KEITH RICHARDS
CONSULTING

DSDM®
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Integrating DSDM® into an existing PRINCE2™ environment

Purpose of this white paper

The purpose of this white paper is to describe the benefits of running PRINCE2 and DSDM together and to provide a general overview on how to achieve this.

DSDM is a project delivery framework which is regarded as being 'agile' in that it uses concepts such as iterative and incremental development, dynamic change control, collaboration and on time delivery.

This white paper has been written for people who work in a PRINCE2 environment who would like the option of executing their projects in a more agile way or need to find a complementary product delivery framework which will integrate with PRINCE2.

The rationale behind integrating PRINCE2 and DSDM

PRINCE2 is firmly established and recognised as one of the world's leading project management methods. In today's market place there is now a breed of newer and more agile approaches which offer an alternative to the traditional way of running a project.

The rationale behind integrating the two approaches together is that it enables a PRINCE2 project to be executed in a more agile way without the need to make any fundamental changes to PRINCE2. This may be particularly desirable when there is an immovable deadline to achieve or the project may be subject to a lot of (or late) change.

Adopting DSDM also provides PRINCE2 with a project delivery framework which is structured in such a way that it is fully compatible with PRINCE2 and is easy to integrate.
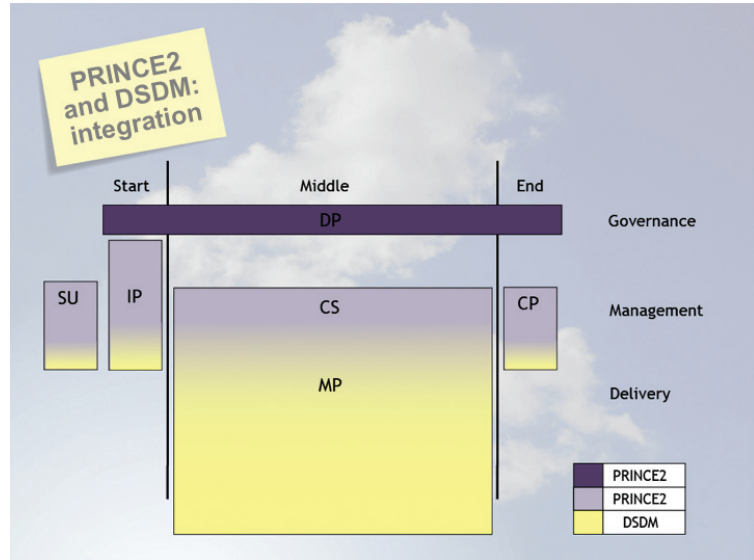

Diagram 1: Integrating PRINCE2 with DSDM

How to integrate the two approaches

In order to integrate the two approaches it is important to understand the strengths and limitations of each method. On top of this it is necessary to blend the contrasting cultures of PRINCE2 and DSDM in the best way possible so that flexibility and dynamism can exist from within a structure of stability and control.

The strengths of PRINCE2

PRINCE2 is particularly strong in the areas of project governance and project management. It provides an overarching structure of governance to a project by establishing a Project Board which directs the Project Manager using 'management by exception'. This enables the key interests on a project to give direction when required in the knowledge that they have created a safety zone by establishing a stage boundary and tolerance levels for the Project Manager.

Governance is further enhanced by positioning the Business Case as the driving force of the project.

The PID (Project Initiation Document) is a widely recognised document to ensure that a project has correctly completed a controlled start and is now ready to commit a significant amount of resources.

There is a very strong focus on getting the quality of the final deliverable to the appropriate standard. Disciplines are built in to PRINCE2 from the very outset and are carried on into the detail of each product or sub-product.

The use of Work Packages enables PRINCE2 to integrate with external organisations or organisations that are using other project management styles.

Above all PRINCE2 is regarded as a common standard which enables projects in the public or private sector to be executed with a common understanding of the processes and the terminology used.

When integrating PRINCE2 and DSDM all of these strengths stay in place to enable a truly scalable approach to agile project delivery.

The limitations of PRINCE2

Generally speaking there is nothing fundamentally wrong with PRINCE2 but it does have two areas of limitation. Firstly it deliberately does not encompass the mechanics of product delivery. Secondly, it is classically built around the time, cost and quality (TQC) triangle which does not quite line up with the agile mindset.

PRINCE2 does not prevent these areas being easily addressed but there is very little reference to them in the PRINCE2 manual.

A brief summary of DSDM

DSDM is an agile project delivery framework that aims to deliver the right solution to the business at the right time.

It is made up of a set of guiding principles, a project lifecycle with a flexibly defined set of products, clearly defined roles and responsibilities and a set of best practice techniques to enable product delivery.
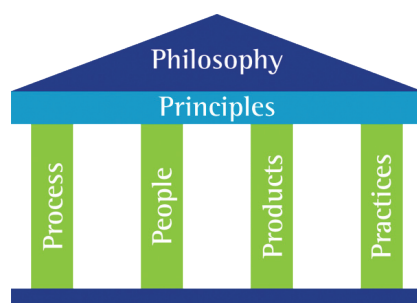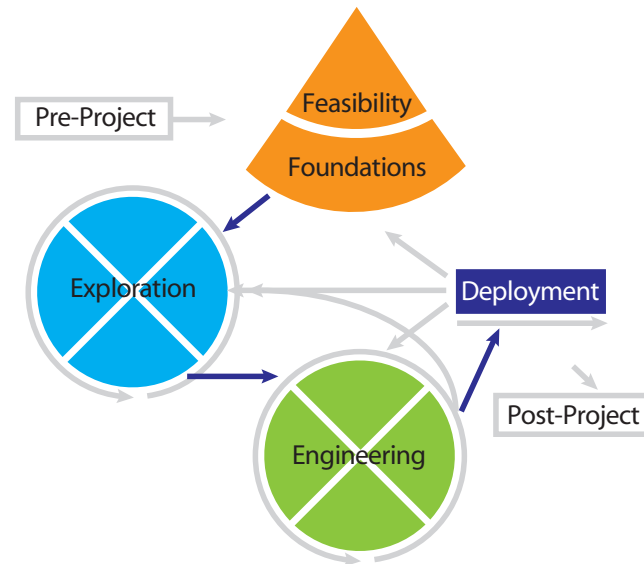
Diagram 2: The composition of the DSDM framework

The 8 principles of DSDM are:

1. Focus on the business need
2. Deliver on time
3. Collaborate
4. Never compromise quality
5. Develop iteratively
6. Build incrementally from firm foundations
7. Communicate continuously and clearly
8. Demonstrate control

The DSDM lifecycle

Diagram 3: The DSDM lifecycle

The strengths of using DSDM in a PRINCE2 environment

Integrating DSDM into a PRINCE2 environment is reasonably straightforward in that both approaches are built in a similar way and can be described as coming from the same stable. They both use Product Descriptions and have similar organisational structures therefore when combining the two there is no need to duplicate or compromise. All that is needed is to take additional concepts and components from DSDM and install them into the structure PRINCE2.
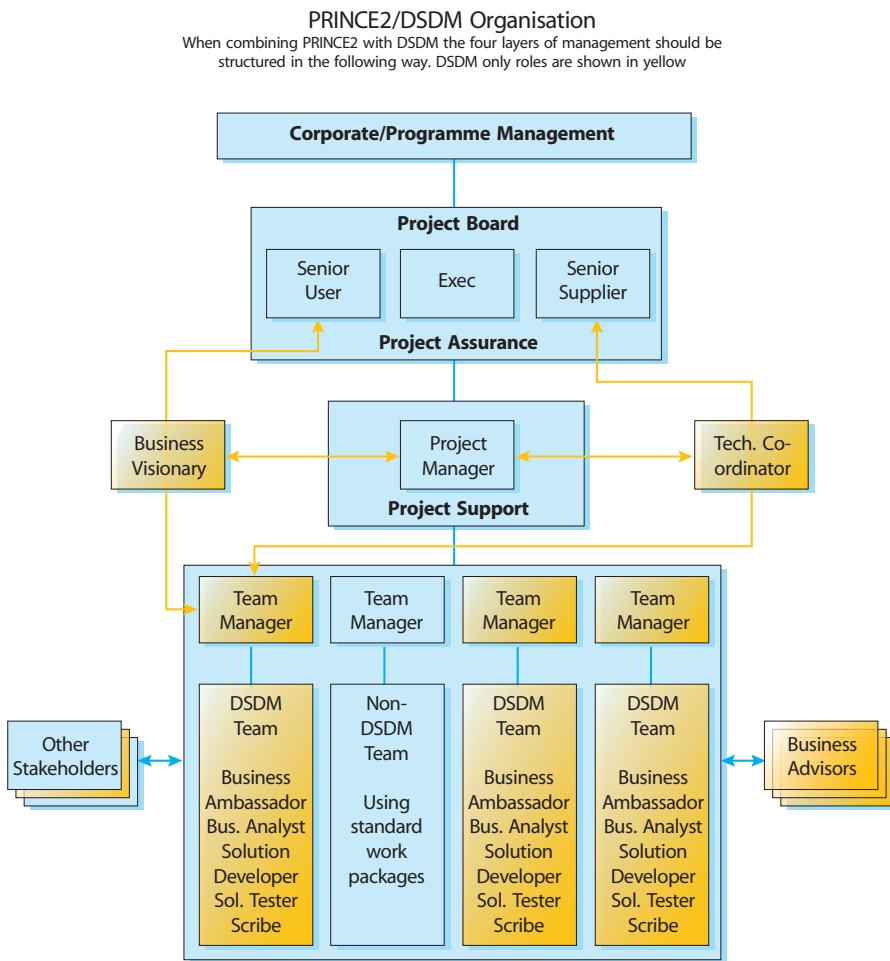
The DSDM additions to PRINCE2 would be:

Introducing the mechanisms for scope tolerance

DSDM turns traditional thinking on its head when managing the key controls on a project. It fixes time, cost and quality and allows the features being delivered (or scope) to be actively managed. In order to do this DSDM provides a Prioritised Requirements List (PRL) and techniques such as MoSCoW and Timeboxing in order to control it.

Explicitly support iterative and incremental product development

The DSDM lifecycle promotes iteration which is essential on projects where the final product is complex or unclear. In tandem with this DSDM aims to provide early ROI (return on investment) by delivering parts of the final product as soon as it can whenever this is possible. This also provides 'real' feedback which can be incorporated into later deliveries.

PRINCE2/DSDM Organisation
When combining PRINCE2 with DSDM the four layers of management should be structured in the following way. DSDM only roles are shown in yellow

Diagram 4: PRINCE2 and DSDM combined organisational structure

Providing product delivery team structures

The DSDM organisational structure goes lower down than the Project Management Team in PRINCE2. The two structures map easily and DSDM provides several customer and supplier roles which operate at the project coalface.

Enabling an agile ethos

The DSDM style of delivery is highly collaborative. The team structures at the delivery level are mixed to enable a greater understanding and speed of communication. Change at the detailed level is handled dynamically in a way that accepts the fact that the detail often emerges during the project and cannot be predicted at the outset.

Promoting the use of facilitated workshops and modelling

Facilitated workshops are typically used throughout a DSDM project in order to produce high quality outputs in a short space of time. They need to be run correctly and if done so create fast lines of communication, understanding and ownership.

Modelling is extensively used in DSDM to support the need for text based documentation. 'A picture is worth a thousand words' and DSDM shifts a lot of document driven communication into a more visual form to reduce misinterpretations and simplify messages.

Conclusion

The two approaches integrate seamlessly and having a DSDM option allows organisations using PRINCE2 to have a choice in the way they execute a project. All projects are unique but they also have similarities and running PRINCE2 with DSDM allows an organisation to choose the way in which they wish to run a particular project.

On some occasions they will need to run a project with very strong governance and little room for manoeuvre. There could be cultural or contractual reasons for this. However, in other situations a project may exist in a more collaborative relationship and this can be harnessed to take advantages of a more agile approach to converge on an accurate solution.

Further information

Agile Project Management: running PRINCE2 projects with DSDM Atern

Author Keith Richards, published by TSO

PRINCE2 – **www.apmgroup.co.uk**

PRINCE2 Training - **http://www.prince2. org.uk/web/site/Qualifications/ HowToStart.asp**

DSDM – **www.dsdm.org**

DSDM Training - **http://www.dsdm.org/ training/default.asp**

Keith Richards Consulting – **www.keithrichardsconsulting.co.uk +44 (0) 1934 710332**

DSDM Training (including integration with PRINCE2) - **http://www. keithrichardsconsulting.co.uk/site/ about/latest/dsdm_training_index.html**

Author

**Author - Keith Richards
Director - Keith Richards Consulting
www.keithrichardsconsulting.co.uk**