

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT WEAKNESSES

Embarking on a new business venture or substantial business change today almost inevitably has significant IT elements, wide ramifications and a climate of uncertainty to cope with. A more sophisticated approach to managing strategic programmes is needed and lessons from large business transformation programmes and, more recently from e-commerce, have reinforced this. Managing strategic change is still a demanding challenge which should not be underestimated.

Mistakes are still made, and some common weaknesses we have found in managing strategic programmes are failure to:

- recognise the full extent of change implied by a strategic initiative, so treating it as an isolated project rather than a programme
- attend to the wider political and emotional issues as well as the rational solution
- communicate regularly and widely to different audiences
- allocate the best people to lead and participate because they are too valuable to the 'business as usual'
- attend to 'the last mile' so that business benefits are actually realised after key changes have been achieved
- distinguish between bureaucracy and management.

Many of these weaknesses are built in unwittingly at programme inception and are avoidable.

OUR ADVISORY SERVICES

NixonBrooke provides programme level advice and guidance on:

- programme shaping and definition
- setting up suitable programme management structures and processes
- health check and rescue of existing programmes.

We also provide programme implementation support in selected areas. The key outcome of our advisory work is a well-constructed and coherent strategic programme firmly rooted in achievement of business benefits; where programme disciplines ensure integration across projects and project disciplines ensure delivery of components.

We place great emphasis on:

- starting off on the right foot
- managing the programme in the context of what the strategy is trying to deliver, not merely managing the mechanics
- creating a programme mindset geared to business benefit
- distinguishing between programme and project management disciplines and applying them appropriately
- actively managing uncertainty and softer aspects, besides rational achievement of milestones.

BENEFITS OF USING NIXONBROOKE

Our consultants have worked on definition and delivery of national, multi-national and global programmes. We provide programme level expertise and our consultants are trained to take a broad view, grasp complexity, isolate programme inter-relationships and handle political and emotional aspects.

Our capability can be used to supplement top executives who are best placed to manage the breadth and complexity of strategic programmes, but who cannot be spared from running the business. We provide the necessary counterweight to the tendency in middle management to simplify programme activities into something which matches old-world models, rather than create the new-world which the business wants.

We bring knowledge of what works well, from both the personal experience of our consultants and from over ten years accumulated know-how of programme management philosophies, examples, illustrations and diagnostic tools. This foundation of expertise enables us to make sound and relevant recommendations quickly.

OUR SERVICE SUITE

1 Programme Definition

Our approach to programme design is benefits-focused, outcome-based and process-driven. Central to this is joint visualisation of goal end-states. We work with you to define the shape of the entire programme and assemble its components into workable units. We highlight workstream interactions and dependencies to create the basis for cross workstream risk management.

2 Programme Management Framework

We advise clients on the structures and internal and external processes appropriate to managing their programme. Detailed design ranges from staffing aspects (roles, responsibilities, competencies and selection), to management reporting, stakeholder management and communications. We also cover setting up the programme office (which sits above the project structures) to manage benefits delivery, project interdependencies and risk.

3 Health Check and Troubleshooting

When programmes start to go wrong, the first reaction is always to 'dig-in', re-double the effort and press on. Our review service covers all aspects of managing a strategic programme, highlights issues, recommends corrective action and creates buy-in to it. We assess stakeholder position and cultural values, as well as governance, management structures and disciplines. Our own best practice models provide the basis for comparison, and diagnostics are used to surface diverging views and reach a joint opinion of the action needed.

The health check can be used at different times in a programme's life; for example:

- at the outset - to give executives the added confidence of an independent review
- as a check during a programme - to ensure that effective management is not being driven out by low level bureaucracy
- when a programme needs rescuing – perhaps, it seems to have lost momentum or there are high levels of in-fighting.

IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT

We are often invited to remain with a strategic programme during implementation in a both a steering and a senior assurance role. We can also provide programme support and targeted expertise in specialist areas; for example, in embedding programme management disciplines. We are also sometimes asked to fill the roles of programme manager or director to ensure continuity.

OUR BACKGROUND

NixonBrooke is a specialist IT advisory team. Our role is to help the business obtain the best possible return from its investment in Information Technology. Our teams comprise experienced consultants who have specialised in this field for many years. We were formed as an agreed spin-out from KPMG, with whom we have a licensing arrangement for our methods, and with whom we continue to work collaboratively for some clients.

Our services cover:

- IT strategy
- IT performance management
- Governance & organisation
- Outsourcing
- Strategic programme management.

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