Mistakes to avoid when introducing PRINCE2™ into your Organisation

PRINCE2™ is a method for running projects. It is adaptable to any size or type of project and can be used by any organisation.

So why do so many organisations fail to get the best out of PRINCE2™ or even give up trying?

Introducing PRINCE2™ into your organisation? Here are eight simple mistakes to avoid.

1. Forgetting the simple rules of process management.

PRINCE2™ is a process and it requires all the follow through that is required for successful management of processes:-

- Training
- A place to go for help after the training
- A process owner
- Senior management support and buy in
- Supporting tools, templates and experts
- Monitoring

2. Forgetting the simple rules of Change Management.

Changing the way people run projects is asking for new behaviours and, perhaps, new skills.

Change will always encounter resistance and create challenges.

The introduction of PRINCE2™ should be treated as a change management project.

3. Believing that PRINCE™ is just for middle management.

Large projects will need senior management on the Project Board (the PRINCE2™ equivalent of a steering committee and a vast improvement on the standard steering committee). Senior management need to know how a PRINCE2™ project works and what they can expect of the project manager and what the project manager expects of them.

Senior management do not necessarily need PRINCE2™ qualifications, but they do need a solid briefing.

4. Giving up after the initial productivity dip.

This is a well known phenomenon that accompanies the introduction of new technologies or processes.

As people learn the new system, they are initially slowed down. What they used to be able to complete confidently and rapidly is now unfamiliar to them and takes time.

But as they become familiar with the new system, they become confident again and productivity rises back to where it was. If it is a good system (and PRINCE2™ is a good system), the productivity starts to exceed the previous benchmarks.

5. Treating everything as a project and trying to apply PRINCE2™ to areas where it is not suited.

PRINCE2™ has been designed as a *project management methodology*. A set of processes suited to managing something with a beginning, middle and end. Often a project is unique and different and can lead to a step change in the organisation.

Business as Usual is about doing the day to day work of the organisation (e.g. maintenance, customer service, and accounting); activities that happened yesterday and will happen again tomorrow. They don't lead to step changes but they are the basic work of the organisation.

You can borrow from PRINCE2™ to improve *Business as Usual*, but trying to bend *Business as Usual* into a different shape so that it fits inside PRINCE2™ will simply lead to problems.

6. Using PRINCE2™ as a *one size fits all* solution to every project.

The strength of PRINCE2™ is that it can be scaled to any size of project. Trying to use the same templates and exactly the same formality for every size of project will either drown small projects in bureaucracy or kill large projects with insufficient discipline.

BUT it takes good understanding, skill and knowledge to intelligently scale PRINCE2™. Most people learn the full PRINCE2™ methodology including many aspects that need only be lightly used in small projects.

After a typical PRINCE2™ course, it is actually harder to use PRINCE2™ for small projects than it is for large projects.

Most organisations will need to get expert advice to produce guidelines for using PRINCE2™ with their small projects. Once this is done and communicated, then small projects will gain improved reliability without massive overheads. The organisation will also gain greater visibility of, and confidence in, the small projects.

7. Setting the *Project Management Office* up for failure

Some organisations recognise the need to support the PRINCE2™ process (see mistake number one) and create a *Project Management Office* to manage and monitor the process. They often have other responsibilities as well, such as consolidating project reporting, performing project audits, process improvement and so on. This is a good idea.

BUT this requires resource, expertise, and strong communication skills. Too many organisations treat it as just another administrative task. They underestimate the work involved and the skills required.

8. Blaming PRINCE2™ for the project management overhead.

Project Management, like other forms of management takes time. Maybe it's an hour a week, maybe its two days a week, maybe its full time. It depends on the size and nature of the project. This is over and above any specialist skilled work that might be needed like IT, engineering, writing, research etc.

We all instinctively know that large and complex projects need full time project management. But many organisations are not used to allowing time for project management on the smaller projects.

Proper project management does take time, whatever process you use. PRINCE2™, if used properly, does *not* require any more time than other methodologies, but it is often contrasted with no methodology at all. And that often meant no project management at all.

It is not PRINCE2™ that is taking the time. It's project management that's taking the time. And if you don't manage your projects, how successful are they going to be?

Conclusions

The introduction of PRINCE2™ should be treated as a project – a project with a degree of change management required. The organisation needs to consider how to build a useful, self sustaining and continuously improving process. People must be given time and support to get to grips with it and use it effectively.

Use PRINCE2™ to manage its own introduction and learn from the mistakes of others.

This paper was written by Dan Skelsey, Director and Lead Trainer of Project Laneways. Dan has practiced project management in small and large organisations and taught PRINCE2™ to about 1000 people in a 100 courses across five continents.

Project Laneways was created to provide **practical** training for projects in the **real** world.

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Project Laneways is an accredited training organisation for PRINCE2™ and Change Management.

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