



keynote

Implementing Prince2: Strategy or Stealth?

Approaches for establishing Prince2 in your organisation

INTRODUCTION

This keynote provides guidance on introducing a Prince2 based project management methodology into an organisation, drawing on experiences from both commercial and public sector organisations.

For some organisations the decision to use Prince2 is made at a senior level and adoption becomes part of corporate policy. This may be termed the strategic approach and a top-down style of implementation is the logical solution.

In other situations, the initiative may come from lower down, as a grass roots movement from the project management community or through the programme/project office. Introducing Prince2 may not be seen as a strategic objective and a bottom-up approach is often appropriate. In the extreme, the organisation may simply give low priority to project management capabilities and introduction 'by stealth' may be considered.

TOP DOWN APPROACH

In the top down approach, implementation is often carried out as a project in its own right. Key steps are shown in the table, beginning with the decision to adopt Prince2 published as a clear policy statement.

A change project

Implementing Prince2 in an organisation is essentially a change project and should be approached as such. Be clear on the changes you want to achieve, who will champion it and how you will measure the outcomes. In addition to tangible products such as standards and templates, the project will need to deliver change products which support:

- Communications and changing attitudes
- Embedding the approach throughout organisation/function
- Achieving and demonstrating benefits.

Projects may be delivered through extreme measures and some organisations have a 'hero' culture which encourages this, so decide how you will tackle this type of opposition. Expect to need the full range of change management disciplines including the time-honoured 'carrot and stick'.

	Key Steps
1	Decision to adopt Prince2
2	Establish implementation project
3	Deliver standards and templates
4	Initial training
5	Demo projects and initial benefit assessment
6	Evaluate Demo and benefits
7	Full rollout & embedding
8	Track and report benefits

Clarify the benefits

Be clear but realistic about the benefits. Improving the organisations capability and using good practice are worthwhile aims but may be difficult to quantify as are better team working and increased staff flexibility. Better quality deliverables and removal of unnecessary activities can produce some measurable benefits - remember to removing existing management controls that are no longer needed. If you are aiming for specific results such as shorter projects or improved delivery to schedule then define KPIs early on. Remember structured methods are often

about improving predictability and repeatability across the portfolio as a whole rather than individual projects. Having an independently verifiable goal can be a good motivator and maturity targets such as P3M3 or OPM3 are valuable for this purpose.

Set an appropriate scope

In some organisations 'project' just means an idea, a budget line or a small task - these shouldn't translate directly into Prince2 projects, so set scope and size limits for projects. As a rough guide, projects less than say 3 months duration and less 3 people's work are unlikely to benefit significantly from using Prince2.

Decide if a project should cover just a specialist area such as IT, or if it encompasses whole business projects. The latter is usually preferable but may be limited by organisational constraints.

Educate at all levels

Education will be needed at all levels, not just project managers. Senior staff who may have project board roles are particularly important. Their time is limited but they need to be familiar with the core of the method, and terminology, so provide tailored executive briefings and coaching as necessary. At the other end of the spectrum administrative and support staff will need training to do their jobs effectively.

Use demonstration projects

These should try out the first deployments, verify the implementation and identify issues; they may also deliver quick wins. Look out for staff with an 'early adopters' outlook to the lead on these projects. Converting projects already underway to the Prince2 model is rarely sensible, but progressive introduction aligned with stage boundaries can be used for longer running projects.

Embedding and driving through

Like any significant change, developing the standards and templates is only a fraction of the work required to embed them. Plan an ongoing set of measures to reinforce and embed including:

- Cascade training/coaching (project manager > team > support staff)
- Short training/refresher sessions, 'lunch and learn'
- Coaching/mentoring
- Knowledge sharing and lessons (emphasised in the new Prince2 release)
- Competitions and incentives where appropriate
- Reviews and audits
- Published performance indicators.

Web or intranet sites are a good to but must be used so if these are a key embedding tool be sure to track the number of site visits.

Role of the PMO

It is essential to involve a project or programme office if you have them and they can provide substantial support to the initiative. As a support function they rarely have enough influence to be the overall champions.

BOTTOM UP

The bottom-up approach builds on and refines what you already have, picking out quick wins and adopting the principles rather than following every detail mechanically. A range of opportunities and techniques are described below.

Using Prince2 terminology

The benefits of using Prince2 terminology are greatest when working with others who use the same terms (e.g. suppliers who use Prince2, customers in public sector organisation and Prince2 trained staff and contractors).

However, introducing foreign Prince2 terminology can create confusion and alienate people for little benefit. Fortunately it is not an all or nothing decisions. The table summarises some key terms with their pros and cons.

The two main principles are: use a consistent terminology across the organisation; don't introduce Prince2 terms and then give them a new meaning of your own.

Term	Observations
Project Board	Increasingly common term but Steering Committee or Steering Group are common and equally acceptable terms
Project Executive	Often called the Project Sponsor or Project Owner or Project Director but usually with the correct concept so both terms are OK
Business Case	Widely recognised and understood term but considerable variation in content
Project Initiation Documentation	Widely used but often misunderstood with much variation in content. Often better to focus on defining the constituent documents/information clearly.
Stage	Often called phases and frequently overlapping. Reinforce the idea that stage ends represent critical management decision points
Product	Often the source of confusion - can easily be replaced by 'output' or 'deliverable'
Work Package	Less commonly used but when found usually close to Prince2
Workstream	Not a Prince2 term but frequent seen; use with care - it can introduce silo & line management structures contrary to the whole concept of projects as temporary teams

Governance structure and the 3 viewpoints

Most staff recognise the 3 principle stakeholder viewpoints (Business, User and Supplier) and use them even without explicit definitions. This injects much more balance into the project, particularly helping supplier-side staff (e.g. IT) to see business perspectives.

Some organisations will find the Project Board construct too consensus based. Conversely, organisations with a consensual style often go too far with too many members on the boards. Using an existing governance group but ensuring it addresses the 3 viewpoints is often be a practical way forward, particularly if the programme of project office can steer it towards a more Prince2 style of operation.

Business Case

Commercial and many non-commercial organisations will already be comfortable with the Business Case concept and some minor tuning of contents is usually all that is needed to get a Prince-like product.

The practice of reviewing the business case at key points in the life of the project is rare but there is no reason why the Project Manager or Project Office can't keep an eye on the Business Case. When a significant decision point or change in direction occurs this can be used as a trigger for a review.

Stages and key decisions points

The idea that a large piece of work (project) should be broken into smaller chunks (stages) is a familiar one. Both Prince2 and non-Prince2 organisations often make poor choices on the division into stages and this is one area where practical project management experience really helps.

Planning the next stage of work informed by progress to date is a fundamental idea - whether you use end stage reports and lessons logs is a matter of choice.

Management products

The descriptions of Prince2 management products (Appendix A in the manual) can be used almost stand-alone and this is a common quick win.

Product descriptions and work packages

Creating a product description template with some embedded guidance is a good start in defining and delegating work. Gradual introduction focussed on major project deliverables avoids the idea being seen as too bureaucratic. Later, standard product descriptions for common specialist products can be created, simply by looking at good examples.

This can be used to lead into the use of work packages and work with external suppliers is a great catalyst for using these. These same concepts can be extended to internal suppliers particularly where clarity and an element of formality is important such as other divisions of the organisation or overseas teams.

Information and configuration management

Prince2: 2009 has dispensed with most of the ideas of information management which will seem a retrograde step for anyone who has ever struggled with a mass of uncontrolled files on a shared server.

The principles of configuration management are simply stated, generally understood and can often be satisfied with some basic processes and a standards project directory structure. More sophisticated organisation may already have an internal document or configuration management system so just codify it.

Controlling changes

Most people recognise that requirements, scope, finished products etc. can't be allowed to change in an uncontrolled way and projects which have a customer or supplier contract reinforces this. The change process in Prince2 is sound but high level which encourages you to develop some specifics for your own project.

The Prince2 approach of using the issue log to control changes can be confusing - if so use a separate change log and procedure recognising that some movement between issues and changes might be needed

Quality and quality control

Start with the basic principle - very product needs some sort of quality check. From there it is logical to keep some basic records of the check and the result. As quality checks become more common, standardising on how checks are done to improve effectiveness and efficiency is a natural step.

Risk management

Risk management principles and process can be taught in an internal seminar in 1-2 hours. Recent turmoil in the economy has emphasised the importance of basic risk management which can be used as a lever with senior staff.

Practical implementation points include:

- Focussing on a small number of serious risks
- Focussing on the financial/commercial implications of risks
- Managing them actively
- Reporting in a concise and easily understood (graphical) way.

Product based planning

Rarely found outside Prince2 organisations and as a project-wide technique often alien, so best handled in a low-key way. Most staff can understand clearly pre-

sented product breakdown structures and product flow diagrams - just use them and talk through them, omitting the Prince2 terminology. Creating breakdown structures and flow diagrams interactively in workshops involving user/business people usually works very well, building understanding and commitment. Planning specialists often don't use them but once trained find them very helpful so it is worth giving specific training to this group.

CONCLUSIONS

The approach to execution should be based on building on the principles and developing what is there already. There will be a small number of areas where there is nothing to build on. These can be plugged by using a consultant either external or borrowed from a project office or other part of the organisation. Don't say 'We are doing it because it is Prince2' but also don't conceal the fact you are using Prince2 concepts. Do say 'we are doing it because this is a technique which is easy to use and works well, and there are extra benefits if we all work in a similar way'.

It will have become apparent by now that top-down (strategy) and bottom-up (stealth) approaches are not mutually exclusive. Each approach has its merits and a judicious combination of these is likely to be even more powerful.

MORE INFORMATION

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