jump-start
your project

by **Geoff Vincent**

Principal Consultant: CITI Group

IN a recessionary climate, effective project management is doubly important. Simply to survive, organisations may need to carry out rapid and effective change, and be confident that it is carried to completion. And they may need to do so with fewer resources, to more challenging timescales, and under much stricter constraints than in more prosperous times.

Yet organisations often find it difficult to mobilise their project management effectively — even if they have previously invested in (for example) sending their project managers on PRINCE2® training courses. Knowledge, even of a well-tried and tested method, is not the same as the ability to produce results under pressure.

Faced suddenly with a need to deliver, with possibly severe consequences of failure, how can organisations 'jump-start' their project management capability? Based on recent experience with CITI clients, there are a number of things that can be done to produce results quickly and at minimum cost:

■ **Promote proven project management skills and experience, not just knowledge**. Put experienced people, with a track record of delivery, in the most critical roles — even if it means an organisational reshuffle. Use the budget you have in the most effective way. It is education, not just method-based training, and the sharing of lessons learned that develop genuine skills and experience in project managers. In recessionary times, these are the people you need to know you can rely on.

■ **Find simple and effective ways to apply project management principles**. Recent work with a major client on 'appropriate governance' has identified simple ways to ensure, with minimal intervention, that projects are set up and governed in the right way — minimising bureaucracy, while ensuring that essential governance principles are actually put into practice. At critical times, you cannot afford for key initiatives to fail — neither can you afford wasted overheads.

■ **Check if the organisation is getting in the way**. A simple health check can verify if an individual project is set up in the right way, while a deeper analysis based on forensic project management principles will identify and address systemic issues of organisation or process that may be leading to repeated failure or underperformance. Survival in a challenging climate means rooting out and resolving causes of failure, wherever they may be.

■ **Look beyond the method**. The new version of PRINCE2® 2009, shortly to be released, places emphasis on principles (such as management by exception) rather than process rules. 'Best practice' can be implemented with a minimum of bureaucracy, once the key principles are clearly understood. It is good judgment, not following the rule book, that will maximise the chance of survival.

Faced with a difficult environment, we can keep doing what we've always done, and hope that things turn out all right in the end. Or we can take active steps to become leaner, fitter, and better adapted to the challenges ahead. The choice is yours.

(PRINCE2® is a Registered Trade Mark of the Office of Government Commerce in the United Kingdom and other countries.)

take active steps to become better adapted to the challenges ahead

change starts here   www.citi.co.uk

by Andrew Smart,
Director of Project Management, Magnox South,
and Bernard Murray-Gates,
CITI Principal Consultant

supporting a growing demand

■ BEST PRACTICE SHOWCASE
23 June 2009, QEII Centre in
Westminster, London
To book visit www.
bestpracticeshowcase.com
Organisations are now moving toward
'demand-driven' development, that is
the framing of development support
around a more complex mix of support
interventions – founded on a firm
understanding of the needs of the
community overall and the individuals
within it. This begs the question: "How
do we assess the development needs
of the community?"

For the answer, see CITI's case study
seminar on 'Assessing 'demand-driven'
development: an effective approach' at
Best Practice Showcase. In this session
an overview of different approaches
is discussed, and their various
strengths and weaknesses assessed.
The underlying principles of effective
assessment are identified.

A case study will be presented by
Magnox South Ltd, who recently carried
out work to understand and measure
the capability needs of their project
and programme community. The case
study illustrates how these best practice
principles were put into action, and the
useful information it provided to those
tasked with devising a 'demand-driven'
development framework for their staff.

■ **Please see back page for
more details.**

bridging the gap . . .

TACKLING Britain's
nuclear legacy
is one of the
most important
and demanding
managerial,
technical, commercial and
environmental challenges facing
the UK over the next century.

Magnox South Ltd, a company owned
by EnergySolutions, is the management and
operations contractor currently responsible
for defuelling and decommissioning
five of the UK's historic Magnox nuclear
reactor sites on behalf of the Nuclear
Decommissioning Authority.

The sheer scale of this challenge, the
diversity of facilities that were built, the
different technical specifications used and
the fact that much time has passed since

Magnox South

implementation, makes each and every
clean-up project uniquely challenging.

Andrew Smart, Director of Project
Management, said: "The priority for Magnox
South is decommissioning the sites we
manage in a safe and hazard-free manner.
This involves complex project management
challenges and requires high levels of
professionalism. We recognised that we
wanted to develop the skills and enhance
the competencies of both our project
managers and the other professionals
working with them on our projects.

sustainable improvement

"We knew that 'standard' project
management training courses are readily
available but given our unique environment,
and the diversity of experience among our
workforce, we were not interested in a

'sheep dip' approach. We had some experience
of this in the recent past and understood its
limitations in making sustainable improvement
in performance.

"We wanted to better understand
development needs across the community before
committing investment in project management
training. We also realised that we needed to
know more about the required competencies
of our staff before we could even attempt
to bridge the 'development gap'. Finally we
wanted to create a comprehensive development
support framework that addressed individuals'
requirements and allowed them to access the
necessary development interventions."

Many organisations are now coming to
the same conclusion about developing their
project and programme capability. In the
past, development needs have been addressed
in a 'scattergun' fashion — usually with some
mixture of distance and classroom-based
learning that are not particularly connected
or related to each other.

More-enlightened organisations are now

moving towards 'demand-driven' development,
that is the framing of development support
around a more complex and integrated mix
of support interventions — founded on a firm
understanding of the needs of the overall
community and the individuals within it.

"We needed a reliable, verifiable assessment
process that could work cost-effectively across
several sites throughout the southern counties
of England. This had to be easy to access and not
burden the staff asked to take part.

demand-driven development

"Following a rigorous supplier process we
engaged CITI to assess and establish the 'gap
of performance' between desired and actual
capability, in order to allow us to specify a
'demand-driven' development framework for
the project community including project
managers, project control staff and project
team members," said Andrew.

In addition to utilising elements of its
standard project management profiling toolkit,
CITI developed a bespoke set of questionnaires

to examine the competencies expected of
professionals in different project roles and
at different levels within Magnox South.
This solution allowed assessment of core
competencies in project management as well
as the specific technical competencies required
by professionals within such an exceptional
environment. It included self-assessment as
well as 360-degree feedback, and provided each
participant with their individual report as well
as population summaries and analysis that
informed management discussions about the
overall development framework.

The successful implementation of the
assessment process over a period of about
a month has been a good experience for
Magnox South. "The new information we gained
about our project community's development
needs is a huge step forward for us," added
Andrew. "Now we need to close the capability
gaps we found by ensuring that future
development interventions give our project
community the skills and approaches required to
tackle the complex challenges ahead of them."

reaching goals through **individual development**

By Louise Worsley, **Design Authority**

➤ new learning strategies

IN the last ten years there has been an unprecedented
growth in management education. The MBA is now
the base requirement of anybody wishing to enter into
senior management consultancy or into many senior
management positions.

Yet organisations have a greater demand for
management competence than the MBA schools can
possibly service. Outside academia, innovative corporate
training enterprises increasingly provide the type of

management training where learning
is distributed at the time of need, embedded
in a work context, and delivered in rapid 'bite-
sized pieces', which aim to meet participants'
needs in terms of depth of information coverage,
timeliness of delivery, and job-relatedness.

In working with organisations to develop
project capability, CITI has focused on the
development of individual capability through
organisational development.

"It takes a village to bring up a child"
(South Africa township lore). Similarly,
it takes a community to create a project
manager. Development activities must
combine training approaches with on-the-job

development, support and mentoring.

Three years ago we worked with a group
of clients to career assess some of their
most senior and successful project and
programme managers. What made them
good? What development opportunities
had they found most useful?

Interestingly, over 90 per cent of
those interviewed had at some point in their
career been 'taken under the wing'
of a senior person in their organisation. This
person generally took the role of personal
champion, helping the project manager to
become positioned appropriately in the
political milieu of the organisation.

➤ development needs analysis

CITI's new personal development
questionnaire is designed not only to help
you see which of our courses is most
appropriate but also to prompt your thinking
about what development actions you should
be taking. It uses the insights gained from
profiling and interviewing over ten thousand
project managers.
**Why not try it today? Simply visit
www.citi.co.uk/dna**

supporting a growing demand

Continued from inside.

■ **BEST PRACTICE SHOWCASE — BIRDS OF A FEATHER SESSION**
23 June 2009, QEII Centre in Westminster, London
To book visit www.bestpracticeshowcase.com
Best Practice Showcase 2009 offers the widest range of Birds of a Feather (round-table) sessions yet. These sessions are popular and are required to be booked in advance. Join the CITI table at 10am, 11am, noon or 3pm for a highly engaging and topical discussion on 'Organisational and individual development: achieving effective return on investment'.

All organisations will recognise the problem of achieving return on the annual investment they make in developing their project and programme management expertise.

Too often the promise of lasting performance improvement is illusory, and the warm afterglow of a well-delivered and well-received training course becomes a fading memory as delegates swiftly revert to the old mental and behavioural habits they have grown accustomed to within their organisations.

Bernard Murray-Gates, CITI Principal Consultant, discusses: where does it go wrong? Where do development strategies fall short, and what can be done to address the gap? How can we structure development frameworks in order to achieve the best return on our investment? How should we measure that return? What should the organisation do to support and nurture effective development of individuals and groups?

This workshop will identify the major obstacles to development and outline the latest 'best practice' thinking about adult learning.

■ **BEST PRACTICE USER GROUP (BPUG)**
16 July 2009, CITI Limited, Newport Pagnell
To book visit www.usergroup.org.uk
CITI's approach to learning takes participants 'beyond method' to experience complex project issues in real business environments.

In this one-day event we invite members of BPUG to experience how they can apply new techniques and good judgment in complex situations. Through the day we explore effective approaches to portfolio management and link these to organisations' value systems and strategies.

expand your skills

Project Leadership
13–14 July 2009

This highly interactive and practical masterclass addresses the challenges of managing and leading people in projects and provides 'best practice' strategies and tactics for dealing with people and teams. It is the development of these critical people skills that makes the difference between functional professionals and successful project managers.

Understanding Project Management
14–15 Sept 2009

By attending this two-day course designed for non-project managers, you will learn more about how projects are run, how project techniques and approaches can add value to your current role (be it in HR, finance, marketing or operations) and what factors make project management different from other types of management.

Professional Portfolio Management
28–29 Sept 2009

Successful portfolio management requires the application of practical techniques for clearly assessing the desirability of the portfolio and for managing its 'doability'. This course provides a proven approach for managing portfolios, enabling you to organise and structure portfolios of projects using strategies that will maximise their value within the organisational constraints of resources and risk tolerance.

Coming in October . . .
Delivering Strategic Programmes – practical programme management techniques which take individuals beyond applying a method.
Managing Complex Projects – deliver complex projects such as delivery of new technologies, management of complex stakeholder groups or delivering across departments.
Making Projects Work – tools and techniques to manage projects in any sector.
Creating Valuable Project & Programme Support Offices – set up and manage a support office that adds value to your organisation.

■ **Go to www.citi.co.uk/opencourses for more information on all our courses or call 01908 283 600.**

Manage your career —
MSc Managing Major Projects and Programmes
Next induction day — 6 October
Closing date — 10 July

Designed for experienced project managers, this part-time MSc programme is designed to provide a qualification whilst developing your project management approach, so you can deliver the most complex cross-functional projects. Assessment requires attendees to take the learning from the taught modules and apply it to their current projects or programmes, providing immediate value to their employers and allowing them to apply their learning with support from both CITI and the National Centre for Project Management.

■ **To check your eligibility to join the programme and view details of the modules included go to www.citi.co.uk/msc or call 01908 283 600.**

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