TRANSLATING good ideas into achievable projects is a common problem. Even with that magic ingredient, 'buy-in'; even when resources are actually available; it just doesn't seem to happen.

The culprit is often seen as the project manager – they just don't do the job properly! But the real problem usually lies elsewhere. The failure is more likely to be unwillingness or inability to translate wants and needs into specific changes in processes and behaviour, and more particularly, things, that can be delivered by projects. Wanting to provide better customer service is not something a project can deliver; providing clear signage, or a knowledgeable individual, capable of talking with people, handling conflict and following through, is. Which of these was it that the governance group wanted/expected?

proposition

Unless you track backwards from the customer value proposition (CVP) or the business value proposition (BVP) to the description of the changed state, which can be directly translated into people doing 'stuff' with or to 'things', it is unlikely that what is 'desired' and what actually gets 'done' will coincide.

There are two 'secrets' to translating strategy into effective action. The first is translating the CVP vocabulary, rich in outcomes and benefits, into a blueprint or operating model vocabulary, full of process descriptions and key performance indicators, in a stepwise and checkable way. The second is to create 'chains of impacts and sub-impacts', all the way back to a specific output – real objects that a project can deliver. Projects can only deliver outputs, not outcomes. On the other hand, the value of a project arises from the impacts and changes caused to the business-as-usual processes by the way the things are used. Contrast this approach with

ready for
action

by **Christopher Worsley**

CEO: CITI Group

the common circumstance where projects leap from the concept to the concrete. There is no checkable link – no way of determining that the outcomes can be achieved from the outputs. Subtle changes in project content and alterations in the sequence of delivery lead to sudden failure or – perhaps worse – sudden success, leading to a continuance of the poor approach. It's like watching the amateur golfer, who every now and then hits a good one, thus justifying his bad stance, poor club selection and terrible swing, and never improving.

To get from strategy to implemented project, just follow these steps and decide:

What do you want?
The vision
Why is it desirable?
The CVP and the BVP
What does good look like state?
The major impacts
What has to be done/be different?
The business changes
What has to be in place to trigger these?
The chain of impacts/sub-impacts
What are the outputs?
The things to be delivered
What processes can be used to get these outputs?
The work breakdown structure
What resources are needed to run the processes?
The resource model

leap of faith: translating strategy into action

What risks do you intend to manage?
The project plan.

Of course you could just do what you can with the resources you've got, and hope it turns out all right. But you wouldn't want to do that now, would you?

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Britannia BUILDING SOCIETY

PROBLEMS with IT projects — especially government IT projects — are rarely out of the news. But a recent National Audit Office (NAO) report shows the other side of the coin, highlighting 24 projects in both the public and private sectors that can be judged a real success. These projects succeeded not just in technical terms, but also in achieving their business objectives.

One of the success stories described in the NAO report was Britannia Building Society's Really Big Programme, intended to update the Society's IT infrastructure, deliver a specified set of business benefits and improve Britannia's ability to undertake major change. Britannia's legacy infrastructure, storing mortgage information on one system and savings accounts on another, put the Society at a competitive disadvantage in the marketplace.

Britannia did a number of things now recognised as the right way to manage major change of this kind. Recognising that this was a major business programme, of strategic importance to the company, senior management (up to Group Board level) were actively involved at every stage.

a new wave of

HISTORICALLY, project portfolio management has been understood as the management concerns associated with running multiple projects. Portfolio management is, in fact, much more than management of a collection of projects or multi-project management.

A portfolio of projects needs to be structured and assessed in terms of business value and alignment to strategy and should be designed

to achieve the maximum risk-adjusted value contribution to an organisation.

If project management is about managing within the defined constraints (usually expressed in terms of time, cost, resource and quality), then portfolio management is about the management of the constraints: that is to say, the specific management of those factors that tend to constrict or limit throughput, cause bottlenecks and therefore reduce the flow (using a systems analogy) of projects in a

change starts here

ower
delivery

by **Geoff Vincent, Principal Consultant**

Specific business benefits were identified and measured and the business case was revisited at six-monthly intervals to ensure that it remained valid. Considerable effort was put into creating constructive relationships with suppliers and managing risks.

technology

IT projects are rarely — if ever — just about the technology. Britannia correctly recognised that this was a major business change programme and managed it accordingly.

CITI has been proud to support Britannia in the development of its project capability since 2002, working alongside it to build the best practice principles and approach used on the Really Big Programme into a formal CITI-based methodology. We were not surprised to see its application of best practice recognised both by the NAO report and in the achievement of the British Computer Society Business Achievement Award.

The benefits of good project management were also seen in the projected profit figures – the Really Big Programme is set to have an anticipated £72.8 million impact on profit to 2009!

success

The really good news is that by systematically applying the right principles, based on lessons learnt from previous successes and failures, all organisations, both public and private, can dramatically increase their chances of overall business success. Public reports, like those from the NAO, tell us what it takes so there is no longer any excuse for failure.

■ **To access a copy of the National Audit Office report visit www.citi.co.uk/ NAOreport**

linking our community

Since mid-2005, BT's IT division has undergone a radical transformation. This has involved fundamental change that has seen thousands of IT professionals move from own-use projects on to work programmes that directly benefit BT's customers – with a strong emphasis on making it happen – and happen fast.

Since then, the successful 'One IT' strategy has delivered huge financial savings for BT as a company, and has significantly increased teams' productivity. Central to delivery of this strategy is the pool of project and programme management (PPM) resources that are being developed to help deliver the One IT programmes efficiently and effectively.

As part of this radical new approach the PPM community has recognised the importance in encouraging all IT project and programme managers to take a proactive role in their work community. This has led to the whole of BT Exact setting itself the challenge to create a strong sense of community among geographically located teams across the UK, some ten per cent of whom are homeworkers.

To this end, November and December 2006 saw a series of community forums take place in different parts of the UK – each with two main objectives. First, to set out a marketplace where community members could meet with preferred suppliers and discuss their development needs, and second, to invite guest speakers to discuss hot topics.

The speakers included BT people – invited to discuss challenges specific to BT – and guests from external organisations who gave a valuable outside view of issues the industry faces today. One such organisation, CITI, was pleased to provide three of its representatives who discussed issues such as forensic project management, project management in the 'real world' and stakeholder management.

All BT Exact people who attended the forums provided hugely positive feedback, many commenting that the sessions were 'excellent' and had altered their thinking towards the projects on which they were working. Liz Yates, BT Exact's PPM operations manager added: "Those who attended came away more engaged, with an increased awareness of how to develop themselves, and more informed on key areas." Future planned activities for the forum aim to increase user participation with the BT Exact intranet portal and promote membership of special interest groups. The forum's organisers expect these will also make the BT Exact community spirit flourish.

management

given portfolio. These factors are referred to as the 'critical resources' and need to be managed at portfolio level.

These include but are not limited to the following:

■ **Key personnel (required by multiple projects)**
■ **Project interdependencies**
■ **Approval gates**

By removing these from the control of individual projects, the process of portfolio management will cause significant change to individual project plans, which are concerned with achieving their own stated objectives. In other words, portfolio management brings 'big picture' management in order to achieve maximum value delivery to the organisation.

As with any system, the flow rate or throughput is determined by the bottlenecks — that is the specific concern of portfolio management.

■ **For more information about portfolio management and analysis, call Steve Lloyd on 01908 283600.**

by **Ion Kroussaniotakis, Principal Consultant**

in touch with
events

Enhancing Competitive Advantage through People

IN recent years, the influence of technology and growth in knowledge-intensive organisations around the world have caused and challenged industry to focus on the quality of the workers available. This conference aims to bring out the most important aspect of human capital management – transforming a worker into a resource that is competitive. A panel of expert speakers has been confirmed, to show HR and line managers how to achieve organisational excellence through people. A CITI client case will be presented on day two.

20-21 February 2007

Project Manager Profiling – building a community fit for purpose

IN developing corporate capability in any particular discipline, organisations need to establish their current and desired states and develop, implement and review a strategy for attaining that desired position. The use of project management profiling identifies each practitioner's level of capability and facilitates the identification of individual development needs, and informs corporate tactics and progress.

GCHQ established its project management profession some three years ago and has gradually developed collateral to support the development of its project management community, including a development framework, fully defined roles and career paths and promotion integrated with corporate standards. The maturity of the project management profession is evidenced by increased capability, development against an approved business plan, and recognition by peer groups within the organisation.

■ **To book this event go to www.unicom.co.uk/hr**

by Hilary Small, CITI & Steve Jones, GCHQ

13 March 2007

The leadership gap – going beyond method

THERE is considerable focus on method and management of projects, but success is still elusive. The missing ingredients are judgment and leadership. Does leadership differ in project and programme environments? Who does it and what should they do?

This session looks at the issues, recommends an approach and illustrates good practices by examining a successful Home Office project.

■ **To book this event go to www.pspevents.co.uk/26**

Public Service Leadership event

THE UK public sector is today undergoing change and reform on an unprecedented scale. Greater efficiency is demanded from all areas and there is intense political pressure to meet an increasing number of targets. Public expectations of both standards and methods of public service delivery have never been higher and are fuelled by our experiences of the best service from the commercial world. The annual Public Service Leadership conference brings together practitioners in leadership development from across public service, along with senior academics of international renown. Via plenary and work sessions, delegates have the opportunity to network with and learn from their peers in a wide range of public service organisations. A CITI client case will be presented.

by Bernard Murray-Gates, CITI & David Chapman, Home Office

14-15 March 2007

Project Challenge Spring Show

PROJECT Challenge is the must attend event for all project and programme professionals. The show brings together around 50 of the leading industry suppliers for you to network with and cutting edge seminars that support you to improve your business performance and help you manage projects, programmes and resource more effectively. CITI launches this year's show.

Translating strategy into action

MANY perfectly good strategies are spoiled by imperfect implementation. Unless good ideas are turned into products and processes that can be used by people, little that is of value happens. The focus of this talk is about taking direct action within the clients' organisations through active participation at some level of the governance structure – whether it is structuring portfolios, defining programmes and projects, execution assurance or delivery of programmes and projects.

■ **To book this event go to www.projchallenge.com**

by Christopher Worsley CEO: CITI Group

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