

## The Right Programme Manager

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Hi, it's Rob Llewellyn here and welcome to episode fifteen of transformation management. Thank you so much for joining me today. As always, I'm going to do my best to help you get better equipped to manage and lead transformation.

Programme management involves the coordinated organisation, direction and implementation of projects and transformation activities to deliver outcomes and benefits relating to an organisation's strategic objectives.

But for years, Programme Management has been confused with Project Management, and the terms have been used both flippantly and interchangeably, which hasn't helped recruiters and hiring managers identify the right people to manage programmes.

The confusion among hiring managers and leaders about the difference between project management and programme management often results in companies hiring the wrong people because they simply don't understand the difference is between the two roles.

Even the internal appointment of a trusted and experienced member of staff often results in them being given the role for the wrong reasons. While some might think the individual deserves the role, if they're inexperienced at running programmes, the writing is often on the wall before the programme gets off the ground.

Back in 2005, The Digital Media Initiative was created to prepare the BBC for the on-demand digital world that was beginning to appear back then. It was a complex business transformation programme aimed at transforming the way in which the BBC makes content for its audiences.

The programme was intended to deliver a data management system, including a structured format for data, and a catalogue database that listed all archived projects and content. A digital archive to store all new BBC content. Production tools, and common enterprise services.

But the programme was eventually cancelled with an asset write-down of £100m, and PwC was engaged to review this £100 million disaster. They revealed that the shortcomings of the initiative were far from technical.

1. The programme governance structure wasn't effective
2. Corporate Governance bodies weren't given a clear view of status

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3. The focus and priorities were on technology build and not sufficiently on enabling change
4. The Business Case wasn't periodically reviewed
5. The lack of an integrated assurance plan reduced the effectiveness of governance in managing risk
6. And key lessons to be learned were broken down into six areas, which are:

Programme and Corporate Governance. Specifically, the programme governance structure, the role of the Design Authority, the role of Corporate Governance, and programme reporting.

Programme Lifecycle Management. Which included agreeing on a common approach and programme planning and plan management.

Risk and Issue Management.

Programme Assurance Planning.

Financial Management. Specifically, business case definition and approval, and financial management.

Benefits Management and Tracking

You can download a copy of the 58-page report of that failed initiative in the show-notes at [roblllewellyn.com/15](http://roblllewellyn.com/15)

Now aside from the BBC's irresponsible loss of £100 million of British taxpayers' money, this kind of story is widespread. Often on a smaller scale, but sometimes even on a larger scale.

Even when well-known consulting and integration firms are engaged to help companies through the process of programme delivery, success is far from guaranteed. I'm seen my fair share of big brand consulting firms lead their clients' programmes into a very dark place, which can cost considerable time, money and lost opportunity if things aren't turned around quickly enough.

One of the problems is due to the common misconception that programme management is essentially project-based, and that programme management is an extension of project management.

It's not unusual to see project managers entrusted with major programmes, eventually steer those programmes into trouble. And most legitimate programme managers will be able to identify the shortcomings in a programme and predict what the consequences will be.

Despite the best of intentions, hard work and desire to succeed, many of the project managers that lead programmes into trouble are simply not up to the task. They might be great at managing projects, or even an operational part of the business. But managing a programme of work is another ball game. Let's face it, being a top tennis player doesn't make you a top squash player.

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Organisations often assign a member of their workforce who has some bandwidth, project and operational expertise, or a promotional promise to the role of programme manager. Others engage a consultant that has strong technical or functional expertise, but a weak combination of the skills, attributes and capabilities required to be a good programme manager.

While programmes and projects are both temporary organisations which aim to achieve benefits for sponsors, they have important differences.

Programme management doesn't replace the need for good project management and vice versa. The two roles complement one another, but they don't replace one another.

The skills, knowledge and instincts that served project managers well in achieving project objectives are often inadequate when it comes to achieving programme outcomes. Many project managers simply aren't prepared to deal with conflicting priorities, a mixed bag of often stakeholders, company politics, and culture.

In his paper titled “Using PRINCE2 and MSP Together”, Andy Murray pointed out that the management focus for projects is on detailed specification of how, and the control of activities to produce products. Whereas the management focus for programmes is on high-level specification of why and what, stakeholder management, benefit realisation, dependency management, transition management, change acceptance and integration with corporate strategies.

Let me run through the primary activities the programme manager needs to perform:

Programme planning and governance involves integrating plans into a joined-up overarching programme plan and then managing it. It also requires the establishment of governance policies, standards and structures. This'll then contribute to producing a programme management roadmap and plan that are kept up to date, governance, organisation charts, roles and responsibilities and an escalation process.

Programme integration management involves the coordination and integration of the projects and other key activities within the programme. It also involves establishing the support structure for the programme, which consists of programme frameworks, a programme management office, resources and tools. These activities need to produce integrated programme plans, a programme management framework, PMO structure, roles and responsibilities, and a plan to staff the PMO.

Programme scope management involves high level scoping and benefits analysis and agreeing both with all key stakeholders. Scope and benefits need to be managed carefully throughout the initiative and this can contribute to the creation of the programme charter.

Programme time and cost management is about planning timeframes and budgets, which needs to be monitored on an ongoing basis and reported upwards. Some of the artefacts from doing this will be capacity plans, control procedures, actuals and forecasts, and burn rate charts.

Programme quality management involves embedding a quality management environment to establish quality requirements across the entire programme, including all projects and other activities, and ensure quality measures are met. This includes quality control, quality assurance and quality improvement, all of which need to be documented.

Programme human resource management is about ensuring the right people will be in the right place at the right time. Balancing available resources, skills and capabilities that are required to meet the needs of the plan is often a challenge. As is managing both the well-being and performance of the people involved. Resource plans with capacity planning, feedback reports, KPIs, team events and good communication are all important here.

Programme procurement management involves evaluating the need for additional skills and capacity and selecting the right suppliers to help meet the needs of the programme. This should include evaluating the potential to offshore or outsource work and negotiating supplier contracts.

Programme reporting involves reporting an appropriate level of programme performance, audit results, risks, and issues. This essentially provides senior management with the data they need to make informed decisions and take appropriate actions to safeguard the well-being of programme. Change requests, risk and issues registers and programme performance reports are all part of this.

Programme risk management is about developing and implementing a robust and effective approach to the management of risk, so that risk exposure is balanced. This needs to accommodate programme-level risks, risks which that are escalated or aggregated from projects and other programmes, and strategic risks. It's worth knowing that just as there's a difference between programme management and project management, so programme risk management is different from project risk management.

Benefits management is the identification, definition, planning, tracking and realisation of business benefits. Let's face it, delivering benefits is the reason most programmes are launched. The irony is that the anticipated benefits are often made very clear in a business case, but then nothing is done to manage those benefits throughout the programme. Whether they're tangible or intangible, a proper benefits management process needs to be adopted so that business benefits can be a key driver of programme decisions.

Stakeholder management involves the identification, analysis, planning and implementation of activities designed to engage with stakeholders. While that process is important, even more important is the programme manager's ability to engage well with stakeholders and be politically astute. These stakeholders are made up of many different characters. Some easy and some difficult to work with. Which makes stakeholder management one of the most challenging aspects of programme management, and this is where a lot of programme managers fall down, particularly when stakeholders have a big influence over the success or failure of the programme.

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The next time you need to appoint someone to manage a high-value programme of work, consider the capabilities required to manage the programme, as opposed to the skills required to deliver a project.

Ten questions that a good programme manager should be asking are:

What methodologies are we using? - At the transformation, programme and project levels.  
How are we ensuring delegation to 3rd party suppliers and optimising our spend?  
How are we tracking progress and informing our various groups of stakeholders?  
How are we tracking time-and-costs and ensuring we are sticking to the budget?  
How does the schedule and resource-list look, and how are they working together?  
How are we coordinating projects and programmes and ensuring they are aligned?  
What are the objectives and scope of each of the projects and programmes?  
How are we ensuring we adopt best practices in terms of quality?  
How are we ensuring that we have the right people in the right place at the right time?  
Who has assessed the health of the programme?

And keep in mind that technical or business expertise isn't what will determine the success of a programme manager. The ability to understand technology or a business function doesn't equal the ability to manage a complex programme of work.

While specific business and technology expertise can come in very handy, if the person you appoint lacks programme management experience, chaos and confusion is an almost inevitable consequence you'll have to contend with several months down the line.

Remember the mistakes that the BBC, and thousands of others have already made when it comes to programme management and learn from them. It's free!

I appreciate you listening, and here's a quote to finish off the day from Peter Drucker.

“Management is doing things right. Leadership is doing the right things.”

What will you do to ensure your programme managers are doing things right?

I hope you enjoyed this episode. Thanks for listening - Take care and I'll catch you in the next episode of transformation management. Bye.