



Rod Sowden, Managing Director of Aspire Europe Ltd, the only consultancy and training organisation dedicated to Managing Successful Programmes, shares insight into 'The Golden Thread' that is common throughout successful change programmes.

Aspire Europe Ltd are an APM Group Accredited Training and Consultancy Organisation.

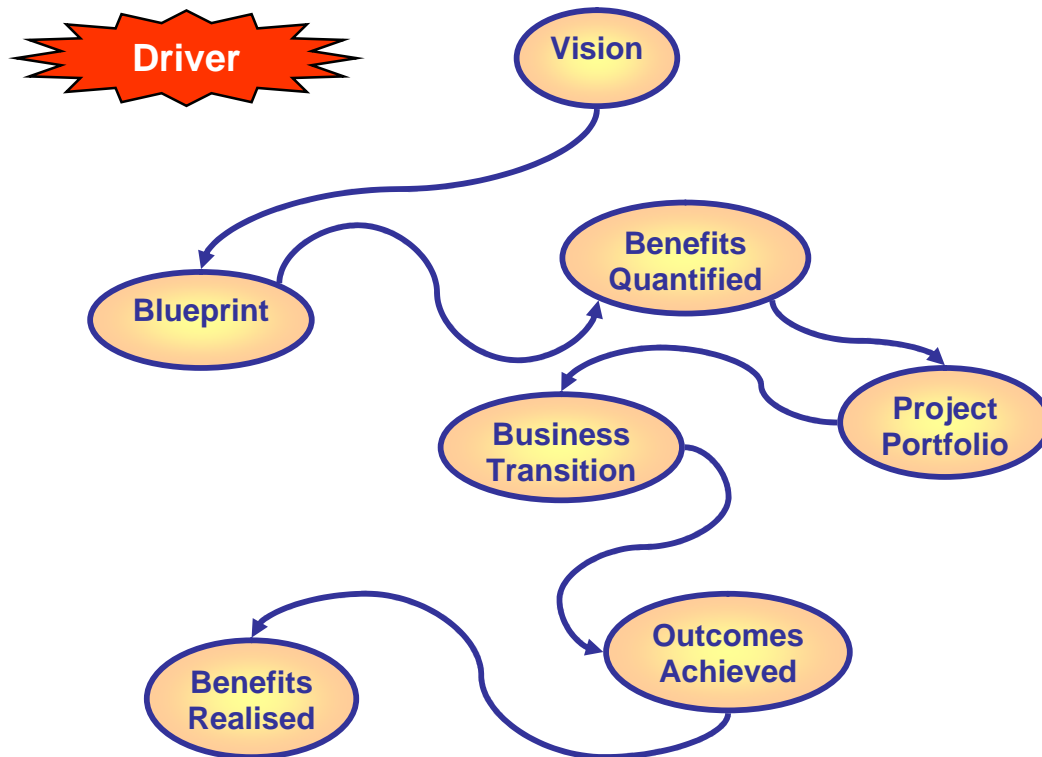
How Fit Is Your Programme?

Across the UK at the moment there will be hundreds of programmes being run, but how well are they being run and how does the sponsor know that his/her programme is in a healthy shape?

There are a number of ways to find out, most of them costing money from consultants. Most programmes are complex, and are being run using a methodology that fits one of the following descriptions:

1. Home grown – the organisation has taught itself how to run large complex change initiatives based on its project experience.
2. Proprietary methodologies – from one of the big consultancies at a significant cost.
3. OGC Managing Successful Programmes – methodology available for public use and owned by the OGC. This is by far the dominant approach on the current market place.

From our experience there is a thread that runs through most proven methodologies, and is often missing from the home grown approach. We call it 'The Golden Thread', as all the successful programmes we have come across use it, whilst less successful ones don't.



The Vision Statement – clearly sets out the direction and purpose of the programme.

Blueprint – a detailed description and understanding of what the future state of the organisation will be like, an important step often missed. If you don't know where you are going, how will you know when you have arrived?

Quantified Benefits – detailed description of the benefits to be delivered, not a set of bullet points buried in a business case. This is the core of an effective programme, and can't effectively be done until you know where you are going.

Project Portfolio – well structured to maximise the efficient use of resources, designed to deliver dividend early and effective control points to stop the programme running away with itself.

Business Transition – effective plans to minimise the instability caused to the business whilst remaining ambitious about the intended achievements.

Outcomes Achieved – focus remains, the new systems have been installed and moved to the new building, you have reached the new state, but you still will not have achieved the benefits.

Benefits Realisation – it is all too easy to declare victory before the benefits have been achieved. People still think that a miracle will occur that turns outcomes into benefits which is wrong – management intervention will still be required.

With this information, you can do your own health check to test the quality of your programme. If the key components of 'The Golden Thread' are not in place you will undoubtedly run into trouble. It is all too easy to bypass the blueprint or benefits through expediency to move forward, but if we had £10 for every senior manager who said "if we'd have done this in the first place we would have headed off all the problems later", we'd be very rich people by now.