



by Nick Graham



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About the Author

Nick Graham is the founder and Managing Director of Inspirandum Ltd, a small and specialised company focused on achieving excellence in project management. In his company he has set very clear objectives to teach all project approaches and methods in a practical way so that they can be applied intelligently and productively.

With a career that has covered both the public sector and the private sector, Nick is able to communicate readily with managers in both communities. He's been involved in project consultancy and training for more than 15 years and his experience with structured methods in projects goes back much further. In the PRINCE method it goes back to before it was even called PRINCE.

Nick is an experienced project practitioner and trainer and he's also a qualified teacher. His work has taken him world wide, and those attending his courses have described his style as energetic, lively, fun, very practical, and very informative. Nick's consultancy work has ranged from helping to plan complex projects to advising senior managers on how to implement project and risk management methods throughout their organisation.

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to Li Yat Chuen – ‘YC’ – and Christina Lai in Hong Kong who, by their dedicated professionalism and enormous kindness, have demonstrated so consistently that you can indeed combine business and pleasure.

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Graham, Nick. Prince2 For Dummies.

Hoboken, NJ, USA: For Dummies, 2008. p xix.

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PRINCE2 For Dummies

Graham, Nick. Prince2 For Dummies.
Hoboken, NJ, USA: For Dummies, 2008. p xx.
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Introduction

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For a very long time, people have been doing projects, and for a very long time some people have been messing up their projects. Good approaches and techniques are 'out there' but some people just don't know they exist.

Happily, PRINCE2 is getting increasingly well known as a structured method that gives a clear but very flexible approach to running projects and builds in the things that work well. PRINCE2 helps you do the job of running a project, and also helps you avoid messing up. Whether you're very experienced in running projects, or absolutely new to it, you'll find PRINCE very powerful and may go on to become a raving PRINCE fanatic like me. Well, hopefully not as raving, but certainly enthusiastic! Enthusiastic because this stuff really works.

You may have heard a few negative things about PRINCE; that PRINCE makes a mountain of paper, that it's only for very big projects, that it only fits very formal projects. None of that is right and when you read this book, you'll soon see why. Used well, PRINCE — with its 30 year track record — is highly effective and a major help in delivering projects successfully.

About This Book

This book is based very much on practicality. You'll find a fair bit of technical content here, but that takes a back seat to understanding the logic and thrust of PRINCE2. Once you have the logic clear, the technical bits become straightforward. For the fine detail of all of the PRINCE documents, consult the PRINCE manual — *Managing Successful Projects with PRINCE2* by the Office of Government Commerce (published by The Stationery Office). *PRINCE2 For Dummies* isn't a replacement for the manual but a practical commentary that gives you the main principles and structure in a much more lively way with lots of practical advice and examples.

Graham, Nick. Prince2 For Dummies.

Hoboken, NJ, USA: For Dummies, 2008. p 1.

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PRINCE2 For Dummies

PRINCE is a process-driven method and the processes cover from just before the start of the project until project closure. The Part II chapters on these processes each have a diagram – a process model. Just to warn you up front, these can look complicated but the trick is not to get too focussed on them at first. Just have a quick glance to get the overall idea, then read the chapter. At the end of the chapter, have another look at the process model and you'll see it as a simple roadmap for that part of the project. Everything falls into place!

PRINCE has an incredibly effective way of doing planning in the project, called *product led or product based* planning. If you haven't had much project experience, be happy, because you'll probably take to this way of working like a sausage to ketchup. But if you've done a lot of project planning, you might find the PRINCE way a bit more difficult. Don't give up, though, because it'll suddenly click into place. It took me a while to get my head round PRINCE when I first came across it – but it's really easy now. So stick with it. Product planning is very, very powerful and it's worth a bit of perseverance to get your head round it.

Foolish Assumptions

I assume that you:

- ✓ Don't know anything about PRINCE2 at all yet. If you do know a bit, that's a bonus.
- ✓ Want a project method to help you in your drive towards a successful project outcome – not to bury you under a pile of paper.
- ✓ Are practical and pragmatic, and prepared to be flexible to get the job done.
- ✓ Really want to use the method intelligently to get the maximum possible power from it.

How This Book is Organised

This book broadly follows the structure of the PRINCE2 method, looking at most of the processes first (*when* you do things), followed by the components (*what* you do).

This section gives you an idea of what lies ahead.

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Hoboken, NJ, USA: For Dummies, 2008. p 2.

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Part I: How PRINCE Can Help You

In case you're not too sure about methods, this section sets the scene and shows you that you already use methods, and even that you quite like them. Part I also covers how to get the power out of PRINCE, so it's a good dipping section.

Part II: Working Through Your Project

Part II is all about the processes, and it works through the project from start up right through to project closure. The processes in this part are the suggested *when* you do stuff.

Part III: Help with PRINCE Project Management

Part III covers what are known as the PRINCE *components*. These are about *what* you do – such as risk management. This Part also covers planning.

Part IV: The Part of Tens

Here you find some handy lists giving condensed advice on making PRINCE work well, writing sensible Business Cases, and doing Project Assurance (project auditing) really well. You can find even more advice free on the Dummies website, so point your browser at www.dummies.com.

Part V: Appendices

Here you find a bit about the PRINCE qualifications and also a useful glossary of main PRINCE terms to give you a handy look-up when someone uses a term that you can't quite remember the meaning of. Of course, you can learn the terms by heart and impress people at dinner parties with your expertise – or is that overdoing it a bit?

Graham, Nick. Prince2 For Dummies.

Hoboken, NJ, USA: For Dummies, 2008. p 3.

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PRINCE2 For Dummies

Icons Used in This Book

To help you navigate through the book, these icons highlight some of the key points:



The information next to this icon helps you understand a point, often using a real project.



The PRINCEiples are really core to the method, so make sure these snippets really stick in your mind.



These are clear explanations of PRINCE terms (you can also find help in the glossary at the back of the book).



This icon draws your attention to an important pointer to bear in mind.



These snippets are all about stuff to steer clear of. They tell you how things can get really messed up, sometimes with details of how other people have done exactly that. Laugh at them, but don't fall into the same trap!

Where to Go from Here

The great thing about *For Dummies* books is that you don't have to read them all the way through. You can simply turn to the bit you want. The Table of Contents and the Index help you out. Of course, as a structured method, PRINCE has a structure, but even that won't stop you moving in and out of chapters. When you're starting up the project you may want to read Chapter 4 on checking out the project idea which covers that start up work. But then you may zoom off to look at the component chapters for the Business Case (Chapter 10) and Risk Management (Chapter 14) to help you do that work.

Graham, Nick. Prince2 For Dummies.

Hoboken, NJ, USA: For Dummies, 2008. p 4.

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Part I

How PRINCE Can Help You

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



'The new methodology has really helped me become organized. I keep my project reports under the PC, budgets under my laptop, and memos under my mobile.'

Graham, Nick. Prince2 For Dummies.

Hoboken, NJ, USA: For Dummies, 2008. p 5.

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In this part . . .

Why use a method? Some people really hate the idea and the very word is enough to send them speeding away like Road Runner until they're a dot on the horizon. But methods are really helpful and in fact you already use them.

In this part I set out the idea of a method and how the PRINCE2 method can really help you plan and control your projects. Method isn't an extra overhead, it's a powerhouse. I also show how the different bits of the method fit together – the structure – and how to apply it so that it works for you every time, no matter what type or size of project you happen to be working on this time around.

Graham, Nick. Prince2 For Dummies.

Hoboken, NJ, USA: For Dummies, 2008. p 6.

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Chapter 1

So What's a Project Method and Why Do I Need to Use One?

In This Chapter

- ▶ Exploring what a project method is and how it works
 - ▶ Establishing how PRINCE2 can help you run a project successfully
 - ▶ Knowing what a method is about – and that using one isn't difficult
 - ▶ Explaining how PRINCE gets a bad name when used wrongly
-

You must have seen newspaper reports of projects that have gone wrong, resulting in a waste of money, lost opportunities, and disappointed people. The big question is: 'Do projects have to be like this?' The short answer is a resounding, 'NO!'. That's a pretty bold statement given the scale and complexity of some projects. But the fact remains that the underlying causes of project failure are generally very well known – and, interestingly, so are strategies to prevent those problems and to help plan and control projects more effectively.

Now if only somebody would get all that information together from the huge pool of experience of planning and controlling projects. If only they'd package it up in a form that's really usable and walk you through a project in a way that avoids the known pitfalls and builds in things that are really useful to help you, based on those years of experience of what works and what doesn't work. If only. Well, read on – because between the covers of this book is some extremely good news for you.

Chapter 2 explains the overall structure of PRINCE but this chapter gives some context and looks at why a method such as PRINCE2 can be a very real help to you on your projects. We also think about some project problems and what you can do to avoid them.

Graham, Nick. Prince2 For Dummies.

Hoboken, NJ, USA: For Dummies, 2008. p 7.

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Part I: How PRINCE Can Help You

Getting the Low-down on PRINCE2

PRINCE actually stands for *PR*ojects *IN* Controlled *E*nvironments, but don't worry too much about that; they had to call it something. PRINCE is currently on Version 2, hence PRINCE2. Small changes and developments are made from time to time and are released in new editions of the PRINCE2 manual.

PRINCE is a project method and it happens to be rather a good one, as PRINCE is the result of many years of hard work by many people feeding in practical ideas. You can use PRINCE2 on on just about any type of project and of any size, from the very big down to the really small.

If the word 'method' spooks you, that's understandable. The very mention of a method makes some people break out in a cold sweat, reminding them of their worst nightmares, fighting through a mesh of never-ending administrative procedures and struggling up a mountain of paper. One senior manager in a large organisation asked us about PRINCE2 because she'd heard the name and wondered what it was. But as soon as she heard PRINCE2 is a method she flatly refused to hear anything more about it.

But methods don't have to be bureaucratic nightmares. Used properly, methods are sensible, helpful, productive, and simple. In fact, you already use them – and you like them.

No doubt you've done a jigsaw puzzle. How do you like to set about a jigsaw? Do you start with the edges or do you go for the corners first? Perhaps you begin by putting together those bits of the puzzle where you can see that the pattern is the same. Or maybe you prefer to start with the sky. Either way, you have . . . well, a method. A method is an approach that helps give a bit of structure to what you're doing and then helps you do the job.

The difference with project methods is that they aren't just one person's approach: Lots of people have an input into setting down a good way of doing things. If a lot of experienced people think a particular approach is a good way of doing something – which is the case with PRINCE2 – then you can expect it to help you too.

Giving You Some Facts about Projects

PRINCE2 works well with all types of projects. This section reviews how you can use PRINCE2 to overcome problems.

Graham, Nick. Prince2 For Dummies.

Hoboken, NJ, USA: For Dummies, 2008. p 8.

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Chapter 1: So What's a Project Method and Why Do I Need to Use One?

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Fact 1: A lot of projects go wrong

Project failures are common. A failure can be the loss of the entire project or something can go wrong in one or more aspects. The things that bother most people are time and money, though they need to bother about rather more than this – notably quality. But sticking to the most common concerns, projects are almost always late and almost always overspent. Sad though this is, many organisations expect nothing else.



One PRINCE project manager caused a big problem when he delivered his project on the day he had specified. The part of the business responsible for taking over the project deliverables for operational use was not ready. The project manager questioned this because he had confirmed the project's scheduled end, and the senior manager responsible for the operational area replied that they had not believed the date because projects were always late.

Now a lot of debate goes on about 'failure'. If a project is just five per cent over budget but does everything that's required, is the project really a failure? Even more attention in the debate is given to deciding whose fault something is. When a periodical for the IT market published an article suggesting that IT staff who failed to deliver the goods should be fired, IT professionals reacted strongly, saying that project failure wasn't just down to them. They were right, because an IT project relies on much more than merely the competence of IT staff. If business areas don't supply knowledgeable staff to tell the IT people what they want in a new computer system, they shouldn't fall over in shock when the delivered system doesn't work as required.

This book is concerned with what can help avoid a failure, whether in IT projects where failure does tend to be measured to some degree, or in business projects where the failure goes largely unreported.



After a large survey that revealed substantial failure in IT projects, Bryan Cruickshank, UK head of information risk management at KPMG, was reported as saying: 'Blind application of methodologies doesn't tend to work very well and it's certainly not something you can do straight out of university.'

I very much agree. Such 'blind application' is frighteningly common and often results from people just following the manual page by page as if every project were the same, or attending poor-quality training courses that only teach the 'what' of PRINCE and how to pass the PRINCE exams.

In *PRINCE2 For Dummies* the focus is on explaining the method in a practical way, with the 'how' and 'why' as well as the 'what'. It helps you apply the method well, with understanding, and therefore successfully. For the precise

Graham, Nick. *Prince2 For Dummies*.

Hoboken, NJ, USA: For Dummies, 2008. p 9.

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10 Part I: How PRINCE Can Help You

and full detail of the 'what', you need to invest in a PRINCE2 manual. For explanations of how to make PRINCE work really well and productively on your projects, keep reading.

Fact 2: We know why projects go wrong

Here are some of the main causes of project failure. As you can see, the list is fairly predictable. Please note the kindness of using the word 'they' and not 'you' – because you don't face these problems in your organisation, do you?

- ✓ **No clear objectives:** They weren't really sure what the project was about.
- ✓ **Unrealistic finance:** They were never going to be able to do a project of that size on such a low budget.
- ✓ **Unrealistic staffing:** They were never going to be able to do a project of that size with so few staff. Or perhaps they have enough staff, but what they didn't take on board was that all the people had other responsibilities and were only available to the project for 10 per cent of their time; the project team was only one-tenth of the size they thought it was.
- ✓ **Poor communications:** Nobody knew what they were supposed to be doing or what anybody else was supposed to be doing, and people were unsure who they should report to and who could make decisions.
- ✓ **Poor planning:** Actually that's a kind way to put it. No planning at all is actually the problem in many projects. Then they hit problems in the project that they could have found, and solved, during planning.
- ✓ **No effective progress monitoring:** The project was going off track but nobody even noticed, much less did anything about it.
- ✓ **Unclear scope:** Nobody was really sure what was in and what was out of the project. When they discovered essential things that nobody had talked about before, they had to include them. As they weren't in the original plan, the project went over time and over budget.
- ✓ **No change control:** They added in all sorts of things with no attempt to check if they were sensible or affordable, or worth the effort or cost. This is known as 'scope creep'. Sometimes the cumulative impact of a lot of uncontrolled small changes overwhelms and kills the project.
- ✓ **No risk management:** The project got killed by something that they clearly could have foreseen, controlled, or even prevented.
- ✓ **The project was not actually sensible:** A manager said that he wanted it, but nobody realised that it would cost considerably more than it would save.

Graham, Nick. Prince2 For Dummies.

Hoboken, NJ, USA: For Dummies, 2008. p 10.

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Fact 3: We know good ways of preventing a lot of those things

The sad thing – or the good thing if you take a PRINCE2 perspective – is that most of the ways of preventing problems are straightforward. That suggests in turn that PRINCE is pretty straightforward, and actually it is. It contains a lot of detail in places because the method can tackle some pretty big stuff, but nothing is difficult. You may say, 'If everything is so easy, how come nobody did it before?' Good question. But happily someone has done it now.

You can accuse me of being simplistic here, but if that's the worst insult I ever have to face I'll have an easy life indeed. Solutions exist to these problems.

- ✓ **Lack of planning:** Do some planning. PRINCE has a rather different but really powerful approach to this. You can look forward to some real help when you look at the planning chapter, Chapter 5.
- ✓ **Lack of clear objectives:** Set down clear objectives. And following on from this point, don't allow the project to start until the objectives are both clear and agreed.
- ✓ **Lack of risk management:** Do some risk management. Again, the method incorporates some really helpful and simple stuff. You may need rather more risk management than the method provides, but that doesn't take away from the fact that it gives a great foundation.
- ✓ **Lack of a business case or project justification:** Don't start the project until the business case demonstrates clearly that it's worth doing. Oh yes, and do actually produce a business case.
- ✓ **Lack of change control:** Do some change control . . . Okay, you get the picture.

The problem is that although most people can come up with most of the answers for themselves, they seem to think they don't need to apply these sorts of project disciplines on 'this project'. On 'this project' we can get away with it. Wrong, because obviously all failed projects were 'this project' to somebody. To have the best chance of project success, taking these actions has to become automatic, the way the organisation does projects.

By adopting PRINCE as a method and using it sensibly, it becomes standard practice – and with that comes the inherent protection of an approach that avoids known project problems. One objection may be that the method takes up too much time and time is at a premium in 'this project'. Don't let that put you off. You can use PRINCE in a very rapid way indeed, but we address that along with many other problems in the Part of Tens, the third section of the book.

Graham, Nick. Prince2 For Dummies.

Hoboken, NJ, USA: For Dummies, 2008. p 11.

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12 Part I: How PRINCE Can Help You

Fact 4: PRINCE2 is available for free

An amazing number of organisations say that they have their own standard for planning and controlling projects. But why reinvent the wheel? Why make up a project standard if a well-proven one already exists? The really good news is that PRINCE is basically free. You may want to buy a manual and go on a (good) training course, but you don't have to pay to use the method. You don't need to ask anybody's permission or pay any fees to use PRINCE, you just use it. Good, huh? You have restrictions on using the name and logo though, or taking core bits of the method and including them in other things – the legal minefield of intellectual property and copyright – so be careful out there.

Making Your Life Easier with PRINCE2

I teach PRINCE to a lot of people on training courses. One of the things I often say at the beginning of a course is: 'If PRINCE doesn't help you plan and control projects better, faster, and more easily, then why bother? Just do whatever else you'd do if you weren't using PRINCE.'

And that's the point. Any method has to earn its keep – used with understanding and intelligence, this one does. PRINCE2 can make your life easier for lots of reasons, many of which this book unpacks later on. But here are some to start with.

You may have come across competitions asking you to complete a sentence to win a prize. Well, here's a sentence with some prize-winning selling points for the PRINCE method.

PRINCE2 can help me plan and control my projects because it:

- ✓ Provides a 'checklist' approach to help make sure that I've thought about everything I need to think about at this point in the project.
- ✓ Takes a powerful and logical approach to planning that helps make sure that I don't miss anything out – that the plan is complete.
- ✓ Sets down really clear roles and responsibilities, which go a long way in helping prevent misunderstanding and communication problems.
- ✓ Brings in managers at key points to make clear decisions about the project, such as if it should continue.

Graham, Nick. Prince2 For Dummies.

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Chapter 1: So What's a Project Method and Why Do I Need to Use One?**13**

- ✓ Causes me to make a conscious decision to carry on with the project at control points, so I don't just carry on by default even if things are going wrong.
- ✓ Provides one of the most effective progress-monitoring controls seen in projects and one based on fact, not on estimates of percentage completion of activities.
- ✓ Integrates risk management into the routine of project management so that I don't forget it.
- ✓ Makes sure that an approved business case with measurable benefits drives the project.
- ✓ Includes regular reviews of the business case, so if circumstances change, I re-evaluate and perhaps even stop the project.
- ✓ Makes sure that all parties with an interest in the project are involved with the management of it, so it includes the users but also the suppliers – those doing the project work.
- ✓ Makes sure that one person is ultimately in charge of the project so that things happen and decisions are not fudged.
- ✓ Builds in auditing of the project to make quite sure that everything is running well and that management information about the project is accurate.
- ✓ Links quality management to deliverables to keep it specific and measurable.
- ✓ Is hugely flexible and adaptable to fit different sizes of project, different types of project, and different project environments – it's not a 'standard approach' because projects themselves are not standard.

The list can go on and on. But, in short, PRINCE2 can really help you on your project, whether big, small or something in between – as long as you understand PRINCE and use it sensibly. PRINCE is really powerful and really helps you do the job when you use it properly. And using it needn't cost you much more than the price of this book, so that saves you the work of writing your own method!

In fact, in all the years of teaching PRINCE2, including to many project staff with a lot of experience as well as people with none, I've only ever found one person who claimed not to find it helpful. Well, come on, you can't win them all!

Graham, Nick. Prince2 For Dummies.

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Part I: How PRINCE Can Help You

Clearing Up Some Misunderstandings about PRINCE

When organisations do still make up their own project method, this can be because of misunderstandings about PRINCE2. Here are a few of them:

- ✓ **PRINCE is for big projects only:** No, actually it zips down to a very small size and you can use it on very small projects. For example, its design allows for very informal use, so while it has a number of reports, these reports can be verbal.
- ✓ **PRINCE is a method designed by government for government projects:** That in itself doesn't mean that you can't use the method for non-government projects, but actually the statement is untrue. PRINCE started out as a method designed by a private company and then the UK government purchased it for use on its projects. And most of the development of PRINCE2 was by private companies, although the government made sure that it stayed suitable for their projects as well as private-sector ones.
- ✓ **PRINCE has huge overheads and is very bureaucratic:** No it doesn't and no it isn't. Unless, that is, you use it wrongly. In fact, one of the first signs of the method being used badly is that people on the project describe it as 'bureaucratic'. If you're on a project and you hear the words 'PRINCE' and 'bureaucracy' in the same sentence, then worry.
- ✓ **We don't have time for PRINCE:** Yes, you do. You can always find time to project manage, unless you want to fail. People who say this just don't know how to use the method rapidly.

Working Through Your Project

Just like having a method for doing a jigsaw helps you to get started and work through the problem of completing the puzzle, so having a method for doing a project 'walks' you through the project and helps by pointing out what to think about at each point. PRINCE does this, from a point even before the project begins right through to the end. PRINCE uses eight processes, which form helpful checklists of what to do at eight key points (these are covered in Part II, with the planning process covered in Chapter 12). This is really helpful, provided that you bear in mind something that this book reinforces again and again in different areas: A checklist doesn't mean that you have to do everything. Mostly you will, but if you don't need something on a particular project, then for goodness sake keep your brain in gear and don't do it.

Graham, Nick. Prince2 For Dummies.

Hoboken, NJ, USA: For Dummies, 2008. p 14.

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Chapter 2

Outlining the Structure of PRINCE2

In This Chapter

- ▶ Introducing the main structure – the processes
- ▶ Outlining the components
- ▶ Exploring some techniques to help you do the job

The PRINCE method can seem a bit fragmented at first, but when you see how all the parts fit together then that's no longer a problem. Parts II and III of this book look at the various elements of the method, but this chapter ranges across the whole of PRINCE at a higher level so that you can see how it all slots together.

You may need a little while to get to grips with all the detail, but the framework in this chapter helps speed up that process by giving you a sort of map. PRINCE is very logical, so if you have any experience in projects at all, even limited experience, you can predict to some degree what the different parts of the method will include.

When you have the structure of PRINCE clear and then hang on the detail, it just becomes the way you run projects. You find that your concentration turns away from what the method is and on to how you're going to use it on your next project (or if you react like some of the delegates on my courses, how you wish you'd run your last one!). And even if you have a lot of project management experience, you may still find the framework in this chapter helpful before you get into the detail.

Getting to Know the Process Model

The main part of PRINCE's structure is the process model, shown in Figure 2-1.

Graham, Nick. Prince2 For Dummies.

Hoboken, NJ, USA: For Dummies, 2008. p 15.

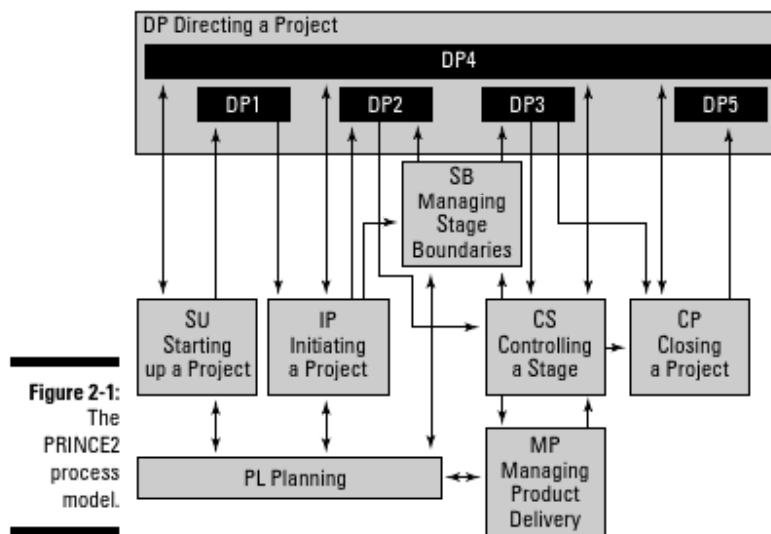
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Part I: How PRINCE Can Help You



This model takes you through your project from the part before the project, known as Start Up or, to use the full PRINCE name, Starting Up a Project, through to closure. Eight processes walk you through the project and set down what you need to think about and do at each key point. The processes represent the chronology or time span of the project. You can think of the processes as the suggested 'when' of PRINCE.



Primary processes and sub-processes. The primary processes are the eight top-level ones. Each of these top-level or 'primary' processes breaks down into between three and nine sub-processes that give more detail on what's going on. This is where some people start to lose it and think: 'Oh no. My worst fears confirmed. You have to go through loads of steps.' But when you use it intelligently, PRINCE just isn't like that at all.



Beware of people who say you have to do all of every sub-process on every project because PRINCE is a standard approach to projects. You don't and it isn't. Just pretend that you didn't hear them and read on.

You can think of the sub-processes within each primary process as a helpful checklist. When you do, suddenly the whole method comes alive. Just because something is on a checklist doesn't mean that you have to do it. In fact, a checklist can be really helpful to show you what you *don't* need to do as well as what you *do* need to do. You may be starting to see how PRINCE really can help you on your projects. The sub-processes help you think through very rapidly indeed what you need to do, and so speed you up and bring clarity.

Graham, Nick. Prince2 For Dummies.

Hoboken, NJ, USA: For Dummies, 2008. p 16.

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One day my PRINCE will come

PRINCE isn't new and in fact its track record is quite impressive. It started out more than 30 years ago as a method called PROMPT II (PRoject Organisation, Management and Planning Technique) and was developed by a private company. The UK government bought the rights to it for computer projects. A new government version took on board suggestions for improvements and was renamed PRINCE (PRojects IN Controlled Environments) to make it distinct, but it was just PROMPT II with some changes and was still very much geared to computer projects.

The UK government decided to make PRINCE publicly available without charging for its use, and it spread out through different types of organisation and through different countries.

But something interesting happened. Although PRINCE, like PROMPT II, was aimed solely at computer projects – and the manual was written that way – people took the principles of PRINCE and applied it to business projects that had absolutely nothing to do with computers. And it worked. Looking back, that's not particularly surprising because the principles of planning and control are much the same across most projects. This wider use was recognised and in Version 2 the method was given a new structure that made it very much easier to use but, importantly, the IT terminology was taken out. When PRINCE2 was launched in 1996 it was as a business project management method, suitable for all projects and not only IT ones. The result was an astounding success and PRINCE2 continues to grow in use worldwide.

The top-level or primary processes set down the main progression through PRINCE. But they aren't linear, because one process goes on all the time and one set repeats. The repeating block is to do with the control of project stages and these cycle round for as many stages as you have in your project. Later chapters in the book go into detail on each of these processes.

Getting things going

The first four processes are to do with getting the project under way, taking decisions about it (the work of the Project Board), and planning at three different levels of detail.

Starting Up a Project (SU)

This is the part of PRINCE that comes before the project. It covers sketching out what the project is about in order to make a decision on whether going forward into full planning would be worthwhile. Sometimes a quick look at an idea reveals that it's not so good after all and that the right thing to do is to stop immediately. SU also looks at roles and responsibilities, and normally you put the Project Organisation in place now. This includes the Project Board: the group of managers with oversight of the project, who decide if they should start the project and take it on into full planning. SU has six sub-processes and Chapter 4 explains how they work.

Graham, Nick. Prince2 For Dummies.

Hoboken, NJ, USA: For Dummies, 2008. p 17.

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Initiating a Project (IP)

This process drives the first stage of the project, the Initiation Stage, which is for project planning. The work covers the production of the project plans – in the broadest sense – which together form the Project Initiation Document (PID). This is not simply an activity plan. The PID includes elements such as the Project Quality Plan, the Risk Log with the risk actions, and the whole package of things that define what the project is and how you're going to control it. The primary process has six sub-processes and Chapter 5 explains the work involved.

Directing a Project (DP)

Figure 2-1, the process model, shows that DP runs right through PRINCE, from SU to project closure. It covers the work of the Project Board, which in turn breaks down into two broad areas. The four smaller boxes are processes that cover key decision points. I mentioned the first in the section 'Starting Up a Project (SU)'. The board decides if the Project Brief looks promising and whether to start the project and do the detailed project planning – the Initiation Stage. But another process runs right through PRINCE: giving ad-hoc direction, or advising the Project Manager whenever necessary. Chapter 9 tells you what you need to know, but briefly this is where the Project Board functions as the Project Manager's boss. Just like you may need to go and talk to your boss about something, so the board must be available to the Project Manager to give direction when needed.

Planning (PL)

Planning is just one process with seven sub-processes, but it has many applications in PRINCE. You use PL at three levels of detail for project, stage, and, if needed, team planning. The sub-processes of PL form a planning sequence that you can use at any and all of the three levels of detail, and other primary processes 'call' PL to produce a plan at the appropriate level. For example, IP – Initiating a Project – calls PL to produce a Project Plan, which then goes into the PID. Planning is a particularly powerful part of PRINCE and Chapter 12 provides the low-down.

Repeating as necessary

The next three primary processes repeat for as many stages as you have in your project. The only exception is in the last stage of the project, where you trigger project closure (see the later section 'Closing a Project') instead of the Stage Boundary (SB) process to prepare for the next stage.

Graham, Nick. Prince2 For Dummies.

Hoboken, NJ, USA: For Dummies, 2008. p 18.

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