

**DELIVERING CHANGE
IN BLUE LIGHT SERVICES
PMO SUMMIT REPORT**



**BLUE
LIGHT**
PMO SUMMIT

Report Launch

Shared Insights from Blue Light PMOs

Agenda

01

The Summit

Four Themes and Eight
Challenging Areas

02

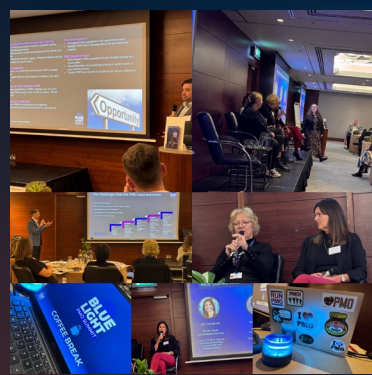
Eight Main Challenges

Report Highlights

03

Summary and Conclusions

Continuing the
Conversation



November 2025

PMOs from Police, Fire, NHS, and Ambulance came together for the first Blue Light PMO Summit





01

The Summary and the Challenges

An untapped asset for blue light organisations



“
PMOs remain an
untapped asset
in delivering
strategic change
”



An untapped asset

Emergency services pressures:

1. Rapid response
2. Political pressures
3. Limited budgets
4. Constant operational demand

How the PMO can help services by:

Moving from 'admin' to strategic partner:

1. Help services align efforts
2. Help services influence leadership
3. Help services survive the pressure of change delivery





DELIVERY & STRATEGY

- 1 Project management skills and capability**
P3M capability, shortage of skilled PM professionals, limited training budgets, resource mgmt implications.
- 2 Complex transformational change**
Lots of constraints - regulatory, political, ICT, regional, national.
- 3 PMO service areas**
Areas such as benefits management, project prioritisation, reporting analytics, business cases etc
- 4 Low project management maturity**
Inconsistent frameworks, fragmented governance and limited visibility across portfolios, individual effort rather than organisational capability.



The top challenges identified by emergency services based PMOs

FUTURE FOCUS



- 1 Shaping the next generation PMO**
Planning, designing, implementing, managing and leading PMOs for the future.
- 2 The use of advanced technologies such as AI**
Managing and supporting advances in technology whilst keeping the lights on.
- 3 Learning from failure - continuous improvement**
Using every change to shape what comes next - designing amore resilient, future-ready service
- 4 Value for Money**
Different thinking, creative changes, utilising innovation.



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

How your organisation is dealing with that challenge?

How your PMO is contributing to address the challenge/s

- 1 Insufficient executive sponsorship**
In projects, programmes and the PMO.
- 2 The PMO as a strategic partner**
Moving from an administrative support function to a proactive, value-driven entity.
- 3 Long term support for the PMO**
Constant justification and first in line for budget cuts etc
- 4 Alignment to the frontline**
Keeping PMO and PM linked to the frontline - and not losing sight of what really matters.

- 1 Funding constraints - doing more with less**
Different thinking, creative changes, utilising innovation.
- 2 Culture resistance - 'not invented here' mindset**
Overcoming scepticism, utilising change management approaches.
- 3 Change fatigue**
Techniques and approaches to overcome, focus on staff wellbeing and support.
- 4 Cross service collaboration - away from silos**
Both internally and across emergency service departments and agencies.



PEOPLE & CHANGE



CULTURE & COLLABORATION



LEADERSHIP GAPS

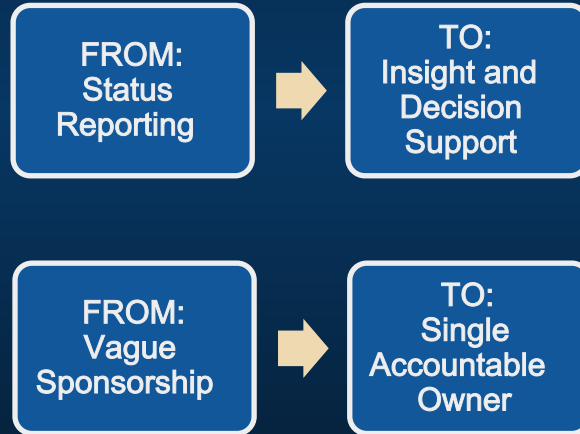
CHALLENGES ONE AND TWO – EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP AND STRATEGIC PARTNERING

The Ailment

Symptoms:

- Token sponsorship
- Executives who are “too busy”
- Mixed messages from the top
- ‘First to cut’ syndrome
- PMO labelled as “admin” or compliance checkers
- Not empowered to challenge
- Brittle gains

The Shift



The Cure

Treatment:

- Adopt a critical friend
- Leading with data -driven insights
- Support sponsors on decision rights



CAPABILITY CRISIS

CHALLENGE THREE – PROJECT MANAGEMENT CAPABILITY GAPS

The Ailment

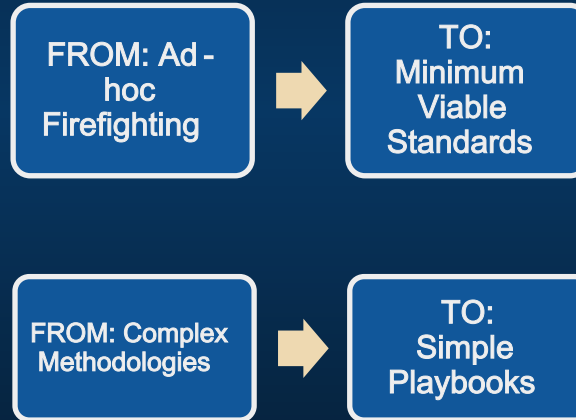
Symptoms:

- Subject matter experts managing projects
- “Off the desk” project management
- Compliance without comprehension
- Patchy capability and inconsistencies
- Promoting without preparing

“PMOs often act as trainers and coaches for accidental PMs.”

- Panel Discussion

The Shift



The Cure

Treatment:

- Implementation of an “Incubation Phase” for pre-launch planning
- Establishing communities of practices
- Fundamentals training



PRIORITY PARADOX

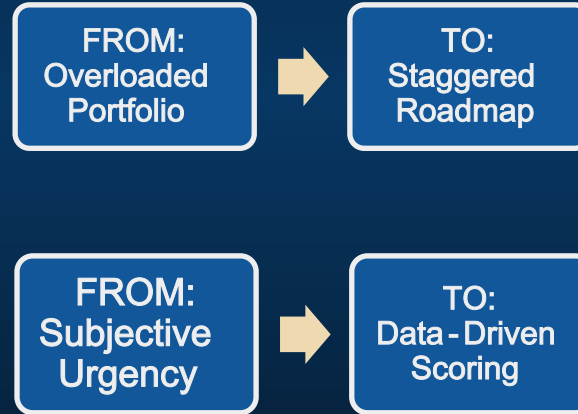
CHALLENGE FOUR – WHEN EVERYTHING IS A PRIORITY

The Ailment

Symptoms:

- A culture of 'Yes' driven by political mandates
- Stealth projects hiding in the system
- Resource overload
- Leaders avoiding hard choices
- Scoring systems misused

The Shift



The Cure

Treatment:

- Visualise the portfolio on a single heatmap
- Use two -stage prioritization
- Quantify the cost of overload on emergency response times

STAND OUT ACTION:
Force one explicit trade-off
in every prioritisation
conversation

WORKING WITH COMPLEX CHANGE

CHALLENGE FIVE – COMPLEX TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE

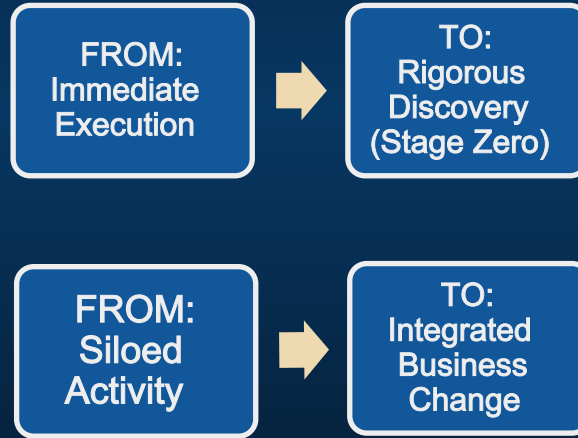
The Ailment

Symptoms:

- Rushing to delivery without discovery
- Focusing on the tech whilst forgetting the people
- Conflicting objectives across agencies
- Change management is either too rigid or too uncontrolled

"Projects that go through the business case process always perform better." - Panel Discussion

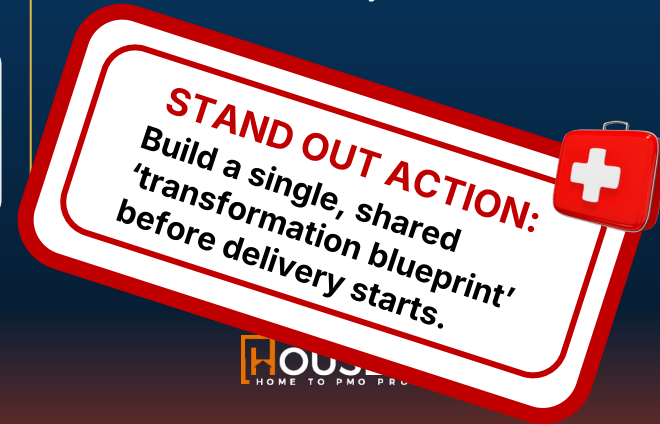
The Shift



The Cure

Treatment:

- Mandate a Discovery Phase to validate feasibility
- Invest in dedicated Business Change functions, not just technical delivery roles.



PROVING WORTH

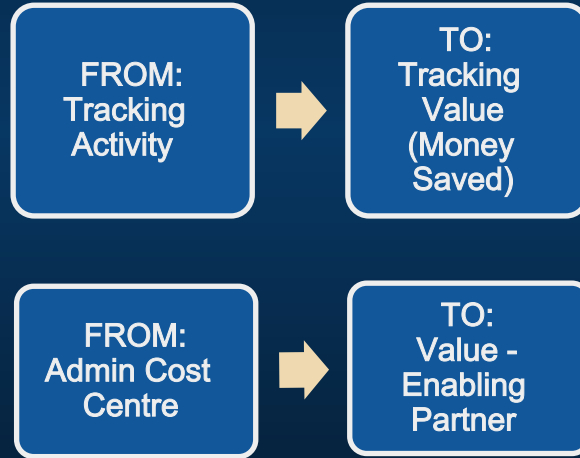
CHALLENGE SIX – VALUE FOR MONEY

The Ailment

Symptoms:

- PMO viewed as overhead or ‘first to cut’
- The Visibility Paradox where costs are seen but savings are hidden
- Lack of value metrics
- Lack of communication of value

The Shift



The Cure

Treatment:

- Log ‘cost avoidance’ (saves) explicitly
- Link PMO goals to strategic outcomes like reduced response times.
- Establish benefits -led culture

STAND OUT ACTION:
Track and publish one tangible saving the PMO creates each quarter.

THE RESILIENCE FACTOR

CHALLENGE SEVEN – CHANGE FATIGUE

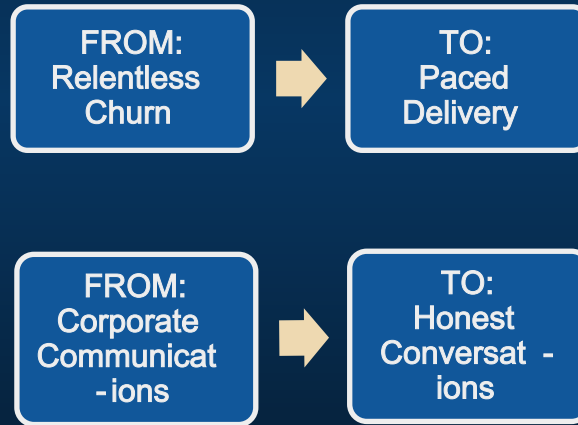
The Ailment

Symptoms:

- “Here we go again” – the carousel of restructures
- Staff exhaustion leading to passive resistance
- Mentally checking out of change

"Strong relationships are what make portfolio governance work. It took us two years to get here."
- Panel Discussion

The Shift



The Cure

Treatment:

- Implement ‘blackout periods’ in the portfolio
- Host informal wellbeing conversations
- Co-create change with the frontline

STAND OUT ACTION:
Pause one initiative to create space for another to land properly

“NOT INVENTED HERE”

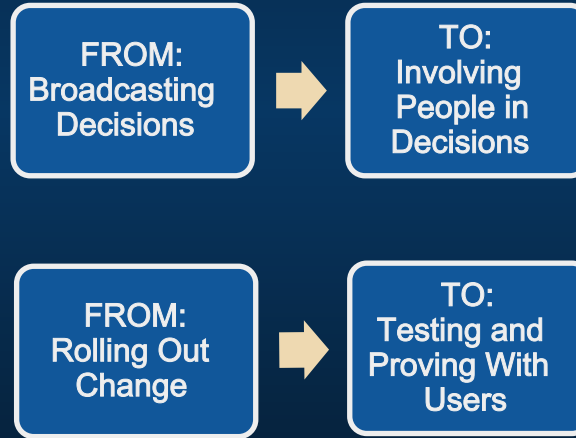
CHALLENGE EIGHT – STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The Ailment

Symptoms:

- Projects are designed *about* stakeholders, not *with* them
- Key groups feel change is being done *to* them, not *by* them – triggering “Not Invented Here” resistance.
- Partner teams blocking or slowing progress
- Ignoring local knowledge and expertise

The Shift



The Cure

Treatment:

- Engage early and keep engaging (not one-off consultations)
- Use trusted frontline champions and super-users
- Co-design key decisions with those affected

STAND OUT ACTION:
Involve stakeholders in shaping one decision they normally resist.

ALSO IN THE REPORT

Other Challenges on the Horizon

AI and Automation

- Exploring AI in existing PPM tools
- Running small pilots for report automation
- Upskilling teams on data literacy

Agile Delivery Methods

- Build stronger relationships with product owners
- Supporting flow, stability and dependencies
- Creating visibility into agile team capacity

Data and Digital

- Establish a central data source for project and resource information
- Leveraging existing tools better before buying new ones
- Better data input at source



The Leadership Opportunity

These challenges cannot be solved by the PMO alone.
They require deliberate leadership choices

1

Prioritise Realistically and Visibly

Stop the 'everything is a priority' culture. Make trade offs clear.

2

Pace the Change

Protect people and outcomes by acknowledging capacity limited

3


Invest in Capability

Don't just buy delivery tools, invest in the skills of the people using them

4

Position PMOs as Partners

Move from admin support to strategic partners involved in supporting early decision -making



Reality on the ground: Five Core Frictions

Fragile executive sponsorship

Strategic PMO is not the default

Capability gaps put pressure on delivery

Prioritisation remains a major pain point

Change fatigue is real and growing





“
not just a support
function; it is the
backbone of delivery in
emergency services.”



Clearly Mandated



Actively Sponsored



Involved Early



Properly Resourced

When these conditions are met, PMOs strengthen delivery confidence, reduce risk, and help organisations focus on the work that matters most.

Perhaps the most powerful outcome of the summit was the sense of shared experience.

You Are Not Alone

PMO professionals left the summit knowing that their struggles are shared across the sector.



It's Not Personal

The challenges faced are systemic, not personal or local.



“When the PMO thrives,
delivery improves. And when
delivery improves, so does
the organisation.”

Signed the Blue Light PMO
Community / House of PMO





Thanks!

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