

## Welcome

Welcome to all our readers! In this issue of Tipoffs, we take a look inside the world of Programme Management from ground up.

An inside look at this month issue provides several different glimpses into this complicated element of the executive management structure. Leading off is our own Mick Hides, who gives us a glimpse inside one third-party company trying to break the mould in restructuring its programme management department. Nicola Thorp gives us the lowdown on how the profession defines three separate management approaches programme, project and portfolio management. But as she and you'll both discover it's hard to pin down just one definition to an entire set of methodologies!

Also in this issue, Lindsay Scott continues the threefold approach by addressing the proper function pyramids involved with programme management. Paradise in programme management may be just a short scroll down the page for your company!

Meanwhile, our own Managing Director John Thorpe gives his experience-laden take on whether or not programme management provides its own inherent philosophy.

In addition to all of our words and thoughts on programme management, we will also take the opportunity show you the benefits of running a successful industry tool: Our own blog, [How to Manage a Camel](#). And we invite you to add your own thoughts and opinions as well.

Do you want to contribute to a future issue of Tipoffs? We are always looking for contributions from the next great writer out there looking to share their knowledge and expertise in the project management industry. For more information, drop us a line at [editor@arraspeople.co.uk](mailto:editor@arraspeople.co.uk).

## An atypical look at programmes

By Mick Hides

A current assignment, nearing conclusion for Arras People, demonstrates the importance of buy-in by the Senior Management Team for our Third Sector client.

In his book "[Fifth Discipline](#)", Peter Senge stated that there are two main motivations for change: aspiration and desperation. The award of significant government funding (£10'sm) would cause feelings of angst in the best of us fundamentally challenged the way our client needed to work.

Arras People were approached to work on developing a Programme Structure to deliver a stream of the government's social agenda.

For the senior management team this posed a very different challenge to their role as champion of their target audience and distributor of donated funds.



Equally, they realised that such a massive undertaking would require a

## In This Issue...

[An atypical look at programmes](#)

[Defining programme, project and portfolio management](#)

[Where does the programme function fit?](#)

[Is there a profile for a solid programme manager?](#)

[Suggested readings and links](#)

[Arras People Update](#)

[Project Management Blog](#)

[New roles](#)

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### "Atypical look" links

For a chance to check out Peter Senge's acclaimed book 'Fifth Discipline', click [here](#).

new type of organisational framework. But then the question becomes, 'How to achieve this?'

The response was to adopt a Programme Management approach headed by a charismatic and inspirational Programme Manager. The scale of the programme required someone who could instil confidence in the senior management team and the organisation as a whole that this was a manageable and achievable proposition.

For the programme to be successful it needs to ensure that activities are aligned to the needs of the clients. But who are the clients in this case?

- Is it the target audience for whom the service is being delivered?
- Or is it the funding body?

The truth is probably both. By meeting the needs of the target audience and demonstrating value for money to the funders, the programme will be judged a success.

The Senior Management Team is really driving this programme and see a fantastic opportunity to change the nature of their business as well as being a role model for the industry as a whole. The push by government to engage with the Third Sector in delivering the social agenda is a key part of the procurement strategy. Combining the passion of Third Sector organisations, with the resources to make a difference has the potential to change the way services are delivered.

But what sort of person would be suitable for this role? The ideal candidate they feel is a strong leader with excellent commercial skills used to driving change. The management of technological-rich solutions plays a large part in everyday business life that potential candidates have tended to have managed large scale IT transformations. The people they have spoken to have tended to come from the private sector as the senior management team feel they need to adopt a more enterprising approach if they are to flourish.

This is the first of an entire Programme Management structure that involves new roles and a change in attitude of the entire business. The senior management team are under no illusion that this transition will be quick or easy.

But their belief is that they have to rise to the challenge and as such they are totally committed to this path.

Will it be successful?

The simple answer is that it has to be and I have no doubt that the Programme Manager and his new team, supported by the senior management team will be the benchmark for Third Sector delivery for many years to come.

*Mick Hides is a Consultant for Arras People.*

## Defining programme, project and portfolio management...with a little help

*By Nicola Thorp*

Previously clearly defined functions such as Programme, Project and Portfolio management appear to be evolving. Once upon a time, the

programme management function was place to ensure the strategic goals of the business were met now elements of portfolio management merge into programme management, and project management is merging with both



programme and portfolio management. Is this a conscious decision, a lack of understanding, or just the need to pick and choose what works?

As stated below (taken from the [OGC website](#)) programme management

### "Definition" links

For a look at the home page of the OGC website, followed by other glimpses of their official definitions of [programme](#), [project](#), and [portfolio](#), click [here](#).

For a glimpse into the Association for Project Management's look at these definitions, click [here](#).

is surrounding changes to client services. However APM states programme management as coordinated management of related projects which may also include business as usual activities also stating programme management varies across industries and business sectors, leaving the function open to interpretation (or picking and choosing?).

OGC's definition of project management highlights a very interesting point in regards to the necessity for a project if, in the initial stages, a thorough investigation was instigated around "why, when, how and what", a clearer definition of function requirements would be apparent instead of jumping right into trying to resolve the issue. APM state a similar definition in regard to project management but also states projects bring about change - which is overlapping OGC's programme management description.

Portfolio management, according to APM and OGC definition, is very similar though it is described as running at a high level such as programme management.

**Programme Management:** *Programme management is a vital component in the delivery of change; whether change to public or customer services, or change within organisations. In the government context, Programme Management is what the best policy makers have always done, though they may not have called it that; thinking through the end-to-end process to translate policy into delivery plans and into desired outcomes.* <sup>\*</sup>

**Project Management:** *Sets out roles and responsibilities for delivery (governance) of individual projects, milestones and resources; identifies stakeholders; interdependencies; manages delivery; manages project budgets. A good project management method will guide the project through a controlled, well-managed, visible set of activities to achieve the desired results. All parties must be clear about why the project is needed, what it intends to achieve and what individuals responsibilities are in that achievement.* <sup>\*\*</sup>

**Portfolio Management:** *In the context of government delivery of key services and improvements, Portfolio Management is a corporate, strategic level process for co-ordinating successful delivery across an organisation's entire set of programmes and projects. The total set of programmes and projects within an organisation is known as the "portfolio" and this represents a complete picture of the organisation's commitment of programme and project resources and investment to delivering its strategic objectives.* <sup>\*\*\*</sup>

The debate surrounding the characterisation of the discussed three areas could be deemed as infinite - there are a lot of courses, books, articles and blogs surrounding such issues. Having researched the trend to merge the roles, I have found there are many reasons behind such confusion as stated above, the need for a solution without clearly defining the problem is a large contributing factor. In addition to this, traditional business structures add confusion to where the functions should truly sit within an organisation, not to mention the increasing trend of businesses requiring more than is set out in the parameters of a single function.

All of these factors provoke more questions, but if we haven't got the functions clearly defined by our governance providers, how can we strive towards a more efficient business structure?

**Nicola Thorp is a Consultant for Arras People.**

### "Programme function" links

For further information on the OGC, specifically an article on P3O, click [here](#) (PDF).

For a general overview from the Business Improvement Package on Portfolio, Programme and Project Management, click [here](#).

Real life applications are available in the blogosphere, dealing with [Information in Higher Education](#) as well as [the Art that is project management](#).

## Where does the programme function fit?

By Lindsay Scott

Ah, the programmes approach to effective delivery, the answer to everyone's prayers. Imagine the scenario across the business world:

*"We have excellent project management capability, a mature organisation that has been delivering successful projects for years - we have decent project managers that manage effectively and know how to*



deliver We have big programmes of work - complex, resource-heavy with deliverables that our organisation's profitability and success depend on.



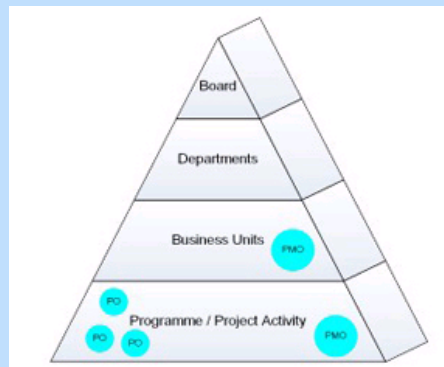
"The Project Managers know what the Programme Manager needs, and ultimately the Programme Manager has the support, guidance, straight-talking Corporate Programme Management Office, so he/she knows that the programme they're sweating blood and tears over is still viable. In other words, it's still aligned to our corporate strategy and our business objectives - it's still top priority, visible and the programme outcomes still in demand by the board members."

Phew! That looks like a pretty good organisation structure to me. So why doesn't everyone want a structure like this? Or if the want is there, why is there not the desire to make it happen?

The majority of wants and needs from organisations over the last six years of recruitment requests fall firmly in the Paradise Found model - this joined up, top-down and bottom-up programme/project-centric utopia. The want is there, the need definitely, but to truly change an organisation's management approach, the need has to be overpowering, the drive vast and the board's approval considerable.

Paradise Found is often that step too far - an unreachable model; the board love the idea, but love isn't enough - action is also needed. Traditional departmental structures and fiefdoms are threatened; Fear, uncertainty and doubt comes to rule the day. The organisation needs a leader: Someone who has a passion for big changes like this; someone who brings people with them; someone who is not afraid of the fear of change and is able to convey that feeling across and up and down an organisation.

So if not Paradise Found, what is the next best thing? Paradise Average? A state where we hope we can reap the benefits of a Paradise Found, but with less hassle? Our programmes and projects are transient, not core to the business, so



the function managing them should be the same. We are left to hope that, by relying on good programme managers, supported by good project managers (and, where appropriate, their project offices), we will maintain a linkage to the business strategy and deliver results. Our business unit leaders will bridge that gap between top level corporate strategy and the work carried out on the project shop floor. Hoping that the business unit leaders buy into a PMO function that at least knows the score across the business units because who else is going to?

Many requests for programme managers and PMO managers, where an organisation is trying to improve its programme and project outcomes, ask for candidates with skills and experiences that could take them to the Paradise Found. Unfortunately the remuneration and benefits often reflect the Paradise Lost.

Which brings us to the Paradise Lost, where to start? We know good project management control, programme governance, benefits management and change management brings us closer to the Paradise Found.



Instilling these skills throughout the organisation from the shop floor to the HR department, from the procurement and finance team to the CFO

### 'Programme manager?' links

If you want to add your own comments about this particular article, login to [How to Manage a Camel](#), the project management blog of [Arras People](#), and give us your take (the article is posted [here](#)).

makes business sense.

So why doesn't it happen? Two reasons to start with (and the list is pretty long):

**1. The designated champion of the board is needed.** You'll need an experienced manager who is focused on the outcome and not the detail. The manager is someone who gets out and about, constantly talking and checking that everyone is bought into the plan. The goals for this person are team-oriented: constant promotion and sharing of the successes.

**2. You need the right Corporate PMO Manager.** Again, this person needs to be a seasoned manager who relies on experience to implement solutions. They use communication tools first and foremost, above everything else, and they are not relying on the usual 'Me-too' tools (MSP, PRINCE2, etc.) to take the "we love this approach" to the "our business is successful due to our approach".

*Lindsay Scott blogs about Project Management issues [here](#).*

## Is there a profile for a solid programme manager?

*By John Thorpe*

Having been involved with Projects and Programmes and Business Management for many years I believe that there is a recognised, if not agreed, difference between the two forms of delivery; my question regards the personal qualities required of the person who is charged with the delivery of programmes. Programmes in the extreme can be characterised

as being complex, high value (in cost terms), high value (in bottom line impact) and high impact in terms of the number of people impacted by their outcomes.

Recently, Terminal 5

became a great example of this, and it certainly ticked all of the above boxes, though not necessarily in the way it was envisaged when the programme was conceived! Come to think of it, many programmes are larger in terms of "annual turnover", "potential risk" and "individuals employed" than many organisations run by a board of directors and a host of specialist contributors! Can or should these be recognised as a business operation in their own right? Are they companies that should be addressed and managed as such? In fact, is there a point at which a project can no longer be called a Project because of its fiscal value? My quandary in this article does not concern the size and potential complexities of programmes and projects; I am more interested in how we find the right person to take on such a task. What skills do they require? How were they trained? Where did they acquire the relevant experience? Can they lead and deliver? I believe all "managers" require a core set of skills and competencies both hard and soft in order to be effective and to deliver. What I really struggle with when it comes to Programmes is; are business trained people or project trained people in the box seat?

If we first consider competence, the following elements of competency need to be considered if you are looking for a Project Leader, Operations Director or Managing Director:

- Technical
- Behavioural
- Contextual

Within each group there are many sub elements, of which desirability and capability will differ according to role, its seniority and deliverables. How these have been acquired and the breadth of experience will depend upon career path.

Background and experience is an area of contention: Is a programme just a logical extension of a project environment which demands the skills associated with a solid background in delivering projects? Or is it



really a business situation; a microcosm of the organisation that demands the skills normally associated with a business leader, such as vision, leadership and strategy?

My own feeling is that true programmes need Programme Managers who understand business in the round. People who are able to motivate and lead; People who can set the course and then lead from the front relying on the management team around them to deliver be that in the areas of Finance, HR, Operations etc. Yes, an understanding of projects and their control is a great background. But is it enough?

What is the de-facto profile for a Programme Manager? The answer, I believe, is in the hands of the business people who have to carry the can for the success or otherwise of the programmes that they initiate. They need to work with the Project Management community (in-house or externally) to create this template and then identify the most capable individuals to deliver their visions, whether they come from the Business or Project community. Once identified, they then need the environment in which they can succeed.

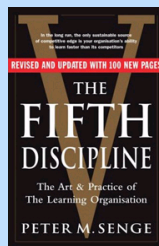
*John Thorpe is the Managing Director of [Arras People](#).*

## Suggested readings and links

*Edited by Dan Strayer*

With each issue of Tipoffs, we endeavour to find some web sites and relevant books for your perusal and study with the month's theme. With programme management as the theme this month, we point you to three books and several web sites that can address the issues surrounding the profession.

### TIPOFFS' BOOKS OF THE MONTH

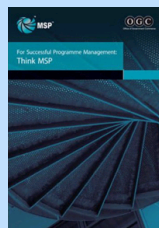


#### [The Fifth Discipline](#)

Peter Senge

##### What reviewers are saying:

*"This book sets out theory very well, it also provides Thought Leadership, Breakthrough ideas and Inspiration. It's well written and enjoyable."* - **'Stephen Parry, Author of "Sense and Respond"', (5 stars at [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk))**



#### [For successful programme management: Think MSP](#)

Office of Government Commerce

##### What reviewers are saying:

*"While it won't make readers instant programme managers, Think MSP introduces the concept of programme management in a concise and easy to understand way, making it useful for those new to programme management."* - **K O'Rourke' (4 stars at [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk))**



#### [Thinking and Acting as a Great Programme Manager](#)

Sergio Pellegrinelli

##### Synopsis:

*"This is a new book about being a Programme Manager, a new area about which very little has been written still...It brings cutting-edge thinking on a subject of great relevance to professionals and senior managers, providing useful advice on the practice of programme management, and the performance of that role in organizations."*

### TIPOFFS' LINKS OF THE MONTH

[OGC](#) - The Office of Government Commerce lists several of the definitions on project, programme and portfolio management listed above in Nicola Thorp's article. In addition, OGC conducts the [OGC Gateway review™](#) to examine programmes and projects throughout key decision points in their lifecycle.

[APM](#) - Dealing in both project and programme management, the

Association for Project Management supplies its own definitions of the three types of management we were concerned with earlier.

[ProgM @ e-programme](#) - Specifically located within e-programme.com, ProgM has free registration and addresses the promotion of programme management and tackles issues with discussion.

## Arras People Update

Arras People are at it constantly on their blog, [How to Manage a Camel \(see below\)](#). We don't want to take away too much from the block below, but it's worth mentioning that posts are getting more and more varied all the time. And just like with anything you turn to for advice, news and entertainment on the web, a strong variety of items is always a good thing.

Some, admittedly, are [self-fulfilling](#). Others tend to talk about (and link to) what's going through the mind of [those in our profession](#). One even tackles the weight of an election season that swept Boris Johnson into the London mayor's office (and what that means to the [project management boom that was the Livingstone Era](#)). Yet although everyone seems to spew their thoughts online these days, The Camel signals the progressive approach Arras People is taking to delivering on what we preach. What you get with Arras People is the direct experience and life skills of project people, and we seek both candidates and clients who have not only a love for life, but for this ever-expanding and always-demanding profession as well.

Traffic has been strong, too. The comments that we've received have been positive and thought-provoking, and we're reaching an audience that Project People like us have been targeting all along.

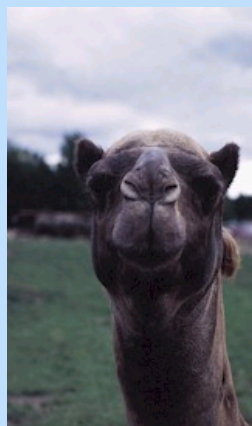
### In other news...

- If you wanted to find project management jobs in the UK on Google, and typed in 'project management jobs', you can't do much better [than us](#).
- Arras People kicks off June with a host of new client contracts and repeat business from our existing clients. Check out the [job board](#) and register to be informed of new opportunities.
- If you live in the East or West Midlands or don't mind a relocation, and are thinking about a career change, consider registering us. We have many opportunities throughout the Midlands in places like Birmingham, Derby, and Crewe, and we are always here to help the career changer or project management professional looking to take the next step. For example, have a look at [this vacancy in Crewe](#). Or [this one in Solihull](#).
- Last year, Arras People raised over £1000 for three North West charities through our [project management careers clinics](#). The good people at Heywood Children's Charities were all too willing to welcome our donation and generosity (and once again, the [press coverage](#) wasn't bad, either!).
- It's never too late to brush up on your training and skills. If you need advice on your project management career with the added bonus of contributing to one of four newly selected charities, then [book a slot](#) at one of our clinics today.
- We've recently published a [Qualifications Brochure](#) (Adobe Acrobat required to download) for project managers. You can also get some of your questions about Project Management answered [here](#).

## Project Management Blog

### How to Manage a Camel

The comments are piling in, and traffic is growing steadily. The blog we at Arras People created is an online gathering spot for professionals in project management. It is a place for project managers, programme managers and other project-related professionals to address issues in this growing sector. We are raising questions and concerns about the field, and it is our hope to continue that trend. But we need something else - you!



Drop by How to Manage a Camel today, and

add your comments to existing posts, or simply let us know about your thoughts on the issues surrounding the work-life dynamic for project managers. You are always welcome at the Camel!

> [Visit the blog](#)