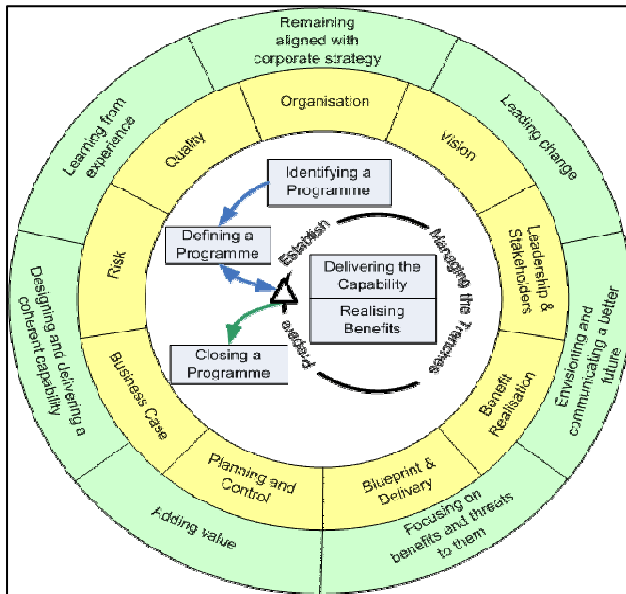


All you ever wanted to know about MSP - Rod Sowden, Lead Author for MSP 2007



The Office of Government Commerce has just released the third revision of the globally recognised best practice framework for Programme Management called “Managing Successful Programmes”. It was first released in 1999 when it first crystallised the evolving concepts of business change from projects. In 2003 a second version was released which reflected the increasing maturity of the concepts. The 2007 version has captured the evolving knowledge in this discipline whilst remaining true to the original concepts. New tools and techniques have been added and greater depth of explanation to help organisations and individuals effectively implement the programme management successfully.

MSP defines programme management as “the action of carrying out the coordinated organisation, direction and implementation of a dossier of projects and transformational activities (i.e. the programme) to achieve outcomes and realise benefits of strategic importance to the business”.



The MSP framework is designed to enable the delivery of transformational change and the achievement of an organisations strategic objectives. Programmes exist in the tension zone between the strategic direction of the organisation, the delivery of change capability by projects and the need to maintain business performance and stability whilst realising and exploiting the benefits from the investments.

There are three types of programmes that MSP endeavours to address; each will require different focus and intensity of resources and control.

Vision led programmes that start with a clearly defined vision, have a top down approach, and focus on strategic or innovative opportunity with radical transformation of business, culture or both.

Emergent programmes evolve from current uncoordinated initiatives, where there is recognition of the value of joined-up approach with an emergent vision and end goal

Compliance programmes can also be called ‘must do’ programmes. The organisation has no choice but to change, for example because of market forces or the potential negative impact of not changing.

Unlike project management, which thrives on certainty, programme management recognises and exploits the ambiguity within which it exists.

The Managing Successful Programme Framework.

When picking up the manual, you will note that it has 3 main sections,

The Introduction describes the context of Programme Management and also introduces the Programme Management principles, these apply to every programme, have been proven in practice and empower individuals to deliver successfully, and these principles are:

- Remaining aligned with corporate strategy.
- Leading change.
- Envisioning and communicating a better future.
- Focusing on the benefits and threats to them.
- Adding Value.
- Designing and delivering a coherent capability.
- Learning from experience.

The Governance Themes are a set of references that explain how key elements of the programme should be delivered during its delivery lifecycle. The Governance Themes cover subjects that will need to be constantly managed to a greater or lesser extent on a daily basis:

Organisation describes how governance should be applied, through the Sponsoring Group and Programme Board, and provides guidance on the roles and responsibilities for the main roles, Senior Responsible Owner, Business Change Manager and Programme Manager. It also recommends additional roles.

Vision is required for the delivery of any programme, MSP sets out the key contents and how it should paint a picture of a better future for the organisation.

Stakeholder Engagement and Leadership is critical to any programme, change requires effective leadership. MSP emphasises the need to not only identify and communicate with stakeholders, but also provides analysis tools to generate greater understanding of their needs, perceptions and priorities.

Blueprint Design and Delivery is the foundation for the programme, what is the “to be” state for the organisation when the programme completes, and in fact what is our starting point (“as is” state). Transformation is delivered in step changes through Tranches.

Benefits Realisation Management is the core difference between projects and programmes, the active exploitation of the opportunities that are offered by the

investment in projects deliverables is complex, with each benefit having its own profile and a supporting plan to deliver the changes and release the dividend.

Business Case will be in place for all programmes, with MSP highlighting the need for the programme to have an overarching Case, and each project having its own Business Case too.

Risk and Issue Management offers advice and guidance on how to avoid the realisation of the events that will cause the programme to fail. It not only focuses on the need to manage threats, but also to exploit opportunities. There are four perspectives, Strategic, Programme, Operation and Project risk.

Planning and control are covered in detail to explain how to develop the Programme Plan and maintain internal control.

Quality describes how there should be optimal management of people, resources, suppliers, processes, assets, information and strategic alignment.

Transformational Flow is the term used to describe the lifecycle of the programme; it uses “Flow” to reflect the evolving nature of the journey the programme takes and the adjustments that will need to be made. The following summarises the stages it passes through.

Identifying a Programme takes an outline idea, and undertakes analysis of stakeholders, clarification of the strategic requirements and market consultation to turn it into a business concept that gains strategic support.

Defining a Programme confirms the vision, undertakes detailed analysis of options and designs the programme infrastructure to deliver, resulting in a business case and strategic commitment.

Managing the Tranches describes the cyclical activities involved in managing and proving the coordinating interface between projects, business change and strategic direction.

Delivering the Capability explains how the alignment of the projects and other activities that deliver the Blueprint will be managed and controlled.

Realising the Benefits outlines the preparing, delivering and reviewing activities to take the capability delivered by projects, transition into the business operations and embed it within the business operations to release the intended benefits.

Closing the Programme structures the end to the programme, consolidating and embedding the change, closing down all programme activity and completing Stakeholder Engagement.

In the Appendices of the manual there is guidance on programme documentation, how to implement MSP, undertake Health Checks and manage a Programme Office.