



Where's the Brain?

When an economic slowdown occurs and cost cutting is the immediate objective, what better way to increase value to the organization than to help it cut the costs of waste, unnecessary or redundant processes, and rework due to missed expectations? Many organizations begin their business intelligence (BI) efforts by implementing a small, easily managed project – one that demonstrates the benefits of BI without risking a large investment from the corporation. Good idea, no doubt. If the project is successful, though, the requests for other such projects will rapidly start arriving. Suddenly the coordination of multiple BI implementations becomes a critical management issue. With that in mind, this month's column is dedicated to explaining the roles and responsibilities of a BI program management office (BIPMO).

To differentiate between a project and a program, let's look at the characteristics of each.

A *project* has the following characteristics:

- Each project is a one-time occurrence, having a unique start and end date. Each project has its own project plan with its own deliverables, activities and milestones.
- A project has a specific perspective. For example, a project may have an order entry, customer profitability, or sales force automation perspective. The project is created to solve a very explicit business problem.
- A single project may not require an extensible architecture, either conceptual or technological, to accommodate future expansion.
- Most projects have a very short term focus and exist for less than a year.
- Most projects will not realize the benefits from the use of standards or the reuse of existing items such

as data models, definitions, programming modules, etc.

A *program* has the following characteristics:

- Programs are ongoing. They may have a specific start date, but do not have a specific end date. Programs usually have a set of established priorities that translate into specific projects within each program.
- Programs are much broader in perspective, usually encompassing enterprise initiatives such as CRM or business intelligence. The programs are generally aligned with significant objectives or changes to the corporation's overall direction.
- Programs, as opposed to projects, require an extensible architecture. This architecture serves as the road map for all current and future projects.
- Programs have a long-term focus, giving guidance and direction to the overall implementations that lead to a satisfaction of the ultimate business objective(s).
- Programs realize benefits of corporate and IT standards and the reuse of data models, definitions and programming modules, as well as the CIF components (data warehouse, data marts, meta data, and so on).
- Programs include several related projects. These projects are linked or associated to an overarching business goal or objective such as "better understanding customers and customer purchasing" or "making better strategic decisions."
- Strategy is essential for managing programs. The strategy encompasses how the organization will determine what projects to fund, in what order and how it will enforce the usage of corporate standards. The strategy will also ensure the continued reuse of the components

in the CIF.

Now that we understand the difference between programs and projects, let's examine the program management office (PMO) roles and responsibilities.

- First and foremost, the PMO must have a well-defined charter and set of objectives.
- The PMO must prioritize the related projects. This prioritization must also include a determination of whether a proposed project should even be included in the program at all or if it is feasible. These are not easy decisions.
- The PMO also distributes the funding for the various projects. This distribution is separated into the funding allocated toward the overhead and reusable components versus the funding set available for specific and unique project attributes.
- The PMO defines and enforces adherence to enterprise standards and policies by each project. If an exception is made, the justification for that exception and the subsequent actions that may be needed to remove or mitigate the exception should be documented.
- The PMO establishes the methodology used to create this environment.
- Finally, the PMO is responsible for defining the management and technology infrastructure including: the creation of a governance structure that enforces use of standards and policies; a definition of technical and business strategy; an assessment of the technical and organizational readiness; a definition of the enterprise's standards and procedures; the development of conceptual and technical architectures; the creation and maintenance of subject area and business data models; and the definition, selection and imple-

mentation of the technical infrastructure.

Now that we understand the roles and responsibilities of the PMO, what are the characteristics of a BI program manager?

- The program manager's major responsibility is to manage the day-to-day program activities and ensure the delivery of each project's product according to its scope, schedule and budget.
- The major challenges for the program manager are the prioritization and funding for the proposed projects according to the PMO's charter and dealing with the business demands for quick delivery of BI capabilities.
- A program manager has the following important traits: significant

and proven project management skills over multiple projects; understanding of BI concepts and methodology; commitment to the overall goals and objectives of the BI initiative and to the architecture (conceptual and technical) supporting it; and excellent communication skills to upper management, the business community and the various projects' team members.

Hopefully, this article has given you a good idea of the difference between a project and a program, the roles and responsibilities of the PMO, and the characteristics of a good program manager. With a sophisticated and mature BIPMO, you should see significant benefits and cost reductions that result from the removal of

inefficiencies and wasted efforts. The impact of the BIPMO demonstrates that a solid foundation which includes a scalable infrastructure and a reusable model with an enterprise view is critical. The enterprise view becomes worth the effort when we consider the consistency and repeatability aspects of the BI environment. Finally, the BIPMO can ensure that the results and success of one project are repeatable across *all* the related projects and that past mistakes are not repeated in subsequent projects. 

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