PMOs by DESIGN

The lessons learnt and how they've led me to where I am today

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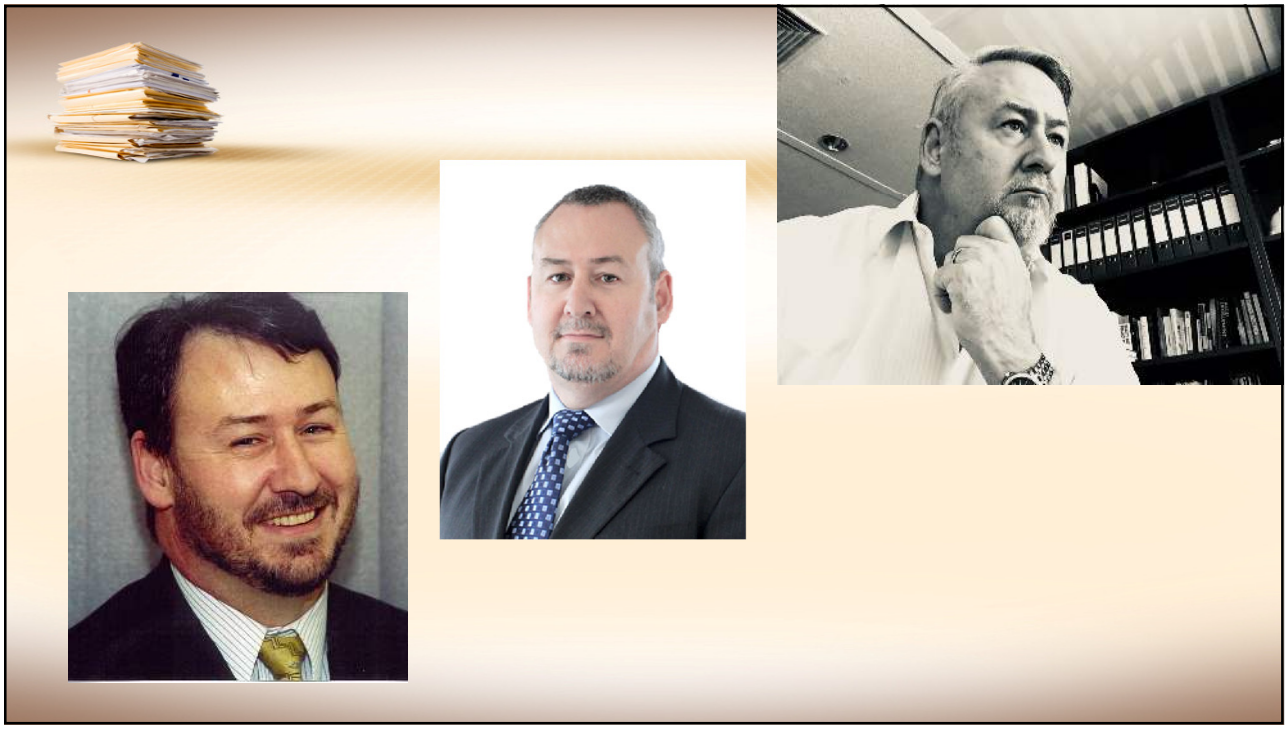
Outline of today's presentation

- Introduce myself and describe my journey (to date)
- Describe two case studies
- Draw out the relevant observations
- Discuss the literature supporting the observations
- Provide you with a way forward



Introduce myself

- An accidental project manager
- Surfed the wave of technology introduction
- Interesting pivot around the turn of the century – organisational PM
- From practitioner to senior to consultant
- Academically pursuing my interests in PM Education

PMOs by Design – Case Study 1

- An Australian Telco, progressively privatised in 1997, 1999, and 2006.
- Internet "invented" in 1983, Australia connected in 1986.
- Large Telco commercial operations commenced 1995.
  - *"Prior to this operation the tariffs charged by the then small internet providers was based on time used on the service. Big Telco Internet developed a world first tariff in charging by megabits downloaded, soon acclaimed by the rest of the world which followed suit"* (source: Wikipedia).
- Car Phones in 1981; Mobile phones in 1987.

PMOs by Design – Case Study 1

- New technologies being rushed to market; Billing and provisioning too often an after-thought.
- Banking, another deregulated industry with significant geographical spread, and prime for modernisation that ITC brings (e.g. ATMs).
- One of the big 4, a most significant customer of the Telco (~5% of Billing Revenue).
- The business need / opportunity to provide a single bill.

PMOs by Design – Case Study 1

- Once successful, customer demand drove a rapid expansion (4 FTE to > 200 in two years) – a start up.
- Began introducing web-applications to view and interrogate the billing data which increased demand.
- Repeatable projects, requiring scaling and quality assurance
- Speed to market advancements made with Rapid Application Development.

PMOs by Design – Case Study 1

- The idea of a PMO "born" on a plane trip back from Melbourne.
- My job to implement a PMO.
- Primary goal was to procure and induct project managers.
- Required compromises, how I did it.

PMOs by Design – Case Study 2

- Federal Government Department, undertaking the largest program of work outside of Defence.
- At its peak > 200 projects, with expanded by 50% scope two years into the program
- Organisation PMO function was minimal prior to the program. The program established a PMO as part of its remit.

PMOs by Design – Case Study 2

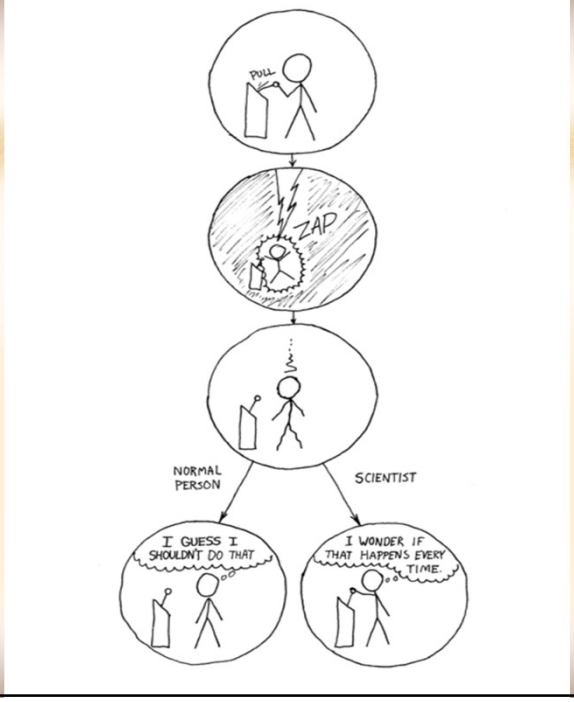
- Main business need was to provide a single coordinated view of the program.
- Time, cost and status reporting via a new technology (CA Clarity)
- Methodologies were non-existent and left to the individual PM capability
- Resulted in a plethora of “borrowed” templates and tools, and difficulties in consistency

PMOs by Design – Case Study 2

- PMO established with 12, mostly experienced staff.
- Business (policy) became increasingly disengaged.
- Left the department 3 years into 5 years of the program, returned to the Department 5 years later to find PMO was now staffed with 35 staff one of which had delivery experience.

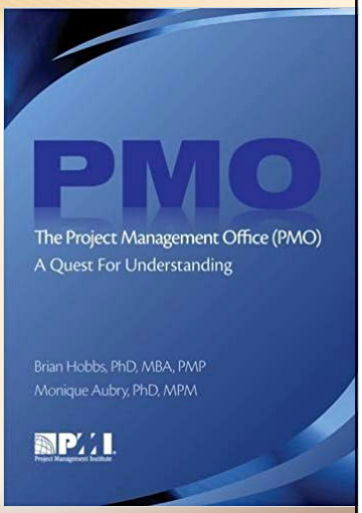
What happened next - Career

- Projects Director for largest contract won by 2nd placed Telco.
- Spinal injury
- Returned to Fed Govt department, leading web applications development team.
- Recruited by small / medium engineering consulting firm. First engagement to implement a PMO.



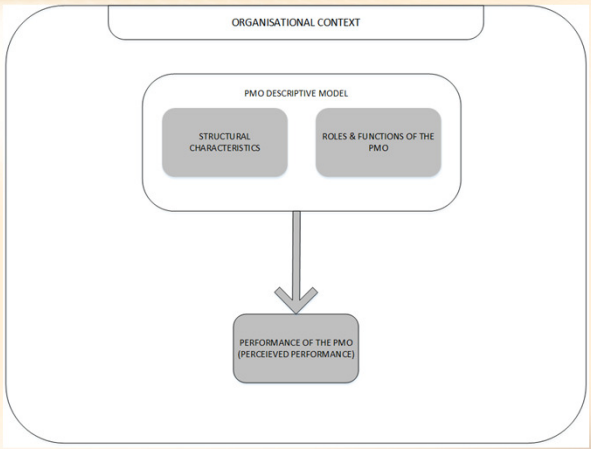
What happened next - Academia

- Interest in PMO implementation, soon led to Hobbs and Aubry, 2007
  - *Project Management Offices: A Quest for Understanding*. Hobbs & Aubry, 2010.
- Commenced MBA in 2015.
- Presented at PMI 2018 National Conference:
  - *"PMs are being taught the Wrong Thing: Pathway towards a better way to educate PMs"*.



Observations from the Case Studies

- Non-deliberate implementation
- Business need was implicit, not explicit
- Service offerings including:
  - Resourcing & Capability (Telco)
  - Quality Assurance (Telco & Govt Dept)
  - Program Reporting (Govt Dept)
  - PM Information Systems (Govt Dept)
- Delivery experience devalued



What the literature (Hobbs & Aubry) says about the observations

- PMOs should be designed. Designed to meet business need.
- PMOs deliver services. The researchers identified 27 groups.
- Delivery experience should be highly valued.

The way forward

- Green or Brown field implementation.
- What are the business needs, what is their priority.
- How does the PMO add value.
- Define the services, the service levels and the capabilities needed.
- Don't forget Capability, in particular the change from organisational to protean career development.