What is P3O and What can it do for You?

If ever there was a time to deliver efficient and consistent change in an organisation, it is now and the OGC's Portfolio, Programme and Project Office (P3O) guidance sets up the structure to deliver just that.

What is P3O? In essence, it's a way of providing joined-up support for launching change. The Office of Government Commerce's (OGC) P3O gives guidance on establishing, developing and maintaining a decision-making and enabling structure or management environment for all levels and all kinds of change in an organisation.

What does it look like? It can be a single office or a set of linked offices with a strategic, challenge and assurance role; this is no glorified administration department. Several office types are possible. The portfolio office gives senior managers a panoramic view of the portfolio, of progress, conflicts, risks and benefits against investments. The Centre of Excellence assists organisations to improve their portfolio, programme, project and risk management (P3RM) through best practice, training, and so forth. Temporary offices support programmes and projects.

Which model should I use? That depends. The vision and goals of the sponsor, the size and maturity of the organisation, P3RM, all of these factors will influence the choice of model, the staffing and the pace at which you design, build and adopt P3O. A small company may only need one P3O expert; a large one, an army of them. One organisation may launch P3O quickly; another roll it out in stages.

How does the company benefit? It's about the bottom line. P3O helps decision pick the right programmes and projects and see that they are done right. Every success or failure is visible to staff so they can escalate problems to the right level and allow investment management judgments to be made early. Companies can balance change and business-as-usual agendas. P3O drives efficiency and consistency and delivery, in terms of cost and time, becomes predictable, stickable.

Does the company _really_ need P3O? Judge for yourself. The OGC seven questions in [Business Benefits of P3O Implementation](#) which we've listed at the end can help you do that. Steve Boronski, an ILX Senior Management Training Consultant, also has an [effective formula](#) to check if you have one or need one; it's based on the questions: if you make X investment, will you get Y benefits and will it improve Z Key Performance Indicators?

Where is the evidence that it works? No-one wants to throw good money after anything in these hard times unless there's a clear return. P3O can give that and [BT Design (P3O: No Skeletons in the Cupboard at BT Design)](#) show how it worked for them.

How does yet another certificate benefit individuals? Senior managers will understand the structure for achieving strategic objectives. Programme managers will bring consistency to programmes and effect standardized strategies within projects. Project managers can integrate with programmes and deliver consistent outputs. P3O also offers a career path and more information is available from the [Project Management Office Special Interest Group](#).

What's the training and qualification structure? P3O slots perfectly in with the OGC products such as PRINCE2, ITIL, MSP and M_o_R. It comprises [Foundation](#) and [Practitioner](#) level qualifications and is accredited by the [APMG](#). There is the guidance, support and documentation that you would expect and the OGC already provides a [P3O Online Repository](#).

The OGC's Seven Questions to put to Senior Managers:

1. Are all your programmes and projects really necessary?
2. Which ones will help you to deliver your strategy? What benefits will they give you?
3. How much is your change portfolio impacting the business?
4. How much is it costing you?
5. If your budgets are reduced, which programmes or projects could you put on hold – what would be the impact on the business?
6. Do you have the right people and skills? Are they available when you need them? When is it more appropriate to hire in contract staff rather than do it yourselves?
7. Are your managers delivering your programmes and projects consistently and well?

Useful Links:

- For a complete picture of P3O and what it can do head to the OGC.
- A bunch of useful P3O downloads can help you get to grips with this new guidance.
- The APMG provides a wealth of information about P3O and accredited training options.
- There are many training and support options for P3O that include e-learning as well as blended learning to make your money go further.