

Trends in the management and support of major capital investment projects and programmes

In today's environment more than ever, governments and businesses must respond to ever increasing pressure and scrutiny from stakeholders to provide tangible evidence that they are rapidly and effectively delivering on their plans and strategies while managing risks effectively. As they are investing at an increasing rate in projects or programmes for improving performance and the Built Environment, introducing enabling technology, redesigning processes and managing change; they must do so in an environment that grows more and more complex, crossing enterprise and country borders, involving a variety of internal and external stakeholders, and with emphasis on speed to deployment and cost reduction. Organisations need to be confident that their programmes and projects will be successful, benefits will be realised, and changes will be sustainable.

While project and programme support offices have become widely accepted and adopted in corporate landscapes, variations can be observed in the understanding and use of a common terminology, programme management maturity and level of competences across organisations. These variations are simply related to the fact that there is no uniform recipe for success as project and programme support offices can come in all shapes and sizes.

Despite these differences, the following underlying managerial trends can be identified in international organisations and in the UK:

☒ Moving towards standard models, services and common language: this will provide the basis for training and qualifications at a number of levels and will contribute to providing project, programme management standards to both public and private sectors.

☒ Recognising and developing the emerging programme management profession

The speed of change presents a challenge, and business success rests on management's ability to master and drive change effectively. Consequently, effective programme management capabilities are now among the most crucial differentiators, providing the ultimate competitive edge in the future marketplace. Programme management is becoming a core competency as well as an established and distinct career path rather than being treated as a sideline activity.

☒ Designing, monitoring and delivering sustainable business benefits

Top management now promotes a benefit driven culture, sustaining a mindset focused on continuous improvement.

Business cases are used to monitor programme progress in terms of benefit delivery. Corporate governance is extended to programme management, allowing for programme and project control and oversight. Benefits Realisation Planning is being established at the core of the programme management function with robust business cases and clearly assigned accountability for the delivery of tangible and intangible business benefits, which are sustainable, measurable and realisable post transfer to business as usual state.

In the UK, major project and programme support offices are becoming 'intelligent' functions that drive progress, provide continuity during changes, ensure risks and dependencies are managed and benefits are delivered.

About the author:

Gildas André is a Director at Accuracy in the Project Advisory and Dispute team.

He advises board members and departmental heads on planning and delivering major global and European capital programmes and managing the implications arising from disputes in the infrastructure, construction, energy and manufacturing sectors.

His primary experience has been gained in planning, project finance, risk analysis, project controls and associated and spans all phases of programmes and projects. He initially worked in a construction management and planning role for an international construction company, a London construction project management consultancy and in operational risk management and performance improvement for Ernst & Young - a Big Four professional services firm.

He has worked on international major sporting events, residential developments, multi-storey office buildings, shipping port, business parks and power generation major projects. He coordinates the UK practice activities on a number of major capital investment projects both in the UK and overseas.

An active member of the Chartered Institute of Building and Association for Project Management, Gildas is a joint – author of the CIOB Guide to good practice in the management of time for complex projects and acknowledged contributor to a book on Sustainability Interventions – for managers of projects and programmes and to the sixth Edition of the Association for Project Management book of Knowledge published in July 2012.