What is MSP®?

MSP® (Managing Successful Programmes) is an approach to programme management developed by the UK Government that allows organisations to manage transformational change more effectively. How does MSP allow organisations to do this?

MSP consists of the following:

- 7 programme management principles

- 9 governance themes

- 6 processes in the programmes transformational flow

Let's walk through this in more detail….

The MSP Principles

MSP is a framework that is principled based. These principles reflect the good programme management practices. They apply to every programme and have been proven in practice. So what are they?

Remaining aligned with corporate strategy – for a business to move forward it will have a set of corporate objectives that it will be looking to achieve. How businesses achieve these objectives are by introducing the changes needed. This change is delivered by programmes and projects. Quite simply each programme of change needs to be aligned and will help deliver those objectives. If a programme is not going to help deliver those objectives the question must be asked why are we investing in this programme?

Envisioning and communicating a better future – stakeholders will only buy into the change if they believe in it or see it as being beneficial. That is why it is essential that that the programme team clearly communicate what that better future will be. This is done in MSP by producing the Vision Statement. This statement should show were the organisation wants to be once the change has been delivered. Like a postcard from the future. We have all received a postcard from a family member when they are on holiday. What is the first reaction normally when you receive that postcard? I want to be there. That is the goal of the Vision Statement.

Leading change – for the change to be successful, it needs to be led. There will be key roles in the programme team who will be responsible for leading that change. The SRO

(Senior Responsible Owner) is the figurehead for the programme but the BCM (Business Change Manager) will be responsible for delivering the change in their area of operations. These key people need to lead from the front, which will help with the buy-in from the relevant stakeholders.

Adding value – it is key that adopting a programme management approach adds value. If the change can be delivered better as a project on its own, then that is what should happen. Putting in place a programme management team and approach takes time and funding so that time and cost needs to be worth it – to add value.

Focusing on the benefits and the threats to them – the MSP manual indicates that benefits management are at the very heart of programme management. Ultimately, it is the benefits that the programme helps the business to deliver that will lead to corporate objectives being achieved. If a programme is not going to deliver benefits, why is it being undertaken in the first place? It is important that the programme identifies the benefits and focuses on delivering them. This also means the programme team needs to be aware of and manage the risks to achieving those benefits.

Learning from experience – whether it be business as usual, projects or programmes, it is essential that organisations learn. It is important to learn from what has happened in the past, learn as we go and put what we have learned into practice. Keep in mind learning is not just about what went wrong. We can also learn from what went right. Learning will reduce the same mistakes from being made again as well as just allowing the programme to continually improve.

Designing and delivering a coherent capability – the programme's projects will deliver the outputs that the programme will then use to deliver the benefits. It is important that the programme have a clear understanding what the changed organisation will look like after these outputs have been delivered. This is achieved in MSP by producing the Blueprint. A design of the future to be state of the organisation. This blueprint needs to be coherent so the programme knows what the projects must deliver to give the programme the capability needed.

The MSP Governance Themes

Programmes need to be governed. Governance is the control framework through which programmes deliver their objectives. To be successful, the programme needs clear governance for its key elements.

These key areas that need good governance are covered by the 9-MSP governance themes.

Programme Organisation – it is important to have the right programme team in place. The programme organisation theme provides that guidance. It discusses the leadership that will be needed for the programme to be a success and guidance on the programme organisation that needs to be put in place. The theme also gives guidance on the key roles

needed such as the Senior Responsible Owner, Business Change Managers, Programme Manager and the Programme Office, amongst others.

Leadership and stakeholder engagement – as we mentioned above, it is important that programmes are led. It is also important that the programme understands who their stakeholders are and how to communicate and engage with them. A stakeholder is any individual, group or organisation who have an interest in the programme. Some stakeholders may support the programme, some may not. The key is to identify your stakeholders and actively communicate and engage with them.

To help you do this the leadership and stakeholder engagement theme provides a 6-step stakeholder engagement cycle.

Benefits management – benefits are key! If a programme is not going to deliver benefits then why are you doing it? It is important that benefits are identified, planned, delivered and reviewed. This is the 4- step benefits management cycle provided by the benefits management theme. Also discussed in the theme are key sets of programme information such as benefits maps, benefit profiles and the benefits realisation plan.

Vision – programmes help deliver a better future – a vision. This theme covers one of the key pieces of the programme information – the Vision Statement. The Vision Statement should set out what the organisation would look like once the change and benefits have been realised. The theme gives guidance on what a good vision statement should look like.

Keep in mind the Vision Statement is what is used to sell the programme to the stakeholders, to get them to buy-in so it needs to be a compelling vision.

The Business Case – every programme should have a business case. The business case answers the question of whether the investment in the programme is worthwhile and continues to be worthwhile. The business case takes the costs and risks of the programme and weighs it up against the potential benefits. The business case will be developed in outline as the Programme Brief and be refined during defining a programme. This provides the test of whether the programme is worthwhile.

However, the business case should be reviewed,updated and used throughout the programme to test the continuing viability of the programme. One of the key times this would happen would be at the end of a tranche.

Blueprint design and delivery – the blueprint shows the design of the future organisation against the current state of the organisation. It is vital that the programme understands what the future organisation will look like. This can be done in one go or more typically through stepped changes in capability by designing intermediate blueprints. This theme provides guidance on designing the blueprint and on a key technique used to design the blueprint. The POTI model. The POTI model describes the Processes that need to be in place, how the Organisation will look and the Technology and Information needed.

Risk and issue management – managing risks and issues is important in a programme. This theme provides both a risk management and issue management cycle to do this. Of course, once of the first questions asked when we talk about risks and issues is what is the difference between the two? Well, the answer is risks are uncertain events whereas issues are events that have happened. The key is to manage both of them.

Planning and control – programmes need to be planned and controlled. This is achieved by having a Programme Plan. Also, resources need to be managed. One of the biggest challenges programmes face is having the right resources at the right time. MSP sets out the need for a Resource Management Strategy and plan. As well, the projects need to be controlled and this is set out in the Monitoring and Control Strategy.

This theme gives you guidance on all of the above points so your programme will be well planned and effectively controlled.

Quality and assurance management – quite simply quality and assurance is about doing the right things in the right way. The Quality and Assurance Strategy and Plan allows this to happen.

Discussed in this theme are areas such as auditing of the programme, assurance reviews of the programme and how maturity models can be used to see how well programme management is embedded in the organisation.

The Transformational Flow

The transformational flow is the programmes time-based to-do list. It consists of 6 processes that take you through the steps needed in the programme lifecycle.

Identifying a Programme – this answers the question is the programme worth starting? It is normally quite a short process that will see the Programme Brief be prepared and the Programme Preparation Plan. This information will be used by the Sponsoring Group to decide if the programme is a good idea. This is also where the Senior Responsible Owner and potentially the Programme Manager and Business Change Managers will be appointed.

Defining a Programme – This is where the programme is planned in detail. The Governance Strategies, the Programme Plan, Blueprint, final business case etc. will be developed. This process provides 17-steps to be taken to ensure the programme is worth proceeding with.

Managing the Tranches – this covers the day to day activities of the Programme Manager and is also there to maintain the balance between delivering the capability needed and the rate of change the business can cope with.

Delivering the Capabilities – this process steps through how the programme manages the projects and how the capability needed is delivered.

Realising the Benefits – this process is the responsibility of the Business Change Managers and how they transition the capability delivered by the project's outputs into outcomes and benefits.

Closing the Programme – programmes are temporary. They should not run on for ever. The programme needs to ensure a controlled end to the programme and this is achieved by carrying out the steps in Closing a Programme.

MSP is a proven and trusted framework to allow your organisation to effectively manage change and get the benefits needed.

If you are interested in MSP® Virtual Training in Canada, it is now available through The Right Door Consulting & Solutions Inc in partnership with Elite Training & Consultancy UK. The Trainers are highly experienced MSP professionals in the UK. Please contact Kathy Ring for more information. Email kring@therightdoor.ca or call 514 970 4242