

# **Roles, Responsibilities and Skills in Programme Management**

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## **Introduction**

The past two decades have seen a significant increase in project and programme management maturity, largely thanks to the efforts of the various project management institutes and associations worldwide.

More importantly to the context of this paper, programme management as opposing to project management, varying not in scale but rather in fundamental management aspects has been well developed and defined over the past decade. A major milestone in such understanding was the publication of the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the OGC's Managing Successful Programmes (MSP) in 2007 which defines programme management as "*the action of carrying out the coordinated organisation, direction and implementation of a dossier of projects and transformation activities to achieve outcomes and realise benefits of strategic importance to the business*", and clearly outlines the role of the Business Change Manager which constitutes the greatest difference between the roles found in project management and in programme management.

Today, some confusion still prevail over the roles of the different actors in programme management and how they differ from their peers in project management.

This paper tries to outline and clarify the major roles, their responsibilities and the skill required to satisfy such responsibilities.

## **Definitions**

### **Job**

A job is a position within an organisation and is usually defined in the *Job Description* which outlines what is expected from the person who will perform such a job and his/her skills and attribute.

Examples of jobs are: Marketing Director, Software Developer, Executive Assistant, etc.

### **Role**

Within each job, there is at least one role to assume. In project and programme management, there are often multiple roles associated with each job, depending on the needs and phase within the programme lifecycle.

Typical roles in programme management are: Programme Manager, Planning Coordinator, Senior User, etc.

### **Responsibilities**

For every role assumed, there is a set of associated responsibilities. However, not all associated responsibilities need to be satisfied on every occasion. Required responsibilities vary depending on the type of initiative and the point of time within the programme's lifecycle.

Examples of responsibilities are: Quality Control, Management Reporting, Risk Planning, etc.

### **Skills and Attributes**

In order to satisfactorily fulfil a responsibility, a skill or a set of skills are required. Skills are usually acquired through training, experience or a combination of both.

Sometimes, certain attributes are needed to help in the effective utilisation of skills. Such attributes could also be acquired through training and experience although quite often, these can be personal attributes that were embedded in us during our early stages of development.

Examples of skills are: communication, planning and leadership. Examples of attributes relating to these skills are: confidence, logical thinking and charisma.

It is important to understand the relationship between a job, the role(s) involved, the responsibilities held and the skills required to satisfy the job. Without clear understanding of the above, it is unlikely that an efficient programme management team can be put together.

## **Roles, Responsibilities and Skills**

A programme, regardless of its structure, purpose or outcome will entail a project or a number of projects (or a mix of projects and other programmes). That is to say, projects by default are present in every programme and as such, certain project management roles must be present within every programme. Such roles include the Project Manager, Customer, Senior User, Planning Coordinator, etc.

In this paper, we will concentrate on the major roles within a programme that differ from those of project management. Mainly, what is referred to by the OGC's *Managing Successful Programmes* as the Programme Board.

### **The Sponsor**

The sponsor is the most senior member of the programme organisation. Often in large programmes, there is more than one sponsor or sponsoring group

The sponsor has some crucial responsibilities, some of which are often ignored to the detriment of the programme. Ironically, the reason often being: seniority.

#### **Responsibilities of the Sponsor**

- Authorising the programme on the basis of its mandate and business case
- Appointing the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) to represent the interest of the sponsor
- Approving and authorising the funding for the programme
- Resolving cross-programme issues and strategic issues with senior stakeholders
- Approving the programme's progress against the organisational strategy and objectives
- Demonstrating "visible" support to the programme and its management team
- "Leading by example" the transformational change brought about by the programme
- Confirming successful delivery and signs-of at the programme closure.

#### **Skills and Attributes of the Sponsor**

By virtue of his or her position, the sponsor is a very senior member of the organisation. He/she should have a clear vision of the strategy, very strong entrepreneurial skills, high credibility in the organisation and a deep knowledge of the business.

### **The Senior Responsible Owner (SRO)**

The SRO is often the sponsor or a member of the sponsoring group. He/she is appointed by the sponsors to represent them in the programme organisation and is ultimately responsible for foreseeing that the programme meets its overall objectives.

The SRO must be empowered to make decisions on behalf of the sponsors.

## Responsibilities of the Senior Responsible Owner

- Guarding the viability of the vision and the business case
- Getting the money from the sponsors
- Leading the programme to its successful completion
- Managing key “strategic” risks
- Maintains strategic alignment between the programme and the organisation
- Interfacing with the senior stakeholders.

## Skills and Attributes of the Senior Responsible Owner

Just like the sponsor, the SRO is a senior member of the organisation. He/she must possess strong leadership skills and be able to make critical decision. The SRO should be able to retain focus over the strategic objectives of the programme.

## The Programme Manager

The programme manager can be thought of as a “*super*” project manager. His/her role is mainly operational in being responsible for planning and governance and for overseeing the successful delivery of the programme’s output/product. That is, the new capability.

Although knowledge of the business is important, the higher stress is on his/her skills of programme management. The programme manager must have practical experience of having been a project manager for large and complex initiatives.

## Responsibilities of the Programme Manager

- Daily programme management throughout the programme lifecycle
- Defining the programme governance (controls)
- Planning the overall programme and monitoring the progress
- Managing the programme’s budget
- Managing risks and issues and taking corrective measurements
- Coordinating the projects and their interdependencies
- Managing and utilising resources across projects
- Managing stakeholders’ communication
- Aligning the deliverables (outputs) to the programme’s “outcome” with the aid of the Business Change Manager
- Managing the main programme documentations such as the Programme Initiation Document.

## Skills and Attributes of the Programme Manager

The programme manager must have a strong practical experience of project management gained through managing large and complex projects. He/she must have:

- Good knowledge and handling of project and programme management methodology and techniques
- A good understanding of the wider objectives of the programme
- The ability to work positively with the wide range of individuals involved in programme management
- Strong leadership and management skills
- Good knowledge of budgeting and resource allocation procedures
- The ability to find innovative ways to resolve problems.

## **The Business Change Manager (BCM)**

One of the fundamental differences between programme management and project management lies in the management and realisation of the benefits. That is, the clear and measurable added value brought about by the integration and utilisation of the newly delivered capability.

Whereas project management deals with outputs (products or deliverables), programme management deals with outcomes, the final result brought about through the utilisation of outputs.

The role of the BCM is that of planning and managing the realisation of the benefits through the integration of the new capability within the business practices.

The BCM is a very strong member of the “business” and although knowledge of programme management is very helpful, the higher emphasis is on his/her knowledge of the business processes and the organisation’s strategic objectives.

Where there may be more than one business area impacted by the programme, a BCM for each of these areas should be appointed, one of which will act as the Senior BCM.

### **Responsibilities of the Business Change Manager**

- Defining the benefits that will realise the strategic objectives of the programme
- Developing the benefit realisation plan
- Maintaining overall focus on benefit realisation
- Defining and tracking the Key Performance Indicators for benefit realisation
- Managing “business continuity” during the change
- Advising the programme manager on whether the outputs and outcomes will lead to the realisation of the benefits
- Preparing affected business areas for transition to the new way of working. Potentially implementing new business processes
- Optimising the timing of the release of new deliverables into business operations

### **Skills and Attributes of the Business Change Manager**

The BCM must have a strong background and ongoing operational responsibilities in the relevant business areas affected by the programme. He/she should have a good understand of the management structure, politics and culture of the organisation, and possess good change management skills and enough experience to manage very complex situations while maintaining focus on the programme’s objectives.

The BCM should also have good negotiation skills, interpersonal skills, managing chaos skills and prioritisation skills.

## **The Programme Management Office (PMO)**

The Programme Management Office has similar functions to the Project Management Office but on a larger scale, higher level and a wider perspective.

The PMO can vary from one person acting as “Programme Support” to a large team of individuals and can have more than one location if the programme is scattered nationally or globally. It can be setup to support a specific programme or be a permanent structure supporting all the organisation’s programmes, in which case, it is integrated with the organisation’s permanent Project Management Office.

The PMO has a manager responsible for its functions. **The Programme Office Manager.**

## Responsibilities of the Programme Management Office

- Setting up tools and standards for managing the programme
- Planning, tracking and reporting on outputs and outcomes
- Information and logistics management
- Financial planning and tracking
- Risk and Issue tracking
- Cross-project interdependency management
- Setting quality control standards and tracking implementation
- Setting and tracking change control procedures
- Developing stakeholders' map, defining the interest of each group
- Planning and executing communication plans to stakeholders

### Additional Roles that a permanent PMO can have

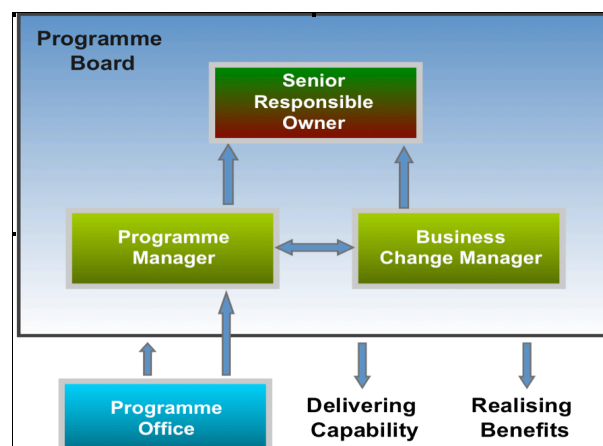
- Strategic overview and reporting on all programmes to senior management
- In-house consultancy to projects and programmes
- Providing training to projects and programmes management teams
- Auditing and health checks on projects and programmes

## Skills and Attributes of the *Programme Office Manager (POM)*

The skills required for the role of the programme office manager are very different from those of the programme manager. The programme manager role is a hands-on role and needs strong leadership and people skills. On the other hand, the POM's role is a hands-off role requiring strong management discipline and communication skills. The POM's role is a supporting role to the programme and its management team.

The skills and attributes of the POM should include:

- Long experience of effective programme management. Having been a strong member of programme management team(s)
- Solid proficiency in programme and project management methodologies
- Strong knowledge and experience in the use of the various tools to aid programme management
- Ability to put theory in practice
- Clarity during chaos
- Strong interpersonal and communication skills.



## **Senior Responsible Owner and the Programme Board (OGC, MSP© 2007, page 30)**

## Acquiring Skills for the Role

There is no doubt that our personal attributes play a major role in our ability to utilise certain skills, making the differences between the “academic knowledge of the how” and the “practical ability to implement the how”. This however is very subjective to both the skill and the individual in question and as such, no rule that applies-to-all can be set.

It is nevertheless very beneficial to be aware of what skills are easier to learn than others. Then, each individual needs to be honest with themselves in deciding whether to undertake such a learning effort or not.

For example, one may argue that communication skills can be learnt and with practice, a motivated yet not so good a communicator can become a good communicator. On the other hand, leadership skills are unlikely to be acquired through reading and training at a mature age and as such if one lacks in leadership, then he/she will do well to acknowledge so and concentrate on their stronger attributes and acquirable skills.

A useful tool when assigning the various roles in a programme is to draw a simple matrix for each role outlining the skills required for the *particular job* against the skills held by each candidate.

An assessment similar to that outlined in the OGC’s Successful Delivery Skills can be utilised. An example is as follows:

Company: The World Newspaper, Geneva, Switzerland  
 Programme: New newspaper format. Tabloid and full color.  
 Role: Programme Manager  
 Candidate: Mr Alan Norman Other

SKILL	Necessary Level	Candidate Level	DELTA (ASSESSMENT)*
Experience of project and programme management	3	1	-2
Knowledge and handling of project and programme management methodology and techniques	2	3	+1
Understanding of the wider objectives of the programme	1	3	+2
Ability to work positively with the range of individuals involved in the programme	3	1	-2
Strong leadership and management skills	2	1	-1
Good knowledge of budgeting and resource allocation procedures	1	3	-2
Ability to find innovative ways to resolve problems	3	3	---

Level 0	None
Level 1	Awareness
Level 2	Professional
Level 3	Expert

## **Conclusions**

Programme Management is a distinct discipline from Project Management and although most project management roles are present in programmes (since programmes contain projects), there are roles within programme management that hold distinct responsibilities and as such require particular skill that differ from their counterparts in projects.

Whereas project management deal with outputs (products or deliverables), programme management deals with outcomes, the final result brought about through the utilisation of such outputs. This constitutes the largest distinction between the two disciplines and is mostly visible in the role of the Business Change Manager.

When selecting the programme board and team, one must be very aware of the skills needed for the particular roles within that programme and that although some skills can be learnt, other will be harder to learn or acquire for someone who does not already possess them.

## **References**

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