

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Making sense of the leading project management qualifications

Project management



ER, WELL, I'M A, YOU KNOW, 'PROJECT MANAGER'

Up until a couple of years ago I thought 'project manager' was something you called a new member of staff when a more appropriate job title wasn't apparent. It was only when I began researching the field of project management and the various training courses available, that I realised that far from being a catch-all term to describe any job function that isn't sales or marketing, project management is in fact a science.

Moreover, anecdotal evidence suggests that those who plunge into new projects without first defining their goals, or establishing a system to achieve and measure these goals, will become unstuck. The past few years have been littered with high-profile projects that have failed or come drastically near to failure: the Millennium Dome, and the IT-infrastructure project for the NHS are just two notorious examples. The new Wembley Stadium, even though it looks amazing now, had to overcome many problems that emerged during its construction, not least ballooning costs and timescales. Many would argue that these serious problems came about due to ineffective project management. And such mis-management can be very costly: the NHS admitted in 2004 that its IT upgrade could cost as much as £30bn over ten years, five times higher than the original estimate.



**By Tim Runacre,
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USING THE PRINCE2™ METHODOLOGY TO MANAGE PROJECTS EFFECTIVELY

As well as having a scientific base, effective project management is an acquired skill. In the same way as psychologists might subscribe to either a behavioural or cognitive school of thought, many practitioners of project management will either adopt the PRINCE2™ methodology (accredited by the APM Group) or the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK – the Project Management Institute's global standard).

While both methodologies are tried and tested, the PMBOK was originally a US standard, while PRINCE2™ has grown and been exported from within the UK public sector. We apply PRINCE2™ to our own projects here at Reed Learning, and provide the qualification to our customers.

PRINCE2™ (**PR**ojects **IN** Controlled **E**nvironments) is a flexible product-based planning approach to project management, focusing on business justification and providing a defined organisation structure for the project management team. As such, the methodology can be applied to projects within any organisation, regardless of industry or product. "When I started my project management career I hadn't undertaken any formal training," says Zein al-Bader, a previous PRINCE2™ delegate, "but now I can ensure all building blocks to projects are clearly defined. I can manage a project through its life span by giving it a controlled start, middle and end, resulting in work finishing to schedule."

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👑 Courses marked with this logo are run by Insights, an accredited PRINCE2™ training organisation.

★ **Managing Successful Programmes logo:** these courses are run by Insights, an accredited MSP training organisation.



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The emphasis of the methodology lies on dividing each project into manageable and controllable stages, and the eight processes which govern PRINCE2™ projects are as follows:

- Planning (PL)
- Directing a Project (Project Board) (DP)
- Starting up a Project (SU)
- Initiating a Project (IP)
- Managing Product Delivery (MP)
- Controlling a Stage (CS)
- Managing Stage Boundaries (SB)
- Closing a Project (CP)

These processes do not form a linear sequence but are linked together in a process model. The planning process, for example, feeds into and from four of the other processes as the project develops.

PROJECT MANAGERS USING PRINCE2™ ARE ABLE TO:

- Establish terms of reference as a pre-requisite to the start of a project
- Use a defined structure for delegation, authority and communication
- Ensure resource commitment from management is part of any approval to proceed
- Provide regular but brief management reports
- Keep meetings with management and stakeholders to a minimum but at the vital points in the project

The methodology is designed so that the scope of projects can always be contained within the PRINCE2™ universe, regardless of unforeseen risks or setbacks. "PRINCE2™ allows a proactive, not reactive, approach to project delivery", comments Paul Kelly from our accredited training partner, Insights. "It ensures risks are identified and managed throughout the project", he adds. Projects are never managed in a static environment, and wherever people are involved, surprises will follow. Adopting a strong risk management strategy can usually keep these variables under control.

It is not just for its flexibility that I would recommend the adoption of PRINCE2™ as a project management standard for your organisation, but also because of its accessibility. It is possible to become a fully-qualified PRINCE2™ practitioner in just five days.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I'VE GOT A WHOLE BUNDLE OF PROJECTS TO MANAGE?

If this is the case, then the correct term for you is 'programme manager'. The likelihood is that your department or organisation has an overall strategic objective, and you have to ensure that a range of different projects all deliver what they promise to ensure you meet this objective. A portfolio of several different, but strategically connected, projects is called a programme. While not responsible for the day-to-day management of each project, the programme managers will be the first to get it in the neck from the board if one or more of the projects they're sponsoring goes belly-up.

Managing Successful Programmes – one of the latest qualifications accredited by the APM Group and delivered by Reed Learning – is fast becoming the de facto standard for programme managers. It defines the role of a programme manager, and helps you compile blueprints, identify tranches and manage risk at a strategic level. It provides a methodology to co-ordinate a portfolio of multi-site projects to be delivered on time and to specification.

The chances are that if you're at a project board / programme management level you'll have years of experience in the field, and perhaps quite rightly believe that what you don't know about project management wouldn't even fill the back of a postage stamp. If this is the case, then you're exactly the person the Managing Successful Programmes qualification was designed for. Why not give it a try, or have a look at the options we offer on page 31? It could save you millions.

So whether you're a newly appointed project manager tasked with implementing an efficient system for re-ordering post-it notes, or an international programme manager with billion-pound budgets to play with, remember that you're not alone. There are various established systems available to you, so that with a small amount of training you can do what you do even better.

For full outlines of our project management programmes, please visit www.reedlearning.co.uk/projectmanagement

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