MSP® – A QUICK GUIDE
By Kenn Dolan

Introduction

Managing Successful Programmes (MSP) is a best-practice framework for delivering complex programmes in accordance with long term strategies. MSP was developed for and is owned by the Office of Government Commerce (OGC), an Agency of the Government of the United Kingdom.

MSP was first released in 1999 in recognition of the need for greater links between an organization's longer-term strategy, objectives and goals and the projects being undertaken by that organization.

The current, third, version of MSP was released in 2007 and demonstrated a significant advance in the maturity of programme management by expanding on the original concepts and introducing new tools and techniques.

MSP defines Programme Management as "...the action of carrying out the coordinated organization, direction and implementation of a dossier and transformation activities to achieve outcomes and realize benefits of strategic importance to the business".

Why Would an Organization use MSP?

MSP is designed to support change within an organization or in the wider community. So MSP should be of interest to any organization which is undertaking change.

This includes:
- Organizations that are merging, or going through an acquisition
- Government agencies rolling out new legislation
- Organizations developing and launching new products
- Partnerships that are developing a new facility

What are the benefits of using MSP?

MSP is a pragmatic approach to programme management which ensures a strong leadership and governance structure is established and maintained. The emphasis is on Stakeholder Engagement and Benefits Realization Management.

MSP has been implemented in the public and private sectors because it provides a number of benefits to the organizations undertaking programmes, including:

- Provides a common framework for all parties to work within - including the Client, Contractors and stakeholders
- Strong emphasis on the identification and realization of measurable benefits
- Strong Stakeholder Engagement focus ensuring that stakeholders have the opportunity to participate at the key times throughout life of the programme
- Clear communication links between the delivery team and the operational teams who will take ownership of the finished products
- Good governance is a significant part of the framework and is instituted throughout the programme
- MSP provides a method for managing the complex relationships between the interested parties in a significant, long term change initiative.

MSP provides individuals with skills and techniques not usually familiar to project managers thus providing them with another tool to add to their professional toolkit.

Types of Programmes

MSP recognizes three broad categories of programme:
1. Vision Led Programmes take a top down approach, establishing a clear vision at the start of the programme which is closely aligned to corporate strategy. This type of programme is usually innovative and involves significant change.
2. Emergent Programmes evolve from current workload and aim to combine existing projects and associated tasks.

3. Compliance Programmes focus less on benefits realization and more on the achievement of obligatory outcomes.

All three can implement MSP but each type of programme will place emphasis on different aspects of the framework.

MSP Framework

The MSP framework comprises three major elements:

1. Principles

The principles of programme management have been distilled into seven features which form the foundation of the framework. They are:

1. Remaining aligned with corporate strategy
2. Leading Change
3. Envisioning and communicating a better future
4. Focusing on benefits and threats to them
5. Adding value
6. Designing and delivering a coherent capability
7. Learning from experience

2. Governance Themes

Nine Governance Themes represent topics which need to be addressed throughout the life of the programme. It is the control framework which enables the programme to deliver and ensures there is visibility for stakeholders.

1. Organization
The MSP Organization details the roles required to deliver the programme and its associated change. This role-based approach ensures the governance structure is applied through a Sponsoring Group and their appointed representative, the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO).
A Programme Board drives the programme on a daily basis.

2. Vision
The vision, defined by the Vision Statement, is agreed and committed to by the Sponsoring Group. It represents the better future which the programme is designed to deliver and provides a focus for the team throughout the programme's life. This is important as the long-term nature of programmes means the team members are likely to change and the Vision Statement will provide a constant focal point.

3. Stakeholder Engagement and Leadership
Programmes attract a large number of stakeholders from a variety of backgrounds and with differing degrees of influence. The MSP framework ensures the stakeholders are identified and engaged in an appropriate manner to allow the participation and involvement of those who have an interest in the outcomes. MSP recognizes the criticality of communication with stakeholders and the link between this engagement and leadership.

4 Blueprint Design and Delivery

The Blueprint is a document which translates the Vision Statement into a detailed description of the capability which is required to enable the outcomes. The Blueprint defines the scope of the Programme Manager's authority by describing the current, or "as is", state of the organization and the future capability which will be delivered through the Project's Dossier.

5. Benefit Realization Management
Benefits are defined as "...the measurable improvement resulting from an outcome which is perceived as an advantage by a stakeholder". The rigour with which an MSP programme addresses the management of benefits is one of the distinguishing features between programmes and projects. The Governance Theme of Benefits Realization Management incorporates a number of techniques and tools that support the identification, realization and measurement of benefits within the programme. The methodical approach to the management of benefits is closely linked to other governance mechanisms within MSP including the role of the Business Change Manager.

6. Planning and Control
Planning and Control are fundamental to the success of the programme and should be seen as separate and complimentary concepts. A Programme Plan is developed during the Defining a Programme process and contains many assumptions and estimates. These will be revised as progress is made. The preparation of the plan requires the analysis of large volumes of data and the consultation with subject matter experts and stakeholders before the distillation of that information into a coherent plan.

7. Business Case
The Business Case provides the test of the viability of the programme and justifies the investment in the programme. Closely linked to the analysis of benefits, this document provides the SRO and the Sponsoring Group with the information required to support their investment decisions. The programme Business Case is maintained throughout the life of the programme to provide the Sponsoring Group and Programme Board with confidence that the investment in the programme is worthwhile.

8. Risk and Issue Management
Programmes are managed in an uncertain environment and risks will be identified throughout the duration of the programme. This Governance Theme covers the identification, management and escalation of risks and issues. The Risk Process is applied to both threats, which have a negative impact on the programme outcomes, and opportunities, which have a positive or advantageous impact on the programme outcomes. From an organization's perspective, there are four types of risks: Strategic, Programme, Project and Operational. Categorizing risks enables the appointment of Risk Owners and provides the opportunity to escalate the risks to higher authorities if necessary.

9. Quality

Quality Management, in relation to MSP, refers to the need to satisfy stakeholders' requirements by meeting their expectations and offering the best opportunity to realize the planned benefits.

3. Transformational Flow

The term Transformational Flow is used to describe a series of six processes which guide the programme management team through the programme.

1. Identifying a Programme

During 'Identifying a Programme' the Programme Mandate is agreed by the stakeholders and developed into a more comprehensive document outlining the programme's purpose.

2. Defining a Programme

The detailed planning for the programme is undertaken during 'Defining the Programme'. Once the Sponsoring Group refine and approve the Vision Statement, the Programme Board and supporting subject matter experts undertake a number of activities which culminate in the development of a Programme Plan (normally part of the larger and more comprehensive Programme Definition Documentation) and the Programme's Business Case.

To enable the development of a robust Business Case the process must first consider:

- The Blueprint - to understand what capability is required
- The Projects Dossier - to enable the estimating of costs, duration and benefits associated with the programme
- Validation of Benefits - resulting from the analysis of the benefits and modeling to achieve the optimum result
- Governance requirements

3. Managing the Tranches

Primarily the responsibility of the Programme Manager, Managing the Tranches implements the governance arrangements for the programme to each of the tranches. The activities contained within this process are applied in alignment with the previously defined strategies and plans developed during the Defining a Programme process.

4. Delivering the Capability

The Programme Manager is responsible for coordinating and managing the projects. This is achieved by applying the 'Delivering the Capability' process.

5. Realizing the Benefits

The Business Change Manager(s) are responsible for integrating the outputs from the projects into the operational environment and thereby generating the expected benefits. Realizing the Benefits identifies three distinct sets of activities which comprise this process, they are:

- Managing Pre-Transition which involves the analysis, preparation and planning for the business change
- Managing Transition which includes all the activities involved in the handover and integration of outputs into the business environment
- Managing Post-Transition which includes the measurement of benefits.

6. Closing the Programme

The purpose of each of the processes within the Transformational Flow is to ensure that each programme is managed in a consistent manner. The 'Closing a Programme' process is applied to ensure the work of the programme is completed and that any follow-on support and actions are in place to ensure the ongoing realization of the benefits.

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Kenn Dolan is a Registered Consultant for MSP, PRINCE2, PPM and P3M3. He is an experienced programme and project management consultant. He has worked in Europe, Africa, Australia and throughout South East Asia with clients from the private and public sectors.

He has coached and mentored senior executives in over 20 countries through the process of creating their organization's PMO capability and establishing an effective environment to deliver the planned strategic benefits. Kenn's expertise lies in the adaptation of methodologies to ensure a lean and efficient approach is applied enhancing the organization's productivity.

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