

2009 UT Dallas Project Management Symposium Abstract Submission
Title: “How to Get Your Enterprise PMO Green Lighted by Executives”
Author: Andrea Nicholas

Today’s turbulent economic conditions are arguably anything but fertile ground for launching PMOs. With organizations the world over gutting expenses, reducing headcount, and suspending capital investments until further notice, launching anything new at this juncture is a tough uphill climb. Additionally, with the average PMO implementation requiring 1 – 2 years and every entity in business today being mandated to return a profit or slash expense, launching a PMO can appear hopeless.

Don’t despair. It’s possible to get your Enterprise PMO approved; you just have to work harder at defining its value these days. Ultimately, the persons who approve or deny the Enterprise PMO launch are executives. To define the value of your proposal you must speak the language of your audience. This means that you must start talking “executive” speak and, simultaneously, stop talking “PM” speak. Executives are only interested in knowing what all that project management gobblegook *gets them*. For example, instead of talking about aligning project goals to the organization’s strategy, demonstrate how eliminating the poor-returning projects from the company docket will give them x dollars back in their monthly or annual budget. Or, rather than discussing potential incremental efficiencies gained in implementing cross-functional project portfolio optics, show how the resulting productivity gain could allow the company to trim contractor expenses by x dollars.

Switching our Enterprise PMO message is easier than it might sound, and there are reliable frameworks we can use to assist us in crafting our proposal. This presentation will instruct attendees on how to leverage a four-part system designed to excavate, analyze and define the critical factors in any organization and tie the Enterprise PMO’s charter to them. In doing so, the Enterprise PMO is architected such that it delivers the greatest value and executives are persuaded to approve its launch.



Andrea Nicholas is the founder and principal of Optimize!, a Project Management Office (PMO) solutions consulting firm located in Dallas, Texas. With nearly 20 years of experience in the project management discipline, Ms. Nicholas’s career has included building PMO’s from scratch, managing PMO day-to-day operations, successfully leading multi-million dollar domestic and international engagements, and deploying sustainable portfolio management and process improvement initiatives for firms in the financial, utility, technology, and consulting industries.

Ms. Nicholas frequently speaks publicly on the broad topic of project management and has published articles for PM World Today, PM Forum and PROJECTmagazine. She possesses a Master of Business Administration degree from the University of Dallas and a Bachelor of Arts and project management graduate certificate from the University of Texas at Dallas. She also holds a PMP® certification from the Project Management Institute® and is a Lean Six Sigma Green Belt.