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- Plan and get approval for your programme
- Manage risk and change throughout the lifecycle of your programme

Alan Ferguson
Managing Director, AFA

by Alan Ferguson

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MSP For Dummies®

Visit www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/wordpresswebdesign to view this book's cheat sheet.

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Introduction

I wonder what you think of when you see the word ‘programme’: perhaps a TV show such as *New Tricks*, *The Simpsons* or *The Wire* (or *Rastamouse* if youngsters are in charge of the remote contro in your home). Or do you immediately picture a concert programme detailing the evening's entertainment? Perhaps you even interpret the word in a chilling Orwellian way, in the sense of indoctrination requiring de-programming (don't worry, no brainwashing in this book – just masses of useful info!).

However you think of it, as far as this book is concerned a *programme* is a structure within an organization that aims to manage the delivery of benefits from change (I provide a much fuller explanation in Chapter 1). *Programme management* means many different things to different people, but I use the term to mean, quite simply, *managing big change*. By ‘big’ I mean larger tha can be comfortably managed in a single project.

Some people like to arrange significant organizational change into multiple projects, and while I cover managing multiple projects in depth in *MSP For Dummies*, a growing body of experience shows that transformational change needs more than project management. You also need to deal with the outputs from projects in business as usual and to help people come to terms with the change they are undergoing. In other words, you need programme management, and in particular, MSP.

For me, programme management becomes really exciting when it combines managing multiple projects with achieving change in business as usual.

Managing Successful Programmes (MSP) has been describing how to do all this since the turn of the millennium. I've been fortunate enough to be involved in programme management and MSP f all that time. I've had some exciting and fulfilling experiences helping organizations around the world to change themselves fundamentally. Now I want to share the tips and tricks that I picked u over the years, many of which are included in MSP, to help you achieve transformational change i your business.

About This Book

Although *MSP For Dummies* builds on the MSP manual *Managing Successful Programmes*, which is owned by a UK government joint-venture called Axelos and published by TSO, it isn't intended to be a complete replacement for the manual. Instead this book is an abbreviated guide to MSP an most importantly, a practical commentary. If you want the full detail of MSP, I recommend that you look in the manual.

My aim in *MSP For Dummies* is to bring MSP alive. I try to explain some of the exciting new idea in MSP in engaging and amusing ways. I also give you lots of examples from my own experience to give you a real feel for programme management.

Many people go on to take exams in MSP, so I make sure that *MSP For Dummies* helps you if you want to sit these exams later. I cover most of the terms and items in the MSP syllabus for at least the first exam – the Foundation. If you come across an MSP term that's new to you, check it out in

the index or the Glossary in Appendix B.

But as well as the official MSP line, I also give you my personal views on programme manageme in general and MSP in particular. I've trained thousands of people in MSP from around the world. I'm aware that MSP programme management contains some incredibly useful, but pretty large, ideas. Therefore, I lay out *MSP For Dummies* in a way that shares these new ideas with you and also shows you how to apply them in a practical way while running your programme.

People often understand these big ideas when I first share them, but they lose track of the message when they start applying them. If that happens to you, don't worry. Follow the book's cross-references to all these exotic new ideas and get them clear in your mind.

Foolish Assumptions

I'm very keen that this book is accessible to as wide an audience as possible, and so I make a few assumptions about you:

- You don't know about projects (but if you do, I promise not to talk down to you).
- You're familiar with what typically happens in business as usual (that is, the way the business normally achieves its objectives), even if you aren't working in the business-as-usual part of a organization.
- You are familiar with some reasonably large organizations, whether public, private or third-sector.
- You don't think a programme is the schedule at the heart of a project. Programme managemen involves more than working out when you can deliver something.

By the way, this book is aimed primarily at Programme Managers, the people who undertake the day-to-day management of programmes.

Icons Used in This Book

I sprinkle the chapters of this book liberally with icons that highlight some key points.

This icon shows a simple way of making a particular part of programme management mor flexible in the real world.

Check out the text besides this icon to see the key points to bear in mind around a subject.

Pay attention when you see this icon, because here I describe a problem or trap to help you avoid difficulties.

Here you can get a precise definition of an MSP term: useful stuff for exams or when you want to agree a definition with colleagues in your programme.

This icon indicates an opportunity to consolidate your understanding by applying new idea to your programme.

Beside this icon I relate examples of programme management in practice.

Beyond the Book

In addition to the material in the print or e-book you're reading right now, this product also comes with some access-anywhere goodies on the web.

Check out the free Cheat Sheet at www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/msp and head to www.dummies.com/extras/msp for free online bonus content about managing successful programmes.

Where to Go from Here

The simple answer is that the world is your oyster. Well *MSP For Dummies* is your oyster, anyway. You can go wherever your mood takes you in the book.

I suggest you begin with Part I and see how many of its ideas are familiar to you and how many are new. You then have a chance to reflect on new ideas as you look elsewhere in the book. Part I also describes the beginning of a programme, so it's a great place to look if you're just about to get started in a programme.

If you're logical and practical, you may want to look at the processes (flip to Chapters 3 and 7), as well as the chapters in Part V. If, on the other hand, you prefer to get your mind round the concept first, look through the Table of Contents to find the chapters covering the theme you're after. If you want to get a feel for programme governance themes, Chapters 5 and 6 are good places to start.

If you're in a tearing hurry, because you're in the middle of a programme and managing it doesn't leave you much time for reading a book, start with Chapter 4, which covers the fundamental ideas behind programme management. If you apply these principles pragmatically to your change initiative, you really are doing programme management.

Good luck and have fun.

Part I

Getting Started with Managing Successful Programmes

For Dummies can help you get started with lots of subjects. Go to www.dummies.co to learn more and do more with *For Dummies*.

In this part…

- Discover how to tell the difference between a programme and a project.
- See how a programme delivers from projects and into business as usual.
- Decide with senior management if you're going to start a programme.
- Understand the principles behind programme management.

Chapter 1

Introducing Programme Management: Projects, Programmes and MSP

In This Chapter

- Thinking about the differences between projects and programmes
- Discovering the key programme management terms
- Uncovering the structure of MSP

The term *programme* can have lots of different meanings in business and within organizations. Perhaps you think of a programme as a schedule in the heart of a project. Be careful if that's what your colleagues think – they may consider Managing Successful Programmes (MSP) a scheduling tool! Or it can mean a set of projects, which is fine because you can use parts of MSP successfully to look after such a set. Let's call that *multi-project management*.

In this chapter, I explore the nature of programme management. I look at projects and programmes, building on the idea of a project to introduce the concept of a programme. I also share with you a few terms used frequently in programme management, to help you develop that all-important common vocabulary, and I have a quick look at the programme management structure as it's used in MSP.

If you already have a fair amount of programme experience and are reading *MSP For Dummies* to discover additional details of good practice in managing transformational change programmes, by all means skim rapidly through this chapter.

But more than likely you're newly arrived at the programme management station and want to orientate yourself. Well if any of the following applies to you, you're in the right place:

- Your project is getting a little complicated and someone at work mentions programme management (perhaps at the coffee machine while you're waiting for a so-called espresso that in fact looks more like washing-up water when it's dispensed).
- You're looking after a number of projects and really want to tie them together a little more tightly (as much as you really want a caffeine boost – right now).
- You know that your business has to change and your gut feeling is that putting a few people to one side to deliver a technical solution from a project isn't going to suffice (just like that machine-produced cup of joe won't do).

Understanding Projects and Programmes

Whatever your level of programme management experience, no doubt you already have some idea on the following:

- What a project is
- What a programme is
- What the difference is between a project and a programme

As you read through this book, I share some new ideas with you, and so I want you to be clear in your own mind about genuinely new ideas or ones you have some previous experience of.

Start by folding a piece of paper in half. Label one half ‘project’ and the other half ‘programme’. Then write down a characteristic of a project and the equivalent characteristic of a programme. Repeat this exercise until you've identified six to twelve sets of characteristics.

Take your time with this important exercise; perhaps leave the list on your bedside table.I bet you wake up in the middle of the night (especially if you read the list before trying to sleep) and think of another pair of characteristics.

Whatever you write on your comparison list is fine; this is your starting point, so there are no wrong answers.

Getting a group on the same programme page

If you're already working on a potential programme with a group of colleagues, run through this exercise with them. Get each person to write down their views on the characteristics of projects and programmes and then combine the lists. You then understand both the group's view of the differences between project and programmes as well as each person's opinion.

Don't send me your lists (please don't!). I've done this exercise with thousands of people all over the world, so I'm getting pretty good at guessing what gets written on these pieces of paper.

Checking on the characteristics of projects

Here's a fairly typical set of project characteristics:

- Projects are finite; they have a defined start and finish.
- Projects deliver a predetermined product, service or output.
- Projects have a clear development path.
- Project benefits accrue at the end of the project or afterwards.
- Projects have a shorter timescale than programmes.

You can have, and I frequently do, a debate about each of these characteristics; they aren't set in

tablets of stone. This list serves my purpose for now by giving us a point of comparison for the characteristics of programmes (look at the later section 'Working out programmes' characteristics').

Definition of a project

Your programme contains one or more projects, and so you may as well have a definition of a project to hand.

A *project* is a temporary organization created for delivering one or more business outputs according to a specified business case.

Note that the word 'business' appears twice in the definition: you only do projects because they make business sense.

Project constraints

When discussing project characteristics, people often mention that a project is time-constrained, temporary or has a start and end; perhaps even that a project is fundamentally defined by time. Le me put that another way: whenever someone mentions the scope for a project, do you tend to com up with an inevitable and reasonably fixed timescale?

This is the way many people see projects, but I like to think about them in a different way. I consider project constraints as performance targets.

I suggest that a number of different elements of a project exist that can be constrained and which the project manager may have to manage. I show the project constraints in Figure 1-1, and discuss them below:

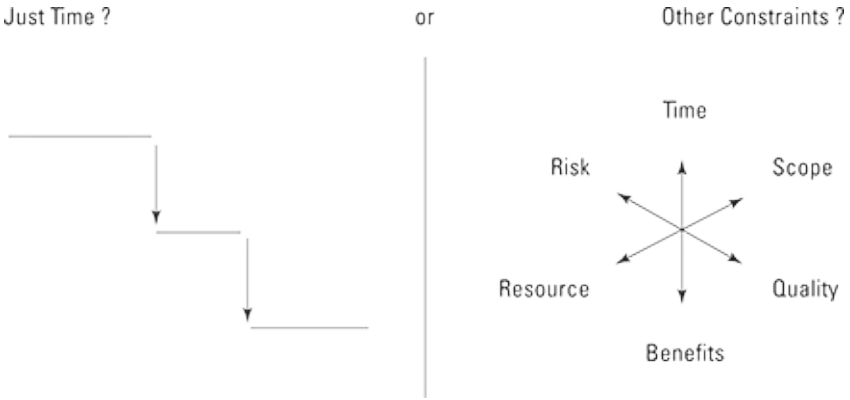

Figure 1-1: Project constraints.

- **Time.** The obvious one as just mentioned.
- **Scope.** The need to deliver a certain amount of functionality**,** for example, adding an online store to a company website**.**
- **Quality.** The fitness for purpose of deliverables or perhaps even the rigour with which fitness for purpose is demonstrated.
- **Benefits associated with the deliverables.** They may be defined quite rigorously so that you

have to achieve a certain amount of saving, for example, or may be quite vague, for example, you're putting in place a new marketing image.

- **Resources.** To put it narrowly, the costs available to carry out the project.
- **Risk.** You may have to reduce the risk and the project or taking some risks may be acceptable.

You can put these constraints in some sort of order, because certain constraints are more constraining and others less so, which increases the amount of flexibility when a project is executed. (The question of how a programme constrains projects is discussed in Chapter 10.)

Working out a programme's characteristics

Here's a typical list of the characteristics of a programme:

- A programme is bigger than a project; people use terms like *strategic* when talking about programmes. Bigger change initiatives are more likely to affect the whole organization and its future direction. That's the sort of thing people mean when they talk about something being strategic.
- A programme has a vision of an end state.
- A programme's end state may be some distance in the future and therefore it involves uncertainty: no path is defined to that end state.
- A programme can involve changing culture, working practices, business operations and services as well as delivering outputs.
- A programme needs to co-ordinate the output delivery from a number of projects so that benefits can be realized during the programme and afterwards.
- A programme may give you an opportunity to include infrastructure projects that don't directly deliver benefits.
- A programme's timescale is longer, possibly much longer, than a project's.

Check out Chapter 2 for loads more info on what a programme is.

Definition of a programme

A *programme* is a temporary, flexible organization structure created to co-ordinate, direct and oversee the implementation of a set of related projects and transformational activities. It aim is to deliver outcomes and benefits related to the organization's strategic objectives.

Now that's a pretty long definition, so I break it down into chunks to understand what it's about:

- **A programme contains a set of projects and so is liable to be large.** Therefore, you're talkin about something that relates to strategic objectives.
- **A programme is an implementation of a set of related projects and transformational activities to co-ordinate in business as usual.** Doing one or more projects may not be enough Projects give businesses the outputs; the ammunition if you like. Business then has to fire the gun; it has to transform or, to put it simply, to change. You do all this to deliver outcomes and

benefits (defined in the later section ‘Being Clear about the Four Central Terms’).

- **Despite being large, the programme is still a temporary organization.** It needs to evolve over time as its goals change and as the organization changes.
- **The programme has to manage.** In other words, it must co-ordinate, direct and oversee the work to deliver the projects and to do that transformation in business as usual.

Nature of a programme

You can start to see that a programme covers a much wider range of issues than a project.

A programme isn't just a big project.

I discuss this wider range of issues throughout this book, but some of these aspects of programme management may already be occurring to you. If so, tick them off against this checklist:

- Focus on strategy
- Vision and Blueprint within a tranche boundary
- Timescales loosely defined
- Risk management focuses on risk aggregation
- Issue management being orientated towards inter-project and benefits- related issues
- Planning to deliver outcomes through tranches
- Benefits delivery
- Governance through strategies and standards
- Wide stakeholder engagement
- Quality management spreading out to look at processes
- Business Case focused on benefits

Don't spend too much time yet on the checklist, because it contains lots of terms and subjects that I explain later in the book. As you move on through the chapters, you may like t come back to this list to see whether you're building up a picture of what a transformational change programme can be.

Being Clear about the Four Central Terms

Four terms are crucial to understanding programme management:

- **Output.** An output is simply something that is made or produced. It's also sometimes called a *project deliverable* or just a *product*. This term will be familiar if you've worked in a project

environment.

- **Capability.** A capability is a complete set of outputs. If outputs are a project view of what's made in a project, you can think of the capabilities as being the business-as-usual view of a collection of those outputs.
- **Outcome.** A new operational state (some people define it as the *effect of change*). Outcomes are vitally important within programme management. They're the result of change normally affecting real-world behaviour and/or circumstances. They're a manifestation of part or all of a new state conceived in a programme's Blueprint.
- **Benefit.** A measurable improvement resulting from an outcome perceived to be advantageous by some stakeholders and which contributes to organizational objectives.

Following the projects-to-benefits-delivery sequence

The delivery sequence, shown in Figure 1-2, adds gloss and context to the terms:

1. **You deliver outputs from projects.** Output is a term relevant in the world of the project. While it's still relevant in programmes, it isn't the be-all and end-all. After you've got the outputs from the projects, you're about halfway through the heavy lifting.
2. **You produce capabilities, which are one or more outputs from the point of view of your business as usual.**
3. **You exploit capabilities so that they become outcomes.** (Outcomes are significantly differen from outputs).
4. **You measure the achievement of outcomes as something quite specific: benefits.**

The last two activities take place within business as usual and not within a project.

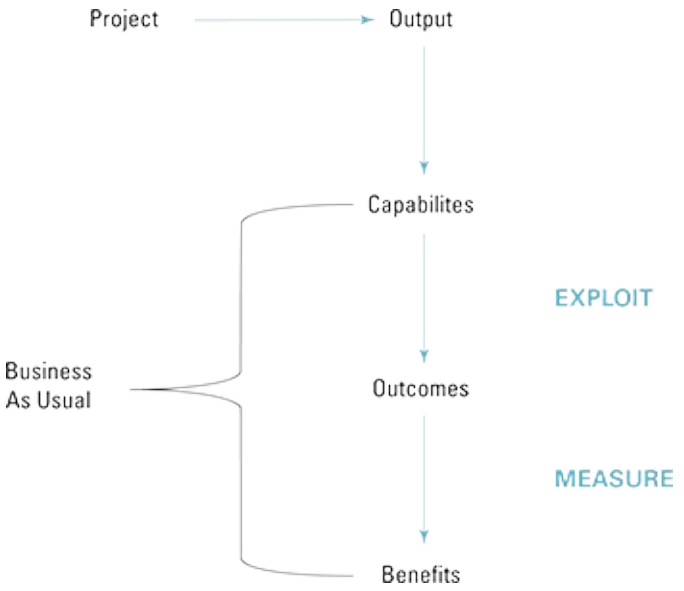

Figure 1-2: Project to benefits delivery.

Programme management is project delivery plus capability exploitation to achieve outcomes and benefits.

Comparing outputs, capabilities, outcomes and benefits

Take a good look at Table 1-1, which is really useful in enabling you to think about the difference between outputs, capabilities, outcomes and benefits.

Study the table and then try completing a similar one for your initiative, identifying the outputs, capabilities, outcomes and benefits for your programme.

Table 1-1 Comparing Outputs, Capabilities, Outcomes and Benefits

	Output	*Capability*	*Outcome*	*Benefit*
Description	The deliverable developed by a project from a planned activity.	The completed set of project outputs required to deliver an outcome; exists prior to transition.	A new operational state achieved after transition of the capability into live operations.	The measurable improvement resulting from an outcome perceived as an advantage by one or more stakeholders and which contributes towards one or more organizational objectives.
Rationale	Answers at least in part the fundamental question 'What do we need to create to enable the change?'	Answers the question 'What do we need to have in place to enable the new operating state?'	Answers the question 'What is the desired operational state of the organization using these new things?'	Answers the question 'Why is this justified?' (that is, it explains what a programme delivers).
Example	An individual component of an e-commerce system, application, hardware, new business processes training and so on.	An e-commerce system tested and ready to go into operation and with trained staff.	Transformed client service organization, faster processing, fulfilling and charging for web-based orders.	Increase in percentage sales revenues.

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Seeing the Structure of MSP

In this book I don't just talk about programme management in general; I look particularly at programme management as it's described in Managing Successful Programmes (MSP).

The MSP framework – the method if you prefer – consists of three concepts or elements:

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