



COLLABORATIVE PMO LETS LARGE PHARMA ACCELERATE R&D

When there is a chance to make scientific advances or beat others to market, it is critical to get a pharmaceutical product through research and development to launch quickly and predictably. To prepare for those opportunities, a company must objectively assess its limitations and improve its operational structure.

A large biopharma company recognized that it had a gap in its ability to launch products on time. So, it sought to transform R&D to improve its systems, processes, and structure. The company wanted faster throughput and better forecasting. However, R&D timelines were unreliable and critical information needed to accelerate or kill assets was missing.

Among the challenges, technical subject matter experts were leading project teams on top of their day-to-day functional roles. At the same time, tasks were often misaligned with strategy, roles and responsibilities were unclear, and prioritization wasn't well-defined. There was limited visibility into the early pipeline, as well as inconsistent execution, measurement, and management.

TO BUILD OR TO BUY



The company wanted to grow its portfolio of new products, reduce development and launch timelines, and improve predictability and visibility. And it wanted to do so quickly.

It set out to build a project management office (PMO) to standardize processes and reporting, establish project governance, and prioritize and resource projects based on strategic goals. R&D leadership weighed their options. They could build the PMO themselves, giving the R&D function control and internal capacity. But it would be slow to build, and they had had past failures and missteps in project leadership functions.

They considered using a staffing firm to fill resource gaps. Using contracted workers would be cost-effective, as they could add resources when they needed them and drop them when they didn't. However, they were concerned about variable quality among outsourced workers, inconsistent processes, turnover, and cultural fit.

A hybrid approach, a collaboration, would provide best-in-class processes and consistently high quality, plus management involvement and cooperative problem solving. The onus of hiring and developing team members would rest on the partner. And the pharma company would be able to add and remove resources—including those with varied skill sets—as necessary.

R&D leaders chose the third option, a collaborative PMO (cPMO), and enlisted Integrated Project Management Company, Inc. (IPM). IPM enabled rapid ramp-up by leveraging relevant experience working within pharma companies. It also brought project leadership and risk management expertise, strategic business and change management consulting, and on-site director-level leadership. When necessary, the pharma company could tap IPM's executive team and specialized subject matter experts within IPM's Centers of Excellence. It could also access functional support such as training, communications, and creative services.



A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH



IPM consultants worked with the company's R&D leadership to understand the culture and team dynamics. The on-site IPM director helped guide strategic prioritization and alignment. Because the team had struggled in the past to identify how much time people spent on a given project, the cPMO focused on resource management to ensure they were progressing on the most important work.

Multiple IPM project managers were rapidly onboarded to work alongside technical leads to execute select projects and drive

predictable results. They instilled project management processes, including integrated timelines, scenario planning, communication management, and executive dashboards to enable consistency and visibility. The team developed and curated a toolbox of customized processes and deliverables, as well as transparent reporting and escalation processes. Seeing the benefit of project management practices, R&D leadership asked IPM to implement them across its entire project portfolio.

SPEED, CONSISTENCY, CONFIDENCE



The cPMO successfully reduced product development cycle times and increased consistency in the timing of stage-gate transitions. With improved consistency, the team has been better able to predict development and launch milestones. Transparent benchmarking has provided visibility into the R&D pipeline and confidence in the ability to meet those milestones. With these advancements, R&D was able to triple its asset portfolio in two years while providing tactical and strategic guidance for all projects, discovery to launch.

IPM's onboarding process enabled the cPMO to right-size as needed. It added and removed project managers as assets were added, projects closed, and priorities changed. Through training and mentoring, internal project leaders have improved their leadership and communication skills to foster a more collaborative and team-driven environment. And

coaching internal stakeholders about the value of project management has helped ensure adoption and sustainability.

The company's cPMO executive sponsor noted the new operating model has meant a tighter integration between operational and scientific decision-making. As the cPMO matured, it drove continuous improvement throughout R&D, enhancing business processes. Over time, R&D leadership has internalized the knowledge and experience of the cPMO and transitioned roles to internal resources.

The company's PMO is still a collaborative environment and has become a critical leadership function within R&D. Its spirit of continuous improvement has sustained the group as it has evolved along with the R&D function and the value of project management within the organization.

