



How do organizations benefit from using the Managing Successful Programmes framework?

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Contents

1 Introduction	3
2 Change in organizations	3
3 A framework for delivering change	3
4 The five main benefits of MSP®	3
5 Conclusion	4
About the author	4
Acknowledgements	4
Trademarks and statements	4
Further information	4

1 Introduction

Mentor and lead author for the 2011 edition of *Managing Successful Programmes* (MSP®) and lead author of the 2007 edition, Rod Sowden, Aspire Europe Ltd, outlines the benefits that organizations will enjoy from using MSP.

This recent 2011 version gave us an opportunity to give facelifts to the content of three important chapters clarifying and improving some of the concepts introduced in 2007.

2 Change in organizations

Organizations are in the grip of change; increasing pressure from competitive marketplaces and challenges to the public sector are continuing to drive the demand for greater efficiency. In some organizations, where all the efficiencies have been squeezed out, the need is for transformational change, and doing things in a radically different way is dominating.

Such levels of change can bring the potential for great success from these opportunities, but for many it can bring chaos and increased inefficiency as service delivery is distracted by the adoption of unaligned change and reactive management.

3 A framework for delivering change

MSP is basically a framework for delivering change. Readers of the book will quickly spot the significant differences from project management. The focus is on engaging and managing the environment within which it operates and reacting to opportunities and challenges rather than insulating itself, resisting change and focusing on internal delivery.

There are numerous business benefits from adopting MSP – the word ‘adopting’ is used intentionally as elements of MSP already exist within most organizations. MSP isn’t implemented as such – it helps to make sense of what is there and identify gaps and obstacles that will need to be addressed.

4 The five main benefits of MSP

For those considering adopting the MSP framework, here are the five main benefits:

1. *An improved and coherent governance structure* that addresses the issues of linking business strategy, organizational change and project delivery by establishing clear sets of accountabilities and responsibilities that cover not only the projects and the control structure for the programme manager, but also ensure that there is clear ownership and accountability for delivering change through the role of business change managers. Accountability for the whole programme is embedded in a single role: the senior responsible owner (SRO). This structure enables effective hierarchical control of direction by the executive while ensuring business requirements are paramount during design and delivery, with the pace of change remaining under strategic control.
2. *The agility to react to change* is important because a critical requirement for a programme is to have clarity of the ‘as is’ state of the organization and the intended ‘to be’ state that will be delivered. Having this clarity enables rapid impact assessments of changing circumstances and realignment to the new needs of the organization. Where there are a number of programmes running, the impact assessments can be taken across the portfolio equally as effectively. Making organizations agile increases their competitive edge during turbulent times like we are experiencing now, which contributes to the increasing take up of MSP.
3. *Improved strategic alignment and clarity of direction* is a fundamental requirement of any programme approach. Within an MSP programme this alignment is achieved through two core concepts: the blueprint, which is a detailed description of what the programme will leave behind once completed, and the detailed benefit profiles explaining how they will be achieved, by whom, and how they will be measured. Without the blueprint to focus the projects on their outputs and the benefit profiles to describe how their outputs will be leveraged, programmes find it very difficult to set priorities and can quickly lose direction and focus. A common problem as many of you reading this will be aware.
4. *A focus on delivering benefits from effective business change* is a critical advantage once MSP has been adopted. The focus of programmes moves from coordinating project delivery to preparing for, delivering and establishing change which enables sustainable benefits to be delivered. A characteristic of organizations with embedded programme management is that they do fewer projects but achieve more benefits because their efforts are focused on doing the important things.

4 How do organizations benefit from using the Managing Successful Programmes framework?

5. *A foundation for improving organization performance* from the proven track record of the MSP framework worldwide. There is a Best Management Practice accredited industry providing qualifications, trainers, consultancies and tools to support organizations in adopting and developing their capabilities. The most important tool for this, from an MSP perspective, is the Portfolio, Programme, and Project Management Maturity Model (P3M3®), which provides a maturity model that can be used by organizations to target their investment to maximize short- and long-term benefits from adoption.

5 Conclusion

In conclusion, as the old saying goes, 'Nobody ever got sacked for choosing IBM' and increasingly the same saying applies to the selection of Best Management Practice frameworks, of which MSP is a key element. Its flexible approach with a focus on linking strategy to change through effective project delivery provides a framework that enables organizations to effectively drive change.

About the author

Rod Sowden of Aspire Europe Ltd is lead author for the 2007 version and mentor for the 2011 version.

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