



# Enabling a Continuous Value Office

 **MacroSolutions**  
WHITEPAPER SERIES



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# Clearing the way for teams to be successful by making the right things to do the easy things to do

Organizations are looking to be more flexible and responsive, break down internal barriers, and implement product and service delivery strategies focused on outcomes as opposed to project strategies overly focused on process. This paper looks at how an organization can be organized – and how a culture can be enabled – to deliver IT needs in an efficient, fluid and barrier-free environment. The concept of a central program management office (PMO) that simply provides “oversight” is increasingly perceived as a structure that offers little value to an organization and can operate counter to enabling these goals. There is a fundamental need to allow certain areas of an organization to be as flexible and mobile as possible while still addressing less flexible and slow changing compliance requirements.

This is where Macro Solutions’ Continuous Value Office (CVO) comes in. Inspired by DevOps and rooted in lean management principles and the Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe), the CVO transforms the traditional PMO into a value delivery office with a focus on customer needs and providing enablement and advisory services. The CVO supports delivery teams by making customer-requested capabilities available while ensuring continuous improvement.

The CVO changes the organization’s perspective, taking the necessary elements of a PMO (such as methods for addressing compliance with appropriate risk reduction) but pivots from a focus on governance, standards and checking to create a culture of collaboration, enablement, orchestration, and continuous improvement, all of which provides value to the customer. The CVO takes an active and anticipative approach, removing or lowering hurdles for teams and stakeholders, and acts as a translation layer between the least flexible areas of an organization and the areas that need to be the most flexible.



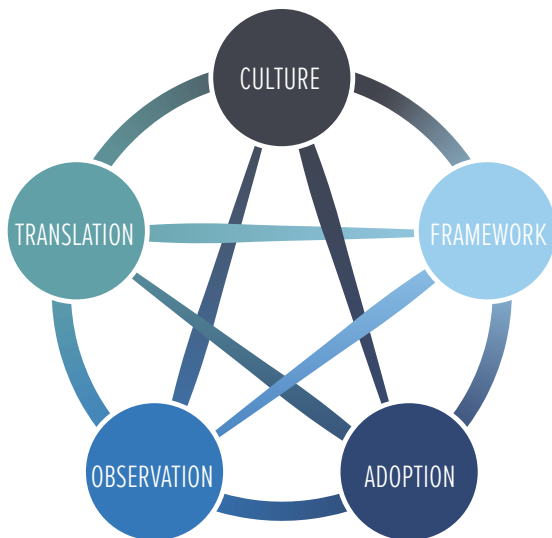


# CRITICAL ELEMENTS

## Laying the foundation to provide continuous value to the customer

Implementing a CVO does not immediately make it effective within an organization. A CVO is fundamentally different than a PMO or a typical service delivery organization. Therefore, it usually requires a change in the organizational culture to truly be effective. Thankfully, a CVO is a critical component in ushering in the kinds of organizational cultural changes that will pave the way to its own success.

But it takes more than a change in culture to fully enable a CVO. In addition to Culture, the related elements of Framework, Adoption, Observation and Translation are all necessary parts of an effective CVO.



Each of these critical CVO elements stand strong on their own, though they are also dependent upon and supportive of one another, similar to the components of the Chinese Five Elements Philosophy (Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, and Water). The CVO ensures that the elements—Culture, Framework, Adoption, Observation, and Translation—come together and are implemented to support the CVO mission of providing continuous value to the customer.

### Answering these questions will help illustrate the value of the critical elements of the CVO.

Each element (Culture, Framework, Adoption, Observation and Translation) is addressed separately in the subsequent sections with recommendations to put them in place for the CVO.

### With the customer in clear view, there are several questions that must be addressed:

- What are the cultural elements that will drive behaviors through the value streams and the entire system of your organization?
- What are the cultural behaviors that foster strong IT leadership to better support operational departments, including HR, Accounting, Finance or Legal?
- What are the approaches the delivery teams should take?
- What technologies should they consider?
- Are these technologies already in house?
- How might they organize their work?
- How might they communicate with other groups inside and outside the organization?
- How do organizations encourage the incorporation of new ideas, tooling and methods that ensure continuous improvement?
- How are these changes communicated, and how does one ensure that progress is occurring in real time?
- How do organizations get dependent teams talking and engaging in ways that help to reduce the friction that can naturally occur?



# CULTURE

## DRIVING POSITIVE BEHAVIORS AND OUTCOMES

**To drive positive behaviors, a culture must be established from the top. That culture must embrace customer focus, innovation, and observability, remove fear, and increase participation and ownership.**



### Get People Talking

The most important activity within the CVO's responsibility is to establish a culture of communication and collaboration. The CVO creates an environment that eliminates the competition that naturally forms between teams and amongst people, and instead focuses on competing processes, methods and toolsets. This allows for timely availability of valuable information for all stakeholders.



### Do Not Fear Failure

While not every delivery framework the CVO provides will fall from the Agile tree, the cultural values of fail fast, learn, react, and share should be emphasized and incentivized by the CVO. The CVO brings people together in a judgment-free environment, to share lessons learned, take advantage of successful innovations, and steer clear of the negativity that competing teams can use against each other.



### Focus on Enablement—Not Governance

The CVO has a governance role, but it does not need to advertise it. A common trap that even the most talented people can fall into is immediately becoming risk managers, blockers, and using the word “no” in interactions once they perceive they are responsible for project success. Rather than focus on governance, the CVO enables the observation and adoption of different models and frameworks and encourages collaboration. Members of the CVO should foster positive culture aspects, establish tool sets, and study the organization to find ways to help teams succeed—governance plays a role, but the semantics of “governance” should be minimized to help drive conversations and interactions between teams and inform how the CVO supports and is viewed by the organization.

### IMPROVING WORKPLACE CULTURE

- Begin by understanding the current IT delivery culture.
- Incentivize people to collaborate.
- Create a positive, judgment-free environment empowered from the top where teams try, adapt, and refine models to best support successful outcomes.
- Instill a culture of intent with a clear focus on value delivery that allows teams to find their best way there.
- Empower the CVO to be the champion of the organization's culture.



# FRAMEWORK

## IMPROVING UPON BASELINE ASSUMPTIONS

To create an environment where new approaches can be tried, baselines and initial assumptions are viewed as a springboard from which an organization can discover what works best.

### REFINING YOUR FRAMEWORK

- Empower the CVO to establish competing frameworks for delivery.
- Allow teams to choose a delivery framework that best suits their needs and their customer's desired outcomes.
- Encourage tailoring and capturing of improvements over time.
- Enable reskilling, and adjust models, processes, and political conditions to help teams succeed.
- Engage all stakeholders to overcome friction or drag, allowing them to be part of the organization's success.



**Competing Framework** – The CVO is responsible for providing the product, project, and service delivery frameworks from which teams may choose. Each team, product, or project is different, and as a result, each may benefit from different frameworks, including Agile, lean, or even waterfall. These frameworks are often limited in traditional organizations. Each delivery framework should be viewed as a starting point, similar to an experiment, that produces the tailoring and improvement feedback loops that leadership expects.



**Framework Tailoring** – The competing frameworks should be about making the right thing to do the easy thing to do for the teams delivering value to the customer. The options need to be tailorable to allow alignment to team needs. Over time, default models may become refined and require less tailoring. However, default frameworks need to be viewed as starting points, not as canon – the frameworks should be expressions of and enablers for the culture.



**Continuous Retrospective and Refinement** – The CVO is responsible for ensuring teams are continually retrospectively their implemented frameworks, processes, team norms, reporting, and outcome measures; working with teams and customers to adjust data points that support decision-making and understanding the value delivered. The CVO must reinforce a positive, judgment-free culture that eliminates silo defense tendencies in organizations. This needs to be monitored vigilantly, with special attention paid to removing fear of identifying areas of improvement. Each framework can be viewed as an ongoing experiment where the results and observed outcomes contribute to the refinement of each framework. Fear should be replaced with taking ownership; the negative semantics of failure should be replaced with the semantics of trying, learning, improving, sharing, and continuously analyzing what defines success and what worked from the tailoring and retrospectives. Everyone needs to be focused on delivering customer value.



# ADOPTION

## MOVING THE CULTURE AND FRAMEWORKS FORWARD

To grow a positive culture, teams must always be learning and sharing.



**Coaching and Mentoring** – The CVO is accountable for ensuring teams understand the culture, framework tailoring, and feedback models, as well as leadership's intent for teams to adopt continuous improvement, transparency, communication, and collaboration. This is especially important for new project teams that struggle in unfamiliar landscapes. While organizational process documentation is important, especially in terms of capturing intellectual property (IP), it should be viewed strictly as supporting information. The CVO must enable or provide the coaching and mentoring required by teams to ensure optimal performance – the starting point to driving adoption.



**Communities and Collaboration** – Over time a successful CVO will have fostered communities that help lift one another to success. Self-organizing communities begin to take shape and accelerate the benefits of the culture. The CVO observes these activities, primes the pump when needed, and is empowered to get the participation of all stakeholder groups within the organization.



**Sharing and Lessons Learned** – Making space for the activity of sharing is a powerful way to align every team to their organization's culture and learn lessons from other teams. The act of one siloed representative standing up in front of the others – talking about mistakes made, tailoring and corrections implemented, as well as successes, while demonstrating transparency with leadership who openly cheer the approach without judgment – will reinforce adoption of the positive culture while reducing defense mechanisms that helped create the silos. The CVO is responsible for setting these activities in motion and ensuring that the conversation remains impersonal and non-threatening.

### FINDING YOUR WAY TO ADOPTION

- Support the CVO with the skills and capacity to help educate the organization through facilitation of communities of practice and other bridge-building.
- Set the expectation from the top that everyone needs coaching and mentoring as continuous change and improvements take hold.
- Provide space and expertise to facilitate this education.
- Encourage teams and stakeholders to find ways to improve through sharing and learning from failures as well as successes.
- Empower the CVO to educate the organization and drive adoption.





# OBSERVATION

## FINDING AND SHARING INSIGHTS IN REAL-TIME

To enable flexibility and innovation around frameworks, technologies, and culture, identify and observe the behaviors that help keep focus on delivering customer value.

### UNDERSTAND THROUGH OBSERVATION

- Ensure teams can articulate exactly what outcomes their customer values from this work.
- Share product or service delivery successes quickly and broadly, and craft well-defined, easily understood metrics that align to value delivery.
- Observe the behaviors that emerge across the organization related to the desired culture and defining behavior-based metrics.
- Above all, keep focus on the customers' definition of value as the bearing point.



**Customer at the Center** – Orienting the organization's culture toward the customer means bringing value to the customer as they define it. In legacy models where a PMO monitors project processes as opposed to outcomes, the PMO can make recommendations that are potentially disjointed from customer needs. When this happens, the team shifts focus away from the customer to satisfy the PMO. The CVO empowers and assists teams to pivot quickly from delivery to address customer concerns more directly, requiring this in an observable manner to avoid potential scope creep.



**Value-focused Metrics** – Value is determined by the customer and the nature of the product. The CVO helps delivery teams discern how to measure value by working directly with customers as solutions are envisioned and developed. This is part of Agile and the acceptance criteria process, but it is equally important for other non-agile frameworks. Value focus needs to be incorporated to replace execution and governance focus. The CVO and the teams need to understand how the different frameworks are succeeding at bringing value, not how well they are being executed.



**Culture-Focused Metrics** – Equally important to measuring value delivered from customers' perspectives is observing and understanding culture adoption and behaviors directly. Are managers empowering their teams? Are knowledge workers cooperating with each other rather than competing? Is decision-making being decentralized? Are teams improving? By monitoring these types of activities and fostering and tracking improvements, the CVO keeps its fingers on the pulse of the culture and adoption of frameworks. This body of data becomes the organization's culture-focused metrics and IP.





# TRANSLATION

## COMMUNICATING VALUE DELIVERY

**Managing scope, budget, schedule and quality are critical to successful product and service delivery. To reduce the hurdles that teams encounter while delivering value to the customer, take an anticipative approach to internal contractual and economic stakeholder requirements. These are often the least flexible areas of an organization—the CVO works with these organizations to find opportunities for them to contribute to the new culture and frameworks.**



**Translation for Contractual Obligations** – Contract-oriented groups that are focused on risk management can and will have influence on how management of a contract is to be executed. This impacts delivery frameworks, technology adoption, and metrics. The CVO includes the necessary contract expertise, with individuals collaborating continuously with contract teams to navigate decisions that enable a positive delivery culture with a focus on the customer and outcomes.



**Translation for Economic and Organizational Obligations** - Business and government agencies must comply with budgetary, contractual and human capital-related requirements. It is critical to consider these carefully because, if ignored, or just accepted as de-facto, they can dictate how product changes and projects are managed in ways that inadvertently impact delivering value to the customer. The CVO understands the importance of these organizational and critical legal requirements, and that it is incumbent upon the CVO to satisfy them. The CVO works directly with these groups to navigate requirements in ways that enables more flexibility for delivery teams in the modern IT landscape.



**Translation for Teams** – Product teams and customers understand the legal and budgetary obligations facing an organization. This awareness helps the CVO develop value and customer-focused metrics when working with teams. The CVO transitions from an antiquated command and control orientation of “reporting to a PMO” to an anticipative, proactive, and collaborative approach to these obligations. This makes it as easy as possible for delivery teams, in concert with the CVO, to satisfy these important requirements.

### TRANSLATE IN REAL-TIME

- Keep the CVO fully apprised of organizational strategy or give them a place at the table so that it may communicate and incorporate strategic initiatives as part of driving culture and framework adoption.
- Build the CVO with skills that align to key operational, statutory and other stakeholder groups, along with the business of your organization.
- Empower the CVO to be the surrounding layer that can translate critical organizational functions, which will help the less flexible groups within your organization meet their obligations more quickly and efficiently.



# IN SUMMARY

## THE CRITICAL ELEMENTS IN ENABLING A CVO

To enable flexibility and innovation around frameworks, technologies, and culture, identify and observe the behaviors that help keep focus on delivering customer value.

### GETTING STARTED

- Create an environment of open and collaborative communications.
- Be flexible to the needs of the team, allowing frameworks to be tailored to better suit value delivery.
- Set the expectation that change will be embraced, then observe the team to identify the improvements they uncover.
- Allow the CVO to be anticipative of internal stakeholder requirements clearing the way for team delivery.
- Be clear about the organization's vision and empower teams to make the right choices to achieve customer value.



The CVO's Five Elements Philosophy starts with addressing culture, acting on behalf of leadership as the constant voice fostering **adoption** and training the organization as a whole to focus on delivering value to the customer. This helps solve the challenge of enabling faster moving product and services teams. Teams are given a feedback loop that allows them to choose, tailor, and improve baseline **frameworks** and tool sets.

The CVO encourages the entire organization to always look for opportunities for internal and organizational system improvements by **observing** outcomes and behaviors within, tangential to teams and stakeholders. It also promotes high levels of communication and collaboration throughout the organization.

Finally, the CVO acts as a **translation** layer by communicating with teams and stakeholders to maintain desired levels of flexibility and mobility. The CVO simultaneously addresses mandatory compliance requirements that allow teams to stay focused on the customer.

Individuals and the teams they comprise want to be successful. Successful teams are enabled by an organization that makes space for creativity in an environment, where it is safe to try and fail, but also to learn. The CVO creates a space for success by helping drive this behavior, encouraging adoption while always observing team behavior and dynamics, translating messages between the team and its dependent organizations, and implementing frameworks that allow for continuous improvement—all while maintaining an ever-present focus on the customer.



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## About Macro Solutions

Implementing a CVO can be a challenge for any organization, regardless of their embrace of Agile tools and techniques. This is where Macro Solutions comes in – the Macro Solutions team can help build the foundation IT product and services teams needed to create a fully functional, customer-focused CVO.

In addition to standing up a working CVO, Macro Solutions is a partner for Agile coaching, DevOps enablement and cloud modernization. The Macro Solutions team drives adoption by “doing and then promoting” rather than “monitoring and then telling.” Macro Solutions leads by incorporating Lean/Agile/DevOps processes and tools for its own uses while aggressively supporting early adopters. The team facilitates sharing of knowledge – providing early adopters as examples of practices that can be adopted and provide value. This transparency and functional integrity builds trust and reduces risk. Macro Solutions demonstrates what is possible – discovering and mitigating technical and/or organizational barriers to adoption – prior to attempts to roll out major capabilities, enterprise-wide.

Macro Solutions is a small, woman-owned information technology and management consulting firm that helps government and defense organizations select, implement, modernize, integrate, and maintain critical end-to-end business solutions. Assessed at CMMI Maturity Level 3 for both Development and Services, ISO 9001:2015 for Quality Management Systems, ISO 20000:2011 for Information Technology Service Management, and ISO 27001:2013 for Information Security Management Systems certifications, Macro Solutions delivers honest, powerful results from the inside, outward.

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