PRINCE2 Project Management Methodology Evaluation

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January 2016

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Contents

1 Purpose

PRINCE2 is a de facto process-based method for effective project management (I.G 2016). It has been used extensively by both UK and international governments and holds a wide recognition of PRINCE2 in the private sector.

There are seven key principles of PRINCE2 which have to be applied in order to highlight its true purpose as a project management method. The first principle a project must have is, continued business justification. This simply means that projects must be aligned to the business objectives of the customer organisation.

Learning from experience is another principle which PRINCE2 applies, this principle helps avoid mistakes from the past by addressing any problems which have occurred and been repeated across multiple projects. Defined roles and responsibilities is the third principle which PRINCE2 applies, this principle certifies that the project team should have a clear organisational structure and that it involves the right people for the specific tasks. It is incredibly important that in every project, decision makers are clear what is expected from them, PRINCE2 defines a flexible project management team structure which is suitable on any project to assist this.

Manage by stages is the next principle, this breaks the project into a number of management stages to make sure projects are planned, monitored and controlled. Every project contains an initiation stage which is where a detailed Business Case, Project Plan, and strategies are developed. Manage by exception is another principle which is incredibly useful, the Project Board are senior people who have little time to manage the project and therefore delegate a project manager to follow their objectives. It is incredibly important that the senior management time is used efficiently, therefore they are only contacted if an exception occurs when the project manager cannot deliver the stage plan as the principle highlights.

Focus on products is the penultimate principle which is vital as it certifies there is focus on the product definition, delivery and quality requirements. By developing and agreeing the project product early on, it focuses

attention on the scope of the project and it is useful when developing initial estimations for the time and cost required to build the product. So, when planning either the project or a stage, attention is focused on what will be delivered before a decision is taken to proceed to the next stage and spend any more money. Finally, Tailor to suit the project environment is the last key principle, this is where PRINCE2 is tailored to suit the project's environment, size, complexity, importance, capability and risk. Overall it is apparent that if PRINCE2 is applied blindly to every project, they are unlikely to gain benefits of the method.

2 Characteristics

Projects can be vastly different to each other but can also have many commonalities, PRINCE2 defines five of the common characteristics of project work that make a project different from regular business operations (Bentley, 2015). These characteristics are fundamentally important to any PRINCE2 project.

Change is the first of these characteristics which is incredibly important, as organisations need to change in order to move on and survive. An example of this could be the creation of a new sales website, which would change the way clients are able to purchase items, this allows businesses to become more competitive and shows how a fundamental change is portrayed as a characteristic.

Temporary is the next characteristic that PRINCE2 defines, there is always a specific start and end to a project, and the project should cease once the mandatory products are released. This is an important characteristic as the team is only temporary and will disband once the project is done, therefore any ongoing maintenance of a product occurs after the project and is not the responsibility of the project team as it's not considered part of the project.

Cross-functional is another significant characteristic that PRINCE2 defines, this is when a project engages people from different seniority and business departments that work together for the period of the project. This is another incredibly important characteristic as taking people away from their regular job roles could set certain departments behind in their tasks, it also possesses a potential problem for the project manager to manage these people. Therefore, this highlights how significant it is to take into an account this characteristic when undertaking a project.

Unique, the penultimate characteristic that PRINCE2 defines is another important characteristic, as every project is unique because there is always a new idea. Therefore, it is essential to carefully consider when to re-use

any plans or resources. An example of this could be, building a fiftieth school is different from building the forty-ninth as the locations and designs are different as well as the types of students which differentiate in terms of resources required, this therefore could affect the costs and the time to complete the project as they may vary significantly compared to previous projects.

Uncertainty is the final characteristic defined by PRINCE2, as parts of the project are unique this brings uncertainty, as there is not a 100% clarity how the project is going to work out. This is an incredibly vital characteristic to consider as in a project there should always be consideration for any uncertainties as this could affect the time and cost of the project.

3 Suitable Application

It regards to suitability and deciding when the PRINCE2 methodology should be used, it can vary depending on the project size. Projects tend to fail when there is a lack of communication between members and the management, or if there is a shortage of skills within the team, the PRINCE2 methodology attempts to address these problems. The methodology on the whole is quite complex as it contains many processes but the primary purpose is to allow organisations to have more control over projects, it is viewed as the best practice for project management on an international scale.

PRINCE2 has been a subject of various successes for numerous companies since it was introduced, one specific example of this could be that of mechanical engineering company Scheidt Bachmann, who chose to use the methodology to strengthen their project management. In a recent case study, the company highlighted the benefits that were brought to the organization by implementing the PRINCE2 methodology (ProjectJ, 2015). These included having a strong project team, good customer communication, but also included customer benefits such as a good reputation in the press.

Scheidt Bachmann underlined the basis as to why they decided to use the PRINCE2, which included reasons such as they wanted to make sure that the projects were managed according to an internationally recognised framework. Finally, the company case study was concluded by stating how the project was successful as the work was completed on time and with the proposed functionality. Without the use of the PRINCE2 methodology the project might not have been as successful as it was through factors such as team communication, which is vital when working with large projects.

In comparison to other project management methodologies, PRINCE2 has often been seen as only being applicable to large projects, which is one of the drawbacks when working with smaller projects as it does not offer the level of flexibility provided from others. Due to its complexity PRINCE2

requires a lot of work and training before applying it to a project which can be time consuming, very costly and even after learning it problematic. In respect to smaller projects certain aspects of PRINCE2 can still be applied if the project will only last a short while.

Overall PRINCE2 is a proven suitable method that if studied and applied properly can be the difference between a successful project and a failed project. There are various case scenarios in which companies identify how the methodology was applied and how it helped them produce successful projects. The popularity of the method has increased since its first introduction with over a million people studying the methodology (KnowledgeTrain, 2012) and will possibly continue to grow.

4 Key project management issues PRINCE2 addresses

4.1 Configuration Management

One of the core principles of the PRINCE2 change theme is Configuration management. Configuration management, plays an indispensable role on the success of a project, not only for the present but also for the future. All long term projects will be destined for change throughout their development stages, the primary purpose of configuration management is to allow changes to be made in a controlled and condensed manner.

The importance of configuration management is often misunderstood and abandoning it could lead to various issues with projects which can include having different versions of a product, which means there is no clear identification for the most recent version. Another issue that can occur is that, after changes have been made to a product it is hard to differentiate the new version from the old one. PRINCE2 provides a bases to solve these issues.

The configuration management of PRINCE2 is used to identify how projects or products will be administrated. The strategy provides guidelines as to how projects will be stored, the identification between product versions and to whom each responsibility lies. Furthermore, the strategy also defines the level of security that certain people on the project hold. PRINCE2 users can make use of the 'Tailoring principle' in order to adapt to the company size and the risk level of the project. This ensures that the development process goes smoothly and the products can be managed efficiently and securely.

To conclude, it is hard to argue with the fact that without configuration management the maintenance of products and projects would become

difficult and would possibly lead to a failed project. PRINCE2 has carefully tackled all the highlighted problems by providing a solution for every stated scenario, it is clear that using the configuration management strategy will enhance the quality control of a product or projects life cycle.

4.2   Quality

Quality is defined as the standard of something as measured against other things of a similar kind; the degree of excellence of something (Oxford, 2016). If quality is not considered at the start of a project, it is difficult to end up with a usable product. PRINCE2 prioritises the Quality of the output in projects, thus it has a Quality Theme to describe how Quality can be defined, measured and controlled during the project.

The Quality Theme has two approaches Quality Planning and Quality Control. Quality Planning starts with identifying the products that the project wants to control, whereas Quality Control implements and tracks the Quality methods during the project.

During Quality Planning certain steps need to be followed to ensure a certain standard of quality is kept during a project. This audit trail consists of five key steps which need to be followed; ascertaining customer quality expectations is the perhaps the most important of these steps as it outlines the key requirements, identifies standards which must be met and measurements that can be used to assess Quality such as speed or size. Acceptance Criteria is the next step which is used to add the customers Quality Expectations and Acceptance Criteria to the Project Product Description. Writing the description is the third step which also includes adding the following Quality-related data to the product description: project level tolerances, acceptance method and acceptance responsibilities. Creating the Quality Management Strategy document is the penultimate step, this document defines the agreed strategy in the project. The final step is to write Product Descriptions for each of the main products in the main product and include the Quality information; such as the Quality Method, Quality Responsibilities and setting up then Quality Register.

Quality Control is the second part of the Quality theme; this is where activities are carried out to control Quality as is defined in the Quality Management Strategy. There are three important parts to Quality Control. The first is carrying out Quality methods such as Quality Review Techniques, the second is maintaining Quality and Approval records and the third is gaining acceptance and passing the Acceptance Record to the customer.