

Project Management

We have been extremely active over the past few years in training to support the use of project and programme management in policy-making and delivery. We are now one of the leading providers of this type of training.

Our clients include:

- Department of Health and Health Agencies such as MHAC.
- Government Office West Midlands
- Social Care Institute for Excellence,
- Skills for Care (TOPSS),
- Commission for Social Care Inspection
- MOD Defence Aviation Repair Agency
- Department of Culture, Media & Sports - Arts Division
- Department of Transport - Transec

In total, over a thousand people have attended our workshops, ninety seven percent of whom rated the workshops as excellent or very good. Key points about our training are:

- designed specially for policy and organisational projects
- includes change management features
- adapted to suit organisations' projects and style
- a focus on the early stages of setting-up and organising projects
- delegates use the approaches to plan their own real projects.

During these workshops, over two hundred real projects were scoped and planned, ranging from defined small projects (a recruitment exercise) to less defined major projects such as a new Bill or reorganisation.

To support such training, we have now developed our web-based Project Management Guide which can be viewed in the e-learning section, and which can be tailored to a client's particular needs.

Project Management Case Study

Context

We were awarded the contract to provide project management training for policy staff in the Department of Health. In the early months of the contract, the senior management decided to introduce programme and project management as core skills in improving their policy making and implementation skills and processes, and implement changes in the Health Service. We were asked to widen our contract to support this.

Task

First we carried out a design stage, assessing learning needs through discussions with the key stakeholders. This involved discussions with staff development, focus groups with likely delegates, interviews with selected managers, and discussions with ISD who already employed project management for IT projects. This led us to think in terms of "foundation" training, tailored specifically for policy staff.

Next, we designed the training. Key design principles were:

- Tailored for policy/organisational projects rather than technical (capital or IT) projects.
- A project management backbone with change management features added.
- Suited to "accidental" project managers - those who must carry out real day-to-day work as well as undertaking projects.
- Focus on the early stages of "setting-up and planning" projects
- Delegates testing and trying the approaches on their own real projects.

The resulting design was a workshop which covered the key approaches and techniques on the first day, leaving the second day available for the course to work in groups using the approaches to "scope and plan" participants' real live projects. See [Workshop Programme](#) for more details.

Our subsequent work delivering the programme over the following four years, had three elements:

1. **Foundation Training**, where we delivered some eighty "foundation" workshops for mixed audiences of policy staff and managers, revising the original design as we progressed. This was boosted from the original contract by the senior management initiative on project and programme management.
2. **Customised Workshops**, run at request for distinct units such as the Mental Health Act Commission, Health Improvement & Prevention, and Children's Services Programme, focussing on their own particular issues. We also led "project surgeries" to help a specific project team to plan and organise their own project.
3. **DOH Project Management Framework**, through materials supplied both in the form of the workshop manual but also a "helpnote" we wrote to be available both as a booklet and from the Department's intranet.

Outcomes:

Over eight hundred Department of Health civil servants attended the workshops - from junior staff to Senior Civil Service grades. The workshops were very well regarded indeed - 97% rated the training as excellent or very good on a scale of 1-5. This included both junior and senior grades. Thus a significant percentage of the organisation received the training, and appreciated it.

During these workshops over two hundred projects were scoped, ranging from defined small projects (a recruitment exercise) to less defined major projects (introducing a new Act). This was real work. Feedback showed that this scoping enabled many of those projects to be progressed far more effectively. As examples:

- Establishment of a Social Care Institute for Excellence
- Establishing pilots for commissioning by cancer network
- Producing guidelines for storage of vaccines.
- The new Mental Health Act Bill,

Finally, and perhaps most important, our training made project management relevant to the policy staff and managers that attended. They realised that project management was not simply for technical projects, and were able to relate it to their daily work and see its relevance to policy work.

Project Management Course Pen Pictures

Project Management Workshop

To help managers and staff to organise and manage projects better. Two days covering:-

- the Basics of Project Management - five keys to success;
- Establishing robust project objectives;
- Scoping a Project & creating a scoping plan;
- How to Set-Up & Organise Projects well;
- Defining and Planning the Work;
- Teamwork and Project Leadership;
- Techniques include Setting Objectives, Structuring by Phases, Project Proposals, Project Planning, and Quality & Cost Control.

Leading a Project Team

To help managers and staff to lead a project team effectively. Two days covering:-

- the Basics of Project Management;
- Understanding teams and their development and people's roles in a team;
- Setting-up the Team - what to do & not do;.
- Getting a Team Up-to-Speed;
- Maintaining the Momentum;
- Handling Difficult Situations;
- Techniques include Getting agreed team priorities and objectives, Gaining commitment and motivation, and Handling difficult people and conflicts.

Implementing Change Projects

To help those working on change & improvement projects to manage and implement projects successfully. Two days covering:-

- Clarifying & Communicating the Key Issues & the Strategy;
- Organising & Planning the "Project" aspects and the Implementation Strategies;
- How people react to change & how to handle it;
- Gaining Support through involvement;
- Mapping the Impact of the Changes;
- During the workshop, we use participants' actual change projects to illustrate best practice.

Project Management Workshop

Overview

Designed to help delegates learn how to set-up, structure, plan, and organise projects. In particular, to scope a project and create a project scoping plan. It is suitable for all types of projects and links to delegate's work/projects. Key points are:

- It is highly practical, is suitable for all types of projects and links to delegate's work/projects.
- It is completely compatible with both PRINCE2 and the OGC framework, but is not bureaucratic.
- It is very compact - we cover in two days what others take three days to cover.

The workshops generally follow the following framework:

- **Day 1 Project Management Approaches and Techniques**
In the first day we cover the project management approaches and techniques. This includes establishing objectives and a project mission, structuring projects into stages, project planning and control techniques, and project organisation. A very full day on content.
 - **Day 2 Scoping and Implementing in Practice**
A complete change of style. The morning is spent with delegates working in three syndicate groups; scoping, planning and organising a real project selected by the syndicate. This is practice on real work. All the approaches from the first day are used in this. The afternoon concentrates on implementation, particularly risk management.
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Example Programme

Aims & Objectives

To provide participants with the key principles, approaches and techniques of Project Management.

By the end of the workshop participants should be able to scope and organise a project including: - establishing clear objectives and project mission; define, plan and organise projects; identify and manage project risks and implementation issues.

Day 1

0930 Introduction and Group Exercise:

- What factors help and hinder the management of projects in your organisation?

1045 Project Management Basics

- Establishing project objectives.
- Structuring (chunking) projects using phases and stages.

1330 Project Management Basics continued

- Planning and Controlling the Project
- The key project planning and control techniques including critical path analysis, bar charts and milestone plans.

1600 Project Organisation

- Types of organisation for projects and the sponsoring of projects.

1645 Close

Day 2

0930 Setting up and Scoping a Project

- Setting up and organising a project through a simple project scoping plan.
- Group work developing a Scoping Report for participants' real projects.

1330 Implementing and Leading the Project

- Assessing risk and resolving implementation issues that arise and a Case study on option appraisal and decision making.
- Developing Project Management groundrules for the team

1645 Close.

Projects Without Tears

Projects can be notoriously difficult beasts to manage. Changes and internal political difficulties often beset them, and success invariably depends on gaining the support and cooperation of others.

Project management attempts to resolve such difficulties, confusions, and misunderstandings by introducing clarity and structure. It does not guarantee success - no one can promise that - but employing such approaches will lead to far less crises, errors and wasted time. The five keys to success are:

1. Clear Objectives

What is the project there to achieve and by when? The first key is to establish and maintain clarity and agreement on this, and then communicate it well.

The difficulty is often that everyone involved or affected by it has their own ideas and interpretations, and even when agreement has been reached, as time moves on the views diverge again. Clear objective needs to be a continuing focus during a project.

2. Structuring into Stages

All projects progress naturally through a life cycle of phases - e.g. research, decision making, planning and organising, implementation, and closure.

A key, particularly with long projects, is not to try to tackle the project as one great whole, but to “chunk” it down in appropriate stages, making each stage a “mini-project”, and each end-of-stage a milestone.

3. Project Organisation

Because projects often operate outside of the normal hierarchy (often also crossing boundaries) the project manager needs to establish organisational foundations for it.

This key has two elements:

- to get **clarity and support** of those sponsoring the project
- to build the **commitment** of those working on the project.

4. Sound Planning & Control

Project planning is done throughout the whole project on three levels:

- **top-level planning** to establish the viability of the project and to structure (chunk) it into stages;
- **strategies** to identify and resolve likely implementation issues.
- **activity scheduling** to plan in detail, what actions need to take place when, and who will do them.

5. Leadership & Management

You can have done all the above but the project still goes amiss. The fifth and most important key of all is the project manager leading and managing three strands:

- Maintaining support for the project from all stakeholders.
- Progressing the project activities.
- Keeping the "team" connected, committed and active.