

INTELLIGENT PROJECT KICK-OFF : DON'T WASTE YOUR TIME PLANNING

Mike Pryor, Principal Consultant at Bestoutcome, discusses a powerful, proven and easy-to-use planning technique : outcome-driven planning.



Mike Pryor

Introduction

Project kick-off is the single most important phase of a project, bar none.

There is a well-known saying "you cannot guarantee success when you launch a project, but you can certainly guarantee failure."

Too many organisations waste time trying to produce a detailed, credible plan during kick-off when it just isn't possible. This article describes a proven, intelligent approach that optimises the time spent at kick-off :

- Use outcome-driven planning to produce two plans :

- 1.a high-level plan that shows the Key Milestones which the stakeholders focus on

- 2.a detailed plan showing the activities needed to achieve the Milestones

- Don't plan what you don't know. Use rolling-wave planning to plan in detail for the next phase and in overview beyond that

Outcome-driven planning

Outcome-driven planning is a simple but immensely powerful concept : before you rush off to do stuff, bring the key stakeholders together for a workshop and agree the outcomes you are trying to achieve.

- Once you've agreed the outcomes, build a high-level plan together then build detailed plans in teams

- If you cannot agree the outcomes, abort

the initiative because it will not succeed

Here's an example high-level plan, showing overall Outcomes and interim Milestones and doesn't overwhelm the stakeholders with detail:

Case Study : Staffordshire County Council

Staffordshire County Council is a democratically accountable organisation that serves a community of over 1 million people. The Council's vision is "a connected Staffordshire, where everyone has the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy".

The Council established the Transformation Support Unit (TSU) to provide a rigorous approach to shaping and delivering complex transformation projects. TSU decided to implement an efficient programme management tool to improve the co-ordination and visibility of these initiatives, with the following outcome :

- When all TSU initiatives are being governed in a consistent way, giving full

visibility of progress, risks, costs, benefits and resource needs, and the Governance Boards systematically use information provided by TSU to inform their investment decisions

They selected PM3 from Bestoutcome because of its ease of use, portfolio focus and flexibility, and now use it to support the regular reporting and governance cycles for the Council. This helps ensure visibility across all the Council's initiatives, leading to increased confidence that the programmes will deliver the required outcomes and the Council will achieve its vision.

Conclusion

Using an outcome-driven approach will guarantee that you kick-off projects in an inclusive way, and sets you up for success. This powerful approach is being used successfully in many organisations, large and small, regulated and unregulated, in both the public and private sectors.

For further information on intelligent project kick-off, adopting an outcome-driven approach and using PM3 please contact: info@bestoutcome.com

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