

Get Ready for Governance: What You Need to Know About Presenting to a Project Governance Committee

By Tim Jaques, PMP

As you rise through the ranks, you may be asked to attend governance meetings where you will present directly to senior decision makers in the organization. To be effective, **recognize the dynamics at work in the governance setting:**

- › **Many Agendas, One Forum.** Your project is part of a field of projects that are all important. While you are expected to advocate for your own project, understand that at the executive level your project is a piece in the larger chess game. Where you are trying to secure approval for this one project, the governance committee members may be wondering how this investment will benefit their business area down the road.
- › **Bottom Line Driven.** Executives operate against a set of performance measures, and these can be dissimilar if each executive has a different bottom line. For example, executives of cost centers often seek more resources, while executives that lead profit centers want decreased costs and higher profitability. Knowing these bottom line drivers can help you succeed in a governance setting.
- › **Projects Are Investments.** The project portfolio represents a sizable investment of the organization's resources: financial, human and otherwise. These investments tie-up real costs as well as opportunity costs.
- › **Know Your Role.** Governance operates differently around the world, and is organizationally dependent. Some organizations govern very informally and feel almost casual, while in others the process is formal and intensive. Are you there to sell? To inform? To advocate? Know why you are called to the meeting and work within your bounds.

When you prepare for a governance meeting, you should know exactly what is expected of you:

- › **Presentation:** Will you present through an informal discussion? Or through a Q&A? Or formally, standing before the group and using a visual presentation? Will a facilitator or PMO representative be present? If so, what is his or her role?
- › **Content/Handouts:** For a governance meeting, less is more. Provide the decision-makers with the basic document – a charter, proposal or simply a presentation.
- › **Follow Up:** Capture action items and open issues and be prepared to follow up – even if they are not directly



related to your project. If your presentation spurs a conversation by governance participants, be prepared to participate in the discussion, if warranted.

Successfully negotiating a governance meeting requires a mix of content, confidence and credibility. Here is what you need to know before you go. . .

- › **Be knowledgeable about your project.** Know the business drivers, scope, costs, required resources and schedule. Know the risks and issues, and alternatives. Be ready to speak to the organization's larger goals and strategies..
- › **Communicate directly.** Use an assertive and respectful tone. Use positive language and never disparage another project or business area. Stick to the topic, and be ready to question the executives if something is not clear.
- › **Address bottom line issues.** How long will the project take? How much will it cost? What is the payback period? What is the full lifecycle cost of ownership?
- › **Stay high-level.** Keep in mind that governance is not a project review meeting, but rather an investment review. Keep the information high level and let the executives ask for details.

When done well, presenting to a governance council can greatly improve your visibility across the executive ranks. It can help your project achieve more credibility and is an opportunity to shine. Preparation and participation is well worth your investment of time and effort. Good luck!



PMI thanks Tim Jaques, PMP, for contributing this article. Mr. Jaques is a partner at [Line of Sight](#). He has worked with clients on all types of efforts – strategic, tactical, project and organizational. He has facilitated groups of corporate and government executives through the process of identifying, defining, and attacking the problems that prevent organizational success. You can contact him at tjaques@line-of-sight.com.

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