

What is Programme Management?

What is a programme?

A programme is made up of a group of projects that together will deliver some defined objective change within an organisation. The goals of the programme are typically at a strategic level such that the organisation can achieve benefits and improvements in its business operation.

What is programme management?

Programme management is the coordinated management of a portfolio of projects that change organisations so as to achieve benefits of strategic importance.

What is MSP™?

MSP (Managing Successful Programmes) comprises a set of principles and processes for use when managing a programme. It was devised for the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) and was founded upon best practice and a body of knowledge drawn together from many years of real life experience.

Why use MSP?

MSP offers organisations a standard and consistent approach to programme management. It provides a framework for senior management to direct the change process whilst ensuring that the focus is always maintained upon business objectives. Through project prioritisation and integration, it encourages more efficient use of resources. It also provides for better management of risk due to its recognition of the wider context. Timescales, budgets and quality standards can all be controlled more effectively; roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, thereby obviating duplication of effort and ensuring all personnel fully understand what is expected of them. In all, MSP enables more effective delivery of change and a smooth transition from current to future business operation.

Will using MSP mean yet more bureaucracy?

This is a common misconception about formal methodologies. MSP is actually designed to reduce needless bureaucracy by focusing on what is necessary, rather than what may appear desirable. The efficiencies it achieves, the duplication it avoids and the more effective control it delivers can all manifest themselves in a decreased, rather than increased bureaucratic overhead.

How is MSP implemented?

The first step in implementing MSP is the training of key individuals. This will equip those individuals with the skills necessary to put the MSP approach into practice, though often it is useful to utilise some specialist consultancy. This will bring with it in-depth knowledge of MSP coupled with wide and practical experience gained with other implementations.

Senior management must also be fully aware of MSP, as commitment at that level is crucial to MSP's success.

Finally, effective communication of MSP's objectives and benefits to all those impacted by its use is required.

What training is available?

Standard courses are at four levels: Overview, Foundation, Practitioner and Advanced Practitioner. The Overview is aimed at managers new to formal programme management methods, plus senior managers and executives considering the introduction of MSP into their organisations. The Foundation is typically for those who will be involved in programme management, but not necessarily in a leading role, programme support office staff being a good example. Practitioner level training provides delegates with an initial but useful appreciation of how the elements of MSP interact. The Advanced Practitioner level is designed for delegates requiring a comprehensive understanding of the MSP philosophy and how it can be applied to live programmes, particularly managers with full-time responsibility within a programme environment. The MSP examinations (Foundation, Practitioner and Advanced Practitioner) provide successful delegates with an internationally recognised qualification.

Why AFA?

Unlike other training organisations, which deliver a wide range of training events covering many unrelated topics, AFA's core business is based on the Best Practice methodologies. AFA trainers and consultants have served on the editing teams and review panels for all recent updates of the guidance manuals; several AFA consultants also act as examiners and assessors for one or more of the methodologies; AFA's managing director was commissioned by OGC to write 'Tailoring PRINCE2™'.

For ten years AFA has specialised in providing consultancy and training services predicated on the three Best Practice methods – MSP programme management, PRINCE2 project management and M_o_R® risk management. Our ethos is to work with client organisations, retaining existing robust processes and further developing them in line with Best Practice guidance. Training events are also tailored to suit the current level of understanding within an organisation; a pathway of progression can be offered to allow understanding and skills to improve and grow. AFA has two main advantages over large consultancy and training organisations:

- We tailor our services to suit the client rather than relying on a set of 'products'
- We focus on the Best Practice methods rather than dabbling in many methodologies or offering a wide and disjointed range of training topics

AFA consultants are very pleased to undertake review and development activities when the Best Practice methods are updated. This allows us to feed real-life experience back into the guidance and to remain at the forefront of Best Practice thinking. We have been involved with revision of all three methods and are currently working with TSO and other professional colleagues to develop a Common Glossary.

Contact Details

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