

PMPOV119 - The Impact Engine Transcript

Announcer

This is PM point of view, the podcast that looks at project management from all the angles. Here's your host Kendall Lott.

Kendall

Hello PMS this is something new today. Today I've got for you a readers panel. What is that you? I have with me a best friend and colleague, Laura Bernard, and she is an award-winning PMO consultant and fellow founding board member of our nonprofit. PM for change. More on that in and of our podcast. But right now. What we're here to talk about is her years of wisdom that she. Distilled into a. Book The impact engine accelerating strategy delivery for PMO and transformation leaders. And it's coming out September 10th, 2024. It's a very, very good book. It's a beautiful book. Yes. Go and buy it. OK, we're done with the recording. Oh, no, just kidding. The real trick today is that I have with US 3 professionals who've been through her program and use the techniques that she outlines in her impact engine in different ways. And they've had pre released copies of the book. Yeah. Jelly much. Anyway, here we are today. And what we want to hear from them is as real practitioners. And consultants, what have they gotten out of the impact engine journey that they've? Not. And we have the book as our source material. So let's talk PMOs today. Let's talk about making it real. So welcome panel. So first of all, see if I can get everyone's name right. I have with me today. Willetta love. Is that right Willetta you there?

Willetta

Yeah, that's excellent. Tell us who you are, what you do.

Speaker

Hello.

Willetta

Hi I am Willetta love. I'm into Maryland area and I work for a not-for-profit organization as an associate director of Project Management and process optimization. Not for not-for-profit. Also for about 30 years.

Speaker

Oh wow.

Willetta

And if you have ever been overwhelmed, especially as a new project manager with new responsibilities, or if you struggled with unclear expectations or limited resources. I partner with you and help you to enhance your project outcomes by embracing a strategic mindset. I help to bringing others with you through changes with less stress and.

Speaker

Ah.

Willetta

Finally I help you to overcome self-doubt to lead projects with confidence.

Kendall

Oh dear audience, I haven't tell you that there's at least 2 themes in there that I've heard in this book before, so somebody is singing from the right song sheet, meaning people where they're at right. That's definitely one of them. And having the right mindset. So we've got, we'll let her ready to play our game today with the right mindset. So that's great, Andrea Cirelli, who you are, what you do.

Andrea

Hello. Hello and I am the senior director of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation's PMO Project Management Office. And I have been. She's doing Laura's program for quite some time. I forget how many years, but I've done it across three different companies and I love it. And I actually love diving into support and helping people and the human side. Of project management and I think that it's very important and like we'll let us that change happens to people, right and. I'm happy to be able to be supporting people through all kinds of change, whether it's business challenges, strategic changes, organizational changes. Crises, all of it.

Kendall

And you couldn't have done it without the impact engine, or at least would have been helpful.

Willetta

Yeah.

Andrea

Nope. Yeah, I call this book my purple plan. All right. Because I love it so much. And that's exactly what it is. It's it's on my desk every day and it's my.

Kendall

Landlord. So listeners, the book is purple, which is the branding strategy there for Laura. So that's why we have a purple plan book. So Andrea, the repeat transformation offender, here we go. OK, got it. You keep coming back for some more. And then we have Gregor Androjna tell us who you are, where you're about, where you calling him from.

Gregor

Hi. Hello. Hello. I'm Gregor Androjna. I am a business consultant and I'm from Slovenia. Small country in Europe. So I help on strategic execution through projects and people. Basically I helped to implement them, let's say project management office or something around that and I use impact engine system for that because it's really good. To do it, and beside that I run also some peers, mastermind workshop groups and so on and I am involved in all local community. I'm somehow a leading expert in this field.

Kendall

Well, there we go. I've heard three guests talk about it's about the people. So interesting for you, project managers that are still trapped on your Gantt charts. We you you've heard from Mike Hannon and I enough now to know that that's not the answer. Right. OK. Good with that we go over to the grinning and the smiling. The one and only the author. Laura Bernard. Laura say hi to everyone.

Laura

I'm so happy to be here and I know that our audience listening can't see my face, but I've been grinning ear to ear, bringing some of my favorite people together all in one virtual place to have a conversation. So I'm gonna try and make it through this episode without crying. That's my goal.

Kendall

Yeah, yeah. It's my goal to have all my guests cry. On my podcast, it's so much fun. OK, so let's kick this off. So we talk about the impact engine. That's what she calls it, and it's about accelerating strategy delivery. It's about causing delivery to happen. I thought that was interesting, but before I really get into the book much, I just thought I would. Ask. I'll start with you. With that, I'd like to hear from each of you. You came to this as a professional. None of you were novices when you showed up. You knew things and then you engaged in the process of training certification with Laura and then now you've had a chance. To. Read the book when you reflect on reading. The. Book what reminds you was one of the most interesting things in

the book that it is highlighting whether you already knew it or not, just what did you find most interesting in the book?

Willetta

For me it was the weaving and of the people side of the change. I was leading initiative where for the first time ever the organization was going to implement a common approach to how they manage projects and I felt like I was banging my head up against the wall because people tend to jump straight to solutions.

Kendall

Hmm. Yeah.

Willetta

And it was causing what I call a lot of pain where the question would come up. Why aren't they getting it? We should marinate it. Why don't they just do it? And in the impact engine system from the very start? You have got to involve the people because they want, as Laura says. Change. They don't want change done to them. They want change done with done and. So bringing the learning from being a part of lawyers impact engine system program and of course you just mentioned, I'm certified in that and I kept coming back and applying things and applying things specifically out the stakeholder piece, getting people to ask. He questions about the people. Don't assume. So the stakeholder pees because you want people to go with you from the beginning to the end. It was so critical until my folks started saying. What about this? Stakeholder it's not the people, it's that stakeholders. Get their input.

Kendall

So you knew about that and then you got to see it affirmed in this book and you get to execute it or was it a reminder to you and your?

Willetta

Well, for me I have certified also in ADKAR or Prosci change management which is again what is integrated and with the impact engine system. Again the people side of it. So I had some insight into that, but once I started rolling with Laura. Yeah. And the way that she says, you know, certain things it was. Because you can get frustrated, right? I had to learn about myself. I love the leadership piece that she has in her program as well. I had to assess myself. How do I show up? How do I get in the way and through that assessment, it's like, OK, what triggers me? I had to ask myself questions first, which she provided those tools.

Speaker

Hmm.

Willetta

So that I can when I showed up, I wouldn't be triggered and I have to also get a sense of how other people. Show up. They're not against me. We all want to go in the same direction and want the same things. But I had to get out of the way and through the structured tools in the process I was able to ask better questions and not get triggered in a way where I could bring people along with me. And when I say, I hope other people to build the confidence I'm here today, I don't have confidence because of this program. It is always about the people. It's about the invisible stuff. What's going on? Inside of your head that is causing you to behave in a certain way, or make certain decisions. So I have to start with me. And then get a sense of how other people show up. And so yeah, stakeholder piece, the whole mindset piece, I really look at it as an iceberg. We see things on top, but what about the stuff underneath? How do you get that to the surface? And a lot of what I learned through the program really helped me to ask those better questions. So that I can better plan the strategies to keep people moving through the.

Kendall

Range and it's in the book. That's the thing that I found interesting too, is you opened with its woven throughout the book. I think that's something that's embedded in it. And that's interesting. Well, there's a lot there that you gave us that we may have to come back to and check in on you there about. But I do appreciate what.

Andrea

You gave us there and Andrea, what you find interesting in the book? Like, didn't I find interesting? I feel like I, you know, and I and I know it so well.

Kendall

Pick 3.

Andrea

It, yeah. One of the things right up front was I think you quoted Harvard Business Review, Laura, in the book, 95% of the typical workforce does not understand their companies strategy 95% and that is so true. I can tell you from being the last couple of you know, organizations I've been into across different industries. Sometimes that strategy is seen as just a. Fluffy white piece of the paper. Sometimes it's like, what does this say again? We people don't know Mission, vision statements or anything like that. So for me that you know, that's what I found interesting as well. And then you also mentioned that business leaders need to find the right

balance between ambition and practicality. And between aspirations and capacity. Wow. Like I just, you know, and I can see it in my role now too. And I look back and I see the companies that I've worked for that didn't survive. Right. Well, and there's a lot.

Speaker

Hmm.

Andrea

You know the leadership gets stuck on certain things and it's no wonder why the staff. Can't. Or 95% of the workforce doesn't understand strategy, right? So I found that very interesting. I mean when I found the program. I needed help because I was building a PMO and running blind, so I got my plan book from the program itself and used. That. And immediately connected with strategy. So with the organization I was in and then when you know my stories in the book, I won't leak it, but it allowed me to build what I needed to build with the leadership. And then shift quickly when it needed to. So I really dove deep into the books, focus on what can be wrong with strategy and leadership, and the trickle-down effects it has on the organization.

Speaker

As a whole.

Kendall

Yeah, so lack of clear strategy, lack of everyone understanding it and it's actually helped you build and shift is what I just heard. So there's also something about the ability to turn and change as you go through it that some of this hinted at it, the book in some ways you remind me of some of the stuff that I like in the book when you started talking about that, but Gregor? But you find interesting.

Gregor

Yeah, I can just support this. What? Andrea and Violetta said. However, I would say that I was very happy to see that this change management is so integrated in this process in this book and the system, because it's really an important pillar of the implementation. When you do those projects. So it simply connects.

Speaker

People.

Gregor

Paul leadership and project management. The problem in the field is that there is a lot of some systems or even books or standards which are all about project management and they have no integration with change management, not agnostic for leadership. And we all know now that the most biggest challenges lie in people which has to change. And in leadership level, because we have to translate strategy to the day-to-day operations. In our work, and this is our big challenge. So I think it's beautiful. It's implemented all the way from the start to the end. How we should work with people, talk with people and it really help us to implement the system, so that serves. To the people.

Kendall

But you're all still hitting on this people part, and I think you're also getting to something about the fact that it's implementation.

Andrea

And.

Kendall

Ready sense of it. And I think that was important when I was reflecting on the book right now. And I would tell readers there's a certain part of this that is not uncommon to things that you may have read before, right? In some ways. If I look at the flow part of the flow to pick it up mid stride here is you're going to do an assessment. You're going to define what you need. You're going to plan for what you need. You're going to deliver what you need. So that kind of flow is in there that will look familiar. What I found interesting is what we heard today about weaving the people in, for example. And I think there's an issue of practicality. I want to come back to here now is that kind of flow can be written anywhere, but there's something. About how you have set it up, Laura, that I think is really important and it's the first two parts before that which have to do with the mindset and the recognition as well that is hurt hit on the conference builder. I'm going to take it as you are, the impact. Driver. There is an ownership and accountability. If we're choosing to be a PMO leader. And to deliver value which I think we should also get into what the whole purpose of these PMO's are. So there is a common flow in this, but it's about what you do when you assess. It's about what you do when you engage with leadership. And so I think also taking the ownership of that agency of driving it as a person who runs the engine sounds like something we've heard there. So with that in mind, I'm going to talk to Willetta or Andrea as someone who's had to execute into it, not consult to it, but actually execute into it. What did you see important in the role of getting your mindset? Straight.

Willetta

So for me personally, it was already know enough. Right. And because? We have a tendency to have imposter syndrome. And when I connected with Laura and even continuing with the book which I use as a reference, it just we all have gaps, right, that's the continuing assessment as an individual, right. Where am I now? Where do I want to go? What gaps do I have to close that's a continuous.

Speaker

Yes.

Willetta

Question that should always be asked about yourself and about others that you're working with. So for me it just. Helps fine tune what I already know so that I can be better at helping others to accelerate delivery of their strategy because of course everyone wants it like yesterday. But sometimes you have to slow down to speed.

Speaker

Beep.

Willetta

Up. And so just taking responsibility for just, you know, being curious and courageous and saying.

Laura

I'm here to.

Willetta

Help and not just take be an order taker.

Speaker

Hmm.

Willetta

With a lot of times executives come to you and say, go and do this, but I'm a white person, right? But suppose you're connecting with someone that's not a white person. How do you help them to slow down, answer critical questions that you need other than saying, oh, y'all can do that and run off to a solution. Karen, I asked some questions.

Speaker

1st.

Willetta

To find out. Then uncovered the invisible. Right. Why we're doing this? Does it align with what we want to do?

Andrea

Right.

Kendall

And you and have you experienced that after you started going through this, has it helped you then ask? Those questions and.

Willetta

It reinforces it. Ask it helps me to ask those questions. It gives me the language so that if there is any challenge or stress with the person that I'm interacting with.

Speaker

Hmm.

Willetta

For me, I just look, it's just information. That's how that person is wired. Is it making me feel a certain way? Is it causing me triggers cause literally for me it's like how do I stand the game or letter? How do I stay in the game and not get in the way of myself and so often I find myself and I think it was page 69 is where it starts to stick. Holder piece of it. I tend to go there a lot.

Laura

But.

Willetta

And then the person who's the sponsor, that is usually the senior leader in the executive, which is I think it starts on page. 80 or because the business is responsible for telling me what they want, what is their strategy and all the times they leave that to the people whom they make response, you know, assign the task of delivering the strategy without giving them that upfront information. So Kendall, it's really hard, I'm like. Andrew, I mean, I'm all over this. Book what all this stuff. But I find myself going back to this this bring them with you, the stakeholder piece in particular in the sponsor piece because there. This specific there are challenges with when you're working with people they already know the answer, but I'm able to come back because

I've done the work. I don't skip the work right? I'm able to use the questions that are provided, do the assessment first. Don't assume. That they know. And as an individual, I don't assume that I know. That they know, or that I.

Kendall

Know and I think that's important. That's where you actually opened even before we got to assessment was getting the mindset right and take any agency in it. You opened with you have gaps. It took a second to think about what you know and don't know. So you can. Be able to engage with the leadership.

Willetta

And you know why, Kendall? Because I'm engaging with you.

Speaker

Bye.

Willetta

I only know you for how much time that we've been here in this conversation. I need to go a little bit deeper and ask you those questions. If I am to partner with you and the way to support you and to help you to get to whatever that success.

Speaker

Hmm.

Willetta

Looks like for you.

Kendall

So let me turn that to Andrea. What did you find in that before you even get to the assessment? Was there anything in there that was new to you or different to you cause we're talking about people and this starts with you as the PMO leader or needing to be the leader finding the gaps and understanding.

Laura

Thank.

Andrea

Before I answer that, if I might, I want to add on to that question that you asked Willetta. So what I found and I think this is around page 61, is that Laura says done is better than perfect.

Speaker

Oh.

Andrea

A good enough ServiceNow is better than a perfect service. Never. And that is huge because we don't know how to know exactly how to fix things or how to how to do something or fix everybody's problem. But we have to listen understanding those pain points and get them thinking about it in the right ways. And that goes hand in hand with something else. She mentioned in the book. Which is when you're trying to compile the list of portfolios of the projects and the portfolio. Even in incomplete list of projects is going to demonstrate value because you are providing transparency that's going to get traction. So I think you said momentum beats stagnation and I never been somewhere with this many projects. I mean this is the entire Massachusetts, you know, transportation system, highway. Bridges, roads, right transit. It's like. I don't even think I could ever provide a full exact number of everything happening at the same time at this, you know, inactive or coming in. So this information and that mindset is so important. If we can capture a majority of what is important to them, the leadership to understand that we can make decisions with that, we could be highly effective with that's huge. That's so important, right? And I think that. That. For me, I want to learn more on these pieces. I want to learn more about the unknown of how to execute that point of not execute, but how to be involved in developing the strategy for an organization, right? Not just their mission statement and vision, but where do they want to be in the future? How do they want to grow, what they need to grow? What the environment around them look like competition, all of that, right? So how to get there? But this book is perfect for that because the handoff from all that is for the PMO, PMO is going to execute strategy. Whether it's project by project or whether it's the entire strategy of the entire organization, we've got.

Speaker

Pam.

Kendall

I will come back to that in just a minute, but the two of you have opened up a question for me that I actually want to go to the guru on this. When you just described that the perfect is the enemy of the good, right, this idea, that momentum over stagnation done now is better than perfect later ever. Never getting done. Laura, I have a question for you.

Willetta

MHM.

Kendall

Which is why do you think that happens and why is it endemic in PMOS or project managers or professionals? Why is that an important statement to say? I think we can all understand it and it's a good awakening. Perhaps that's a great idea. I think that's what our guests are telling us. But why? Does. That happen. What is the condition where we insist on getting all the bullets? Because getting all the projects defined before we do anything. What's going on there?

Laura

You know, I think there's actually a few things going on and a lot of it is really internal. I love how everyone's kind of really honing in on that. This is a system and there's a process to it, but it's so much about. How you get there with and through the people and that means you have to really be tuned into like, well, let us said, not just the other people that you're engaging with, but yourself. And I think that it while it is different for different people, the reasons few that I've seen that are pretty common with our mastermind students that I personally get to coach and spend time with like will let Andrea and Gregor. There's few things. One, I think it's confidence, right? Well, that it touched on this about how much this has helped her confidence. And I've gotten to see the three of these folks that are with us. The day really grow and build their confidence over time. I'm so incredibly proud of them because a lot of people go into this without being sure. You know, they don't have the confidence no one taught them how to engage properly with executives. Nobody taught them to ask this the questions that we teach them to. Asked. And so they're walking around in a little bit of fear, a little bit of imposter syndrome or a little bit of just trying to keep iterating and iterating and iterating on the same things because they just aren't sure that this is the thing that they need to do. And just yesterday in our mastermind Pro. Someone was talking about, well, how do I know what to put on the dashboard, right? You know, for the executives and the C-Suite needs to see some stuff. And how do I know? How do I know? And this is someone has been patched on for a while, but she's been gone for the last few months, very busy on sort of high importance projects. But I just asked her a very simple question. I was like, well, what have your executive said when you asked them what information they need to make decisions? And she said, oh gosh. I haven't done that yet. And I was like, well, that's why you have this beer, this concern because you haven't asked the right questions, right. So that's why it's so important to ask those questions up front because that builds the confidence and you can get away with doing a lot less if you're laser focused on solving the right problem, not the symptoms that are showing up, but the root cause of the problem. And you're sure you're at it and you're talking to your executives or your

stakeholders and you say? OK. How might we to quote my Canon? How might we solve this together? What is the thing that you're going to need? What's the information you're going to need? What's the decision that you need to make? You will get a lot more confidence faster and you're not going to do 15 things. Guessing is this it or is this it? Or is this it? You know, because you're asking those, right. Question. So I think a lot of it is confidence, but there's another factor here, Kendall. And sometimes and I talk about breaking habits and building the right ones in, in the book. But one of the challenges we have is that. We are in a space where a lot of project people have been told that their value lies in their certification.

Speaker

Hmm.

Laura

And so they have been told they're hired for those certifications. They're put on projects because of the certifications, even it's in like RFP's request for proposals from or request for quotes from companies. So like, we'll make sure that we're going to see all these people that are with this certification or that certification. So what's happening, Kendall is that we see a lot of people who. Believe that their value to the organization. Is in that. Certification because that's why they were hired. They're sent. Off to training. So they believe that their only value proposition is in the certification they provide. Therefore they must provide so much stuff and they must get it perfect to live up to this fantasy world of applying every tool to every project. Every time. And that's part of what we need to break is that it's about right sizing and executive I. Talked to by. The way they say, please don't give me all the things. Give me just what I need. Just enough to keep us moving forward faster. Accelerating our strategy delivery, not slowing it down. But that's this disconnect that we have is that there's some confidence. Of going on for sure. And then people are misunderstanding the purpose of that training and those certifications and believing their value is tied to it. Therefore they need to perfect. State if they're going to be seen as valuable in the organization and what I say is actually, that's the opposite. What your true value to the organization is where you can take all that knowledge and distill it down to precisely what that organization needs for each project for the portfolio, for the decision making, for the dashboard. So that that's where your true value is and being able to take what you know. And apply only what is needed so that you're not slowing things down and instead can speed them up so those are two of the common.

Kendall

Things we see I had that same experience with clients. Myself, as a matter of. Where the idea was, as it turns out, we turned to you because you seem to have read a lot of the different stuff and have all the different ideas that you can bring to us. And I said, yeah, you're paying me to

have done all that work for you. And then I paused and I said no, actually, you're paying me to throw away most of it.

Laura

Wait.

Kendall

Gregory, I want to turn to you because of something you had said earlier to me before we went on the call was that you were referring to management studies and entrepreneurial lessons and people taking coursework and getting to go to programs to study that. And you said, look, there's a lot of ways to learn about management, entrepreneurship, etcetera. But there is only one impact engine and its power was it. It is a practical system. So you're there in the consultative role. So I'm intrigued as you approach clients, what has been one of the major areas of making it practical that you had to get them across? What has been the hardest part in terms of convincing clients or bringing clients? Across the barrier across the transom, right.

Gregor

Yeah, you're right. It is a challenge when you try to implement or help clients through this. However, the system and book is really helpful. First of all, it builds you mindset, gets you this awareness, how to proceed and when you come to the clients you. Have some, let's say tools how to talk with them and how to engage them. And the usual thing is that they're simply not aware of the situation. They are not aware that the, let's say building super planning tool or process will help them to solve this, not project management problem but they want to solve business problem and this is the real key that they have to learn to get awareness that they have to focus. What is in a day-to-day work? The problem? What are the challenges, opportunities and of course they have to also include their strategy level because the initiatives from. Strategy are the ones who are translated to projects and has to be executed, and it's a real challenge to open a perspective, their minds that it's not about project management because they usually actually hire us, help us to fix project management. We have to educate project managers.

Speaker

Here.

Gregor

And you say, OK, let. Do that, but when you start the conversation and everything, it's about mindset and making this awareness so that they can make a decision to change, and only then they can learn something how to do it. And this is really helpful to have, let's say this

integration with change management on. The top of the project management and connect to leadership and you cannot do it if you don't know they are with them. There is what is in it for me and this is for each person who is supposed to change.

Kendall

Now, are you looking at that in the leadership level or at the change management? Level once the PMO is trying to provide delivery, where do you run into that observation of this WIIFM problem?

Gregor

Well, this week it is important to understand that every person who are you talking to, every sponsor or stakeholder or this client. It's driven by interest. So if you can understand what he wants, you can address that and you can try to help. Him go in front and help to find the solution and he will engage and this is critical. If you don't engage people you don't get the solution.

Willetta

What just got triggered, Kendall, when you asked that question? Because really it is the organization is 1 and you were asking the question from the from the perspective you know. What level did you do it and? What triggered for me, especially in this program, everything we do should be aligned at all levels and its people will get the work.

Laura

Time.

Willetta

They all make decisions based on the data that they know at the time, which is why I know I emphasized the assessment piece a lot. And as Gregor just mentioned, depending on the relevant stakeholder for what initiative you're trying to drive or the work you're trying to drive, you want at all levels to ask those people. The information to get the data to help inform the decision makers to make the decision they need to.

Speaker

Hmm. Right.

Willetta

Wherever they sit in. The organization and all needs to be aligned to ultimately. The overall strategy all of it has to be aligned.

Kendall

Well, Linda, do you find the problem is getting the clarity of the strategy or getting that alignment? What's the strategy is no. What's? Harder in your.

Willetta

Experience. So in this program, which is so significant. As I mentioned earlier, people tend to skip to the solution, but don't skip any of the steps in this system because all the work should be aligned with driving the strategy of the organization. Period. And then ask me that question again.

Kendall

Here's my specific question. When you are engaged with this and you start to help with the optimization, which I believe is in your. Title right is the problem. We need to go through the. But do you find it is more typical that the strategy is not known by the leadership? In other words, it's help getting that to happen? Or is it? No, they typically know, and I gotta pull it out of it because the problem is the alignment and the clarity to others. What?

Willetta

Do you find a bigger problem? So again, in the very in the beginning of the? Any engagement, that's what we talked about. Because whatever project strategy you have, it needs to be aligned with the business strategy. Period. And in this program it helps you to identify where people have contacts at all levels of the organization. But we're able to ask specific questions to help facilitate the conversation in a way to gather that information. You have the business strategy is the foundation of everything else that comes after. It.

Speaker

Yeah.

Willetta

And sometimes you just see, sometimes it's there, sometimes it's. Not, but it's an opportunity, particularly from a PMO perspective, to lend your service too. Do you want to say, do you want help with that to help the link to gain clarity?

Gregor

Let me jump in. I think the biggest challenge is not about strategy. It might be firm or not or details or not. But the point is that usually people do not translate strategy initiatives to projects. They Simply put those strategy initiatives to our business units and they expect that this will be. This will happen and everything will be solved and the initiatives will be done at the

end of the year and they don't treat it as a project, they don't follow it, they don't define the business case, the goals, their operational goals or even they do. And try to make some strategy or sequences how this initiative has to be laid down in the execution stage, because you have several business units and all of those units try to execute those initiatives which are by the way not in any list of the. Projects to be managed. And then you have simply a lot of work. People are crossing the business units, working all around and meeting multitasking, fatigue and exhaustion and everything because there is no control. So strategy is really not translated to project and it's not managed.

Kendall

Uh, you just said something that actually was a quote I had. I don't know if it's in this book, but something Laura did to me. The time I was about to walk up on stage to give a presentation and she was pondering something and she said, hey, Kendall, before you get up there, tell me something like what's the biggest problem for a CEO ever in a small company, small consulting firm and I turned around and I said where the hell is everybody? And it's exactly what you just said and it's this you spend all of January end of December, January building this year's application of the strategy and everyone's all excited and you do the team building, you do all the meeting and you describe what we're going to do. And as CEO, I turn around nine months later and I'm asking, OK, so where are we? And it was like all the reasons something else. Happened that we didn't actually do the thing. We all know the strategy I'm trying to get clarity on the strategy. I'm trying to make sure that they all communicated. We built it collaboratively. I've done all of that. The problem is where the hell is everybody? I did everything right to have this team ready to deliver on the strategy, but the translation had failed. So I'm sorry guys, I interrupted your book story here with my own story, but it it's probably been one of the most important pieces of advice. I gave myself.

Laura

Which takes me to one.

Kendall

Of the best things I got in. The book and I would like your input on this. Whoever wants to speak to it. Right in the middle of the book, almost exactly in the middle of the book, is the jewel for me, which is when the leader is the problem. So tell me your experience about. When the leader is the problem.

Laura

Well, I do want to say one thing on that while there's only one page, it's secretly hidden throughout the entire book can delete when the leaders, the problem, hint, hint right. But

yeah, maybe only one page, but I know that this is something that these folks have certainly dealt with and it's just, you know, part of the course in dealing with.

Kendall

It's underlined in my book here. So tell me guys, what are you experience when the leader is a problem in this context, not being snarky about it, but in fact it is the leadership that we are trying to meet halfway. We're trying to bring them along with us. We have the Impact Engine; we have layers of strategy. We're going to make sure everyone's getting there with them, taken care of and it's about finding the business problem delivery. But the leader is the problem. Experience thoughts is.

Speaker

Yeah.

Gregor

That real to you? I believe that leaders get disconnected from people, OK. And actually they hired me last time for that because they don't need to know what is going on in the operation or everyday work. And the point is that they think also that there is operation and there is.

Andrea

Yeah.

Gregor

Project management styles and this is all technical things and they don't want to get involved and they think, OK, we will make strategy and everything will happen. And even though as I said, it's not translated to the. Projects, even though they expect that projects will be done, they are not. Simply they are not, because there is no connection and there is this connection to leadership and they don't listen. And here they are not aware that this is always basically their job to define those projects, to define those goals, to be a sponsor, which is a critical role. For the PMO, for the impact engine system, for the any project for construction or it whatever, if you don't have a sponsor which are usually from the leadership decision makers. The projects tend to fail. So they really have to get involved, but they don't want to. And the beautiful thing of this book from one point of view is it's not focused on project management, but it's focused on this leadership and change management, everything around to help understand the leadership of the people, how to connect those 3 worlds. So project management, leadership and through change management.

Kendall

Excellent, excellent. We'll let you were going to say.

Willetta

Lord, you see this all the time, leaders, they don't know what they don't know, right? They have short attention spans. They're off to the next thing and they do have a tendency to want to dump things. And you know you. Take care of it this. Is what I want, blah blah blah. You figure out how to do it, but I think again through a structured approach, help them to know what their role is, because a lot of times they don't know what you want for them and how they should show and so you know we get instruction around how we can go about that. And really again, I can't help but keep reinforcing. Ask the question, ask questions. Get the information, because when they start to act up or don't do things and don't show up, you're able to go back to say. This is what you said. Well, let it didn't. Say it. This is what you said you wanted for these. Reasons. Has something changed? That's part of the conversation to ongoing communication you should have. Have. With your sponsor, that's part of another tool in this program. Be focused when you have to have a communication plan and get agreement. This is when we're going to talk that cannot fly in and fly out, get an agreement about when you're going to have these conversations and don't wait for them. Reach out. You have to help them because they do they. Have so much. Going on and then also I know and I incorporated within our approach. Just one sheet. Depending on where we are in the project. Are key questions where they can't just come and say? How's it going? What do you need? No. There are specific questions that they need to ask, depending on where the project is to help them focus the mindset from the project methodology or the output or deliverables to are we driving progress towards the. Outcome. Or to the success that you said that you want because that's the critical question to get their interest, especially if we need their help. If there are some challenges to get things back on track. So literally there are another stakeholder. What is their role if they don't know? Have a conversation at the start and but then you have to help them throughout the entire engagement.

Kendall

Andrew.

Andrea

Yeah, I absolutely agree. I agree with both Gregor and we'll let her on these things and hearing just familiar situations, right. Sometimes I think we have to read the room right. We have to read the leaders. There are instances where leaders are inexperienced, right, and they, like you said, don't know what they don't know. So if they ask you, or if you try to explain things and dig deep to what's important for them, they still need to be open to or receptive right to what you're saying. And that's a little bit harder when we talk about taking our people through

change. Sometimes you have to do. That with the leadership too. Sometimes there are businesses where they're head and cells and all of the leadership is scrambling and chaos. It takes a little more effort, a lot more effort to get them to listen and get them to understand. Where they need to be looking right a little more challenging. But Laura's book is tons of ways of how to speak the leadership, how to understand what's in it for them. And I think one of the biggest things I got out of the book too was under, you know, everyone has that with them, right. That what's in it for them. For the organization, but another one that's personal and underlies most of their decision. Thinking in our job, I think, Laura, you sent us to find both, right? Because we need to focus what's truly important for them to nudge or understand what we what needs to happen. You know, I've been exposed in government to change of administration. So you've got your strategy, your leadership. Moving one way, everybody's marching to the same beat, right? Everything's great. And then administration changes. And you know, you got a whole house full of people gone, right. And now new ones in. That is, with a golden opportunity to say, OK, why is it still important? Why are we doing this? If it's no good, let's can't float it. Just going to move the needle and where we need to go now. Let's dump it right or look at a different way of doing things. Looking at our portfolio differently. So I think when you have leadership that our challenge is there's a bunch of different reasons why. We have to read the room. We have to understand, you know, the full environment. There could be one bad egg, right? We know that and that and might be an easier way to manage 1. And I think This is why I love what I do is because we do have to understand where everybody's coming from, including the leadership.

Kendall

Read the room.

Andrea

And like we'll let us said, and Gregory said this too is how do we support them. To go in the direction that.

Kendall

They need to know. So the biggest thing I'm getting out of this, that I'm surprised by hearing you guys talk. And so I would invite my listeners to consider is this idea, even in the change management aspect, there is a fundamental look here. This is not at all focused on what we do as PMO down. It's not about the processes even right? It's even about the tools she has a thing in here. Don't go to software, right? You can't automate something to do him figured out already. So much about this book and this approach that you're after here is, is more than lip service to do what the business needs. All of what you guys are talking about is. Constantly about the. Uh, it's almost like assumed. I guess that you guys all have your typical project

management techniques to handle down, but this whole PM of focus is that so-called alignment. But is that interaction that? Engagement, that clarity, that change management, that strategy, that understanding that effectiveness, that reporting what has to be reported at what time you mentioned. Goleta was none of this was about our team or about the organization. It was about the leadership that put us in place to begin with. There's such an openness to this concept. The engine sits in a car that somebody else is driving.

Gregor

Let me tell you why. The point is, if you are focused on the project management and tools, this is 1. Thing. And this is some book and methodology is teaching us that we have to focus first on business needs, business problems and find root cause. This and The funny thing is that most majority of the problems and challenges and needs are up to the level of business strategy definition, not in execution. In execution you have project management, execution and etc. But the definition of the project. And the prioritization of projects in. Take and etc. Are the ones fields where the most challenges are. So if you are trying to solve this, you simply have to challenge and address these things on the level of the leadership and make it through change management.

Kendall

Well said, well said. Thank you. Got two more questions for you as we go to wrapping up on this type of thing. I've got two though. I want to leave out there with you and Laura, I'm going to get you some of your reflections. Then after that, I think about what you went through in terms of learning about this approach, this impact engine, what's been highlighted and what's then is captured in the book. I'd like to hear from any of you if what have you taught someone else? You took your lessons, you've executed, you've tried to do it. What have you taken away? And you're like. Let me tell you about this. There's something here you need to know is. There any particular concept aspect? Technique. That you have told another colleague that you've got to get them doing. You know, as if they were part of this. Anyone taught anything? And.

Andrea

Yeah, I come into this yesterday that everybody around me saying, you know, you got to. Find. Them with them, right? It's that what's in it for them and my whole team. You know the CEO who I report to? It's everyone's thinking in this way because it's effective, right? When you understand what makes someone tick or what's important. For them, and you hone in on that, it's a different way of working. They're really.

Kendall

And you've taught people that and they're following up with it.

Andrea

Yeah. Yep. And it's fantastic that and always asking, why does this matter? Why is this important? Right. What's the benefit of doing this and everything?

Kendall

Gregor, wouldn't you taught someone else to do because of this.

Gregor

The first thing I do I say to them, they have to go out-of-the-box after out of the office box. They have to understand that this operational things and day-to-day work is a cage for them and they have to go out and learn new things and new ways, best practices and. By doing that, you have to make some mindset changes. You have to make awareness. To get some wider perspective, because any methodology, gear or any tool is in vain if you don't understand why you need it and how you should start. Also, we have talked about this in this mastermind groups and the point is each technic tool you get everything is great. And I had like 50 aha moments. When I joined this program, actually I went to my build my own company based on this approaching system because I simply saw this is working and this is what I can use to help others to address my pains which I had or. Challenges in my let's say past 20 years in the industry. So it's really about making mindset, changing mindset, widening perspective. But you have to go out-of-the-box, that's.

Speaker

The.

Kendall

Well, Anna, what have you told had to? Tell. Someone else. So.

Willetta

Fortunately, using the. The system itself, I based our organizations first ever organizational wide approach on the system and I did collect an assessment in terms of what was not working, which helped me to communicate the importance of looking beyond strategy or project execution. A lot of the. Information gathered around the challenges I was able to share with. Things had happened before and after there were big gaps, but the project leads and the project teams were getting deemed for things because other roles like the sponsors did not provide the information that was needed. So before they even start again, you have to establish clearly what the business strategy is, right? But everybody is focused on the execution they're doing of it, creating something that may or may not solve. A problem because you don't even know what that is yet. I know Gregor mentioned a couple of times. You know about the root

causes and being clear about your business needs. It is so critical. And I was in a meeting with two executives for two years that were having problems. They had a problem they had. To work together. But once the information was gathered. And white and black written down. A lot of those symptoms could roll up in primary or major root causes. They were able to see that information get on the same page. About oh, you both are aligned. One the business goal. The outcomes that you want now we're clear about. Oh, these are some things. This is what we want. They were able to see it and decide. One that that's the upfront stuff. And the other part of it is. How do you know it's working?

Andrea

Hmm.

Willetta

I don't want to hear all week we had such and such attendance or we've got 400% angry and I'm. I'm a software person. When you are delivering the strategy and creating the outputs to drive the outcome towards those positive outcomes, how do you know it's working? How do you know you're getting the? Value out of it. So again, the front and the back end were skipped. Everybody jumps in the middle. Let's do. And so what I've been teaching and what? Our approach is based off of. It is literally the impact engine system. That is of course made for our organization, but the process is still. So the same.

Kendall

Well, there you're in the successor. I'm going to take it to you and then, panelist, I'm gonna come back with one more question after we've heard from Laura. So, Laura, you heard a lot of different stuff that they've picked up on that they liked. I know you're nodding in there. They're all singing from the. Right sheet there from what you heard in there. Were there any aha moments for you that were important? You know, in terms of your discovery of these ideas that some of which you've heard today seem to stand out for them.

Laura

Well, what's really interesting to me, I mean, this is the first time I've done something like this, right? Like I meet with, you know, I lead mastermind sessions and they're part of the mastermind or impacted accelerator, mastermind, which is for people that are in the impact into the system applying this right. So the book is based on the training implementation program that we've been running for years. That's why we have all this data, even though the book is just coming out, although all the mastermind students have had their copy for a couple of months now, and that's why the pages are all folded over and you know it's become the purple Playbook kind of thing. But it's although the book is new, the system we've been using

has been happening for years, and what's fascinating to me is to watch the three of these lovely people who are some of my favorite people on the planet, talk about it from their perspective about what they've taken away from it. And I'm having some aha moments here myself because, like you said, Kendall. There is a system here. There is a step-by-step process and you're right and this is what I love about it. I like to keep it simple and straightforward and just cut to exactly what you need to do and not over complicated. So the system is. Itself has that mindset piece in the middle, and then you go through iterative cycles of value delivery, assessed, define plan deliver and then evolve because it's a continuous value delivery cycle. You go through it again and again and again every 90 days keeping in cycle with how the company that you're working in probably operates quarterly. Cycles. So what is interesting to me though, is that there is so much in this book that is what to do in what order, why it matters how exactly. To do it and.

Andrea

To.

Laura

Every chapter comes with a downloadable resource to go take action on what you have just learned and so. All of that is. There. Interesting to me that what we've been focused on this entire conversation has been all about those leadership components of it that are woven throughout every chapter. But I'm noticing no one's really saying, I mean, I guess everyone is just kind of taken for granted. Well, yeah, the system works or what do we say? What it I. I'd love to hear somebody say, what do we always say about. You know, if you do.

Andrea

The work. If you do the work, you works.

Laura

Right. Very simply, if you do the work, it just works, right? So I think and we bring that up all the time because every mastermind session, I actually make them like declare their wins. Like, what's your most recent win you've had, you know, implementing this capability in your organization, you know, breakthrough with the sponsor or you know? We finally got the first service rolled out or whatever. Those wins are and those have become the norm I mentioned in. Book that one of our clients actually said your consulting practice and your program should come with the disclaimer. These results are not typical and I at first I left and then I was like, well, actually they are pretty typical if you just follow this process it works. But what is really sticking with people that I think is the real differentiator. It is fascinating to just kind of observe it in this conversation. There's two things. It's all that people and change management stuff.

And it's the fact that, like we teach in Chapter 1, you're not just focused on project execution planning and delivery of projects. You have to get out-of-the-box, like Gregory is saying, you have to step up and out and look at the entire strategy life cycle like, well, that was talking about with we got to go fix the problems and strategy definition. Then we can fix the problems in strategy execution and then we can make sure that we actually realize this. So what we actually benefit from this. So there's all kinds of frameworks. There's actual downloadable templates. There's this really strong process. There's all kinds of things in the book, but what is really standing out is the difference maker that has changed their lives, which is cool to see is all of that people stuff, confidence building, leadership competency and truly stepping into what we call. The strategy navigator role for their organizations and for their clients that they serve each of these people here and those that have been in our mastermind for a while have become the strategy navigator for the organization, not just the project implementer. Right. And they have become impact drivers leading their organizations through big transformation and change. And it's just fascinating to me and I guess it speaks to kind of why I wrote the book in the 1st place and why we do the mastermind. There's so much stuff out there on how to how to set up a PMO. You're, you know, 10 step checklist and this and that. So we've got all that in there, but that's table stakes, baby. What's the real difference maker? How do we put these PMO leaders and transformation leaders and strategy delivery leaders with a seat at the top? And how do we ensure that the executives are pulling out the chair for you? And saying you belong here. And so it's cool to me to just see this and I just have been grinning ear to ear this whole time because I'm so proud of each of them. But this is the norm. This is what you get when you do the work, not just your cool PMO setup where projects are executed well. X as tape snakes. What are we really doing to move the needle? Not. Just with the. Project but with the organization as a whole and the careers as the people that.

Kendall

Are part of that I should let the mic drop there, but I'm not going to, even though that's the natural ending because being a transformational leader, I'm always about. Yeah. So what? What's the next? They set her up for a second book panelists. So there you were, knowing everything. Learn the perfect system, doing it all, tailoring it for your own organization. It's all beautiful. What? One more preference. Laura continues to work with clients and has many people in her various mastermind classes where she's hearing about how you and others interact with their in your organizations and their clients as well. What's the next question you'd like her to investigate? What's her second book going to need to be about? What's the addendum to this book, Andrea?

Andrea

I'd love to see her take on that way up front fleet piece where she's so good at aligning everything we do to strategy. How do we get there? How do we get leaders to really develop? A strategy that will. Project them forward, right and. Beat their sights on it. I think you had mentioned like, where is everybody? Right. How do we get them? There. And how do we keep them there? And I want to say, like the season table, right? And how do we?

Kendall

There you go. Yeah.

Andrea

Get them there. And how do we keep them there?

Kendall

I love it. I love it. So building the strategy itself right at the upfront of upfront, I heard there, Gregor, what would you like her to investigate next and help lead?

Gregor

You know well, I would agree, even though that this book is already also for leadership, it's a great overview of everything is not there is no details on project management stuff and so on. So you people in leadership should then really understand what is the connection from leadership to the operation and translation. Of the projects to the everyday work. However, from my perspective, I would also like to get booked for consultants which has integration of project. This impact engine system because it's not typical PMO stuff, it's really different as we. Today, and it's really at the end of. The day a. Little different when you're using this system. For the customers.

Kendall

Oh, excellent. Nice. Different stakeholder group for those of us, depending on what your. Own business model is. I love it. Well, that what you need to answer for you next. What would be helpful?

Willetta

I think for starters, as Gregor had had mentioned, you have all the pieces and maybe just go into depth and some pieces. So for example. I mentioned the three parts of the strategy life cycle and maybe saying, OK, here's strategy and there are more frameworks, right? It's like, here's this snapshot. I think I've seen this before. Laura better put it up and taking it down. But for example, I'm evolving. Our approach to move. Towards the participation piece of it. As an example, right? So I. Know we talk a lot about. That but at a snapshot in that first bucket. Here

are other processes because we're talking about how people do things depending on what the topic is. So what fits under the definition? What happens before the project? What are the processes involved with that? Just see that as a snapshot so that we're clear about it's not just this one high level thing. There are sub processes that are critical and that could be for each bucket, so that when you're presenting it to the executives or senior leaders, they can see it's not just this magic bullet. For me in particular, we didn't have anything. We're starting from scratch, which meant I had to really work and managing expectations. Right. So that if we want. To see this future. State it's going to take all of this, but we can't do it in a day or in a month or in a year, really setting those expectations so.

Kendall

Ending that commitment. So it's getting some writing there, Laura. I remember years ago, you and I, we weren't the inventors of someone else was talking, but we were kicking around this whole issue of left of Charter talking about project management, right. If you're viewing time, moving to the right on a chart left of Charter, what I'm hearing this team asking is you've moved them all up to thinking about strategy and leadership. This is the left of strategy like we've got.

Laura

Yeah.

Kendall

You got to get in even earlier, so get to work. You have your next. Right. Uh. And so Speaking of books, I'm going to close out here. So thank you. Willetta, Andrea and Gregor. Laura, where can? People find your classes, your writings, your blogs, your seminars, and your Book.

Laura

Yeah. So we're all over LinkedIn under my name and under PMO strategies.

Kendall

There we go.

Laura

Well, I definitely feel free to follow me there. I'm releasing goodness there. We also have a YouTube channel for PMO strategies. We have the PMO Strategies podcast, which this will be a crossover episode that will be on your podcast. Mine was just cool and. And we also then have the book website where it's a great starting point. There's two websites you can go to, but you can get from either to the other and that is impactenginebook.com. So just the word impact,

the word engine book.com and also PMO strategies.com. So you can. Get to either. From either place, you'll see the podcast. You'll see all of our goodness online, and the podcast is on every you know your favorite podcast. Players. So we're trying to be all over the place because I truly have discovered that my mission in this world is to serve the lovely people like we have with us here today. And my goal is to make it easier than it was for me, right? I that book, that purple playbook is filled with battle scars. You just quite can't quite see them because they've been turned into. Definitely don't do this because I made that mistake already. Do this instead and it's my way of giving back to the people that are in the shoes I wore as early as 1999 when I built my first PMO, and I'm doing it for. 25 years now, and it's my life's work to be able to share and support people all over the world that are doing the hard work of trying to make an impact in their organization. So I thank all of your listeners. Thank you to my fabulous mastermind students here. I'm so proud of each of you. And let's just let's keep doing this. Just keep making a big difference. As well.

Kendall

Okay, another author, and this time, verified readers, telling it like it is. The biggest thing that I get that envelops the system of the Impact Engine is for us to break away from the focus, nay, even the definition of our PM roles as managing processes, administering a system across an organization, etc.

It's true we do that, but the value, ah, the value. That comes from the interaction with the executive leadership, from the very beginning and through the entire life cycle of the PMO. So much of this was about managing up, helping the leaders define strategy, or if they have one, listening well and getting action that is consistent with that strategy, and then coming back and showing the movement.

This is about business acumen. There were some jewels in this conversation, about acumen. like delicately helping leadership parse ambition versus practicality and aspiration versus capacity. We are way out beyond managing only for scope and budget to get these things done. Not at this level, not as a PMO leader.

Remembering that momentum beats stagnation and done now beats perfect later. These are the trade-offs we have to consider in making our Projectized organizations more effective. And speaking of trade-offs, you lent your ear to this podcast for an hour. Now go and get that one PDU. Go to PMI Online Reporting System, CCRS and select online or digital media and manually enter provider code number 4 6 3 4 and select M Powered Strategies.

And the name of the episode PMPOV119 The Impact Engine and select business acumen in the talent triangle. I am PMPOV's host and producer Kendall Lott inviting you to DM me with a

guest idea or a topic you want me to poke around and prod at and reminding you in the meantime to keep it in scope and get it done.

Announcer

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