APPLYING PROJECT MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES TO ITIL PROJECT

By

Venkata NK Madireddy

Graduate Certificate in Project Management (Adelaide University)
Certified in Outsourcing Management for Information Technology (National University of Singapore)
Certified Prince2 Practitioner

This is an article written based on the ITIL project I completed in the month of January to December 2017 in Middle East. This is written as a case for class discussion for my Prince2 trainees.

Prince2 principles is framework of good practice for projects and these were developed over the years from lessons taken from successful and failed projects.

The seven Prince2 principles are:

1. Continued business justification
2. Learn from experience
3. Defined roles and responsibilities
4. Manage by stages
5. Manage by exception
6. Focus on products
7. Tailor to suit the project

Continued business justification: All Prince2 projects should have a reason for starting the project and the justification should be recorded and approved. This justification should remain valid and it should be revalidated throughout the project.

The ITIL project that I completed had a sponsor who has approved a business case in which the justification for undertaking this ITIL project in their organization is documented. The benefits that this organization is aiming to achieve from this ITIL Project and how these benefits are contributing to the business objectives is also documented in the business case. It was clearly documented that during any point during the project lifecycle the project benefits cannot be justified, then this project should be stopped. Stopping a project which cannot be justified is a positive contribution to the organization as its funds and resources can be reinvested on other more worthwhile projects.

The Benefits review plan was documented for this project which helped to review the benefits of the project throughout the project lifecycle and helped the project board in taking a decision whether to continue or stop the project.

Learn from experience: Learning from experience is from two perspectives, when starting the project and after the project is in progress.

Experiences from the past projects should be applied to this project undertaken. If this is a project being undertaken for the first time then it is more important to learn from others and external experience should be taken.

Before I started this project, I looked for information from past projects. I collected information about the challenges faced by earlier project managers in executing similar projects. This helped me to plan my project carefully. For example: I understood the some past project managers did not take Organizational change management seriously due to which there was lot of resistance. Such lessons learned from past projects helped me plan early and overcome some challenges easily.

After the project starts, lessons from the project should be reported and documented. The lessons from the project should be applied to the future stages of the project and should also help in improvements.

During execution of the ITIL project I faced challenges in many areas of project, for example, stakeholder support, issue management and others. As I overcame these challenges I recorded/documented these experiences which were useful in the later stages of the project.

Defined roles and responsibilities: Success of the project depends on the project management team. This team should have defined roles and responsibilities for all the people involved in the project which works as an effective communication between these people.

All projects will have these primary stakeholders:

Business: These are the sponsors endorse the objectives and ensure that this investment provides value for money (In this case it is CEO of a Ministry).

Users: These are the people (employees of Ministry) who will use the projects products (ITIL Processes) to enable the organization (Ministry) to gain the expected benefits.

Suppliers: These the people who will provide the resources and expertise required by the project (Laroc Security Pvt Ltd)

All these three stakeholder interests should be represented in the project management team. If the project costs outweigh the benefits, the project is seen as failure. If the outcomes (ITIL Processes) of the project does not meet the need of users (employees) failure is inevitable.

For all those people involved (CEO, Users, Suppliers), a defined project management team structure provides answer to: "What is expected of me?"

In the case of this ITIL Project we had Project Management team, The Board (represented by the Head of Service Management office as Executive, one senior manager from the ITSM tool vendor as Senior Supplier, and one senior manager from the IT Operations as Senior User), Project Manager and Team Managers (Process Owners). We also had Change Authority and Project support and Project Assurance.

Manage by Stages: Prince2 Project is planned, monitored and controlled on a stage-by-stage basis. Management stage is a stage (of the many stages) which the project manager will manage on behalf of the project board at any one time.

The number of management stages depends on the complexity of the project and size. In this ITIL project will had at 5 management stages.

Management stages provides decision points, giving the board (Represented by Business, User and Supplier) an opportunity to assess the projects viability at defined intervals (end of stage), instead of letting it run in an uncontrolled manner.

This ITIL project had one initiation stage and four management stages. Each of these management stage, had set of products to be delivered.

The project board authorised only one stage at a time. As project manager I created an end stage report, and the next stage plan for the next management stage and this information enabled the project board to conduct and end stage assessment and make a decision. The board authorised the next stage only if there is sufficient business justification to continue.

Manage by exception: Accountability is established in Prince2 project at three levels: Directing, Managing and delivering level. At each of these levels tolerances are set against the six aspects of project performance such as Cost, Time, Quality, Scope, Benefits, Risk. These tolerances are the controls at each of these levels. If the tolerances are forecast to be exceeded, then they are to be in exception and it is immediately escalated to next level for a decision.

For example, in this ITIL Project some work packages (delivery level) has a time tolerance of 10 ± 2 days, and when the work package is forecast to exceed 12 days it was escalated to me (management level) by the team manager for a decision on how to proceed. If the work package can be completed within 12 days then the team manager would not have escalated to me.

Focus on Products: Every project is supposed to create one or more products. Prince2 advocates that the project should always focus on creating the products that it is supposed to produce than the work activity.

Focus on products principle says that projects should be output and outcome oriented than work oriented. The project that is output oriented will understand the stakeholder expectations and agree on the product before undertaking the work to produce the product. This set of product or products defines the scope of the project.

In the case of this ITIL project the products that I should focus on to create should be the ITIL Processes and its related documentation like SDP, SLA, OLA and other documents. I had a thorough understanding of the requirements and the process assessment also helped me to understand the products that I need to create and deliver. Stakeholder involvement is very critical in understanding the needs of all the stakeholders.

Tailor to suit the project: Prince2 is a project management method that can be applied to a project of any size, complexity, and risk. It can be tailored to the projects specific context. Tailoring is a technique of modifying and then combining the Prince2 processes and documents to suit to the projects context. Example if there is simple to normal project then the processes or documents can be combined to suit to a simple project. In this ITIL Project I combined Starting up a Project and Initiating a project processes into one process.

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This article is authored by Madireddy Venkat. Reference: Managing successful project using Prince2 Contact: mvenkat27@outlook.com