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# 10 KILLER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PMO ROLES

August 8, 2018 By Ten Six  
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Sooner or later, you'll need to hire staff for your PMO and need the relevant interview questions. Part of PMO implementation planning ([https://tensix.com/pmo-implementation/](https://tensix.com/pmo-implementation/pmo-implementation-)

planning/), is ensuring that you have enough staff to carry out the functions that are required.

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Many PMOs are created from internal team members who want to move across from project management into a PMO role. Or you may find bright and enthusiastic people from other divisions who would be a good fit for the PMO. However, it may also be necessary to look outside the organization to bring in some PMO expertise.

Whether you plan to recruit externally or try to source your PMO team from your existing workforce, you will have to interview candidates. Here are 10 killer interview questions for PMO roles. These interview questions will help you sift through your pool of candidates and find the best fit for you.

## 1. What services should the PMO provide?

PMOs are all different, so there is no standard, 'perfect' response to this question. Ideally, the candidates answer should reflect that. They may also list some of the services that PMOs commonly provide such as:

- standardized reporting
- project prioritization
- portfolio management
- financial forecasting
- capacity planning
- project manager training

## 2. How would you go about setting up a PMO?

If your candidate knows the organization well, they may have a specific idea of how this would work in your business. If they are an external candidate, you should expect

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them to talk about how they would find out the needs of the business, the landscape of current tools and processes and how they plan to get to know the key stakeholders.

The candidate should then go on to describe how they would plan the implementation and ensure that it is carried out according to the plan.

Bonus points if the candidate mentions the typical challenges when planning how to implement a PMO (<https://tensix.com/pmo-implementation/pmo-implementation-planning/>), and talks about how they would address them!

### 3. How do you share best practices within a team?

Your PMO team will be responsible for setting up standard processes and sharing lessons learned across delivery teams. From sharing planning best practices (<https://tensix.com/pmo-implementation/pmo-planning-best-practices/>), to improving schedule quality (<https://tensix.com/pmo-implementation/pmo-scheduling-best-practices/>), there are a ton of ways that the PMO can lead on making sure that people are learning from each other. The candidate should talk about a few of these, like sharing the output from lessons learned meetings, coaching individuals, standardizing and updating processes and so on.

If the interviewee doesn't provide a concrete example in their response, ask them to talk about a time where they have shared best practices with colleagues, or improved a

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process for the benefit of others beyond themselves.

## 4. What experience do you have of PMO and project management tools?

There's no obligation for a candidate to have used the software that you have in house, although they will certainly find it easier to get started if they have prior experience of using what you have, whether that is Primavera P6, Microsoft Project, or something else.

You're listening to find out if they have experience of software tools. It is possible to run small PMOs without bespoke software, but there are efficiencies to be gained from having the right technology in place and being comfortable to use it. Knowing that your candidate has some experience with PMO software will help you gain confidence that they could quickly learn the tools you have.

## 5. How would you manage new project requests in the PMO?

Expect the candidate to talk about the process for submitting new requests, the system for analysing and approving these and then how they would prioritize the work.

You can dig deeper on this question by asking how the process works in their current/previous role and what

improvements they would make to those processes.

## 6. How do you determine the

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## organization's resource capacity?

There are several good responses to this question, and you're really looking to check that they understand about capacity planning and hopefully have some experience of how it works in real life. The candidate might talk about tools, timesheets, planning around holidays, shared resource calendars and so on.

Give the candidate an extra tick if they talk about earned value management (<https://tensix.com/evms-consulting/>), and how that relates to tracking time and effort on projects.

## **7. Tell me about a time when you were responsible for coaching, mentoring or training others on an aspect of project management.**

You are looking to find out how deep their project management knowledge goes. Do they have enough background to be able to support your project delivery teams? If not, how could they get that and build the credibility to be the first point of call for your project managers?

This won't be an appropriate question for junior roles, but you could ask them about how they have supported their colleagues in the role that they do. Even very junior members of staff often find themselves

helping and mentoring other colleagues because they have specialist skill in a particular area.

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## 8. How do you deal with conflicting priorities?

Ask the candidate to give you a specific example of when they have had to deal with conflicting priorities (preferably a workplace example). Listen for how comfortable they seem dealing with conflict, and any strategies they used to defuse the situation. This is all about how well they negotiate and present dissenting views.

## 9. How would you plan to gain support for the PMO and the work that we do?

Building support for the PMO is essential, regardless of how long your PMO has been around for. Internal candidates could talk about particular individuals who they would look to for support, or their plans for networking and socializing ideas around the PMO.

External candidates should have a similar approach. They need to understand the fabric of the business in order to be able to influence. But it's also about quick wins and credible results that show the team is adding real value.

## 10. What do you think a successful PMO would look like for us?

If the candidate struggles to answer this question, ask them to describe what success looks like in the PMO where they currently work.

They should talk about setting objectives and tracking progress against those. It doesn't actually matter what the objectives are, as long as they are agreed by everyone.

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Ideally, the interviewee should also make the end to the PMO supporting the strategic goals of the business. They should fit in so well to the organization that everyone wonders how you got by without them.

## After the Interview

There's no right or wrong answer to these interview questions. They are designed to help you gain an insight into the character and potential of the candidate you are meeting.

After the interview, review your interview notes from all your candidates. You can then make a decision on who would be the best fit for your PMO right now. Soon you will be welcoming the newest member of your team.

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