

Ten steps to successfully leading your critical Programme



Introduction

Major programmes, particularly in the public sector, have never been under more pressure to secure and demonstrate, value for money. The successful delivery of highly complex and challenging programmes requires outstanding leaders and high performing teams, who have the skills and experience to manage relationships, to allocate scarce resources, and to solve problems as they arise.

Empirical studies and literature reviews consistently reveal a common set of traits, behaviours and cultures which almost form the DNA of a successful team. In this whitepaper, we outline ten steps to successfully completing programmes on time, on budget, with the expected benefits and outcomes.



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About the author

Andrew is a Programme Manager with over 35 years experience in the consulting and infrastructure industry. His career as a Certified Management Consultant has focused on strategy, programme management, business process improvement, performance management & change management on large and complex programmes within a number of sectors.



No 1 Develop a clear vision, and inspire your team with it

The key to every successful programme and project is a vision of what it will achieve. Behind the realisation of that vision is a leader with the ability to articulate it, and ensure that everyone involved in the programme knows what is expected of them, when, and at what cost.

This clear vision enables a programme not just to provide direction to its internal staff but to deliver benefit all the way through the value chain. We have found that the ability of leaders to articulate and inspire with a vision has a knock on effect to:

- Establishing a clear cost base
- Engaging the supply chain
- Delivery of wider benefits such as CSR.

This ensures that both the customer, the internal team and the supplier community have a clear sense from the outset of how a project is to be delivered, resourced, and how value will be measured within it. When all have embraced the programme vision and are enthused about its objectives, they are much more likely to be achieved. Successful programmes usually articulate their vision in a powerful graphical format.

“ **Strategic planning is worthless - unless there is first a strategic vision.**

John Naisbitt ”



No 2

Know your organisation, and engage all the stakeholders

Programmes are rarely straightforward, not least because of the number of projects and interested parties involved in them. This is especially true for programmes and major projects in the public eye, which involve a complex stakeholder community, all with their own position, objectives and requirements.

Successful leaders appreciate this complexity, and work to keep all stakeholders engaged in, informed about and committed to their Programme throughout its lifecycle. The key

here is to expend the appropriate amount of (often limited) resources on each segment of stakeholders.

Aligning the stakeholder groups with the professional delivery team and giving them a shared purpose and commitment to the vision, allows the right decisions to be made at the right time. For this to happen, clients need to be frank about the traits of their own organisation and articulate what its own internal culture is like.



No 3

Understand and articulate your organisation's attitude to risk

Effective leaders and their teams provide a clear position of their, and their clients, willingness to bear, transfer, reduce or avoid risk. This can then be assessed for impact on the programme in collaboration with the supplier community.

Any risks associated with a programme or project need to be accurately identified, quantified, and managed throughout its lifecycle. This ensures that there are no areas of uncertainty among the

programme team, and suppliers have clear boundaries within which to frame their solutions.

For example, suppliers to risk averse clients may avoid using new or untested methods or materials. Suppliers to clients with a more positive attitude to risk may be more innovative in their approach – but, even so, they will need a clear understanding of how far the client is realistically prepared to go in breaking conventions, or pursuing creativity or innovation.



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Any goal worth achieving involves an element of risk.

Dean Karnazes

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No 4 **Adopt a good governance regime**

The only constant in a programme or project is that there will be change! Inevitably programmes are forced to adapt to multiple changes during their lifecycle. This is especially the case in the public sector, where projects can be influenced by any number of factors, such as a reduction in the budget envelope, a change in programme sponsor, shifting political priorities, or all of these!

Unless leaders establish an effective governance regime for their programme, it will be impossible to manage change effectively. Key to good

governance is a commitment to streamlining the decision making processes, so that changes can be responded to efficiently. These decisions then need to be communicated as quickly as possible to all involved in the programme, so that it is clear what is required, and in what timeframe.

Good governance carries through to the handover of a completed programme, where so-called 'soft landings' enable the client to take ownership of it, and facilitate ongoing assessment of how well it achieves its objectives.



No 5 Establish clear performance standards

To deliver value throughout a programme, leaders need to establish and communicate the accepted level of performance; and delivery teams need to know how their performance will be measured. Simply put, leaders need to tell their teams what success looks like.

This involves both the client and the programme leader clearly articulating the performance standards, often in the form of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which directly align to the overall vision. With these in place, every team has clearly defined goals, and a detailed understanding of how their efforts contribute to the outcomes of the programme and most importantly how the team will be appraised.

When adopted, KPIs must be used, and not merely created and then ignored. Additionally, assessment of a programme or a project's performance against KPIs needs to be focused and purposeful: it needs to make a contribution to the ongoing success of the programme or project, and used as a benchmark for future Programmes.

The establishment of key performance indicators also provides a framework for programme leaders to articulate the achievements of their programme to a wider audience. This framework should range from 'hard' metrics such as milestones to softer indicators of staff moral and an organisations culture.



No 6 Create a High Performing Team

Business today means that more staff now spend time working on programmes and projects rather than the “day job” or being co-opted onto virtual, ad hoc or “pop up” teams. This has presented the challenge for organisations to quickly create efficient, high performing teams in uncharted territory. Programme teams, and their leaders need a clear understanding of what makes up a high performance team, but also know what it feels like to be part of one.

Leaders need to create time and space for teams to reflect on how well they are working together and recognise peoples strengths, weaknesses and differences to make sure all team members perform to and ultimately realise their potential.

Organisations cannot just put people on a programme or project and hope that all goes well. High performing projects require high performing teams and high performing teams require planning, time, and hard work in the right environment for them to flourish

“**Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results.**”

Andrew Carnegie ”



No 7 **Develop all your leaders, not just the 'Top Team'**

A Programme or complex project is delivered through a number of individual projects, teams and groups of individuals - all led by individuals who are accountable for the performance of these structured and ad-hoc units. Therefore there are many leaders, not just the 'Top Team' or specific individuals. To ensure a Programme is delivered efficiently and effectively, then all levels of leadership need to be assessed, coached and developed along a path to ensure they grow with the Programme.

Great leaders motivate their team members to do more than the expected by raising their levels of consciousness about the importance and value of specified and idealised goals within the Programme. Leaders also get team members to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the team or organisation and moving them to address higher level needs.



No 8 Encourage Innovation within the Programme

In recent years there has been expectation that innovation will solve the need for cost savings, process efficiencies, market growth and even create new markets. The problem is that most Programme teams find Innovation difficult to define and implement in the execution of the programme. From ideas to implementation can be a long difficult journey. There are many factors that encourage innovation within a programme and many that stop potential innovation dead in its tracks.

Individual creativity as a basis for initiating innovation is not only influenced by the programme's organisational structure but also greatly depends on the surrounding culture as a whole. Intangible cultural factors can be the most difficult part of the innovation journey. How do you give your team members permission to fail while still keeping to the programmes high performance standards? How do you allow exploration and yet maintain process compliance and programme assurance?

The key is to build on both failures and success, every time a particular team or team

member tries to innovate. The programme should support them, as everybody involved gains in confidence and creates new learning for the wider programme team. This feedback loop, if capitalised on, drives an innovation culture as teams and team members develop bigger networks within the programme; leaders and managers have more confidence in their teams; and the programme leaders have a lowered perceived risk of innovative activities.



No 9 Learn lessons from previous Programmes

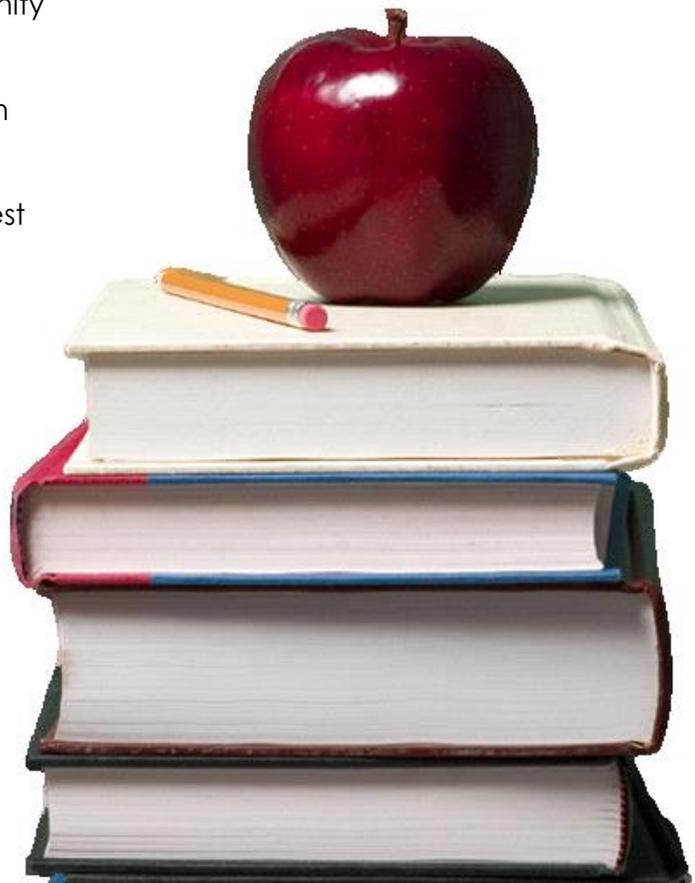
Programme leaders should create a culture of debrief and peer review. A debrief at a project task level can be one of a Programme's most important elements. Whilst it may be too late to have a positive impact on that particular project, lessons can be learned for the effective management of future projects within that programme.

Additionally, ongoing stakeholders need to take ownership of the completed programme or project, and see if, and how, it has realised the original, perceived benefits. A debrief provides the opportunity to manage this handover.

Debriefs should be seen as an opportunity to celebrate success as well as to assess failure. They need to be honest

and forthright, so that projects are appraised in a way that positively influences the programme's culture and ways of working.

By subjecting completed projects to scrutiny, clients and leaders are better equipped when they next go to the market with a similar project. They will know what is achievable and realistic, what expertise is available in the marketplace, and how much it is likely to cost.



No 10

Successful Leaders remain committed to their Programme

Passion is an over-used word, but it aptly describes what is needed to see a programme through from start to finish. Without an ongoing, unwavering commitment to pursuing the vision, programme and project teams are unlikely to deliver the results required of them.

As well as being inspirational communicators, leaders need tenacity. They need to believe in a programme, share their positivity with others, and – where necessary – show bravery in bringing the vision to life.

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When you're surrounded by people who share a passionate commitment around a common purpose, anything is possible.

Howard Schultz ”

