

“Tools, Techniques & Approaches Why Bother?”



the programme & project support office
specialist interest group

Workshop Guidance

Logistics:

- Four 30-minute workshops on fixed topics
- Groups remain fixed for the conference
- Opportunity for four group members to practise facilitation skills during the conference

Workshop Objectives:

- To share experiences on PPSO practise for the topic area
- To ask for advice on particular matters of concern within the topic area
- To network with group members
- To capture two “Best Learnings” for each workshop for sharing with the wider group
- To generate questions for the “Question Time” session for our expert panel

Timetable:

- Introductions: 5 minutes
- Information Sharing: 20 minutes
- Capture of Best Learning: 5 minutes

Workshop Topic Areas:

- Methods – what do you use and why
- Doing the projects right (assurance / methods)
- Doing the right projects (portfolio / prioritisation/ strategy / benefits)
- Tool selection and usage

Facilitators, please....

- Use the workshop sheets to help you generate discussion
- Keep the discussions on topic and on time
- Know when to let the workshop flow, and when to help it along
- Give all group members a chance to participate
- Return the “Best Learnings” sheet and collect Question Time questions

This Workshop Is.... **Methods – what do you use and why?**

Introduction

Prince2, Managing Successful Programmes, Management of Risk, OGC Centre of Excellence, OGC Gateways - the list goes on, and these are only some of the more common “methods”.

This workshop is for you to explore the benefits and problems of using prescriptive methods, and to share your experiences of working on cross-company projects where the methods might not quite align as you'd hope....

Things to consider

- What formal / documented methods do you use – generate a list to aid further brainstorming
- Prince2, do you use it at all, rigidly, loosely, “Prince In Name Only”
- What role does your PPSO have in defining and maintaining methods in your organisation?
- How did you grow your “in house” method?
- Have you implemented a method or framework for benefits management?
- What other areas supported by your PPSO have a method associated with them?
- How do you create a knowledge base around the methods that you use?

Questions for when the conversation dies.....

- What do you consider the value to your organisation to have staff certified in a particular method?
- What do you think of the Prince2 Maturity Model – anybody contemplating an assessment? What benefits do you see in achieving a particular level for your organisation? Is there a demand from your organisations customers to go down this route?
- Methods in the Madness – do you consider it more important to have skilled practitioners who can select methods appropriate to the task in hand (in other words JFDI), or to follow “the method” at all costs to ensure consistency? Which approach is more efficient, and when, in your organisation?
- With the Rubik’s Cube, you can follow a method that is guaranteed to solve the puzzle – it’s slow (do the top layer, then the middle layer, then get the bottom corners in place, then get the bottom edge pieces in place, and then “flip” or “twirl” to suit), but reliable. Mathematicians have recently discovered that all positions can be solved in a maximum of 29 turns – efficient, but you have to reinvent for every scenario. What parallels can you come up with in the world of projects?

This Workshop Is.... **Doing the projects right (assurance / methods)**

Introduction

Another of the workshops talks about methods – which do you use, and what is their benefit. But why bother investing in one or more methods, if either your staff don't use them properly (or even at all) or if the business climate does not encourage the methods to be used.

This workshop is for you to explore how and when you assure method compliance, and to share experiences of when it's worked, and also to learn the lessons of when it hasn't.

Things to consider

- What aspects of projects do you assure in your organisation and how? Generate a list from this initial brainstorming to provide a reference for the remainder of the workshop.
- What approach do you take to assurance? (possibilities are facilitating, gatekeeping, formal audit, project police, judge jury and executioner) – how well do these work in practise?
- What is the PPSO's role in project assurance in your organisation?
- To what depth does your organisation undertake assurance activities (microscope, instinctive, top-level) – when do you tailor your approach to fit the projects, if at all?

Questions for when the conversation dies.....

- What are the real sanctions that you can impose when assurance activity turns up non-conformance?
- Who performs assurance in your organisation – do you follow the Prince2 approach of project assurance being the responsibility of the Executive, Senior User, Senior Supplier, or do you have other approaches? How do these differ for internally-delivered projects and externally delivered projects?
- How do you ensure PM buy-in for your assurance activities – generally PMs have little time for “snoopers”?
- Can you share a “before and after” story from your organisation relating to either a creating, loosening, tightening or abandoning of project assurance activities?

This Workshop Is.... **Doing the right projects (portfolio / prioritisation/ strategy / benefits)**

Introduction

Last Autumn, we held a conference looking at aspects of Portfolio Management as they relate to PPSOs. It was clear from that conference that PPSOs can have a major impact upon the success of investment governance, but there is little written on the subject thus far.

This workshop is for you to explore how and why you undertake portfolio management in your organisations and how you plan your investment in programmes and projects.

Things to consider

- How do you decide which projects to do in your organisation? Generate a list from this initial brainstorming to provide a reference for the remainder of the workshop.
- What approaches do you take to project prioritisation?
- Who owns the investment portfolio in your company?
- How does your PPSO interact with the
- Have you implemented benefits management at your organisation? Was it hard? Has it worked? Have you quantified the benefits of having benefits management in place?
- “Pet projects”. How prevalent are they in your organisation, and do they deliver what was promised at their inception? Does the “sponsor” stay around long enough to find out?
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Questions for when the conversation dies.....

- Is portfolio management just for the bigger corporates with multi-million pound investment budgets, or can it work in smaller companies too?
- What is the attitude towards portfolio management in your organisation?
- How hard is it in your organisation to stop in-flight projects when business-needs dictate? Why do you think this is?

This Workshop Is.... **Tool selection and usage**

Introduction

All PPSOs need tools to manage their assets, be they people, data, knowledge, or physical resources. There's a real mix of commercial tools and "DIY" tools in most PPSOs, and there's little discussion on how to get a rounded and efficient toolset firstly implemented and then embedded in organisations, with the result that many tools implementations fail.

This workshop is for you to explore the tools in use in PPSOs today, gain experience from each other about what tools are being used to solve what problems, and also to share experiences about how you identify tool requirements, procure tools, and implement them.

Things to consider

- What tools do you use in your PPSO? Generate a list from this initial brainstorming to provide a reference for the remainder of the workshop.
- How can your PPSO control the toolsets in use in your project community, and why should it bother?
- Who's done an EPM (Enterprise Project Management) tool implementation? How did it go, what did it cost, how does it help your PPSO and the projects, how painful was it to implement and was it worth it?
- How do you establish and maintain tool ownership in your organisation?
- Does tool usage have to be consistent in both application and coverage to realise the full benefit of the tool?
- How do you build capability to leverage the benefits of your tools within your project and PPSO community?

Questions for when the conversation dies.....

- Buy, build or bodge – which approach do you take in your organisation, and why?
- If you could generate the equivalent of Batman's "utility belt" of tools for (a) project managers and (b) your PPSO, what would be in it?
- Which one tool that your PPSO uses would you defend to the death? Why?
- Which comes first – the tool or the process?

Workshop

- Methods – what do you use and why
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Group

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Best Learning #1

Best Learning #2