First successes are critical gate openers to longer-term achievements and outcomes for program and portfolio management leaders. As a new PMO leader, you have just 100 days to earn initial credibility through results, and to create a value-add perception of the PMO in your organization.

Key Findings

- Successful heads of new PMOs stay focused on a few things. Among them are balancing expectations, staff excellence, building relationships, earning credibility and getting acceptance for the PMO’s direction.

- PMOs succeed by creating new perceptions and changed actions. Among them are improving project management capabilities and maturity, better executive information about the "true" state of proposed and ongoing projects, and better practices for planning, executing and monitoring the progress and incremental success of projects.

- There is no one "right" model for a PMO. Effective PMOs, however, are those that set achievable expectations, demonstrate "real" value (an organizational perception of added value by their actions) and are a good match with their organizational culture.

Recommendations

PPM leaders focused on optimizing and promoting the value contribution of the PMO:

- Address (and reset) leadership expectations to align with what is possible to achieve within your organizational culture by reviewing the existing PMO, discussing it with key stakeholders, considering conflicting views, making compromises and, ultimately, building a consensus on the PMO direction.
Demonstrate early that you understand the PMO leader is a change agent around improving overall success with project management and project execution by identifying the most important improvements that the PMO can work on — improvements that have an immediate positive impact to demonstrate effectiveness.

Establish, as a major end goal for your first 100 days, a solid set of working relationships with influential senior leaders who have committed to advise you and steer you (and the PMO) toward realized value.

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Introduction

The first 100 days constitute an expected "honeymoon" or transition period. This all-too-brief period is yours to formulate a course of action, make connections, and establish and communicate a personal management style. It is within this critical period that you establish yourself and create the basic perceptions that others will, for better or worse, associate with your subsequent plans and actions.

Proper preparation, assessment, planning, acting, measuring and, above all, communicating can greatly enhance your chances of success. This research highlights the key activities that focus on critical issues and provides actions and resources to help you achieve your intended outcomes. Gartner also offers a unique companion experience to this research in our Peer Connect forum for PPM. You can use this forum and Gartner’s annual PPM summits to meet other newcomers to the PPM leadership roles, discuss challenges and get support from like-minded peers.

For the purposes of this research, a project management office (PMO) is:

A function, charged by its own charter and with various aspects of ownership, designed to facilitate and improve the management of projects through the application and use of PPM disciplines, such as project management and program management, on one level, and that participates in the business and IT governance activities in providing, some degree of execution, analysis, and visibility into the "state" and disposition of proposed and existing initiatives.

We break down your first 100 days into six phases, each overlapping with suggested durations that you can customize. Each phase includes critical target outcomes, actions and resources, as well as some optional ideas to consider as time and resources allow. The communicate phase spans the full duration, and we include specific actions for effective communication for each phase.

Figure 1 provides a high-level roadmap to help you identify key milestones as you transition into your new leadership role.
There are many things that can and should be done during the first 100 days. Be sure, however, to pay careful attention to these six major areas:

1. Through discussion, iteratively evolve and refine the PMO charter and roadmap. Build consensus and overcome stakeholder resistance to major points and content. A "charter" provides a statement of operation, which is continuously maintained. A "roadmap" sets direction and expectations, and is updated as events require.¹

2. Identify and succeed with a small number of early challenges, demonstrating that the PMO is a credible function delivering "real" action and value.

3. Validate or improve the "balance" between the PMO mandate, the expectations for results and value, and your resources and capabilities — while making success truly achievable.

4. Acquire from inside, recruit from outside, and contract from service providers high-achieving PMO staff with the capabilities and track records to successfully build a new (or refurbish an old) organization. This staff must be able to work with project and program sponsors, managers and consumers and interact occasionally with senior leaders around capability improvement, reporting and escalation.
5. Build relationship networks that share a stake in success and can advance perceptions of the value-added nature of the new PMO. Get to know, and make yourself known to, middle level, and some senior leadership, peers and influencers among the various business units and IT functions in the organization.

6. Iteratively refine and "sell" the PMO mandate, the roles of the PMO, and a direction and strategy for Year 1. Optimize your actions to drive acceptance among those engaged in aspects of projects and program identification, prioritization, and execution. We recommend periodic check-ins with stakeholders on progress in Year 1 to continue to evolve and improve, based on stakeholder feedback.

The First 100 Days Plan

Prepare Phase (Days −10 to 15)

It is one thing to be offered the role of head of a PMO, and quite another to optimize the situation in favor of your success. Prior to starting work, you must work with your (almost) new boss and major stakeholders to be sure you’re all on the same page regarding expectations and a shared view of what success is and what it will be.

Target Outcomes for the Prepare Phase

When you accept the role of head of the PMO, there are key success components that you must assess, negotiate and agree upon. Check, at a minimum, that the following are in place as you go forward:

- A reporting relationship to an influential, well-positioned executive who embraces the value of the PMO. His/her authority and political connections are one of your major assets.

- A good understanding of the purpose of the PMO, ensuring it is aligned with organizational objectives. Many new PMO leaders wrongly assume their purpose is to institute tighter controls — often slowing down the system — when the actual purpose is to speed the system up.

- A first-cut set of expectations by those leaders who agreed to the need for a PMO for its success. Determine that the PMO can meet these expectations inside the current culture, its proposed organizational location, and the political climate and organizational maturity.

- That the initially proposed level of staffing, types of resources, and capability levels of incumbents, recruits, and either contract staff or outsourced staff are a realistic match to the expectations. Use the Gartner Toolkit: "Toolkit: PMO Staff Size Estimator."
Communications in the Prepare Phase

Before Day 1

Assess your communication skills: Resolve in all communications to follow these best practices for effective communication:

- Use business language wherever possible. Avoid detailed technical terms. Clearly define any specialist terms such as IT abbreviations and acronyms.
- Be brief, clear and consistent in your message across forums and audiences.
- Avoid generic statements — for example, "IT is a critical input to the business" — and focus on only what is specific to your organization’s performance.
- Connect plans explicitly to the strategic investment objectives of the enterprise, thus demonstrating that the IT organization is synchronized with the business.
- Socialize your plans to IT peers and business leaders across the organization, and actively solicit feedback.

Write an introduction: Prepare an "elevator speech" about yourself, your background and your initial thoughts on joining the organization. Make this content as fact-based and neutral as possible, and keep it short and succinct. For example, try a 100-word short bio, along with some personal information about your key priorities in life and work, your value system and your integrity.

Draft discussion guides:

- **Stakeholder discussions:** Prepare a list of no more than five questions, some specific and others open-ended, that will ensure the early stakeholder conversations yield insights beyond the polite meet and greets. For example, while meeting key business stakeholders, ask them about their perception and satisfaction levels on the current state of the organization, any urgent issues that must be resolved as quickly as possible according to them, and any chronic pain areas, priorities and general expectations.
- **Staff discussions:** Prepare a list of similar questions for your first meeting with your staff. Ask them about their key work challenges and constraints, and their perception and satisfaction levels with their own team and organization.

Actions and Communications on Day 1

Since your first day on the job is all about listening and communicating, we’ve combined this phase’s actions and communications tasks.

**Meet and greet:** Call a meeting of everyone in your direct team, in person and through videoconferencing or audioconferencing for remote workers. This meeting has two objectives: (1) to introduce yourself; and (2) to show that you are approachable and available to everyone. Offer no opinions of any kind. Explain that you are still gathering information and are not yet ready to make decisions or changes.
During the meet and greet:

- Deliver the introductory message you drafted in advance. State when you will report back to the team with updates on your progress.
- Let the people attending the meeting introduce themselves in their own way and ask whatever questions are on their minds.
- Remember some detail about each person that will help you start conversations later.
- Be mindful of any apparent biases — identify political/social issues that may remain from your predecessors.
- Be careful not to come on too strong and appear as a threat or hurdle — first impressions are lasting ones.
- Understand your direct reports' concerns, priorities and career aspirations. Which ones understand and can describe the bigger picture? Which ones seem siloed in their views? Where do they need immediate help?
- Clearly outline how the team will be engaged in designing the new PMO and when they should expect updates.

**Distribute your introduction:** Distribute the introductory remarks to the wider IT organization. See if you can post it on the company intranet.

**Regroup with your manager:** Wrap up the prepare phase with a meeting with your manager that covers:

- The key challenges and opportunities from your point of view
- Your preliminary strategic vision
- A communications schedule for the future between the two of you

### Assess Phase (Days 0 to 30)

This phase requires a good deal of listening and asking some probing questions (see "Critical Soft Skills for Effective PMO Leadership"). Proceeding quietly and making little noise is a first requirement during the Assess phase. You don't yet know where the cultural and political land mines reside. Use this time to map out the environmental and governance landscape, PPM maturity, past PMO experiences, and the robustness of current program, project and portfolio management. Identify and validate the first challenges for the PMO — ensuring that you actually can succeed with them.

**Target Outcomes for the Assess Phase**

- Identify an organizationally aligned purpose for the PMO.
- Identify from one to three challenges that can be successfully addressed in your first 100 days. Judge these by "real" value (actual delivery) and "perceived" value (how people see the results).

- Determine what key organizational and operating needs and deliverables must be addressed immediately, and defer the rest. Avoid making significant changes — unless these are truly pressing.

**Actions for the Assess Phase**

- **Assess** your staff and other resources, identifying what you have (and don't have), its value, any liabilities, what's needed and how fast it can be obtained.

- **Decide** which two or three issues/problems/challenges can be addressed inside the 100-day boundary and will best demonstrate PMO effective action and earn credibility. Choose from among your staff (or outside resources) those who are the best guarantors of success to lead those efforts.

- **Complete** the Gartner ITScore for Program and Portfolio Management (see "ITScore for Program and Portfolio Management") or similar assessment to identify strengths, weaknesses and candidates for improvement, particularly in these areas: people, practices and processes, value and financial management, and relationships.

- **Prepare** a goals and mission outline, ensuring they are aligned with those of the organization, and sketch success at 100 days. Work backward from your version of these to the expectations of others — especially your sponsor. Identify what must change/should change/won't change, realistically. Lay out, over the next 100 days, how you will get the changes you need to optimize the likelihood of success, for you and for the PMO.

- **Assess** the draft mandate, goals and/or expectations for the PMO.

- **Get** to know your staff. Have them prepare and submit resumes detailing their backgrounds and accomplishments. If you are considering outside or outsourced staffing, work with providers to identify a cadre of individuals who are high-performing and supplement any deficiencies in internal staff or candidates.

- **Meet** with each of the identified "candidates," separately, and interview them. Treat internal candidates as though they were applying for a position in the new organization.

- **Qualify** each internal staff member as retain/reassign/remove, even if you take no action at once. Consider outside or external staff in terms of the first 100 days only, six months, more than six months and long-term assignment.

**Communications in the Assess Phase**

Listening plays a key communications role at this point in sizing up the roles, PPM maturity, potential supporters and resisters; as well as in assessing what is actually possible now — and what is not.

- **Listen** to key people in the ecosystem — IT and business management and staff, colleagues and members of your staff.
Avoid making any long-term decisions or those that create significant commitments of effort or resources for the PMO — until you are sure you know what’s really going on. Ernest Hemingway had it right: "I like to listen. I have learned a great deal from listening carefully. Most people never listen."

Arrange to meet peers and colleagues, and look for those who share a sense that the PMO can help and, specifically, can help them.

Identify (and deal with) only those relationship and people issues that cannot wait.

Resources for the Assess Phase

Gartner Research and Tools

"Critical Soft Skills for Effective PMO Leadership"

"Toolkit: PMO Staff Size Estimator"

"ITScore for Program and Portfolio Management"

Other Suggested Resources


Plan Phase (Days 15 to 45)

All too often, new leaders fall into the "detailed planning trap" in their first 100 days. Many become so consumed with detailed planning that they forget to do their jobs. As we said in the beginning of this research, "PMOs succeed (or fail) based upon the perceptions of others and rapidly establishing credibility." Make any plans you come up with lightweight and simple. Be ruthless in responding to events by changing your plans.

Target Outcomes for the Plan Phase

By the end of the Plan phase (roughly 45 days), you should have:

- A clear goal of two or three specific issues to be addressed by the PMO in its early stages of operation.
Targets or milestones for the core dimensions of PPM: people, practices and processes, value and financial management, tools, and relationships.

Buy-in from your boss/sponsor, and other influencers who have clearly indicated their endorsement of the target issues.

Two plan outlines: one for the whole of Year 1 and one for the second 100 days.

Identified resources, that is, internal staff and candidates, contracted outside staff, and/or an outsourced PMO provider to carry through on the target issues.

Actions for the Plan Phase

- **Draft**, refine and validate an outline of the Year 1 strategy, and outline the near-term plan for the second 100 days. Review both with your boss. Make an individual assessment of current/near-term PPM opportunities, support for projects and/or programs, organizational change initiatives, or other efforts in which PMO support and assistance offers opportunity. Triage these (informally and initially) to rank order those that offer the best success opportunities for the PMO, and offer needed business outcomes and value. Test all of these ideas (and your triage perceptions) with your boss/sponsor and others as needed.

- **Sketch out** and test with each staff member a vision of their future in the new organization. Note reactions and level of interest, and make needed adjustments.

- **Launch** your recruiting efforts, both inside and outside. Reference initial allocations, salary grades, and allocated budget for contract staff and/or outsourced functions, and determine their adequacy for identified staffing needs.

- **Work** with your boss/sponsor to review budget and planned spending (and the scale of funding available) to match the evolving mandate and expectations.

- **Begin** to identify (not to approach) a group of three to five influencers to be "stakeholders" in the success of the PMO effort. Sell the relevance of a group of stakeholders to your boss/sponsor, and refine your approach to them with him/her.

- **After** two months, and a chance to get a handle on the complex state of the relationships around the PMO, take time and assess what you have, what the organization can do and support, and what your chances of success are in this situation.

Communications in the Plan Phase

- **Engage** with your boss/sponsor to identify early instances of discussion and consensus building around the eventual draft PMO charter. Hold discussions with, and collect ideas and contributions from, internal clients and stakeholders to continuously refine the draft charter.

- **Continue** your efforts to gain support among those who play a role in projects, programs and portfolios, looking ahead to identifying three to five major "stakeholders" to help drive PMO success.
- **Develop** messages and materials for future "roadshows" and briefings among IT staff and selected business areas around the goals, value and path forward for the new PMO. Test that these are a match between expectations and what can actually be achieved.

### Resources for the Plan Phase

**Gartner Research and Tools**

"Toolkit: PMO Startup Sample Deliverables You Don’t Have to Invent and Won’t Find on the Internet"

"Optimizing and Promoting the Value Contribution of the PMO Primer for 2017"

"How the PMO Can Make the Best of Shadow IT"

### Act Phase (Days 30 to 80)

Figure 1 may inadvertently suggest that "act" and "action" are deferred until the work of the preceding phases has been completed. This is a weakness of phase-oriented graphics. Treat this phase — instead — as one of "focus" upon all the actions you have/will undertake during the first 100 days, ensuring that they reach a successful conclusion.

### Target Outcomes for the Act Phase

- Well-communicated early successes as part of the execution of your communications plan.
- Agreed-upon expectations with your boss/sponsor, among stakeholders, influencers and peers for success of the PMO, evidenced in a signed-off charter.
- Active pursuit of a Year 1 strategy, with at least one major milestone completed.
- Engagement with IT and business management by your staff — within the scope of the evolving PMO charter — and acceptance of their advice, assistance and/or PMO-provided "assets."
- A working stakeholder group with its first meeting behind it.

### Actions for the Act Phase

- **Assess** progress and the scale of likely success with the two or three challenges accepted to drive initial PMO credibility. Use the opportunity to rescope or rescale (where needed) to ensure an outcome is perceived as successful.
- **Provide** direction, advice and/or changes in resources.
- **Check** that your staff members are "visible" to influencers and leaders associated with these challenges in ways that add to their evolving public personas.
- **Confirm** the matchup for Year 1 of those of your staff responsible for success with the PMO strategy, goals and direction.

- **Ask** for feedback (good and bad) from these influencers and leaders on their perceptions of what's being provided to them, and others around them; and to solicit their support for the future.

- **Build** consensus in the form of a "vision document" or "concept document" of the PMO mission. Iteratively socialize, validate and evolve this into an agreed-upon PMO charter.

**Communications in the Act Phase**

- **Continue** refining the shape of PMO success, and its role, as you engage in discussions with others around what is possible — and not.

- **Clarify**, through discussion with your boss/sponsor and the leaders who agreed to a need for a PMO, the differences between what they have said they want and what they "really" want.

**Resources for the Act Phase**

**Gartner Research and Tools**

"Developing a Charter to Guide PMO Implementations"

"Five Best Practices PMOs Can Use to Effectively Support Organizational Change"

"Seven Best Practices for a Highly Effective PMO"

**Other Suggested Resource**

"Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) Cycle." ASQ.

**Measure Phase (Days 45 to 100)**

Use your last month of the first 100 days to finalize a solid foundation for the PMO to move forward. At the same time, publicize early successes and start work on major PPM-oriented initiatives.

**Target Outcomes for the Measure Phase**

- The PMO head's first 100 days' success has lots to do with people, their perceptions and some degree of attitude adjustment; it has little to do with things.

- The key outcome is a shared vision of what the PMO can do and will be, together with agreement upon the initial actions and their organizational impact among your boss/sponsor and stakeholders and influencers.
For those obsessed by metrics and measures, outcomes are found in the faces of leaders, colleagues and potential service consumers, as you interact with them, discussing where this will go or won’t go and what are reasonable expectations.  

At 100 days, accept your successful interactions and relationships as your mandate to go out and do the "real" work of engaging with, supporting and facilitating major organizational success with improvements in PPM practices, execution and added value to IT and business goals.

**Actions for the Measure Phase**

- **Validate** that sufficient progress has been made with the two or three initial PMO challenges to claim success, and to justify releasing organizationwide communication of the PMO mandate, role and early activities.

- **Continue** your relationship-building work with colleagues and consumers. Move ahead — with a regular schedule of periodic discussions and reviews — with identified PMO stakeholders.

- **Confirm** consensus to the PMO vision, direction and "ownership" from interactions with stakeholders and influencers, and from the participants in roadshows and briefings across the organization.

- **Confirm** consensus and acceptance as a basis to move forward with the outlines of work and success for Year 1 and the next 100 days.

- **Check** your progress with shaping and reshaping the original goals and mandate into something optimized for success, and take an organizational "temperature."

**Communications in the Measure Phase**

- **Keep** communicating with your boss/sponsor, stakeholders, and influencers involved in the investments and initiatives of the PMO for the next 100 days as part of the framework of an evolving Year 1 strategy.

- **Start** selling the idea of a six-month progress and direction review for the PMO. Accept direction and assignments for PMO support and engagement that align with the vision and accepted consensus to the PMO role and direction.

- **Capture** key PMO messages, needs assessment and organizational fit in a draft outline for the PMO charter. Test consensus by reviewing this draft with your boss/sponsor, stakeholders and influencers. Have your staff start work on a formal PMO communications strategy and plan that will deliver various messages about the new function across the organization to multiple audiences.
Resources for the Measure Phase

Gartner Research and Tools

"Toolkit: First-Year Review for the New PMO: Checklist for Getting a 'Pass' Grade"


"Communication Support Center: Presentation Templates for PMO Leaders and Their Teams"

"The DNA of a PMO Leader"

"Infographic: Reshaping the PMO for the Digital Era"

Other Suggested Resources

"Top 10 PMO KPIs That PMO Is Measured Against To Track Success." Gartner PeerConnect

"How to Measure Organizational Progress." Chron.

"How to Measure Your Action Plan Results." Bright Hub.

Gartner Recommended Reading

Some documents may not be available as part of your current Gartner subscription.

"Four Types of PMOs That Deliver Value"

"Five Best Practices PMOs Can Use to Effectively Support Organizational Change"

"Toolkit: PMO Startup Sample Deliverables You Don’t Have to Invent and Won’t Find on the Internet"

"How Activist PMOs Streamline Processes, Protect Users, Raise Stakeholder Value and Improve Governance"

Evidence

1 "Seven Best Practices for a Highly Effective PMO"


3 Gartner analysts completed a sizable number of PMO inquiries during 2016, which represent some 7% to 9% of the total PPM inquiries.