

Managing Successful Programmes (MSP™) – The Facts

Author

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Synopsis

This paper sets out to explain the UK Government owned programme management guidance Managing Successful Programmes (MSP). It describes the key principles underlying the guidance, the nine Governance Themes and six processes of the Transformational Flow. Finally it describes the benefits of adopting the guidance.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to provide a high-level introduction to Managing Successful Programmes (MSP).

MSP is now used extensively by the UK government, the wider public sector and is widely recognised and used in the private sector, both in the UK and internationally. It embodies established and proven best practice in programme management. It provides a common language for all participants in a programme and its attendant projects and transformational activities.

The paper focuses on providing the facts about MSP to enable the reader to appreciate:

- Why MSP should be used to help organisations manage transformational change
- Who needs to be involved in an MSP programme
- What the MSP framework is and what it consists of
- The benefits of its application.

In producing this paper, the author has been particularly careful to keep to the fundamentals of MSP and has therefore extracted much of the text directly from the MSP guide.

The Name

Managing Successful Programmes is commonly referred to as “MSP”. MSP is a Trade Mark of the Office of Government Commerce.

MSP represents proven programme management good practice in the successful delivery of transformational change through the application of programme management. MSP defines programme management as “the action of carrying out the coordinated organisation, direction and implementation of a dossier or projects and transformational activities to achieve outcomes and realise benefits of strategic importance to the business”.

The Origins

The first edition of the MSP guide, published in 1999, used development material contributed by Calyx Consulting Limited with help and support provided by Programme Consulting Limited. Building on the success of the first edition, a second edition was published in 2003.

MSP has been used and adopted within many organisations both within the public and private sectors. The experiences of those who have adopted programme management have provided invaluable inputs into the latest edition of the guide, which was published in 2007.

The Reasons for MSP

Today’s organisations exist in a climate of constant and increasing change. Organisations that have learned how to transform themselves through effective leadership and strategic control are more likely to survive and prosper. Programme management is increasingly being recognised as key to enabling organisations to manage that transformation.

Where there is major change there will be complexity, risk, many interdependencies to manage, and conflicting priorities to resolve. Experience shows that organisations are likely to fail to deliver change successfully where:

- There is insufficient board-level support
- Leadership is weak
- There are unrealistic expectations of the organisational capacity and capability to change
- There is insufficient focus on benefits
- There is no real picture of the future capability
- There is a poorly defined or poorly communicated vision
- The organisation fails to change culture
- There is insufficient engagement of stakeholders

Adopting a programme management approach such as MSP provides a structured framework that can help organisations avoid these pitfalls and achieve their goals.

The Audience for MSP

MSP defines the roles and responsibilities of all who need to form part of the leadership of a programme. Effective leadership of a programme is achieved through informed decision-making and a flexible management regime. The key roles involved are:

Sponsoring Group

The Sponsoring Group represent those senior managers who are responsible for:

- The investment decision
- Defining the direction of the business
- Ensuring the ongoing overall alignment of the programme to the strategic direction of the organisation

The Sponsoring Group will appoint the Senior Responsible Owner who, as part of the Sponsoring Group, is likely to be a peer of the other members of the Sponsoring Group. The role of the Sponsoring Group may well be performed by an existing executive committee or board of the organisation.

Senior Responsible Owner

The Senior Responsible Officer is ultimately accountable for the programme, ensuring that it meets its objectives and realises the expected benefits. The individual who fulfils this role should be able to lead the programme with energy and drive, and must be empowered to direct the programme and take decisions. They must have enough seniority and authority to provide leadership to the programme team and take on accountability for delivery.

Programme Manager

The Programme Manager is responsible for leading and managing the setting up of the programme through to delivery of the new capabilities and realisation of benefits. The Programme Manager has primary responsibility for successful delivery of the new capabilities and establishing the required governance arrangements.

Business Change Managers

Whilst the Programme Manager is responsible for delivering the capability, the Business Change Managers are responsible for realising the resultant benefits by embedding that capability into business operations. The individuals appointed to the roles of Programme Manager and Business Change Managers must be able to work in close partnership to ensure that the right capabilities are delivered and that they are put to best use.

Business Change Management activities will have impacts both within the programme and its projects' organisations, and within the business operations. Each separate business organisation that is affected by the programme should have its own Business Change Management representative.

Programme Office

Programmes are major undertakings, often affecting large numbers of people and organisations and generating a substantial volume of information. The nerve centre and information hub of a programme is the Programme Office. All information, communication, monitoring and control activities for the programme are coordinated through the Programme Office.

The MSP Framework

The MSP framework is based on three core concepts:

- **MSP Principles.** These are derived from positive and negative lessons learned from programme experiences. They are the common factors that underpin the success of any transformational change.
- **MSP Governance Themes.** These define an organisation's approach to programme management. They allow an organisation to put in place the right leadership, delivery team, organisation structures and controls, giving the best chance for success.
- **MSP Transformational Flow.** This provides a route through the lifecycle of a programme from its conception through to the delivery of the new capability, outcomes and benefits.

Principles

MSP can provide a common framework of understanding for all programmes because it is principles based. These principles are:

- **Universal** in that they apply to every programme
- **Self-validating** in that they have been proven in practice
- **Empowering** because they give practitioners of MSP the added ability or power to influence and shape transformational change

The seven principles are:

Principle:	Description:
Remaining aligned with corporate strategy	A successful programme makes a significant contribution towards achieving corporate performance targets. Accordingly, programmes should maintain good links with what can be volatile corporate strategy, to ensure that the outcomes of the programme remain aligned with that strategy.
Leading change	A successful programme will result in a better future for the organisation. However, it is impossible to move to that better future without clear leadership. Programme leadership should give clear direction, engender trust, actively engage stakeholders, appoint the right people at the right time, be able to live with uncertainty, solve problems with creative solutions, and support the transition until the new ways of working are established and embedded.
Envisioning and communicating a better future	Another important aspect of moving to a better future is the ability of leaders to describe a clear vision of that future. A Vision Statement provides a summary impression of the desired future state by describing the new services, improved service levels or innovative ways of working with customers. It is used to communicate the end goal of the programme and to engage and gain commitment from as many stakeholders as possible.
Focusing on benefits and threats to them	The ultimate success of a programme is judged by its ability to realise benefits that are of strategic importance. Hence, everything within the programme should be focussed towards the realisation of these benefits. This includes the effective management of the risks that could impact on these benefits.
Adding value	A programme is only valid if it adds value to the constituent projects and transformational activities. Hence, there should be programme benefits that are over and above the benefits that the projects themselves are able to identify and claim.
Designing and delivering a coherent capability	In order to realise strategic benefits, the programme will deliver enhanced capability. This should be internally coherent so that all quality requirements are optimised and released into operational use to ensure maximum incremental capability with minimal disruption to the organisation.
Learning from experience	A programme should be a learning organisation that reflects upon its performance and seeks to improve. Hence, a programme will perform better where members of the management assume the attitude of being learners.

The Governance Themes

Governance is the control framework through which programmes deliver their change objectives and remain within corporate visibility and control. The programme's control framework needs to be integrated with the corporate governance framework of the organisation, using the organisation's existing governance and control frameworks wherever they exist.

MSP describes nine Governance Themes, each of which details the consistent controls needed to manage the programme. These Governance Themes are:

Organisation

Establishing a clear and effective organisation is critical to programme success. Ensuring that the Programme Organisation meets the needs of the programme is both an initial and ongoing task. Effective Programme Organisation requires a combination of defines roles, clear responsibilities and management structures together with reporting arrangements that are needed to deliver the programme's desired outcomes.

Programme management is most effective when issues are debated freely and risks are evaluated openly. This requires a leadership style and culture that encourages the flow of information between the projects and the programme. Every opportunity to advance the programme towards its goals should be welcomed and converted into constructive progress.

Vision

A vision is a picture of a better future. It is the basis for the outcomes and delivered benefits of the programme, and as such it is a vital focus and enabler for the buy-in, motivation and activity-alignment of the large community of people involved in the programme.

The Vision Statement is used to communicate the end goal of the programme being an outward-facing description of the future state following programme delivery. A good Vision Statement should be written in the future state, be easy to understand and to communicate, apply to a broad range of stakeholders, describe a desirable and compelling future that matches the degree of transformational change, be verifiable and should be short and memorable.

Leadership and Stakeholder Engagement

Leaders use the Vision Statement to influence and persuade the programme stakeholders to commit to the beneficial future. Stakeholders being any individual or group that has an interest in the programme, its outcomes or benefits. Skilful leaders will use communications, visions and metaphors to manage the stakeholders' perceptions of the current reality, the beneficial future and the tension between the two, to build and maintain the organisational impetus and commitment to change.

Stakeholder engagement involves the identification and analysis of stakeholders, defining and planning how the programme will engage with these stakeholders, then undertaking these engagements and measuring their effectiveness to help define and plan further and ongoing stakeholder engagements.

Benefits Realisation Management

A benefit is the measurable improvement resulting from an outcome, which is perceived as an advantage by a stakeholder. As the programme introduces transformational change, enabled by a project output and/or transformational activity, this results in a desired outcome. A benefit is the measurable improvement from such an outcome and in turn, these benefits should contribute towards one or more of the organisation's strategic objectives.

Benefits Realisation Management should ensure that benefits are identified and defined, that business areas are committed to realising their benefits, that benefits are measured, tracked and recorded, and that there is alignment between the programme's desired benefits and the strategic objectives of the organisation.

Blueprint Design and Delivery

Whereas the Vision provides a description of the desired outcomes of the programme in customer-focussed terms, the Blueprint expands upon this to provide a usable basis for modelling benefits and designing the Projects Dossier (i.e. the group of project that will deliver the outputs required by the programme).

The Blueprint is a model of the organisation upon completion of the programme, its working practices and processes, the information it requires and the technology that supports its operations. This detailed description of the future organisation is designed to deliver the capability described in the Vision Statement. When the future organisation is delivered it has to be capable of achieving the outcomes desired and realising the benefits expected.

Planning and Control

Planning and control are key to the success of any transformation programme, but should be seen as distinctly separate concepts and activities. The preparation of a Programme Plan involves processing large amounts of information and extensive consultation to build the plan. Programme control provides supporting activities and processes that run throughout the programme to refine and improve delivery, minimise the impact of ambiguity and bring certainty wherever possible.

The Programme Plan should include information on the Project Dossier (timescales, costs, outputs and dependencies), risks and assumptions, a schedule showing the tranches, the transition plan and the monitoring and control activities and performance targets. The Monitoring and Control Strategy will set out the approach for applying the programme's internal controls based on the Programme Plan.

Business Case

The programme's Business Case provides the vital test of the viability of the programme. It should be used to answer the question "Is the investment in the programme still worth it?" Since this viability question is ongoing, the Business Case is actively maintained throughout the programme and continually updated with new information.

The Business Case is an aggregation of specific information about the value of the benefits, the risks to achieving them, the costs of delivering the Blueprint and the timescales for achievement.

Risk Management and Issue Resolution

A risk is an uncertain event or set of events which, should it occur, will have an effect on the achievement of objectives. These effects need not all be detrimental as a risk can be either a threat or an opportunity. The task of risk management is to ensure that the programme make a cost-effective use of a Risk Management Process that includes a series of well-defined steps. The aim is to support better decision-making through a good understanding of risks and their likely impact.

Issues, on the other hand, are events that have happened, were not planned, are currently affecting the programme in some way and need to be actively dealt with and resolved. Risks, should they occur, become issues. The task of issue resolution is to prevent an issue from threatening the programme's chances of achieving a successful outcome.

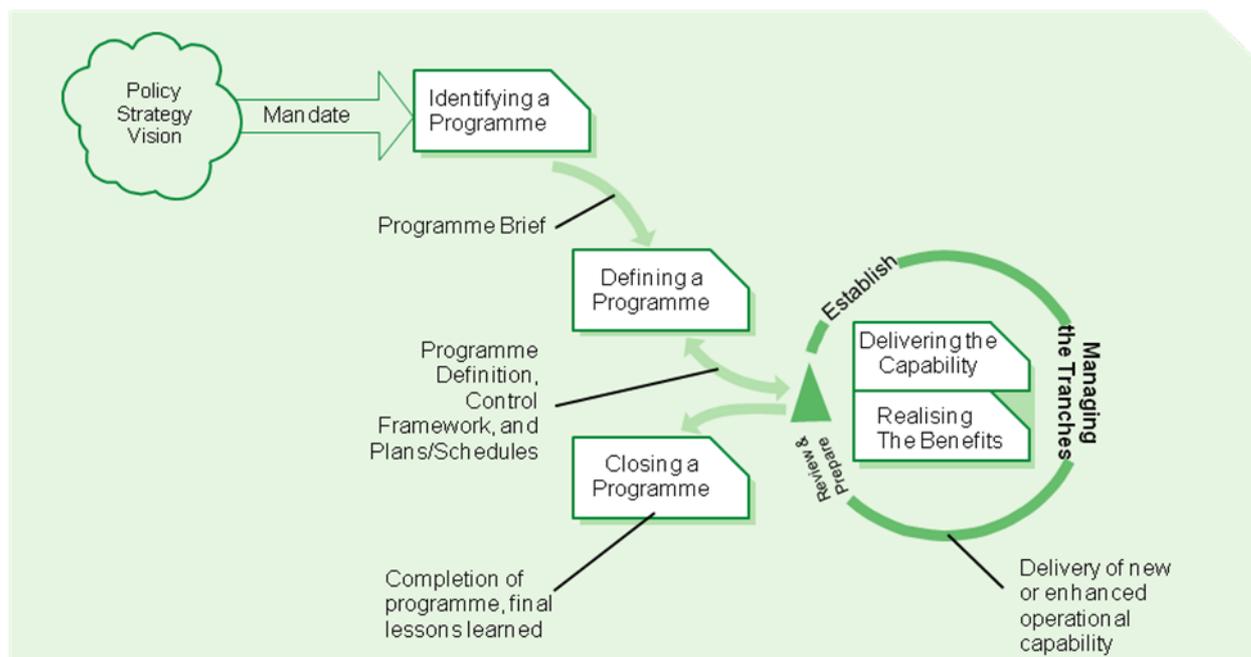
Quality Management

Quality management in a programme ensures that stakeholders are satisfied that their planned benefits have the best chance of being realised and will meet their expectations. If a programme does not apply quality effectively to its activities, its assets and outputs are less likely to be fit for purpose, with the consequential detrimental impact on the outcomes and desired benefits.

Quality management must be an activity that runs continuously throughout the life of a programme and beyond, the focus being on helping the programme with the achievement of the strategic goals.

The Transformational Flow

This diagram shows the Transformational Flow through an MSP programme with the main processes and key control documents involved in delivering an MSP programme. Transformation is achieved through a series of iterative, interrelated steps, where each process may require more than one iteration before the next one begins.



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Identifying a Programme

Typically, a Programme Mandate pulls together the high-level, strategic objectives of the programme from the organisation's strategic drivers and relevant policies, plus the outline vision statement. This summary of the objectives is then developed into the Programme Brief, which defines the expected benefits, costs, timescales and risks relating to the proposed programme. This document requires formal approval by the Senior Responsible Owner and Sponsoring Group before the programme can move into the next part of the Transformational Flow.

Defining a Programme

This process provides the basis for deciding whether to proceed with the programme or not. This is where the detailed definition and planning for the programme is undertaken. The Programme Brief is used as the starting point for creating the Programme Definition Document which is developed to explain what the programme is going to do, how it is going to do it, who is involved, how it will be controlled and the justification for going forward.

The programme governance Control Framework is also developed during this process, by defining the strategies for quality, stakeholder engagement, risks and issues, benefits, resources, planning and control and information management. The plans/schedules are also developed to provide information on the resources, dependencies and timescales for delivery of capability and realisation of benefits.

Managing the Tranches

The purpose of the Managing the Tranches process is to implement the defined governance arrangements for the programme. Governance meaning the functions, processes and

procedures that define how the programme is set up, managed and controlled. As the programme progresses, especially at the end of each tranche, it reviews the effectiveness of its governance arrangements and the continued viability of the programme's Business Case. As the programme progresses, its characteristics are likely to change and so the governance arrangements are often refined as part of the preparation for the next tranche.

Delivering the Capability

The Delivering the Capability process covers the activities for coordinating and managing project delivery according to the Programme Plan. Delivery from the Projects Dossier provides the new outputs that enable the capabilities described in the Blueprint. The activities of this process are repeated for each tranche of the programme.

Realising the Benefits

The purpose of the Realising the Benefits process is to manage the benefits from their initial identification to their successful realisation. The activities cover monitoring the progress of the projects to ensure the outputs are fit for purpose and can be integrated into operations such that the benefits can be realised. This process incorporates the planning and management of the transition from old to new ways of working and the achievement of the outcomes, whilst ensuring that the operational stability and performance of the operations are maintained. The activities of this process are repeated for each tranche of the programme.

Delivering the Capability and Realising the Benefits are distinct processes, but they need to work closely together to harmonise the programme objectives with project delivery and benefit realisation through transition to operations. The Managing the Tranches process is used for overseeing these two processes, providing the high-level direction, guidance and control.

Closing a Programme

The Closing a Programme process is usually undertaken when the Blueprint has been delivered. This means that the capabilities required to achieve the Vision Statement are all implemented, and sufficient benefits have been realised to objectively judge whether the programme has been successful to-date and to be confident that the full benefits of the programme will be delivered in the business-as-usual environment.

Further reviews are likely to be required following closure to assess and measure the continuing realisation of benefits.

The Benefits

Finally, the main benefits of programme management are that it:

Delivers change	More effective delivery of changes because they can be planned and implemented in an integrated way, ensuring that current business operations are not adversely affected.
Aligns projects to strategy	Effective response to strategic initiatives by bridging the gap between corporate strategies and projects.
Promotes senior management support	Keeping activities focussed on the business change objectives by providing a framework for senior management to direct and manage the change process.
Achieves efficient co-ordination and control of projects and transformational activities	By clearly defining roles and responsibilities for managing the programme and realising benefits expected from the programme.
Provides a smooth transition from current to future business operations	Through the clear recognition and responsibility for preparing the organisation for migration to new ways of working.

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Achieves real business benefits	Through a formal process of benefit identification, management, realisation and measurement.