APM Introduction to Programme Management

Second edition

Association for Project Management

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Foreword

Nearly a decade ago, APM published *APM Introduction to Programme Management*. At that time I had just been appointed Chair of the Olympic Delivery Authority charged with delivering the London Olympics 2012: the question on many people's lips was "Does Britain have what it takes to deliver such an ambitious programme given the perception of performance on major public sector programmes?" The answer is one more notch in the history of achievements that this country can lay claim to.

The field of programme and project management is both as old as time itself and also a young profession. When I started my career, project management was 'just a part of' whatever profession you happened to be in – too often with inglorious consequences for delivery that have lodged in the perceptions of many. Times have changed and now professionalism in project management has made successful delivery the expected norm. Recognition that programme management is much more than 'just big project management' is a relatively recent concept. The success of the London 2012 Olympics, and the 'Learning Legacy' shared with the world, has stimulated interest and progress in this field, most recently exemplified on Crossrail. These programmes are not so much a pinnacle of success as the beginning of the greatest proposed investment in infrastructure ever seen in this country. The National Infrastructure Plan sees a forward portfolio of work that will challenge our global skills to deliver – a challenge we must rise to if we are to achieve the growth and prosperity we owe to those who follow us.

While my career has been predominantly in infrastructure, the world of programme management stretches way beyond these limiting boundaries. Wherever change is required to deliver benefits to an organisation or society, there you will find a demand for programme management skills to realise the outcomes sought rather than simply deliver constituent project outputs that do not quite achieve expectations. One can see, in the worlds of IT and defence, examples beyond infrastructure of both success and failure at programme level that build on successful project delivery.

This update to *APM Introduction to Programme Management* brings new insights as to what programme management is all about. It is an 'easy read' for the

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top executives, for those relatively new to programme management who have a thirst for knowledge and for the project management community who should, and need to, understand how their project management skills play into the 'bigger picture'. To all of you, in whatever field you practise your profession, you owe it to your clients, your successors and yourselves to make sure your work delivers the outcomes society expects from you; understanding the programme management context in which you operate will help you achieve this.

Sir John Armitt

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This second edition is also dedicated to the memory of Paul Rayner, past chairman of ProgM and the APM Programme Management Specific Interest Group, and lead author of the first edition.

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Introduction and purpose of guide

The first edition of *APM Introduction to Programme Management* was published over a decade ago and this aspect of the project management profession has come a long way in that short time. The purpose of this guide is to give the reader an insight into programme management – what a programme is, how it functions and how to view it. And who is the reader? Our target audience is those who are relatively new to programme management: an interested stakeholder seeking to engage with a programme about to have a major impact on their life; someone joining a programme team who wants to understand the fundamental principles of programme management; or a member of a project management team seeking to understand how they should interact with a programme – this guide is for you and for anyone like you. This is not a guide for programme management experts – but for anyone less than an expert, this guide should offer you value through its insights or through the opportunities it gives you to compare your first-hand experiences with a 'typical' programme, and thereby gives you the opportunity to challenge what you see going on around you.

Programme management is not about delivering large and complex projects; it is about delivering change – in the physical, professional, business, societal or organisational environment. This publication will help you to understand the organisational and strategic context in which programmes exist, and the differences and relationships between portfolios, programmes, projects and 'business-as-usual' activities, and it highlights some of the keys to understanding successful programme delivery.

APM Introduction to Programme Management 2nd edition is divided into three sections. Section 1 provides an overview of programme management, and Section 2 seeks to explain programme management from the outside looking in through the programme management life cycle. Section 3 aims to offer the reader some conceptual frameworks and insight into what a programme manager should be thinking about in order to optimise the prospects of success and avoid the trap of being drawn into another level of project management.

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Programme management – an overview

As programme management practitioners engage with our expanding share of the world, it becomes ever more challenging to satisfy stakeholders while delivering value and benefits in a new and unfamiliar global environment. Programme professionals find themselves operating in complex environments grappling with problems associated with climate change, technological advances, globalisation, sustainable development, overpopulation, security and economic regeneration and growth, as well as bringing about change and transformation in organisational performance. Meeting these challenges requires a systematic approach, implemented in a controlled environment that is founded on sound principles, practices and tools.

Programmes endeavour to deliver change by bringing related projects and activities together in order to manage their relationships, whilst maintaining a strategic view of the work in order to align and coordinate it in support of specific business strategies. Programmes provide a bridge connecting individual projects to a rapidly changing business environment and often a constantly evolving strategy. Programmes are therefore a key delivery mechanism for strategic objectives.

Organisations benefiting most significantly from programme management approaches will normally be those seeking to deliver beneficial and sustainable change to an organisation or society in line with a defined strategy. Where there is change there will be complexity, uncertainty, risk, many interdependencies to manage and conflicting priorities to resolve. By employing sound programme management policy and practices (as opposed to just project management) considerable advantages can be achieved, for example through clearer management focus on the delivery of outcomes and realisation of benefits. Programme management allows the many aspects of the business environment to be abstracted away from the individual component projects, allowing the project manager to focus on delivering the project.

Programme management is still an emerging discipline for delivering transformational change, playing a pivotal role in managing the transition of the

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solutions developed and delivered by projects into business operations to realise benefits, thus providing the crucial link between strategy and delivery. Where the tools, approaches and mind-sets of practitioners are well developed for project management, those for programme management are still developing: this is an area of opportunity.

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