

# bulletin

news from CITI – for projects and programmes

## time to take control

**C**ONSIDER this: It's June, your organisation owns the largest distribution centre (DC) in Europe, it's full of Christmas gifts, and it's just burnt down! It's a disaster! It took nearly three years to build; now, anything longer than a year for the DC to be fully functional again will be a business catastrophe, on top of the disaster.

What are the options? Standard processes, long decision paths and reactive planning, dealing with problems as they arise, will not work. It's absolutely clear what needs to be achieved, and every decision made must be subservient to that. It's delivering a fully functional DC in under a year. You need a project!

The first decision is easy (and fundamental) – re-implement the original design – no changes, no “while we are at it”, no “let's just improve...”, it's the original design – exactly. Project management is about fitting effort time into calendar time, sequencing tasks, assigning work to teams, keeping to a plan by eliminating emerging variances before they impact the schedule. It is not about product design and development – these are the domain of specialists, working within their own product life cycle and its associated product disciplines.

### Now the keys to success:

- Focus on each process suggested for the delivery of a component deliverable that carries a high schedule risk (i.e. where the 'most likely' estimate is considerably less than the pessimistic estimate), and eliminate them by substituting alternative ways that do not. Design the

by **Christopher Worsley**

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project so that each delivery process has a well-defined 'should take' time. Combine and sequence them into an easy-to-monitor schedule, something you cannot do when a process that should take two hours, can take 20!

- Time compression in projects involves creating parallel tasks. Analyse out any activity that triggers serial sequencing of tasks. An obvious candidate on the project was eliminating the industry practice of having a single point of access to the site – a sensible control but which leads directly to serial processing. That changed the sequence in which things were done!

- Get decisions made in a timely fashion by key stakeholders; failure to do so is a common cause of schedule slippage.

- Monitor closely and continuously, with variances flagged as soon as they become apparent, taking corrective action immediately. This means meticulous planning, immovable milestones and flexible scheduling, not rigid schedules and vague plans.

So what happened? A completely rebuilt DC in 11 months, a delighted client and a stunning achievement – now that's project management!

Incidentally, did you know that by following this approach to project management, it is possible to build a house, from the ground up, using standard building materials and meeting all the building regulations, in two hours 45 minutes? It's been done.

- **Want to know more? Contact CITI on +44 (0) 1908 283 600.**

**plotting a straight course:** a project will give you the power to arrive at your destination on schedule

# taking to the air

**N**ATS is responsible for the safe provision of air traffic capacity in UK airspace. It faces the double challenge of growing demand for flights through the busiest, most complex, airspace in the world and the need to reduce the cost of this air traffic service to its customers: the airlines, military, and airport operators.

To do this, NATS developed a multi million pound investment plan to create a simpler network of air traffic control centres equipped with advanced tools for air traffic management. The plans have been approved by aviation's industry regulator, the Civil Aviation Authority.

NATS needed to know how to plan the investment so that each of the aims would be met, when they needed to be met, without over-investing in any one of them and without

by **Simon Peach,**  
CITI Associate Consultant  
and **Paul Gallop,**  
NATS Programme Manager

incurring an unmanageable level of project risk. Air traffic control applications take many years to develop and the airlines would begin to suffer increasing delays if NATS' air traffic controllers did not get the new tools and systems in time to meet increasing demand.

## benefits

Paul Gallop, programme architect at NATS, turned to CITI and its Strategy Implementation Planning Process (SIPP) for support. Experienced SIPP consultants from CITI helped the team at NATS to revisit the benefits of the programme and to model how and when each element would need to happen. By identifying and predicting the scale of impacts on airspace capacity, air traffic productivity and operating costs, NATS could see how benefits would be realised over time.

NATS then linked each of the impacts to the programme products so that different scenarios could be tested: for example, for the introduction of new tools in a particular order, what would be the impact on capacity and what would be the benefit for the airlines in terms of avoided cost of delay?

Creating the Strategic Implementation Plan did not just give Paul and his team an improved plan; it also leaves NATS in a better place to understand benefits, know when they are needed, and to deliver them for maximum impact and lowest programme risk.

**flight plan:**  
delivering  
maximum impact  
and minimum  
risk



## subject matter or project expert

ACCORDING to The Standish Group (which focuses on IT projects) project management (PM) is today a factor near to the top of the list of success factors. (See fig.1 right.)

But what is really meant by 'experienced' in this context? While theoreticians generally agree that project manager success is linked more to project than subject matter expertise, practitioners are more varied in their opinions. If you are in the IT PM market you may well find that recruiters are more interested in which specific technology you have worked with than your PM background.

In CITI's work on project classification we have identified a continuum of projects from requirements driven, where the major concern is to deliver the product/outcome, through to constraint driven, where the constraints themselves are part of the success factors for the project. At one end the Subject Matter Expert (SME) project manager is often ideal while at the other, general project management

skills are paramount.

Yet availability remains a key skill for project managers and we must understand how to exploit the skills available and how to manage the risks the project managers themselves place on the project.

Here is how the different expertise sources classically manifest themselves in isolation. (See fig.2 below right.)

During the early stages of any project, requirements tend to predominate and thus the SME project manager is likely to be up and running quickly. During the latter stages – project constraints – end date, resources and overall success criteria become a major focus. How often have you seen your SME project manager start so well and then get crushed by the stakeholders in the latter stages? And if constraints are dominant, have you really got the right project manager?

■ For further reading, check out this link on CITI's website [www.citi.co.uk/subjectmatter](http://www.citi.co.uk/subjectmatter)

Success factors 1995	Success factors 2003
User involvement	User involvement
Executive management support	Executive management support
Clear statement of requirements	Experienced project manager
Proper planning	Clear business objectives
Realistic expectations	Minimised scope

fig.1

Success factors	PM expert	Subject matter expert
User involvement	Engage users by meticulous planning of user involvement	Engage users through subject empathy and enthusiasm for subject area
Executive management support	Engage management through appropriate governance	Gain confidence through illustrated subject expertise
Clear business objectives	Ensure agreement of all stakeholders	Support the requirements capture
Minimised scope	Communicate consequences of varied scope options	Support the prioritisation of requirements

fig.2

**Showcase focus on the big four**

THIS showcase is always received with great enthusiasm by speakers and delegates; in recent years the event has scored an impressive 98 per cent satisfaction rating from delegates. This really is a must attend event for Project Directors and Heads of Programmes from private and public sectors. This year's event is entitled 'Getting the Big Four Right: Managing Effective Projects, Programmes, Change and Risk', takes place at the QEII Conference Centre, Westminster, London on Wednesday 27 June 2007.

■ To find out more about this event and to register to see CITI's seminar 'project manager profiling: building a community fit for purpose', Steve Jones, GCHQ and Hilary Small, CITI Principal Consultant visit [www.bestpracticeshowcase.com](http://www.bestpracticeshowcase.com)



right  
direction:  
driving the  
success  
factors

by **Louise Worsley,**  
CITI Design Authority

# achieving project governance

by Adrian Wilson,  
CITI Principal Consultant

■ **PRINCE2 for the Project Executive**  
by Michiel van der Molen TSO £20.

AS a consultant, educator and CITI's PRINCE2 lead trainer, I meet many project managers in many different industry sectors who are very unhappy about the governance of their projects. They feel that their sponsor, or project executive, does not understand how difficult it is to run a project, fails to make timely decisions, neglects to resolve difficult issues and sets unreasonable deadlines.

Registered PRINCE2 practitioners complete an arduous course of highly regulated training, pass exams, and must be re-accredited every five years. Hopefully, this training has been complemented with an appropriate course of project management education; such as techniques courses, along with qualifications like the APMP or, for senior project managers, our own postgraduate certificate. However, anyone can

become a PRINCE2 project executive without attending any education whatsoever and this is clearly wrong!

The 'PRINCE2 for the Project Executive' book focuses on the role of the executive in a project, but there are clear messages and pragmatic advice suitable for sponsors on any type of project. The book begins with a very short introduction to the method. Unfortunately, it is far too scant an overview if the reader has no previous understanding of the model; perhaps the assumption is that board members will have attended either a three-day foundation course or a one-day overview briefing, but most I know have not! The book then improves dramatically by spotlighting five principal areas: the business case, product delivery, use of stages, stakeholder involvement and management by exception.

The author then describes the board roles and gives excellent guidance for handling the project manager, with some useful ideas concerning typical problems and their solutions.

The book goes on to provide guidance for handling external suppliers, how to deal with uncertainty that surrounds projects, pitfalls to avoid and understanding project characteristics – I particularly enjoyed the 'Parkinson's law for projects'.

The book is well written, with useful short case studies that illustrate the points being made, and provides much useful information and advice to project executives and board members. However, by omitting to provide a description of the processes in which the executive is involved, it is incomplete. Furthermore, I would have liked to see more advice and guidance on writing robust briefs and business cases, and how to chair the board at the all important end stage assessments.

Overall, it is a very welcome addition to the body of knowledge. My greatest fear, however, is that the intended audience – the project executive – will not be inclined to even purchase the book, let alone read it.

# leap of faith

**NICK Dobson, CITI Principal Consultant, explains the importance of engaging your CEO in project management.**

## How do you, as a project manager, convey the importance of project management to a new upper-level manager or CEO?

Stakeholder management and knowing your audience are the keys. Knowing how to clearly present the case to the dubious executive or CEO is the first step. Once that is known, the message remains essentially the same. Project management is about achieving change. As early as the late 1400s Machiavelli was telling us that the most dangerous endeavour was trying to achieve change. The difficulties lie with the level of risk associated with moving to an unexplored position; project management is a formalised approach to dealing with exactly such risks. With a focus on cost, benefit and risk analysis coupled to the management control of the constraints (typically cost, quality and time), it is the only rational and manageable vehicle through which to try and conduct this endeavour of change.

## How can you explain the importance without putting them on the defensive?

They are already under threat; you are to be their primary ally. In essence any new upper-level executive or CEO is already carrying a mandate to achieve change. They absolutely cannot

continue to do what put their predecessor out of work; the consequences would be both short-lived and inevitable if they were to try. They are, therefore, in a risky position, under threat to change the world...or else; and trying to carry out a dangerous endeavour...delivering change. As a project manager, the best way of dealing with this is to point out that project management is the most reliable and proven ally in delivering predictable and managed change.

## What should you avoid doing or saying?

It never helps to dwell on the negative but it is also unhelpful to paint an unrealistically optimistic view. You must therefore maintain a 'level-headed', balanced and business-like perspective. Businesses can deal with unpleasant news and, to some extent, surprises. What they cannot cope with are shocks or deceptions that change the rules of the game (rules of the game in project management generally means the business case). This means that you should never lie or misrepresent. Once discovered doing this you are in an irrecoverable position whereby management will lose faith in you and, worse, faith in project management as a discipline.

## How do you get your CEO's attention?

Well, you could rely on lurking in the car park or foyer and using the time-honoured 'elevator speech'. But, if you are a mere mortal such as the author or 85 per cent of the rest of the project management community, the best way is not the quickest. Good project managers do what they say and achieve predictable results through the reliable use of techniques and tools. These include estimating, planning, risk management and, most especially, effective stakeholder management. If you persevere at these you will, without realising it, command the attention of senior management and ultimately the CEO.

## What do you do if you find out that your CEO is eliminating project management?

One is tempted to say cut-and-run! Actually, the CEO may dispose of the title but the practice will remain inviolable as long as an organisation needs to accomplish change. Just accept your new title and continue to deliver effective, planned, coordinated and beneficial change and you should be under no threat.

**achieve change: remove the element of risk with a formalised approach**