The research also extends to bring in the collaborative thinking of seven professionals in business analysis and project management. This report explores a department-level skill that cannot be clearly quantified without subjectivity. The point of this report is to define *where leadership resides* and *if there is a place for it in internal organisational departments, in particular in the Project Management Office.*

PMO Brief

Project management and PMOs are gradually becoming a mandatory requirement in many organisations. Project management techniques and formal academic education is well supported in industry with many institutions offering numerous tertiary qualifications in Project Management.

One support network in project management is the world-wide organisation of the Project Management Institute (PMI), who offer regular international congress meetings, monthly chapter events, publications, education and training in their proprietary and internationally accepted standard in project management, the Project Management Professional (PMP). Another like organisation based in Australia is the Institute of Project Management (AIPM) who also offers similar services, professional qualifications and qualities.

Depending upon the needs of the organisation, a PMO takes a '*top-down*' or *'bottom-up'* perspective. Typically, a *top-down* view is from a senior or Portfolio management level (see Fig1) where the oversight and management of projects within a specified program is facilitated. A *bottom-up* perspective builds specific project tools and work level functions to achieve a particular project service.
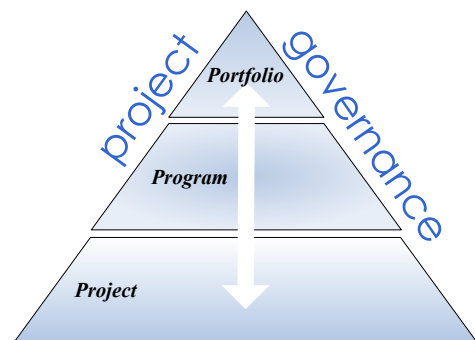
Fig1.

A PMO can come in the form of a separate office, an internal department, a group or a single individual. General responsibilities include the establishment, maintenance, measure and enforcement of project management methodology, processes, procedures, tools, templates and unified standards ratified and supported by the organisation.

It can be tailored to an organisation's specific needs or approach, and will facilitate managing and enabling of consistent delivery of programs & projects with a focus on achieving business strategic objectives. With the development of project management methodologies, large amount of information are generated with the potential to impact future organisation direction. This information forms part of the organisations intellectual property (IP) and is managed through a PMO. Roles and responsibilities differ in each zone. Kendall and Rollins (2003) and PMI (2006) both suggest that they exist typically as;

▶ *A Portfolio Manager shall* develop the PMO value proposition and implementation, obtains, provide executive support for programs, ensure programs of work are aligned to strategic intent, ensures the 'right' projects are accepted and ensure risk and benefits management remain in the good graces of the organisation.

► *A Program Manager shall d*efine project resources, provides governance of programs of work, allocates resources, provides coaching and mentoring services to the project management community, train project managers, facilitates communications and information sharing, supports project rescues, promote common tools and templates.

► *A Project Manager shall* coordinate individual projects, manage financial requirements, track costs, regularly status the project, work autonomously and in project teams, manager project stakeholders, organise planning schedules and timelines, use ratified project tools and templates and maintain operational standards.

These project roles of can are also interchangeable with existing business roles with the Executive Board, C-level and line management and task administration respectively.

A typical PMO is primarily designed to enhance organisational wealth from a project perspective. The sometimes mechanistic framework is generally described as a set of standard tools, practices and measuring and monitoring devices. Rarely does a Program Office address the underlying interpersonal needs of those internal to the PMO. It is the ambition of the learning organisation to have a 'living' PMO that evolves the business with change, builds confidence as an internal project governing body and promotes leadership at all project levels.

Action Research Conceptual Framework

The process of data collection and analysis that was utilised in this report was based around the LOOK – THINK – ACT continuous loop model by Stringer (Fig2), in conjunction with the elements of the McMurray-Ryan Action Research Model – Tier 2 (Fig3). This research methodology was combined in this report to enable focus on the greater detail offered by McMurray-Ryan with the natural systematic loops of the Stringer model.

The purpose of this style of research is essentially to funnel and fine-tune thinking of a broad topic into a smaller one. Often it takes the culmination of the knowledge, experience and aptitude of a focus group to be able to firstly define the issue, then to offer a structured ways of addressing it.
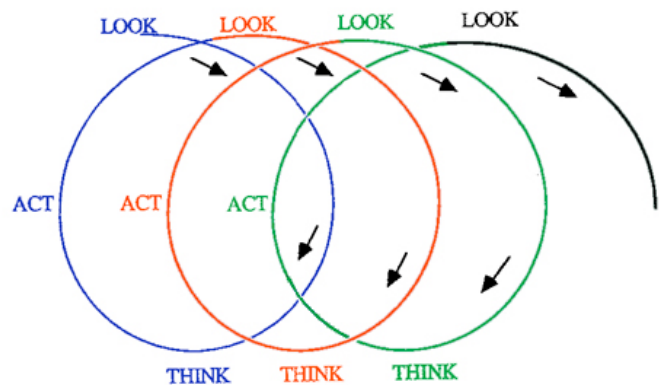

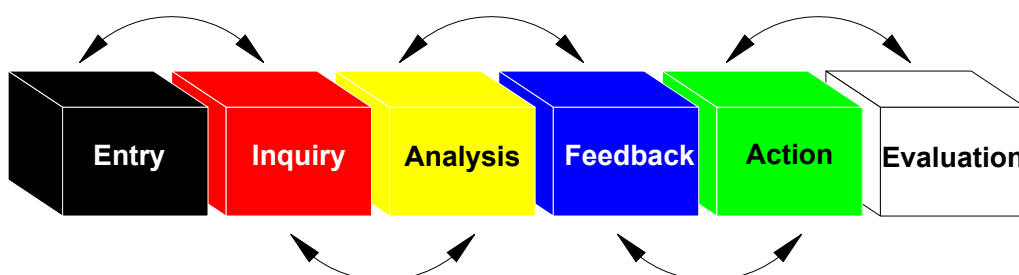**Fig1: Stringer's Action Research Integrating Spiral**

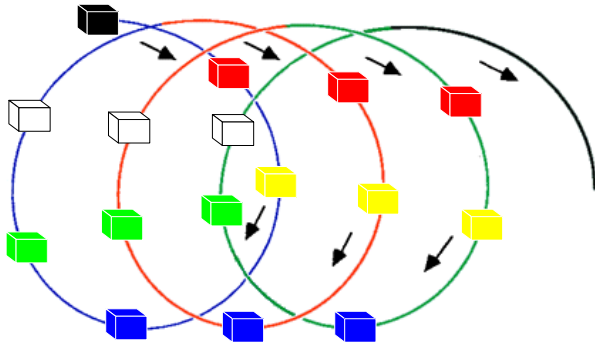**Fig2: McMurray-Ryan Action Research Model - Tier 2**

Fig4: The McMurray-Ryan - Stringer Framework

The process of continually looking at the issue, thinking and planning about how to resolve it, then actioning that plan, fit well with the tasks of *Entry, Inquiry, Analysis, Feedback, Action* and *Evaluation*. These six tasks (excluding *Entry* for the repeated loops) can be drawn around each loop of the Stringer model, merging like thoughts in a consistent detailed manner, forming the framework for data collection and analysis (Fig4).

The First Loop

Entry
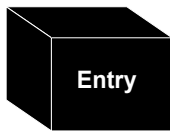
This first stage comprised a reflection on my experience as a project practitioner and the exposure I have had with PMOs and thinking of an issue that faced them all.

Inquiry

By the Inquiry phase, I had a broad idea of what I wanted to research but was unclear on the actual topic. I extended my research externally into PMOs that were running in business using tools like the Internet and company magazines to help narrow the field of research.

Analysis

With the information gathered from the Internet, Project Management journals, magazines and external professionals, I could see patterns and common problems that faced the issue. It became apparent that most PMOs were about the tools and templates and did not speak of leadership.

Feedback

To provide feedback and clarity of the issue, I organised an internal Small Focus Group (SFG) of Project Managers to assist in further defining the scope I had chosen as one worthy of analysis. Over the next hour I presented my findings and collaboratively decided that the knowledge gained from researching this topic would benefit the organisation also.
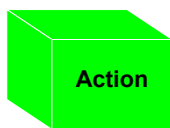
Action

This Feedback stage meeting became the 'action' for this Action phase of research. The data generated from the SFG was invaluable as general patterns formed and the topic of leadership at a departmental level, particularly in a PMO was agreed.

Evaluation

At the end of the first loop, I had gathered enough information to move ahead into further exploring the issue that was now clear.

The Second Loop

Inquiry

Looking at the data gathered, I sought to define other issues that were not immediately obvious. I defined aspects of leadership in the different levels of organisation including promotion, essential skills of project and program managers and potential challenges between organisation and self.

Analysis

I concentrated on the ideas offered by the SFG and developed a questionnaire using the interview techniques proposed by Minichiello et al (1991) to further break down thinking. This consisted of five narrative questions and was sent out by email. I received seven replies in total, four from Project Managers and three from Business Analysts.

Feedback

The responses were interesting and diverse. I felt I had gained a powerful upper hand and well on the way to achieving a greater understanding the topic. They became my Large Focus Group (LFG) who I presented a summary of the data derived from the questionnaire responses (app D) and looked for closing comments and interpretations.
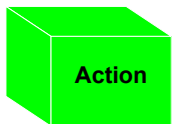
Action

This final data was to form the basis for my action research report analysis, as I use the collaborative researched data to explore the issue in further depth. The 'action' in this case is this report.

Evaluation

This second evaluation phase (written post analysis) has shown the effectiveness of each action stage. The person learning I have gained from this research will most valuable in my working environment not only for myself but for other around me as I leverage this knowledge in business.

Analysis

During the life of Winston Churchill (1874 -1965), he stated "We shape our environments and then our environments shape us". Put into the context of this report, this quote can be translated as leadership that is internal to the PMO is shaped by the broader organisation and cannot reach its full potential without this direction from above. Visa-versa, the broader organisation will struggle to achieve their objectives without strong internal leadership from the Projects Office.

Information gathered from the questionnaires in essence reaffirmed this hypothesis. The concept of buying and selling vision was integral in the balance of power between organisation and the PMO. After the business has defined their mission, an arm must exist for them to reach it. The PMO can act as this arm providing direction as in Clawson (2003) model for Organisational Charters (fig4).

Fig3: Derived from Clawson's Organisational Charters

Clawson goes on to state that short term goals make for weak vision statements. As the definition of a project is 'a temporary venture' (PMI 2004), this statement does not support project managers as leaders in vision. However project management is not all the PMO is. Its mandate is to look at life from a portfolio and program point of view, a top-down perspective as shown in the project governance pyramid (fig1). It has been suggested that an executing leader be positioned outside the PMO group providing guidance and direction, while a manager should work inside controlling operations. This strategy would allow the PMO to have a strong presence at the executive level of organisation along with the long established and generally characteristic departments of Finance, Operations, Production, Marketing and Sales.

Although this option would place an advocate of business projects at an executive level, it could further drive the split between a leader and a manager and with more people involved in driving the PMO, conflict can arise. De Wit and Meyer (2003) suggest that top management should take charge of their organisation and growing misfit between them and the environment is a result of leadership failure. Healthy organisations are able to find equilibrium between top level desire and departmental level (PMO) capability. They back a culture of growth through change and manage hostility, business inflexibility and difference of opinion as they happen. This change comes from all levels of the business resulting in a ripple effect and eventually benefiting the wider organisation. The PMO in a project-centric organisation, expand through the successful nature of their various project ventures. They count on the holistic strength of the leaders and managers alike to get them there. It is the responsibility of senior management to promote this culture.

Paraphrasing the CEO of PMI, Greg Balestrero, he states "leadership is a core competency of both project managers and executives and those executives are driven in producing what project managers' promise" (Leadership, Project Management Annual 2006). Good leadership and management skills go hand in hand but in opposition to this quote, it is not essential. In the mechanistic environment of the PMO, leadership can give way to the management of task, timelines and resources. Clawson uses the metaphor of Distributed Leadership (fig5) in presenting the theory of the team in harmonious balance with concentration on task, not on who is the leader or manager of the group.
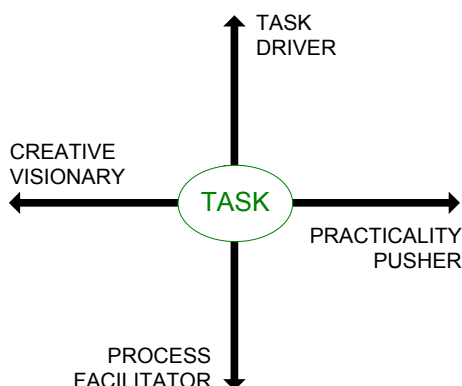
This theory loosely follows the thinking of the Stephen Kemmis article (2000) titled leadership: less is more; where leadership consists of responding to the 'spirit of the people'. Distributed Leadership can offer much value to team dynamics in the right environment.

Fig4: Clawson's Essential Roles in Effective Groups

The collected data suggests that an authoritative manager of a PMO needs to exist and have the leadership qualities to promote unity change in the group and a focus on future direction. These leadership qualities exist outside the PMO as senior management keep the business unit running smoothly. This balance between what the business wants and what the PMO wants remains in equilibrium as long as the visions are accepted and constant with all stakeholders. A PMO must act as a conduit between existing internal and external projections of leadership and align where possible. Strong leadership emanating from the PMO can overcome external organisational deficiencies and inspire internal staff to achieve expectations. In working in business units under executive management, wall and boundaries can form between the business unit to which they belong and the wider organisation to a point where the troubles of the company are invisible to departmental staff. Retreating internally, departs naturally gravitate to one who can improve *their* environment, one who inspires confidence within the people and offer innovative leadership to meet need.

This is where an unofficial leader is anointed and given a chance for internal career progression. The business must recognise this with the support of senior management in adopting change and to instil a culture of continuous improvement within middle management, which is where most PMOs reside. While the skills of project and program managers are essentially with the smooth running of projects, proficiencies in leading teams, managing knowledge and driving change from inside a PMO to benefit the broader organisation offer the chance of admiration for staff and promotion to senior management as long as the business support this professional development.

In a multinational, multicultural study by Prakash Prabhakar (2005) the idea of leadership switching between project leadership focus and people focus is floated. This is a left-brain, right-brain mentality where the leader operates effectively in balancing the need of the project to the needs of the project staff. It is hypothesised that autocratic project leadership is most effectual in switching styles giving clear distinctions between the two hard and soft skills. This data reinforces the ideal that managers of project must also be attribute traits of leadership.

This style of leadership can occur at any level of the organisation. Unanimous support was presented in the questionnaire responses that it is vital that leadership exist inside the PMO. Predominantly this comes from the portfolio or enterprise level to achieve its purpose. Like any strategic business unit, data suggested that this purpose is only achievable with one single individual acting as the group leader.

Further Scope and the Third Loop

Through this analysis of departmental sized leadership, various topical themes emerged. A point of clarity for this paper was only revealed on conclusion of the evaluation phase in the data collected.

The value proposition of the PMO is to enable the broader organisation to achieve its goals through a project-centric environment. In the same way, leadership must exist within the space of the PMO to innovate personal and maintain practices. The PMO absorbs enterprise level strategy, leadership then forms and develops sub-strategies as 'bordered' (department internal) leadership works to achieve wider organisational objectives. PMOs are still relatively new in playing their part in organisational dynamics. Due to this, bordered leadership can act as a save haven and shield PMO leaders from ingrained departmental politics of the other business units, allowing them to concentrate on achieving their key performance indicators unhindered and unaffected.

The research gathered and analysed in this report can be of value to organisations that run or desire to implement a PMO. Consideration must be given to the stakeholders who will ultimately be a part of this new methodology.

Defining leadership at a departmental level reinforces the fact that organisations need to empower their business units to aspire in reaching high levels of leadership quality in turn building currency for the enterprise.

While operational control gives leaders and managers influence over activities within the PMO, strategic control provides authority over changes to the organisational way of life. This is a power all PMO leaders must harness so they may steer the development of their department in the same direction as their company's.

In the same way, the benefits of leadership in a PMO can only be fruitful if the strategic intent of the organisation in aligned with that of the PMO. This is essentially the reason why an organisation would implement a PMO, to help them reach their goals, but this can come unstuck as leaders clash. Conflict can occur if authoritarian leaders have different ideas on where the organisation should be heading. Swift resolution is imperative to ensure the ongoing viability of the PMO as it and the people within it who are the first into the spotlight where the organisation fails at achieving their vision, one that can always be directly related back to project performance.

This line of thinking could be explored via another Look – Think – Act (Stringer) loop of discovery in analysing the effect on company morale, internal dynamics and the broader organisation as leaders internal and external to the PMO colliding head to head in disagreement with company strategic direction. This is the unending nature of Action Research; continual loops of discovery that inspire on-going questions and thought with each loop raising questions and direction for the next. What's the next loop for you?

Key Findings Summary
1. Organisation shapes leadership and their departments deliver it
2. Must be a common ground between desire and capability
3. 'Bordered' Leadership in a PMO can be a saving grace
4. PMO strategy has a 'ripple effect' on organisation
5. Leadership exists at every level of organisation

Final Hypothesis:
1. Leadership and management are essential skill sets to have in providing the best chance of PMO success.
2. Leaders in the PMO must be aligned to the priorities and strategic intent of the broader organisation to exist in harmony.
3. Organisations must support PMOs with the same respect and consideration of that of other traditional business units (i.e. Finance).
4. Senior management must recognise outstanding leadership in the PMO and promote and reward it respectfully.

Appendix A: Raw Interview Data

Interviewee Profile 1	**Position: Project Manager**
Industry experience: Engineering, ICT	**Work experience in a PMO: Yes**

1. What is your definition and impression of leadership in and around a PMO in organisation? Describe your experiences, good and / or bad

I have not been in a work environment where a formal PMO has existed. Having said that I have an opinion regarding definition and impression of leadership in and around a PMO.

In my mind the definition of leadership around a PMO is the delivery of capability to an organisation based upon a vision of what the future should look like. This would require senior management to strategise and communicate future objectives to the PMO who must "buy" the vision before they can successfully lead the organisation through the changes needed to realise the vision. Failure to "buy" the vision will make it very difficult to deliver the desired outcomes as the PMO encounters the inevitable resistance that comes with change.

Once the PMO has the vision they become advocates for change and should as part of leadership sell the vision and attempt to get organisational support for change. Importantly, senior management should constantly be seen to support the PMO and its work. The PMOs leadership responsibility extends beyond the projects and capabilities delivered to actually integrating changes into the day-to-day operations of the organisation.

I have worked in organisations where a number of projects where undertaken in support of a strategy (informal PMO). The sponsor of the changes failed to provide convincing arguments for change. Staff would say all the right things to the sponsor but actually act as saboteurs in the actual projects.

2. Greg Balestrero, PMI CEO, says leadership is a core competency of both project managers and executives. Is good leadership a fundamental attribute in a successful project manager? Discuss.

Good leadership may be an attribute of a successful project manager depending on the context. For example: in the engineering design field, it is usually fairly unambiguous as to what is being designed so the PM acts more of manager to ensure appropriate designs and checks are made. They are relayed periodically to the client who may comment and changes are made. The need for good leadership is somewhat limited. I would suggest that good leadership is an attribute of a successful project manager particularly when the project manager operates in an ambiguous environment. The greater the ambiguity the greater the need for leadership skills.

3. In your opinion, where does leadership exist in organisation? Internally to the PMO or imposed from the broader organisation, or both. Define differences.

Ultimate leadership must exist in the broader organisation before it can successfully operate within the PMO. Leadership may exist in the PMO but once obstacles are encountered that can not be overcome by the PMO, senior management input may be required. If there is no leadership shown by senior management in these circumstances the PMO will inevitably fail or never reach its potential to be change agents.

4. Can performing in a PMO environment facilitate progression to roles of greater authority and leadership? If so, how? If not, why?

Yes. PMOs and their projects are fundamentally about change. Change management is predominately about people and how they deal and interact with changing systems. A person's ability to successfully manage change in an organisation is invaluable, so as long as people recognise the value of being able to successfully lead change, greater levels of authority and leadership should be the reward.

5. Please provide open comments on leadership in the PMO. Is there a place for it?

Anointed leadership in the PMO is vital to the success of projects when successful projects are defined as integrating project delivered capabilities into the greater organisation.

Absolutely, leadership has a place in the PMO.

Interviewee Profile 2	Position: Project Manager
Industry experience: Aerospace Engineering	Work experience in a PMO: Yes

1. What is your definition and impression of leadership in and around a PMO in organisation? Describe your experiences, good and / or bad.

Outside of a PMO there should be an executive who effectively "sponsors" the PMO and has ultimate accountability for the successful operation of it. This person provides leadership for the PMO in terms of providing higher level direction for it and a vision of what it should be.

Within a PMO there should be a PMO manager (which may be shared among a couple of people for smaller PMOs) whose role is to ensure the PMO is functioning correctly and doing what it needs to do. This person provides the leadership for the PMO as they are responsible for driving things within it and motivating PMO personnel.

2. Greg Balestrero, PMI CEO, says leadership is a core competency of both project managers and executives. Is good leadership a fundamental attribute in a successful project manager? Discuss.

What would he know about project management? But seriously… good leadership is typically a fundamental attribute in a successful project manager. As is good management skills.

Good leadership AND good management are probably not essential requirements for a successful project manager but the chances of project success are far higher if the PM has both. If the PM has one but not the other then the project may still be successful (due to a skilled and effective project team for example). But a PM without either is unlikely to be successful.

3. In your opinion, where does leadership exist in organisation? Internally to the PMO or imposed from the broader organisation, or both. Define differences.

Both. See answer to question 1.

4. Can performing in a PMO environment facilitate progression to roles of greater authority and leadership? If so, how? If not, why?

Yes. Management would recognise the individual's abilities and could therefore promote them into other roles outside the PMO (such as into a PM role, or into a corporate risk management role if they showed good abilities in program risk management for example).

5. Please provide open comments on leadership in the PMO. Is there a place for it?

Yes there is a place for it and the PMO is far more likely to be successful if it exists internally and externally to the PMO (as discussed at question 1).

Interviewee Profile 3	**Position: Business Analyst**
Industry experience: Telecommunication	**Work experience in a PMO: No**

1. What is your definition and impression of leadership in and around a PMO in organisation? Describe your experiences, good and / or bad.

I define leadership in the PMO context as the facilitation of "Best Practice" approaches within the organisation by establishing standards and metrics for measuring how well standards are being met. Performance of the various parts of the organisation can then be monitored and actions taken to address any short comings.

Implementing a PMO over a large organisation is very difficult as it requires "buy in" from everyone if it is to work. If this is not the case it becomes rhetoric with little to show for it. Having said this even if a PMO does not meet all of its charter significant benefits can still be achieved. The adoption of a standard file structure and naming conventions for the storage of all project documents can be very effective at improving Project Management across an organisation. People moving into a new area of the organisation no longer took so long to become familiar with where things are stored and what they are called.

PMO's fail when insufficient work is done when identifying what standards to adopt which standards can be applied so that they are appropriate to the area of the organisation adopting them. It is no good devising a standard for work done in one are then assuming the same approach is valid for another without first doing some investigation. Too often I have seen the "baby thrown out with the bath water" when processes that were working extremely well in an area were thrown out in order to adopt a standard decreed from on high. Instead a thorough analysis of processes currently in use across the organisation should be done so that things that work well can be harvested for broader use.

2. Greg Balestrero, PMI CEO, says leadership is a core competency of both project managers and executives. Is good leadership a fundamental attribute in a successful project manager? Discuss.

Leadership is to broader a term to be characterised as simply good or bad. There are broadly three styles of leadership:
- Dictatorial
- Inclusive/Collaborative
- Detached/ Anarchic

Each of these styles of leadership can be effective depending on the nature of the project.
The dictatorial approach works best when time and resources are short and any decision is better than no decision as long as it is made quickly. This approach can also lead to projects failing spectacularly (but at least it happens quickly).
The Inclusive Collaborative approach works well where brain storming and generation of innovative ideas is a priority. The old adage of many heads being better than one comes forward when there are problems to be addressed.
The detached and anarchic approach tends to be adopted where teams are made up of "leaders" in their own skill areas. Such teams may work most effectively if active management is minimised provided adequate lines of communication are maintained. Team morale may take precedence over adherence to rules and procedures.

3. In your opinion, where does leadership exist in organisation? Internally to the PMO or imposed from the broader organisation, or both. Define differences.

Leadership is characterised by a capacity to make decisions and then act on them If the PMO is operating to its charter then it should provide leadership. The broader organisation should provide the feedback that informs that leadership. If this occurs the PMO has more chance of providing the sort of leadership that will be accepted and be of most use to the organisation as a whole.

4. Can performing in a PMO environment facilitate progression to roles of greater authority and leadership? If so, how? If not, why?

In order to attain authority it is necessary to be authoritative. To be authoritative you need to acquire knowledge. This being the case it could be argued that performing in a PMO environment does facilitate progression to roles of greater authority as a PMO is all about managing an organisations greatest asset – corporate knowledge. However PMOs can be merely "talk fests" in which glib phrases such as "world's best practice" and "Industry Standard" are used to justify adopting methodologies and tools without research to back them up. PMOs such as these become

costly exercises in window dressing and generally lead to either disgrace or promotion (to a safe position) for those involved in them.

5. Please provide open comments on leadership in the PMO. Is there a place for it?
Ideally a PMO provides leadership in the form of process monitoring and process improvement for the running of projects within the organisation. It also should provide leadership in the selection of projects to be conducted and ensuring the alignment of these projects with the overall organisational objectives. At another level it can also offer leadership on what the organisational objectives should be and how they may need to change when the environment in which the organisation changes.
In order to exercise this leadership the PMO must draw on information researched both inside and outside of the organisation. As far as possible the PMO should operate in an inclusive rather than dictatorial way when bringing about changes that arise from this research.

Interviewee Profile 4	**Position: Business Analyst**
Industry experience: Retail, ICT	**Work experience in a PMO: No**

1. What is your definition and impression of leadership in and around a PMO in organisation? Describe your experiences, good and / or bad.
PMO should mentor good leadership around projects. Aligning leadership is a function of the PMO. Nothing undermines leadership groups more than the absence of alignment. When group agrees on an action and/or initiative but is not aligned on what is required of them. They will be derailed during implementation when they discover differing views, needs, and expectations.

2. Greg Balestrero, PMI CEO, says leadership is a core competency of both project managers and executives. Is good leadership a fundamental attribute in a successful project manager? Discuss.
True leaders are visionaries. Leaders provide direction and bring about change. Leaders not only directly affect financial markets and the fortunes of other stakeholders but also the careers of their people. Leadership is about the future, management is about the present. The use also varies and types of skill required change across the hierarchy of an organisation. A line manager uses more management and technical skills than a CEO, who would use more leadership.

3. In your opinion, where does leadership exist in organisation? Internally to the PMO or imposed from the broader organisation, or both. Define differences.
PMO is not a leader, it aligns leadership …leadership exists at project managers, senior executives and senior management level.

4. Can performing in a PMO environment facilitate progression to roles of greater authority and leadership? If so, how? If not, why?
Structure of the PMO is tailored to organisation's requirements. PMO can consist of Steering committee, Administrative staff and Business staff or may be 1 staff to. PMO will mentor leadership for Project managers and Senior Executives. Performing in a PMO may not necessarily facilitate progression to greater authority and leadership.

5. Please provide open comments on leadership in the PMO. Is there a place for it?
PMO aligns leadership.

Interviewee Profile 5 **Industry experience: Retail,** **Telecommunication, Financial Services**	**Position: Project Manager** **Work experience in a PMO: No**

1. What is your definition and impression of leadership in and around a PMO in organisation? Describe your experiences, good and / or bad.

To be of value PMOs must be seen as an integral component in the drive towards strategic goals through effective and efficient project and program execution. Without this fundamental link, the PMOs value, raison d'aitre and purpose are effectively side-lined.

This diminishes the authority and, therefore leadership of the PMO; the PMO is reduced to a machine producing graphs, reports and other paper piles.

2. Greg Balestrero, PMI CEO, says leadership is a core competency of both project managers and executives. Is good leadership a fundamental attribute in a successful project manager? Discuss.

Without doubt, leadership is a fundamental pre-requisite of a Project Manager. Whilst the title implies "management" rather than "leadership", the endeavour requires interaction with other people in the Project Team, Sponsor Team, other functional departments/units, external parties such as Vendors, Regulators, etc.

For successful project outcomes, the effort from all individuals involved requires coordination, communication, relationship building and negotiation and influencing skills, apart from the technical skills required. This demands a level of leadership of oneself and of all project constituents.

3. In your opinion, where does leadership exist in organisation? Internally to the PMO or imposed from the broader organisation, or both. Define differences.

Leadership in an organisation exists within all members of that organisation. It ultimately falls upon each individual to decide the extent to which he/she wants to influence others and engage with others. The level of interaction will be proportional to the desired outcome and will be perceived as impactful (whether positively or negatively) and therefore cause a shift in the status quo. This is a qualified definition of leadership, and it is unique for each individual.

In reality, the PMO needs to be perceived as a conduit facilitating improvement in project and program delivery and execution. More importantly, it needs to be understood to be an integral tool of the C-suite for the realisation of an organisation's strategic objectives. In this sense, the PMO needs to "follow" the direction set by strategic planning.

In and of itself, the PMO must also "lead" by example; by showing that it can add value to project and program delivery; by showing that it promotes and supports specific Project and Program Management Training; by continually maintaining a standard set of best practice tools and techniques to support project professionals.

4. Can performing in a PMO environment facilitate progression to roles of greater authority and leadership? If so, how? If not, why?

As long as the PMO provides an environment where continuous improvement and skills development is supported and encouraged, there will exist opportunities for individuals to step up to roles of greater authority and leadership.

An important proviso is that executive management clearly supports a healthy, thriving PMO, including performance review and appraisal mechanisms and infrastructure to make the PMO a dynamic environment and stop along the journey to professional and personal development.

5. Please provide open comments on leadership in the PMO. Is there a place for it?

Per the foregoing responses, clearly leadership must be supported in PMOs and also with respect to the crucial part they play in an organisation's realisation of its strategic goals.

Interviewee Profile 6	Position: Project Manager
Industry experience: Telecommunications	Work experience in a PMO: Yes

1. What is your definition and impression of leadership in and around a PMO in organisation? Describe your experiences, good and / or bad.

My impression of leadership in a PMO is that it is required for a PMO to work. After all a PMOs responsibilities include establishing, maintaining and enforcing project management processes, procedures, and standards. Without leadership a PMO would not be able to achieve these things. I once worked in an organisation where the PMO did not have a leader and it was very frustrating to work in an environment where there was no clear vision and no one to provide guidance and direction. As a result the PMO was disjointed, people lacked enthusiasm and the PMO did not have the respect of the organisation or the senior management team.

2. Greg Balestrero, PMI CEO, says leadership is a core competency of both project managers and executives. Is good leadership a fundamental attribute in a successful project manager? Discuss.

I believe leadership is a fundamental attribute in a successful project manager as without it things won't get done and resources will be unclear on what they should be doing. Leadership creates unity and direction and if there is no one to provide this then I believe a project will not be successful.

3. In your opinion, where does leadership exist in organisation? Internally to the PMO or imposed from the broader organisation, or both. Define differences.

My opinion is that leadership exists in all levels of the organisation. I think that leadership comes from broader organisational levels as well as internally to the PMO. The PMO is guided from leadership internally and externally to it and is a product of internal and external leadership factors.

4. Can performing in a PMO environment facilitate progression to roles of greater authority and leadership? If so, how? If not, why?

I think by being involved in a PMO does facilitate progression to roles of greater authority and leadership. This is because individuals can gain an understanding of what authority/leadership traits work and what don't and gain confidence from observing others.

5. Please provide open comments on leadership in the PMO. Is there a place for it?

I definitely think there is a place for leadership in the PMO. Although hard to control, I think there can only be one leader in a PMO. If there are too many leaders the fundamental principles of the PMO will not be achieved.

Interviewee Profile 7	**Position: Business Analyst**
Industry experience: Government	**Work experience in a PMO: No**

1. What is your definition and impression of leadership in and around a PMO in a organisation? Describe your experiences, good and / or bad.

Leadership is required from outside the PMO and also within it. Outside leaders need to provide the PMO with the authority, support and encouragement to be able to drive projects through the organisation. Within the PMO the leadership also needs to be strong especially in providing the foundations for successful project delivery and to be able to prioritise between the projects. A key element of PMOs where I have seen them fail is the ability resolve conflict between projects and/or business units.

2. Greg Balestrero, PMI CEO, says leadership is a core competency of both project managers and executives. Is good leadership a fundamental attribute in a successful project manager? Discuss.

Yes leadership is a fundamental attribute of a good PM. Good leadership can provide direction, encouragement and support. Project teams can easily become disillusioned as they deal with the day to day issues. Good leadership can ensure that these teams stay focussed on the end goals.

3. In your opinion, where does leadership exist in organisation? Internally to the PMO or imposed from the broader organisation, or both. Define differences.

Leadership is required within a PMO and from outside. In delivery of projects it is probably most important to have stronger leadership within the PMO as they can insulate and overcome the deficiencies from outside. Leadership fundamentally is not that different. A leader at any level needs to be able to inspire others either through actions or words.

4. Can performing in a PMO environment facilitate progression to roles of greater authority and leadership? If so, how? If not, why?

Although I have not seen it happen I believe performing in a PMO can lead to progression of greater authority outside the PMO. It depends on a number of factors such as type of projects that have been managed (internal improvement or external products), the type of organisation and industry. For example if a PMO was delivering internal improvement projects, a role in the Internal Operations division is a potential progression. If the PMO was, for example, developing new products then the PMO probably has strong product knowledge so could use this information in other areas of the business.

5. Please provide open comments on leadership in the PMO. Is there a place for it?

Yes leadership is important in a PMO to ensure that the PMO achieves its purpose, whether it is to help achieve the strategic objectives of the company or to deliver a particular project. To function efficiently at any level the PMO needs the commitment and cooperation of other people. Elements of leadership are the only way to guarantee that this will happen successfully.

Appendix B: Reply summary from the Questionnaire

Q1.
- PMOs buy vision from senior management and sell vision enlist org-wide support
- Leadership goes beyond projects and delivers operational change
- An Executive should reside outside PMO controlling PMO with a manager inside
- Functionality approach and measurement
- PMO to mentor and align project leadership
- Integral in driving towards set strategic goals
- Diminishing authority = diminishing leadership
- Leadership need to establish, maintain and enforce standards
- PMO leader required with a vision and to provide guidance and direction
- Leader maintain PMO enthusiasm and respect for senior management
- External leadership to provide authority, support and encouragement
- Internal leadership to resolve conflict between project and business units

Q2.
- The greater the ambiguity, the more need for leadership
- Good leadership and management skills go hand in hand, preferred but not essential
- Dictatorial, inclusive and detached leadership style in action
- Visionaries provide direction and change
- Leadership is the future, management is the present
- Skills depend on position
- 'Project Manager' title advocates management but leadership attributes are essential
- Leadership is fundamental to create unity, direction and focus

Q3.
- Leadership exists external to PMO
- Senior management needed to keep PMO running smoothly
- Both external & internal leadership exist
- Organisation to provide a leadership charter and monitor
- PMO is not a leader, but aligns leadership with external need
- Leadership exists at all levels of project managers and is with all and unique
- PMO a conduit
- Leadership direction set by external strategic planning
- To lead by example with high standards existing at all levels of the organisation
- Guided by internal and external leadership
- Strong leadership inside PMO required in overcoming external deficiencies

Q4.
- Yes, recognise value to lead change, recognise roles, manage knowledge, be authoritative, with culture of continuous improvement and senior mgmt support and with the understanding of best leadership practices
- No, skills are specific to the PMO and the wider organisation, not senior management
- Only if project development is supported

Q5.
- Yes, it's vital to deliver projects to the organisation, it's directed from internal and external sources, it defines organisation objectives and change management and is essential to achieve purpose, commitment and cooperation
- Inclusive leadership style / approach to change
- PMO aligns leadership and succeeds with support of the organisation
- Effective leadership works with a single leader only

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