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BEYOND the PLAN

Beyond the Signature

FOUR LESSONS THAT SHAPE DELIVERY

Transforming Commercial Agreements into Sustainable Project Value

- A SIGNED CONTRACT IS NOT VALUE
- INTEGRATION GAPS DESTROY DELIVERY
- KEEPING CONTRACTS AND BUSINESS CASES ALIVE
- THE PMO AS THE ENABLER OF TRUST AND VALUE

Insights from
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Executive Summary

contract signature is often celebrated as the successful conclusion of a commercial negotiation. In reality, it marks the beginning of a far more challenging journey: delivering the outcomes the contract was designed to achieve.

This eBook draws on the insights shared by **Amireh Amirmazaheri**, Founder of PMO Solutions and Asia-Pacific Lead of the PMO Global Alliance, during her conversation on the **Beyond the Plan** podcast. Throughout the discussion, Amireh challenges a common assumption in project delivery—that a well-negotiated contract is enough to ensure success. Instead, she argues that sustainable value is created through alignment, collaboration, governance, and disciplined execution long after the contract is signed.

Building on these insights, this eBook explores why successful project delivery depends on much more than commercial agreements. While contracts establish the framework for delivery, they do not create value on their own. Value is realised through integrated decision-making, effective leadership, strong governance, and the ability to translate commercial intent into operational outcomes.

The discussion is organised around four practical lessons that consistently influence delivery performance across complex infrastructure and capital projects:

- **A Signed Contract Is Not Value** – why execution, not agreement, determines project success.
- **Integration Gaps Destroy Delivery** – how disconnected finance, commercial, and delivery functions create value leakage.
- **Keeping Contracts and Business Cases Alive** – why commercial intent and strategic objectives must remain active throughout the project lifecycle.
- **The PMO as the Enabler of Trust and Value** – how a strategically enabled PMO connects strategy, governance, and delivery to protect and realise value.

Together, these lessons reinforce a simple but powerful principle: **successful projects are not defined by the quality of the agreement alone, but by the discipline, integration, and leadership that transform contractual intent into measurable outcomes.**

Ultimately, **the signature is not the finish line—it is the starting point.** Organisations that maintain alignment, integrate people and processes, and continuously connect commercial intent with delivery decisions are far better positioned to realise the value they promised at the negotiation table.

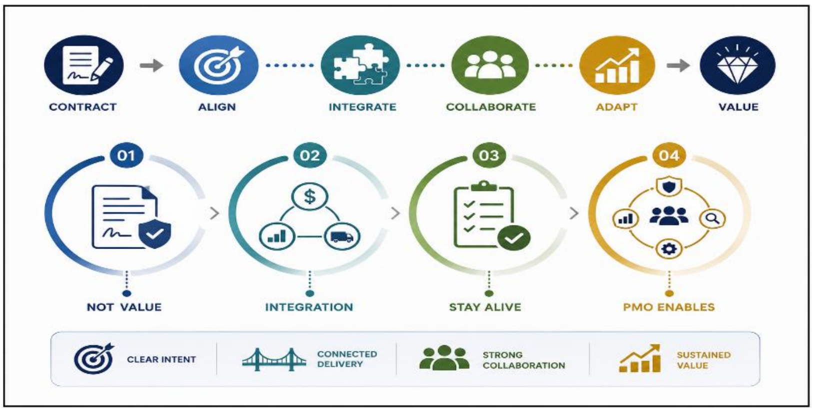

Figure 1 A Signed Contract Is Not Value

Ultimately, the signature is not the finish line; it is the starting point. Organisations that maintain alignment, integrate people and processes, and actively manage delivery throughout the project lifecycle are far better positioned to realise the value they promised at the negotiation table.

Chapter 1: Beyond Contracts: Why Traditional Delivery Is No Longer Enough

Why Real Work Starts After the Deal

A contract signature is often treated as the defining moment of success in major projects. It signals the closure of negotiations, approval of governance, and the achievement of a commercial agreement. In many organisations, it is the point where a project is considered “secured.”

But in complex delivery environments, this is a misleading marker of success. The signature does not deliver value. It only authorises the conditions under which value must still be created. What happens after the deal is signed is where outcomes are truly determined.

Why contract signature is often mistaken for success

Contract signature is frequently misunderstood as project success because organisational systems are designed to reward completion of procurement, not delivery of outcomes. Once a deal is signed, it is often reported as progress achieved, even though execution has not yet begun.

At this point, the project still exists largely in a theoretical state. Scope is agreed, risks are allocated, and pricing is finalised, but all within assumptions that have not yet been tested in real conditions.

This creates a structural blind spot: success is recorded before performance is proven. Key patterns behind this misconception include:

- Procurement success is measured by award, not outcomes delivered
- Contract signature is treated as a milestone of completion rather than commencement
- Reporting systems reinforce “deal secured” as equivalent to success

- Delivery readiness is often assumed rather than validated
- The complexity of execution is underestimated at the point of approval
- Focus shifts immediately to new opportunities after contract award
- The result is a system that celebrates agreement more than achievement.

"The contract is not a live document, and the business case is not a live document." — Amireh Amirmazaheri

The illusion of "winning the deal"

The language of procurement reinforces a powerful illusion: that winning a contract is equivalent to winning value. This framing is reinforced through terms like "successful bid," "awarded project," and "secured work," all of which imply completion rather than commencement.

However, in major projects, negotiation takes place under controlled conditions. Risks are identified, priced, and distributed within assumptions that often depend on incomplete information. These assumptions are rarely stress-tested until execution begins.

The danger is not in winning the deal; it is in believing the deal itself guarantees success. Key elements of this illusion include:

- "Winning" terminology creates a false sense of completion
- Negotiation conditions do not reflect delivery reality
- Risk appears managed on paper but remains active in execution
- Pricing assumptions often depend on ideal conditions
- Commercial advantage is mistaken for delivery certainty
- Delivery complexity is underestimated at award stage

Focus shifts away from execution planning after contract signing

Winning the deal is not the end of competition; it is the beginning of performance under real constraints.

How most project failures begin after negotiation ends.

Most project failures do not originate during execution; they begin immediately after negotiation ends. The transition from commercial closure to operational delivery is one of the most fragile phases in the project lifecycle.

During negotiation, alignment is often strong. Stakeholders are engaged, decisions are coordinated, and communication is frequent. But this alignment is situational. It exists to secure agreement, not necessarily to sustain delivery.

Once the contract is signed, that structure begins to fragment. Key early failure mechanisms include:

- Loss of continuity between negotiation and delivery teams
- Dilution of critical assumptions behind scope, cost, and risk allocation
- Weak mobilisation and delayed readiness of delivery systems
- Misalignment between contractual obligations and operational capability
- Differences in interpretation of scope and intent across stakeholders
- Reduced stakeholder engagement after award
- Early assumption breakdown when real conditions emerge
- Fragmentation of communication across interfaces

These issues rarely appear immediately as failures. Instead, they accumulate quietly. By the time they become visible, they are often deeply embedded in delivery structures.
In most cases, failure is not sudden. It is seeded in the handover between negotiation and execution.

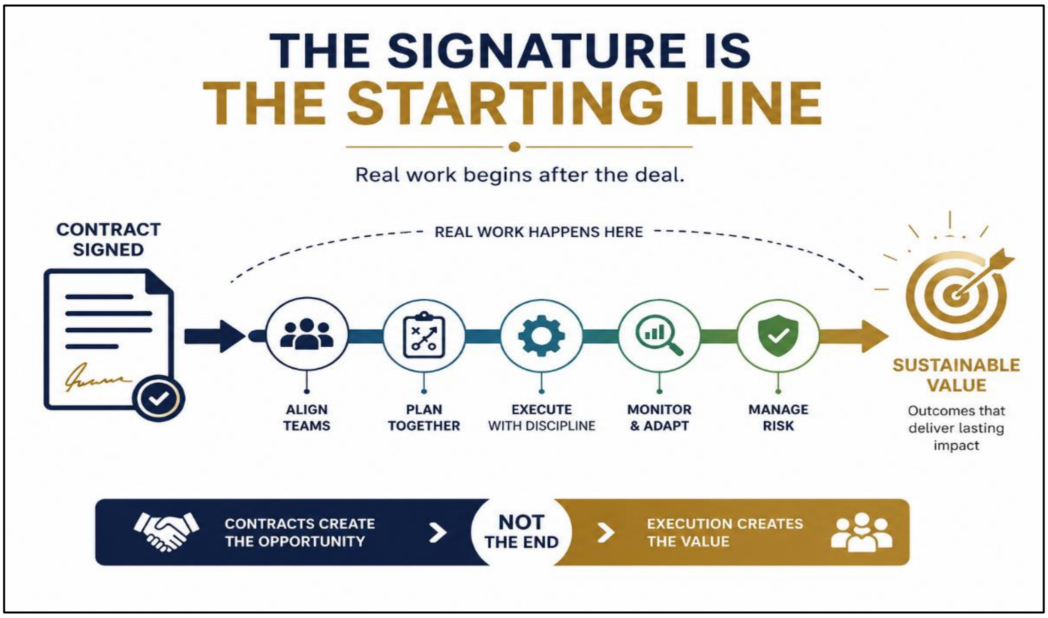

Figure 2 From Contract Award to Sustainable Value

Why delivery, not negotiation, determines value

While negotiation defines the structure of a deal, delivery determines whether value is realised. A contract can allocate risk and define scope, but it cannot guarantee performance under real-world conditions.

Delivery is where intent is tested against reality. It is where plans encounter constraints, and where assumptions are validated or broken.

Unlike negotiation, delivery is dynamic. Conditions change, interfaces multiply, and decisions must be made in real time. Value is created not through agreement, but through execution discipline. Key principles that define value in delivery include:

- Negotiation defines terms; delivery determines outcomes
- Value is realised only through execution under real conditions
- Coordination across teams is more critical than contractual detail

- Change and uncertainty are managed in delivery, not negotiation

- Strong execution capability outweighs perfect contractual structure
- Clarity of roles and decision-making speed drives performance
- Delivery is where assumptions are validated in practice

Ultimately, negotiation sets direction, but delivery determines whether that direction produces results.

Closing Insight

The signature on a contract is not a finish line. It is a transition point. It marks the shift from controlled agreement to complex execution.

Contract signature is often mistaken for success because it is visible, measurable, and reportable. The illusion of "winning the deal" reinforces the belief that value has already been secured. But most project failures begin after negotiation ends, in the fragile space where assumptions meet reality.

In the end, delivery, not negotiation, determines value. What is agreed at the table only becomes meaningful when it is proven in execution.

Real work does not end at the signature. It begins there.

Chapter 2: A Signed Contract Is Not Value

A signed contract is often treated as proof that value has been secured. It represents agreement on scope, price, risk allocation, and timelines. In many organisations, this moment is celebrated as success, the point where uncertainty is believed to be "under control." But in complex delivery environments, this is a critical misconception.

A contract does not deliver value. Systems and people do. The contract only defines intent and structure; it does not execute work, resolve ambiguity, or adapt to real-world conditions. Value only emerges when agreements are translated into coordinated action across time, stakeholders, and constraints.

This is where many projects begin to drift—not because the contract is weak, but because it is mistaken for the outcome itself.

Why contracts don't deliver outcomes — systems and people do

Contracts are designed to define obligations, not to execute delivery. They establish boundaries, responsibilities, and commercial terms, but they do not perform the work required to turn those terms into reality.

Execution depends on delivery systems: governance, capability, coordination, leadership, and communication. These are human and organisational factors, not contractual ones
When these systems are weak or misaligned, even well-structured contracts struggle to produce outcomes.

> ***"The contract is not a live document, and the business case is not a live document."*** **— Amireh Amirmazaheri**

Key realities include:

- Contracts define "what" and "who," not "how"
- Delivery depends on organisational capability, not contractual precision
- Systems of coordination determine performance more than written terms
- People interpret and act on contracts in different operational contexts

- Execution requires continuous decision-making, not static agreement
- Value is created through behaviour, not documentation

In short, contracts provide structure, but systems and people determine success.

The gap between commercial success and operational reality

One of the most underestimated risks in major projects is the gap between commercial success and operational readiness. A project can be commercially “perfect” while being operationally fragile.

During negotiation, conditions are controlled. Risks are identified, priced, and allocated. Assumptions are made to bridge gaps in design maturity or information. This creates a sense of certainty at the point of award. But once execution begins, reality behaves differently.

Figure 3 Contracts define intent, but delivery determines outcomes.

Operational environments introduce complexity that cannot be fully anticipated at the commercial stage. Interfaces multiply. Constraints emerge. Stakeholders shift priorities. Supply chains fluctuate. And decisions must be made with incomplete information.

This creates a persistent gap between what was agreed and what is actually possible.

Key characteristics of this gap include:

- Commercial agreements are based on assumptions, not proven conditions

- Operational reality introduces variability not captured in contracts
- Delivery teams often inherit agreements they did not shape
- Time pressures increase once execution begins
- Coordination complexity grows beyond what was modelled during negotiation
- Early optimism is replaced by practical constraint management

The wider this gap becomes, the more pressure is placed on delivery teams to "make the contract work," even when conditions have changed.

Why projects fail even when contracts look "perfect"

Many of the most difficult project failures occur in environments where contracts are well written, detailed, and carefully negotiated. On paper, everything appears aligned, scope is clear, risks are allocated, and governance structures are defined.Yet delivery still struggles.

This happens because contract quality does not guarantee delivery capability.

Failure often emerges not from contractual weakness, but from execution breakdown. The most common causes are not visible in the contract itself:

- Misalignment between commercial intent and delivery interpretation
- Weak transition from bid teams to delivery teams
- Underestimated complexity of coordination across stakeholders
- Over-reliance on contractual protections instead of active management
- Fragmented accountability across interfaces
- Lack of shared understanding of priorities during execution
- Insufficient mobilisation at the start of delivery

In these cases, the contract may be strong, but the system around it is not.

A "perfect" contract cannot compensate for weak integration, poor communication, or limited delivery readiness. It can only define expectations; it cannot enforce capability.

Reframing success from agreement to outcomes

To move beyond recurring delivery challenges, success must be redefined. Agreement is not success. Outcomes are.

This requires a shift in mindset from viewing contracts as endpoints to viewing them as starting frameworks for delivery. In this reframed view:

- Success is measured by outcomes delivered, not contracts signed
- Contracts are inputs into delivery, not outputs of success
- Execution capability is as important as commercial capability
- Alignment must be maintained beyond award, not assumed
- Value is tracked continuously through delivery performance
- Responsibility extends beyond negotiation into execution reality

This shift changes how organisations behave after signature. Instead of transitioning away from the deal, focus intensifies on building the conditions required for delivery success.
Ultimately, the question is not whether the contract is strong enough. The question is whether the system around it is strong enough to deliver what was agreed.

Closing insight

A signed contract is not value—it is a promise of potential value. The difference between potential and realised value is created entirely in execution. Systems deliver outcomes. People interpret reality. And delivery determines whether intent becomes impact.
In complex projects, success is never secured at signature. It is only proven after it.

Chapter 3: Integration Gaps Destroy Delivery

In complex projects, failure is rarely caused by a single decision or a single team. More often, it emerges quietly in the spaces between functions where finance, commercial, and delivery operate with different priorities, different language, and different definitions of success. This is where integration gaps form. And over time, these gaps become delivery gaps.

What looks like a well-structured organisation on paper can behave like disconnected systems in practice. The result is not immediate failure, but gradual value erosion, missed opportunities, delayed decisions, rework, and friction that compounds across the lifecycle.

Finance, commercial, and delivery operating in silos

One of the most common structural weaknesses in project environments is functional silos. Finance focuses on cost control and compliance. Commercial teams focus on contractual protection and margin. Delivery teams focus on execution, schedule, and technical outcomes. Individually, each function may perform well. But when they are not integrated, the project behaves like separate organisations working toward different definitions of success.
The issue is not intent; it is alignment. Key characteristics of siloed operations include:

- Finance prioritising cost certainty over delivery flexibility
- Commercial teams focusing on contractual position rather than operational flow
- Delivery teams responding to site and execution realities without full commercial visibility
- Separate reporting structures that reinforce different priorities
- Decision-making occurring within functions rather than across them
- Limited feedback loops between cost, contract, and execution performance

> ***"The first step to creating trust and transparency is to have a common language."* — Amireh Amirmazaheri**

When these silos persist, the project loses coherence. Each function optimises its own outcomes, sometimes at the expense of overall project value.

Not speaking the same language" as a root cause of failure

Many delivery issues are not technical or contractual. They are interpretive. Teams use the same words but attach different meanings to them.

Terms like "risk," "progress," "variation," or "value" can mean different things depending on whether they are viewed from finance, commercial, or delivery perspectives. This creates hidden misalignment that only becomes visible when decisions need to be made.

For example, a "risk" identified by finance may be treated as a cost exposure, while delivery sees it as an operational uncertainty requiring flexibility. Commercial may interpret the same risk as a contractual entitlement or liability.

This disconnect leads to friction in decision-making and delays in resolution. Key signs of language misalignment include:

- Different interpretations of the same project terminology
- Conflicting priorities in reporting and performance tracking
- Slow decision-making due to repeated clarification cycles
- Disputes over scope interpretation despite agreed documentation
- Lack of shared understanding of what "success" looks like

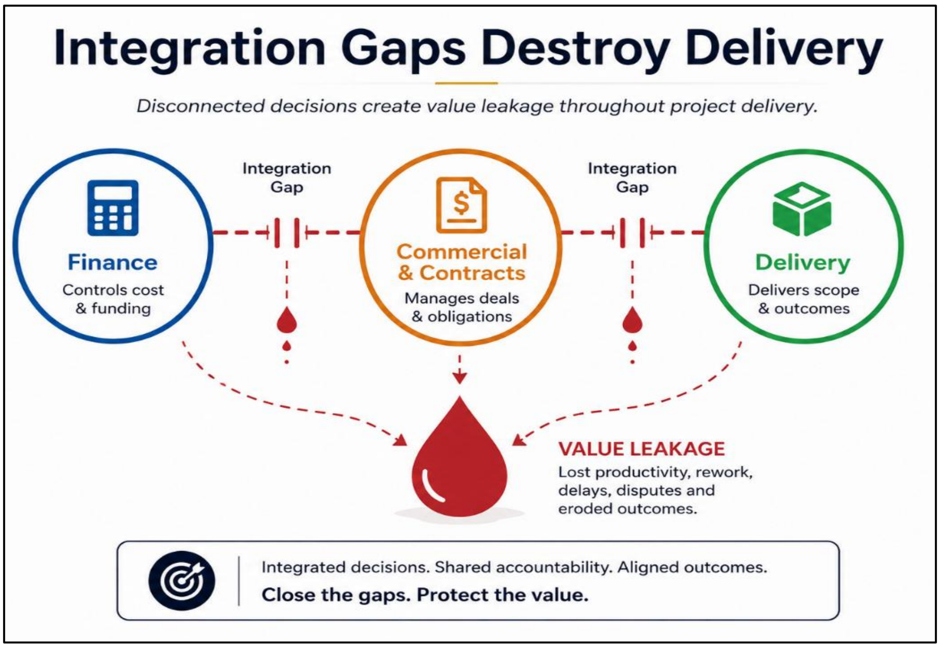

Figure 4 Value is lost not within functions, but in the gaps between them.

When teams are not aligned in language, they are effectively not aligned in thinking. And when thinking diverges, execution becomes inconsistent.

Why value leaks when functions don't integrate

Value in projects is not lost in a single moment. It leaks gradually through inefficiency, delay, and misalignment. Integration gaps between functions are one of the primary sources of this leakage.

When finance, commercial, and delivery are not connected in real time, decisions are made with incomplete visibility. Opportunities for optimisation are missed. Risks are identified too late. And trade-offs are made locally rather than strategically. This creates a slow erosion of value that is often difficult to trace back to a single cause.

Common mechanisms of value leakage include:

- Delayed cost visibility leading to reactive decision-making
- Commercial decisions made without full operational context
- Delivery changes not fully reflected in financial forecasts
- Inefficient escalation paths between functions
- Redundant approvals caused by lack of shared systems
- Missed opportunities for early intervention on risk or variation

Over time, these small inefficiencies accumulate into significant cost and schedule impacts. The project may still "proceed," but at a lower level of efficiency and effectiveness than originally intended.

The cost of misalignment across teams

Misalignment does not only create inefficiency. It creates friction. And friction has a cost that extends beyond time and money.

When teams are not aligned, energy is spent managing differences rather than delivering outcomes. Decisions take longer. Confidence in data reduces. Trust between functions weakens. And leadership attention shifts from execution to resolution of internal issues.

The cost of misalignment appears in several forms:

- Increased rework due to inconsistent interpretation of requirements
- Slower decision-making caused by repeated validation cycles
- Higher contingency usage due to lack of coordinated risk management
- Reduced accountability as ownership becomes fragmented
- Strained relationships between functions and stakeholders
- Loss of momentum in delivery due to internal friction

In many projects, this internal cost is larger than the external risks being managed. Yet it is often less visible because it is distributed across functions rather than concentrated in a single area. The true impact of misalignment is not just inefficiency, it is the gradual weakening of delivery capability.

Closing insight

Integration is not a structural detail; it is a performance driver.

When finance, commercial, and delivery operate in silos, the project behaves as disconnected parts rather than a unified system. When teams do not share language, they do not share understanding. And when functions are not integrated, value does not disappear suddenly; it leaks continuously.

Ultimately, delivery success is not only about strong individual functions. It is about how well those functions work together under real conditions.

Because in complex projects, integration gaps do not just slow delivery—they determine whether full value is ever realised at all.

Chapter 4: Keeping Contracts and Business Cases Alive

In many organisations, a contract and its supporting business case are treated as end products. Once approved and signed, they are stored, referenced occasionally, and largely left unchanged. The assumption is that they represent a fixed agreement and a stable justification for the project moving forward.

But in complex delivery environments, this approach creates a silent risk. Conditions change, assumptions evolve, and delivery realities shift, but the documents remain static. When contracts and business cases are treated as "finished," they quickly become disconnected from the project they are meant to govern.

To protect value, they must remain alive, not as paperwork, but as active tools guiding delivery decisions.

> ***"The first step to creating trust and transparency is to have a common language."*** **— Amireh Amirmazaheri**

Why contracts and business cases cannot sit on the shelf

A contract or business case is not a historical record. It is a set of assumptions, commitments, and expectations about future delivery under uncertain conditions. When those conditions change, and they always do, the documents must evolve in how they are used and interpreted.

The problem is not documentation itself, but stasis. When documents are not actively referenced, tested, or updated in meaning, they lose relevance to execution. Key issues that arise when they are left "on the shelf" include:

- Assumptions made at approval no longer reflect current project conditions
- Business case benefits drift away from actual delivery performance
- Decision-making becomes detached from original value drivers
- Contracts are referenced only in disputes, not in daily management
- Delivery teams operate without visibility of original intent
- Governance focuses on compliance rather than value validation

Over time, this creates a gap between what was promised and what is being delivered—often without clear visibility until late in the project lifecycle.

What it really means to treat contracts as live documents

Treating a contract as a live document does not mean constantly rewriting it. It means actively using it as a reference point for decision-making, alignment, and performance management throughout delivery.

A live contract is one that remains operationally relevant. It is regularly interpreted, tested against reality, and used to guide decisions, not just to resolve disputes.

This requires a shift in mindset: from viewing the contract as static legal protection to viewing it as a dynamic delivery framework. In practice, this means:

- Regularly revisiting contractual assumptions during delivery cycles
- Linking contract scope directly to current execution planning
- Using contractual milestones to guide delivery governance rhythms
- Interpreting obligations in the context of real-time project conditions
- Ensuring both commercial and delivery teams actively reference the same source of truth
- Treating the contract as a coordination tool, not just a compliance document

When contracts are kept alive in this way, they help maintain alignment rather than simply define boundaries.

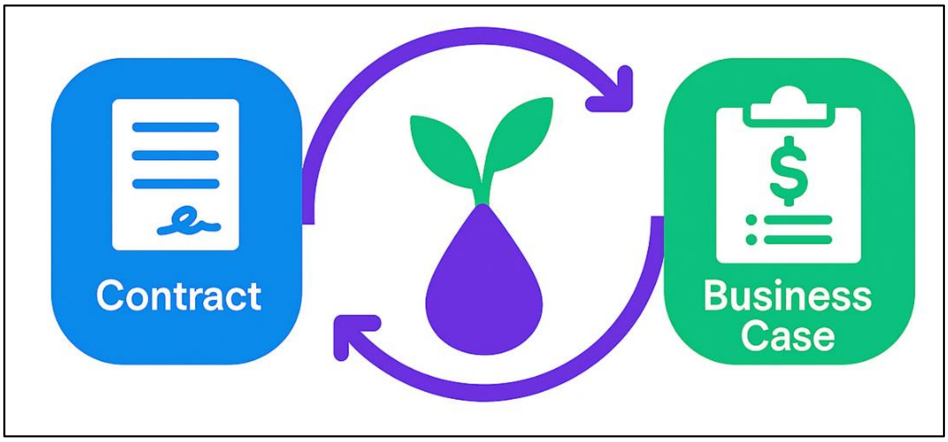

Figure 5 Keeping contracts and business cases alive strengthens delivery performance.

Embedding contractual obligations into schedules, costs, and governance

One of the main reasons contracts become disconnected from delivery is that they are not embedded into operational systems. They sit in parallel to schedules, cost trackers, and governance frameworks rather than being integrated into them.

To keep contracts and business cases active, their logic must be reflected in how the project is planned, tracked, and governed. This embedding process typically involves:

- Translating contractual milestones into integrated project schedules
- Aligning cost tracking with approved business case assumptions
- Reflecting contractual risk allocation in live risk registers
- Linking payment mechanisms to actual delivery progress indicators
- Embedding obligations into governance checkpoints and reporting cycles
- Ensuring commercial terms are visible in operational dashboards

When this integration is strong, the contract becomes part of daily delivery management rather than a separate reference document. Decisions are then made with full visibility of both operational reality and contractual intent.

Keeping value visible throughout delivery

A business case represents the original justification for investment. It defines why the project exists and what value it is expected to deliver. However, this value can easily become obscured once execution begins.

As complexity increases, attention often shifts toward managing immediate delivery pressures, cost variation, schedule pressure, and technical issues, while the original value drivers fade into the background. Keeping value visible requires deliberate effort throughout the project lifecycle.This can be achieved by:

- Continuously tracking actual performance against business case benefits
- Making value indicators part of regular governance reporting
- Linking delivery decisions back to original investment rationale
- Highlighting benefit erosion or enhancement in real time
- Maintaining visibility of “why the project exists” at every level of delivery
- Ensuring leadership discussions include both delivery status and value realisation

When value remains visible, decisions are better anchored. Trade-offs are assessed not only on cost and time, but also on whether they support or undermine intended outcomes. Without this visibility, projects risk becoming efficient at delivering the wrong things.

Closing insight

Contracts and business cases are not static artifacts. They are living frameworks for delivery. When they are left on the shelf, they lose relevance and disconnect from reality. When they are treated as live documents, they become tools for alignment, decision-making, and value protection.

Ultimately, successful delivery is not just about executing work correctly. It is about continuously ensuring that what is being executed still reflects what was originally intended to be achieved. Because in complex projects, value is not only created in delivery—it is protected by keeping intent alive throughout delivery.

Chapter 5: The PMO as the Enabler of Trust and Value

In complex delivery environments, success is rarely determined by effort alone. It is determined by alignment, how well people, systems, and decisions stay connected as conditions evolve. At the centre of this alignment sits a function that is often underestimated: the Project Management Office (PMO).

Too often, the PMO is seen as an administrative layer focused on reporting, compliance, and coordination. While these functions are important, they only reflect a narrow part of its potential. In high-performing organisations, the PMO is not just a reporting mechanism. It is the engine that enables trust, transparency, and value continuity from negotiation through to delivery. When used effectively, the PMO becomes the structure that ensures what was agreed is actually what gets delivered.

Why trust and transparency are delivery accelerators

Trust and transparency are not soft concepts; they are operational accelerators. When information flows clearly and consistently across teams, decisions are faster, risks are surfaced earlier, and coordination becomes more efficient.

In contrast, when transparency is weak, uncertainty increases. Teams begin to rely on assumptions rather than shared facts. Reporting becomes fragmented. Decisions are delayed because information must be verified multiple times across functions.

Trust reduces friction. Transparency reduces duplication. Together, they improve delivery speed and quality.

Key ways trust and transparency accelerate delivery include:

- Faster decision-making due to shared visibility of information
- Reduced duplication of effort across functions
- Earlier identification of risks and issues
- Stronger alignment across commercial, finance, and delivery teams
- Improved confidence in reporting and forecasting
- Lower friction in escalation and resolution processes

Without trust and transparency, even well-structured projects slow down under the weight of internal uncertainty.

"If the PMO is not able to think strategically and connect to the business strategy, that PMO is out of date." — **Amireh Amirmazaheri**

The PMO as integrator, translator, and guardian of value

The true strength of a PMO lies in its position across the organisation. It sits between functions, disciplines, and levels of decision-making. This allows it to play three critical roles: integrator, translator, and guardian of value.

As an **integrator**, the PMO connects finance, commercial, and delivery functions into a single operating rhythm. It ensures that schedules, cost data, and contractual obligations are not managed in isolation but viewed as part of one system.

As a **translator**, it converts complexity into clarity. Contracts are translated into delivery milestones. Financial forecasts are translated into operational impacts. Technical progress is translated into commercial outcomes. This ensures that all stakeholders interpret project status in a consistent way.

As a **guardian of value**, the PMO maintains visibility of what the project is trying to achieve. It tracks whether delivery decisions are supporting or eroding the original business case, ensuring that execution remains aligned with investment intent.

Key responsibilities of a high-functioning PMO include:

- Aligning reporting across commercial, finance, and delivery streams
- Ensuring consistent interpretation of project performance data
- Linking delivery progress to contractual and financial frameworks
- Maintaining visibility of business case value drivers
- Facilitating cross-functional decision-making
- Ensuring accountability across interfaces

In this sense, the PMO is not just an observer of delivery; it is a stabiliser of it.

Figure 6 A modern PMO enables trust, integration, strategic alignment, and value realisation throughout the project lifecycle.

Moving the PMO beyond administration into strategic enablement

In many organisations, PMOs are still positioned as administrative support functions focused on reporting cycles, templates, and compliance tracking. While these activities are necessary, they do not reflect the full potential of the function.

A strategic PMO moves beyond tracking progress to shaping outcomes. It actively influences how decisions are made, how risks are managed, and how value is protected throughout delivery.

This shift requires a change in mindset, from reporting what is happening to enabling what should happen next.

A strategically enabled PMO focuses on:

- Driving alignment between strategy, contract, and execution
- Enabling proactive rather than reactive decision-making

- Identifying early signals of delivery risk or value erosion
- Supporting leadership with integrated, real-time insights
- Challenging misalignment between functions and objectives
- Embedding governance that supports delivery outcomes, not just compliance

When the PMO operates at this level, it becomes a critical part of delivery success rather than a peripheral support function.

How PMOs keep negotiation value alive through delivery

One of the most important but underappreciated roles of the PMO is preserving the value established during negotiation. At the point of contract award, value is defined in terms of scope, cost, risk allocation, and expected benefits. However, this value can quickly erode during execution if it is not actively managed.

The PMO plays a key role in ensuring that the intent of the negotiation phase remains visible and operational throughout delivery. It does this by continuously connecting three layers of the project:

- **Commercial intent**: what was agreed and why
- **Operational execution**: what is being delivered and how
- **Value outcomes**: what is being achieved and whether it still aligns with the business case

By maintaining this connection, the PMO ensures that delivery decisions are not made in isolation from the original value proposition.

Key mechanisms include:

- Tracking delivery performance against agreed commercial frameworks
- Monitoring alignment between actual progress and business case assumptions
- Highlighting deviations in scope, cost, or schedule early
- Ensuring governance discussions include value impact, not just status updates
- Maintaining a single source of truth across functions
- Supporting recalibration of plans when conditions change

In this way, the PMO becomes the thread that connects negotiation to execution and execution to value.

Closing insight

The PMO is not simply a reporting function; it is a delivery enabler.

When it operates at an administrative level, it records what has happened. When it operates strategically, it shapes what happens next. And when it functions as an integrator, translator, and guardian of value, it becomes central to project success. Trust and transparency accelerate delivery. Integration enables alignment. And the PMO is the structure that holds these together. Ultimately, contracts define intent, but PMOs help ensure that intent survives the journey into delivery—and becomes real value in practice.

Conclusion: Final Reflections – 4 Lessons That Shape Delivery

Beyond the Signature: 4 Lessons That Shape Delivery demonstrates that successful project delivery is not defined by the execution of a contract, but by the ability of organisations to transform contractual intent into measurable outcomes. While a signed contract establishes the commercial framework, it is only the beginning of the delivery journey. Real value is realised through effective execution, continuous alignment, and collaborative decision-making throughout the project lifecycle.

The four lessons presented in this eBook reinforce a common principle: delivery excellence depends on people, processes, and integration rather than documentation alone. Organisations that view contracts as living frameworks, maintain alignment between commercial and operational teams, and empower the Project Management Office (PMO) to act as an integrator and guardian of value are better positioned to navigate complexity and achieve sustainable outcomes.

As infrastructure and capital projects continue to grow in scale and complexity, traditional approaches that separate procurement, finance, commercial management, and delivery are no longer sufficient. Success requires an integrated delivery model where stakeholders share a common understanding of objectives, communicate openly, respond proactively to change, and continually evaluate whether project decisions remain aligned with the original business case.

Ultimately, the measure of success is not whether a contract was awarded, but whether the promised value was delivered. Organisations that focus beyond the signature and invest in collaboration, integration, governance, and adaptability will be better equipped to deliver projects that achieve lasting value for clients, stakeholders, and the communities they serve.

Reflection

Developing the insights within this eBook highlights an important shift in modern project delivery: technical capability and commercial negotiation alone are no longer enough to ensure project success. The increasing complexity of infrastructure programs demands stronger integration across disciplines, greater transparency in decision-making, and a continuous focus on value creation throughout delivery.

One of the strongest reflections from this work is that many project challenges do not stem from poorly written contracts but from the disconnect between commercial agreements and operational execution. This reinforces the importance of viewing contracts, business cases, governance, and project controls as interconnected elements of a single delivery system rather than isolated functions.

The discussion also emphasises the evolving role of the PMO. Rather than serving primarily as an administrative reporting function, the PMO has the potential to become a strategic enabler that strengthens collaboration, improves organisational alignment, and safeguards project value from contract award through to completion. By connecting commercial intent with delivery performance, the PMO becomes instrumental in maintaining trust, accountability, and informed decision-making.

Finally, this eBook serves as a reminder that successful delivery is a continuous process of learning and adaptation. Every project presents new uncertainties, stakeholder expectations, and operational challenges. Organisations that embrace collaboration, maintain alignment across functions, and continuously revisit the original purpose of their projects are more likely to realise intended benefits and deliver enduring value.

The journey beyond the signature is ultimately a journey toward better leadership, stronger governance, and more resilient project delivery. When organisations recognise that contracts establish opportunity, but execution creates value, they position themselves to achieve outcomes that extend well beyond project completion.

What's Next?

Understanding the lessons is only the first step. The real opportunity lies in applying them to everyday project delivery.

As organisations continue to deliver increasingly complex infrastructure, construction, and capital projects, success will depend on moving beyond traditional contract management toward integrated value delivery. The question is no longer *"Did we secure the contract?"* but rather *"Are we delivering the value we promised?"*

The four lessons in this eBook provide a practical framework for strengthening delivery capability:

- **Align early** by establishing shared objectives, governance, and stakeholder expectations before delivery begins.
- **Integrate delivery** by connecting commercial, finance, PMO, and delivery functions into a single operating model.
- **Keep contracts and business cases alive** by embedding them into planning, reporting, risk management, and decision-making throughout the project lifecycle.
- **Empower the PMO** to act as a strategic integrator that enables collaboration, transparency, and value realisation.

These principles are not limited to major infrastructure programs. They are equally applicable to government projects, private sector initiatives, digital transformation, engineering programs, and organisational change efforts where successful delivery depends on people, processes, and collaboration.

Questions to Consider

As you reflect on your own organisation, ask yourself:

- Are we measuring success by contract award or by value delivered?
- Do our commercial, finance, and delivery teams operate as one integrated system?
- Are our contracts and business cases actively guiding delivery decisions?
- Does our PMO provide strategic leadership, or is it primarily focused on reporting and administration?
- Are we identifying value erosion early enough to respond before it affects outcomes?

The answers to these questions can help identify opportunities to strengthen delivery capability and improve long-term project performance.

Looking Ahead

The future of project delivery will not be defined by better contracts alone, but by stronger integration, better governance, data-driven decision-making, and adaptive leadership.

Organisations that invest in collaboration, maintain alignment from procurement through delivery, and continually focus on value realisation will be better positioned to navigate uncertainty, deliver successful projects, and create lasting benefits for their stakeholders.

The signature starts the journey.
The delivery creates the value.
The next step is yours.

How EDSICO Can Help

At EDSICO, we help public and private sector organisations navigate complex infrastructure challenges by applying the principles explored throughout this book. From project planning and governance to procurement strategy, risk management, project controls, and delivery assurance, we work with clients to improve outcomes, strengthen collaboration, and create lasting value.

Whether you're seeking to improve project performance, adopt more collaborative delivery models, strengthen governance, or better manage uncertainty, our team can help translate these ideas into practical actions.

Start with one area where greater clarity, stronger alignment, or smarter decision-making can make a difference, and put it into action on your next project.

Take the Next Step

Book a complimentary consultation with our team.

Visit https://edsico.com.au/ to learn more about our services and capabilities.

Explore the Knowledge hub for more eBook and free resources

Biography

Amireh Amirmazaheri || Founder, PMO Solutions | Asia-Pacific Lead, PMO Global Alliance

Amireh Amirmazaheri is a recognised project management and PMO leader with extensive experience delivering complex engineering, infrastructure, and capital investment programs across the Asia-Pacific region. As the Founder of PMO Solutions and the Asia-Pacific Lead for the PMO Global Alliance, she is passionate about helping organisations transform their Project Management Offices (PMOs) from administrative functions into strategic drivers of business value.

Widely known as the **"Queen of PMO,"** Amireh combines deep technical expertise with commercial insight to bridge the gap between strategy and execution. Her work focuses on strengthening organisational capability through integrated governance, portfolio management, value realisation, and cross-functional collaboration.

Throughout her career, Amireh has advised organisations on improving project delivery by connecting finance, commercial, procurement, and delivery teams into a unified operating model. She is a strong advocate for transparency, trust, and alignment, believing that successful project outcomes depend not only on sound governance but also on effective leadership, communication, and organisational integration.

In this episode, Amireh explores why negotiation does not end when a contract is signed and explains how disconnected teams, weak integration, and limited transparency can erode project value long before issues become visible. She shares practical insights into why many projects fail to achieve their intended outcomes and how organisations can reposition the PMO as a strategic business enabler that protects value throughout the entire project lifecycle.

Drawing on years of experience across engineering and major infrastructure portfolios, Amireh offers valuable perspectives for project professionals, executives, and organisational leaders seeking to improve governance, enhance collaboration, and deliver sustainable business outcomes.

Whether leading portfolio transformation, mentoring PMO professionals, or speaking at international forums, Amireh continues to champion a simple but powerful message: **projects**

succeed when people, processes, and purpose remain aligned from strategy through to delivery.

About EDSICO

EDSICO is a leading Australian project management company with access to global expertise. At EDSICO, we have highly qualified and professional teams who provide a range of services to develop projects from inception to delivery and commissioning.

EDSICO has been operating since 2006, with a primary focus on providing a comprehensive range of integrated project services for infrastructure projects. With 25 Years of experience from multi-billion-dollar projects and serving numerous clients, EDSICO opened its first Australian Branch in Sydney in 2014.

We appreciate that our clients are different, and their projects are unique, so one solution doesn't fit all. This is why we take the time to listen and analyse each client's specific requirements, enabling us to provide tailored solutions that adequately address their needs.

EDSICO's client portfolio includes a range of public and private sector clients, including Australian Federal, State, and local government agencies, as well as tier-one contractors and Consultants.

Further Reading and Standards References

The ideas presented in **Beyond the Signature** complement internationally recognised standards and leading industry guidance on project delivery, governance, and value realisation. Readers wishing to explore these topics further may find the following resources valuable:

- **ISO 21502:2020 – Project, Programme and Portfolio Management**
  Guidance for effective project management across the project lifecycle.
  ISO Project Management Standards

- **ISO 44001:2017 – Collaborative Business Relationship Management Systems**
  Guidance on building collaborative relationships and integrated delivery across organisations.
  ISO 44001 Standard

- **A Guide to the PMBOK® Guide – Seventh Edition**
  Principles-based guidance for delivering value through projects, published by the Project Management Institute (PMI).
  Project Management Institute (PMI)

- **PMO Global Alliance (PMOGA)**
  Research, thought leadership, and resources on PMO capability, governance, and value management.
  PMO Global Alliance

Note to Readers

This eBook is intended to complement—not replace—established industry standards and professional guidance. The framework presented is inspired by practical delivery experience and insights shared by **Amireh Amirmazaheri** on the *Beyond the Plan* podcast. Readers are encouraged to apply these concepts alongside their own organisational governance frameworks, contractual obligations, and applicable industry standards.

Beyond the Signature: Project Delivery Checklist

Practical Checklist for Smarter, Sustainable Infrastructure Delivery

Successful project delivery begins after the contract is signed. This checklist helps organisations assess whether they have the governance, alignment, and delivery capability needed to turn commercial agreements into sustainable project outcomes.

Projects that perform strongly across all four lessons in Beyond the Signature are significantly more likely to achieve predictable delivery, improved stakeholder confidence, and long-term value realization.

How to Use This Checklist

This checklist is designed for infrastructure leaders, PMOs, procurement teams, and delivery organisations seeking to strengthen project delivery beyond contract award. It provides a practical self-assessment of the capabilities required to translate commercial agreements into successful, value-driven outcomes.

For each question, select the response that best reflects your organisation's current practice:

- **1 = Yes** – This capability is consistently implemented and embedded across projects.
- **0 = No** – This capability is not in place or requires significant improvement.

By completing this checklist, you will:

- Identify whether delivery thinking begins too late in your organisation.
- Expose gaps between commercial intent and operational execution.
- Assess whether integration is enabling or limiting performance.
- Determine whether contracts and business cases remain active throughout delivery.
- Evaluate the role of the PMO in enabling trust, governance, and alignment.
- Strengthen your organisation's ability to deliver predictable, sustainable, and value-driven outcomes.

1. Beyond the Signature – Why Delivery Starts After the Deal

Key Area	Questions	Status
Definition of Success	Is success defined beyond contract award and financial close?	☐ 1 ☐ 0
Post-Signature Reality	Do teams recognise that real delivery risk emerges after signing?	☐ 1 ☐ 0
Value Focus	Are we actively tracking whether intended value is being realised?	☐ 1 ☐ 0
Transition Clarity	Is there a structured handover from procurement to delivery governance?	☐ 1 ☐ 0
Outcome Orientation	Are outcomes prioritised over contractual compliance alone?	☐ 1 ☐ 0

2. Lesson 1 – A Signed Contract Is Not Value

Key Area	Questions	Status
Value Translation	Do teams clearly understand how contract terms translate into delivery outcomes?	☐ 1 ☐ 0
Operational Alignment	Is there alignment between commercial assumptions and delivery capability?	☐ 1 ☐ 0
Systems Readiness	Are systems, processes, and people ready to deliver the contract in practice?	☐ 1 ☐ 0
Performance Reality	Are we measuring the gap between contracted value and delivered value?	☐ 1 ☐ 0
Success Metrics	Are success measures outcome-based rather than output-based?	☐ 1 ☐ 0

3. Lesson 2 – Integration Gaps Destroy Delivery

Key Area	Questions	Status
Functional Silos	Do commercial, finance, and delivery teams operate in a fully integrated way?	☐ 1 ☐ 0
Common Language	Is there a shared understanding of cost, risk, scope, and schedule?	☐ 1 ☐ 0
Decision Alignment	Are key decisions made collaboratively across all functions?	☐ 1 ☐ 0
Value Leakage	Are misalignments causing rework, delay, or avoidable cost escalation?	☐ 1 ☐ 0
Governance Integration	Is integration embedded in governance structures and reporting cycles?	☐ 1 ☐ 0

4. Lesson 3 – Contracts and Business Cases Must Stay Alive

Key Area	Questions	Status
Living Documents	Are contracts and business cases actively used during delivery—not just archived?	☐ 1 ☐ 0
Change Visibility	Are scope, cost, and risk changes reflected in real time?e risks actively managed as a shared responsibility?	☐ 1 ☐ 0
Cost of Risk Awareness	Is the original business case regularly reviewed against actual outcomes?	☐ 1 ☐ 0
Fair Allocation	Are contractual obligations embedded into reporting and decision-making?	☐ 1 ☐ 0
Incentive Alignment	Are contractual obligations embedded into reporting and decision-making?	☐ 1 ☐ 0

5. Lesson 4 – The PMO as the Enabler of Trust and Value

Key Area	Questions	Status
Integration Role	Does the PMO actively integrate commercial, finance, and delivery perspectives?	☐ 1 ☐ 0
Trust Building	Does the PMO improve transparency and trust across delivery partners?	☐ 1 ☐ 0
Value Protection	Does the PMO track whether negotiated value is being realised in delivery?	☐ 1 ☐ 0
Insight Delivery	Does the PMO provide decision-ready insights rather than just reporting?	☐ 1 ☐ 0
Strategic Influence	Is the PMO involved in shaping delivery outcomes, not just monitoring them?	☐ 1 ☐ 0

Interpreting Your Score

Add your scores from all 25 questions to determine your overall delivery maturity.

Score 22–25 High Maturity
Your organisation demonstrates strong alignment between commercial intent, governance, and project delivery. Continue to refine and share best practices across projects.

16–21 Established
Solid delivery foundations are in place, but there are opportunities to strengthen integration, governance, and value realisation. Focus on addressing the identified gaps.

10–15 Developing
Several capability gaps may be limiting project performance. Improving collaboration, governance, and commercial alignment will help reduce delivery risk and improve outcomes.

0–9 Needs Immediate Attention

Significant weaknesses exist in delivery readiness, governance, or organisational alignment. A structured improvement program is recommended to strengthen project delivery capability and maximise value.
What to Do Next

Use your results to identify priority areas for improvement. The sections with the lowest scores represent the greatest opportunities to strengthen delivery capability, improve collaboration, and enhance project outcomes. Repeating this assessment periodically can help track progress and support continuous improvement.

Summary & Next Steps

After completing this checklist, reflect on:

- Where delivery thinking begins in your organisation
- Whether value is sustained or lost after contract signature
- How effectively your functions are integrated in practice
- Whether your contract and business case remain "alive" during execution
- The true role your PMO plays in enabling delivery success

Need Support?

If your results highlight areas for improvement, **EDSICO can help:**

📞 Book a Free Consultation with EDSICO

👉 https://edsico.com.au/

📧 Email: info@edsico.com.au

🔗 Or reach out via LinkedIn

Watch the full podcast episode.

Hear from Amireh Amirmazaheri, CEO and Founder of PMO Solutions, a recognised PMO and portfolio management expert with over 20 years' experience in establishing and leading enterprise PMOs, governance frameworks, and delivery capability uplift across infrastructure, water, and government sectors, and a global leader in advancing PMO best practice through the PMO Global Alliance.

👉 Watch the full episode on YouTube

Use the eBook, tools, and checklist together to strengthen your bids, improve operational readiness, and build lasting trust with buyers.