



## Implementing Tools and Processes

### Table Discussion Led by Steve Johnson

Steve Johnson is a Programme Manager with wide experience in a range of business and technical environments, derived from over 18 years of working in a practical, consultancy, project and programme management capacity. Projects have covered a diverse range of disciplines within the IT environment, including infrastructure, software development, process re-engineering, change management, networks and service implementation improvement. Over the last few years, Steve has managed a number of P3O and PMO practice implementations for a number of different organisations

The discussion provides an insight into the trials, tribulations and successes encountered during the management of a number of P3O and PMO practice implementations. Lessons learnt, knowledge gained and differences of approach



Sharing lessons learnt are always a valuable sharing exercise; Steve kicked off by sharing some experiences in his roles, including the first time that a PMO was required on a large programme of work. More recently his work has included P3O implementations.

The first part of the session covered the approaches he has taken. He has seen four different approaches for implementing processes in a PMO setting. The ABC approach where everything is documented – but it takes a long time to set up and it winds up with a LOT of documentation (276 files!). The project also started to slow down. They also found that with



each and every person following the methodology it means that the project is not actually delivering what it is supposed to be delivering.

Another approach is essentially getting everyone trained up on a particular methodology (PRINCE2 or Managing Successful Programmes) and then coming back into the organisation to use the processes set down in the prescribed methodology. Or rewriting PRINCE2 to fit the organisation.

The third approach, in another organisation, was to enable the experienced practitioners (in this case PRINCE2 and MSP delivery personnel) to set the high level project principles – what the processes will be and then just allow them to get on and deliver. You do however need to make sure that they actually do know what they're doing and that they're not just qualified!

The approach which works the best – is a hybrid approach which takes into account all three of the above. You need agility of the ABC approach, flexibility from the generic process and also a prescribed method. You don't need to reinvent prescribed methods – just take the high level principles and then work them down into the detail where required (flexibility). The ABC method still figures when you need to have defined processes and where you need control for e.g., RAID processes, managing costs, managing change.

Question from the audience, "How do you take the processes of say PRINCE2 and MSP and incorporate them into the organisation processes – including things like performance management for individuals etc?" For that specific example there is a performance framework based on scorecards for every programme and project which includes metrics like work delivered on time etc. The conversation then turned to gateway reviews. Internally all projects have gateways – based on OGC's gateway processes – which monitors progress and also gives metrics. Audits are also carried out which reviewed projects which were not delivering according to plan.

The second part of the session covered lessons learnt. The first one is senior management buy in – about how the PMO benefits them. Without that mandate it is really not worth doing.

An example regarding a portfolio office – there was a long exercise with the senior management team which had bought into the PMO, which defined what the business objectives were etc. Following the exercise, there were "pet" projects identified that had no strategic value identified. Taking this "pet project" issue further there was an example within a local authority which had a list of the programmes and projects within the portfolio, within the list there were four that were identified as having no strategic value whatsoever. The approach from the PMO was to dig deeper into what these projects were, talking to the right people within the business before making a judgement call on what they were. It pays not to just take information presented like this at face value because there are often different accounts as to why a project is there.

Not having to reinvent the wheel where methodology is concerned is also a major plus because it allows a certain degree of momentum to happen. Also implementing a toolset to work alongside the methodology also enables the method to become embedded much quicker and gets people quickly and easily working with the processes. The toolsets then feed weekly reviews which allow different cuts on the information e.g., RAID, schedule status etc



Question from the audience, "How do you get your Project Managers to understand the processes and their responsibilities?" The example given from the audience was that PMs had been trained but senior management had not been trained. Others on the table also advocated some kind of sponsor level training – even if it's just ½ day. In one organisation it is even mandated that the project must be delivered by an experienced and qualified project manager as well as a qualified and experienced project sponsor. Interestingly within the same organisation project sponsors with a poor track record in sponsoring projects (not realising benefits etc) were also barred from sponsoring projects again.