BUILDING AN ENTERPRISE PMO FROM THE GROUND UP: THE RDU AIRPORT EXPERIENCE

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2019 Project Management Symposium

Agenda

- Background

- The Need

- The Mandate

- RDU's PMO: Concept to Reality

  – *Timeline*

  – *Developing the "Concept"*

  – *Moving to Full-Operations*

  – *Key Lessons We Learned*

About RDU

- Primary airport for the rapidly growing Raleigh/Research Triangle Park area in central North Carolina

  - *11 air carriers*
  - *Nearly 13 million annual passengers*
  - *400+ daily operations*
  - *66 domestic and international locations*
  - *$12.6 billion annual economic impact*
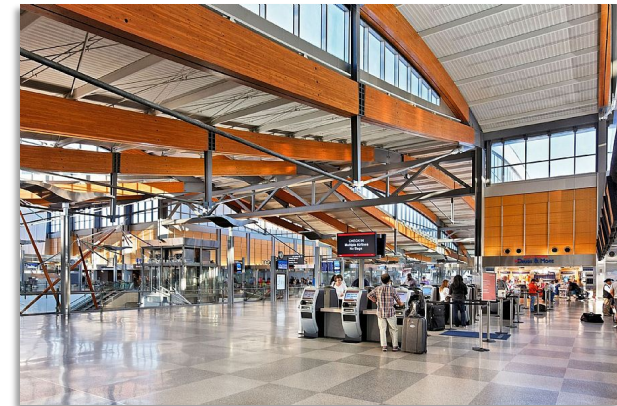
Looking Back... Common Challenges

- RDU has historically done a good job of getting things done!
- Still, we've had our share of project management challenges. Examples include:
  - *Projects vs. Operations:*

    a source of constant tension
  - *Silo mindset*
  - *Inconsistent project management approaches*
  - *Very little collaboration*
- It's important to recognize what your strengths and weaknesses are right from the beginning

The Need for Improvement

- Executive leadership changes
- The modern Airport environment
- Identity crisis
- Demographic transformation
- Strategic and Tactical Planning

The need for a PMO became increasingly clear...

The Mandate Given by Leadership

- Green light given to create a PMO

- Its mandate: To **strengthen, standardize** and **promote** Project Management practice across RDU

  – *This simple mandate drives the services provided and the focus of the PMO*

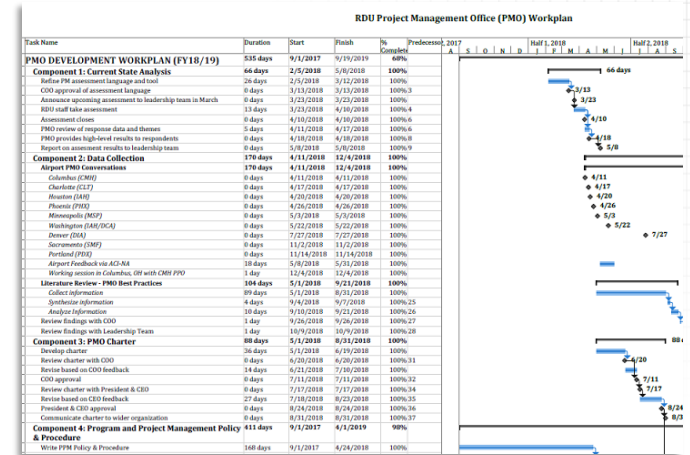# The PMO Concept – Late 2017

- CEO approval in late 2017

- Initial direction was to:

  1. *Study the PMO concept and best practices*

  2. *Understand our current state*

  3. *Transition to the Chief Operating Officer*
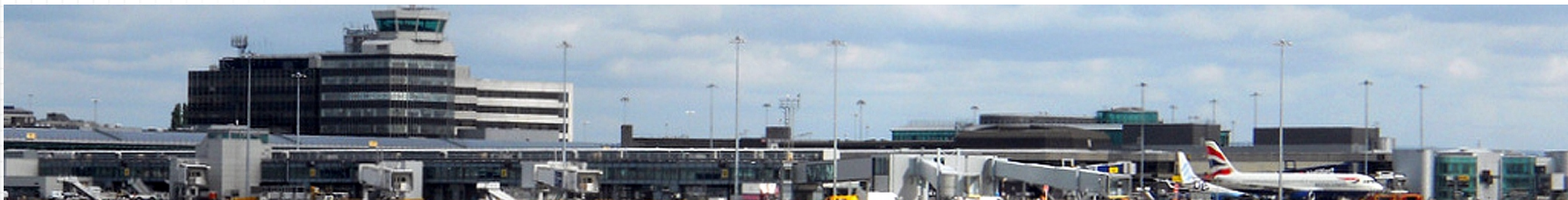
Timeline for our PMO

- One of the first steps was to develop a schedule (aka the workplan)
  - *What has to get done... and when?*

- Eight components of the schedule

- Overall goal was to be in full "Operations" as a PMO by April 1, 2019

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Slide 9

Developing the Concept – Key Actions

- To get to full operations, we first had to do a few things:
  1. *Understand the current state*
  2. *Collect data*
  3. *Develop a charter*
  4. *Write policies and procedures*
  5. *Plan for training*
  6. *Improve existing resources*
  7. *Plan for staffing*
  8. *Conduct change management*

ie, The 8 "Components" of our schedule

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Baseline Maturity Assessment

- February 2018: Baseline maturity assessment sent via Survey Monkey

- Focus was on assessing key project management areas

- Results helped to:
    - *Confirm the value of our general approach*
    - *Recalibrate specific path forward*
    - *Set a baseline against which to measure future progress*

Getting Smart

- In creating a brand new PMO, we needed to learn all we could!

- So we did two primary things:

  1. *Collected data*

  2. *Spoke with other PMOs*

- Took place throughout most of 2018

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Feedback From Other PMOs

- PMOs and the Airport industry
- Conversations with 9 PMO leaders at US airports:
  - *Columbus, Charlotte, Houston, Phoenix, Minneapolis, Washington Metropolitan, Denver, Sacramento, Portland*
- Feedback also gathered from local private-sector firms with PMOs
- Focus was on understanding successes and challenges during PMO set-up; current composition and mandate.

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Literature Review

- Hit the books!
  - *Alpha Project Managers, by Andy Crowe*
  - *The Tactical Guide for Building a PMO, by William Dow*
  - *Delivering Successful PMOs, by Peter Taylor and Ray Mead*
- Scholarly articles, PMI resources, industry white papers, webinars, etc.
- All data/findings loaded into a categorized excel file, then further analyzed for trends and applicability
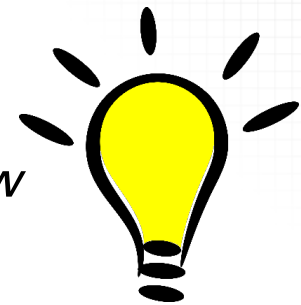
PMO Charter

- Developed and signed in the summer of 2018
- The PMO Charter was/is important because it:
  - *Is a formal document*
  - *Describes the need and business case*
  - *Clarifies the PMO's mandate*
  - *Lists the PMO's "services"*
  - *Is signed by the President & CEO*
- It drives everything the PMO does

**RDU PROJECT MANAGEMENT OFFICE
CHARTER**

August 24, 2018
v1.0
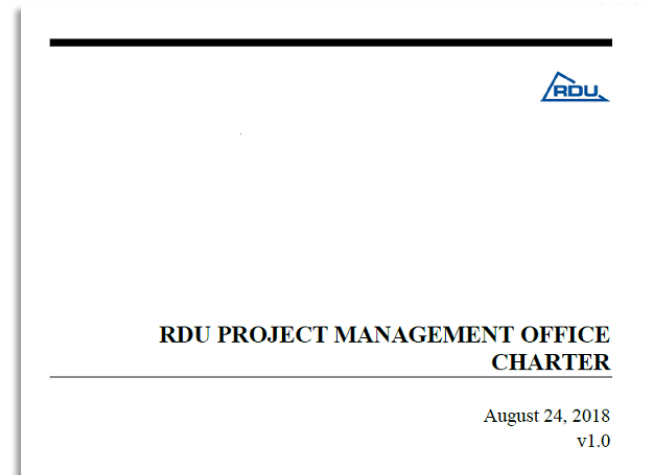
Create Standards

All of 2018

- RDU is a Policy and Procedure-driven organization

- Formal PM standards needed to ensure:

  - *Everyone speaks the same language*

  - *Common project management processes are followed*

  - *The same requirements are met by all*

  - *Accountability for Project Managers and Sponsors*

- Program and Project Management Policy and Procedure developed & approved (big win!)

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Training Plan Development

- Functional vs. Project Staff
- Major need to ensure core group of employees go through basic Project Management training
  - *Understand basic best practices & expectations*
  - *Able to follow the new PM policy & procedure*
- Contracted with a 3rd party firm to build custom training
  - *Released April 2019*

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Improve Existing Resources

- Throughout 2018, we added new tools & templates, best practice material
- Major re-design of internal website
- Re-started community of practice meetings
- Created job-aids, cheat sheets, process flows, etc.

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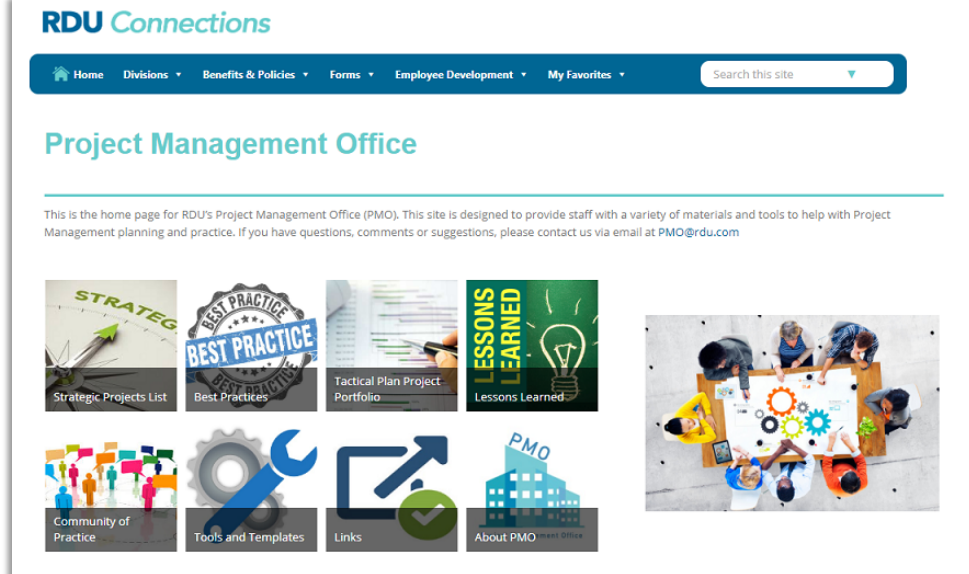
Staffing Analysis

Fall 2018

- How many staff will RDU's PMO need to accomplish what executive leadership asked us to do?

- Staffing analysis conducted:
  - *Estimated hours to complete certain tasks*
  - *Projected against new project workload*
  - *Key assumptions made*

- **Recommendation** = 4 full-time employees

Communications & Change Management

- Change is **hard**. The PMO was a big change for the organization.

- We needed to constantly communicate…
  - *Throughout 2018*
  - *Continues to this day*

- Explaining why a PMO is needed, and what we do

- We communicated via:
  - *Leadership meetings, department "all-hands" meetings, blog posts on the company intranet, and 1:1 meetings, to name a few*

RDU's Experience

- So, you're interested in setting up a brand new Enterprise PMO?
- We learned a lot in the process and hope our experience can help.

The following are the 6 primary lessons we learned, for your consideration...

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Key Lessons Learned (1 of 2)

Six key areas of lessons learned when setting up a new PMO

1. **Leadership Support**
   – *Executive support is mandatory*

2. **Change Management**
   – *You will have critics. It's a fact of life.*
   – *Try to win them over… but, be careful not to "over-cater" to any one group*

Key Lessons Learned (2 of 2)

3. Data Collection

– *Take time to learn; posture yourself based on what you learn*

4. Communication

– *Transparently and constantly talk about the "why"*

5. Value over bureaucracy

– *Your job is to add value. Any other outcome is a loss*

6. Walk before you run

– *Be realistic right out of the gate; under-promise and over-deliver*

Questions?

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