

## Managing Successful Programmes (MSP)

Managing Successful Programmes (MSP) is the Office of Government & Commerce's best practice standard for programme management. These best practices have been set into a framework and published by the TSO in a book entitled "Managing Successful Programmes" which is the basis for a range of qualifications administered by the Association of Project Management Group (APMG).

MSP is not an inflexible methodology (such as PRINCE 2 can be) with a list of processes and procedures based upon a lifecycle model which has to be followed without question or deviation. Rather it is a framework that defines a set of principles and themes built around a programme lifecycle (MSP describes this as the 'transformational flow process'). The MSP framework approach ensures the flexibility and robustness necessary to handle the frequent and sometimes sweeping changes to programme scope and direction often prevalent in the 'shifting sands' environment of the business world. Projects on the other hand require a more structured and stable approach (such as PRINCE 2) because they require clarity of scope and tight control over quality, time and cost in order to meet their unambiguous and comparatively unchanging targets.

MSP is designed to deliver outputs, capabilities, outcomes and benefits to the corporate organisation in order to ensure continuous alignment with business objectives and strategies.

It is important to understand that the MSP framework should not be seen as a turnkey solution. The MSP approach has great flexibility and as such requires customising and tailoring to the unique features of the environment in which the programme will be delivered. This is exemplified by the fact that the MSP book refers to itself as a 'Guide' – "an adaptable route map for programme management".

MSP places programmes into three primary categories:

1. **Vision-led Programmes** – exist to deliver a clearly defined vision created and owned by those at the pinnacle of the organisation, that will focus on innovation or strategic opportunity.
2. **Emergent Programmes** – evolve from existing uncoordinated projects that have grown within an organisation. It is recognised that coordination of these projects is necessary to deliver changes and the desired benefits.
3. **Compliance Programmes** – often referred to as "Must-do" programmes, exist where the organisation has no choice but to change as a result of external event, such as new legislative, regulatory or legal requirements.

MSP subdivides these primary categories into secondary categories:

- A. **Specification-led** – delivering changes led by the specification of the outputs required. For example, a new housing estate or a new Sales Order Processing system. These types of programmes have low levels of ambiguity about what the programme is to deliver, but there may be high levels of complexity and risk in the delivery.
- B. **Business Transformation Programmes** – where change is focused on transforming the way the business functions or operates. For example managing the merger of two companies into one, or diversifying a company's product range.
- C. **Political & Societal Change Programmes** – where the change is focused on improvements in society, and where the level of predictability will be reduced due to various uncontrollable external factors at play.

It is commonly accepted that MSP is best suited to Vision-Led Transformational Programmes, where typically the level of ambiguity is high and the risks are substantial. Although MSP has this natural bias towards transformational programmes, it still remains the best programme management framework currently available for all programme types.

With appropriate direction and instruction MSP can give a strong sense of control and confidence for corporate and programme personnel alike. Those new to programme management will find that the MSP framework is an invaluable guide on what needs to be done in order to successfully deliver a programmes' outcomes and, more importantly, the benefits to the organisation.

APMG is a leading Accreditation, Certification and Qualification organisation recognised internationally by government agencies. They have a worldwide presence, with established offices in the UK, the Netherlands, Australia, China and the USA.

Managing Successful Programmes is a framework that comprises a set of principles and processes for use when managing a programme. The method is the de-facto standard for programme management in the UK and is practiced worldwide.

The MSP qualification is for any organization or individual with the need for a controlled approach to managing programmes; including Programme directors, programme managers, programme support staff, business change managers and senior managers from any discipline involved in major business change.

APMG offer 3 levels of Programme Management accreditation:

1. MSP Foundation
2. MSP Practitioner
3. MSP Advanced Practitioner.

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#### **About the Author:**

**Graham Fincham** is a member of the Association for Project Management (APM), the Project Management Institute (PMI), the International Association for Project & Program Management (IAPPM), and the American Academy of Project Management (AAPM).

He holds several highly respected programme and project management qualifications including MSP Advanced Practitioner, PMP and APMP.

Graham has more than 25 years of experience in programme and project management disciplines. He has spent much of his career working within large organisations and is highly skilled at understanding cultural issues and implementing corporate systems.