

Using Project Management Techniques to Achieve a University-wide Library Resources Review

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I would like to share my recent positive experience of using PRINCE2 Project Management (PM) Techniques to deliver a major review of our library resources allocation model, library resources management policy and reading list strategy.

I had previous experience in contributing to projects that employed PM methods but the *Library Resources Review (LRR)* was my first experience of managing a project using the techniques.

What was the project?

The wider institutional context provided favourable conditions for a fresh look at library resource management. The University of Cumbria had very recently launched its new ambitious and exciting Strategic Plan and its Learning and Teaching Strategy. The library had also recently merged with IT Services to create a new professional service, *Information Services*. This change was particularly well managed and resulted in a general feeling of optimism in staff.

Why PRINCE2?

PRINCE2 can be tailored to the specific needs of any project. The LRR used only the appropriate aspects of the five phases of a project identified by PRINCE2 due to it being more concerned with smarter ways of working and did not require technical effort or financial outlay. PM techniques enabled me to divide the project into smaller portions or stages, mitigate against risk and to keep the project on track by having a clear aim, scope and objectives. All of this sounds obvious, and indeed it is. PM techniques are grounded in common sense. A pertinent ubiquitous quote can be paraphrased as “*if you want me to present on this topic for an hour, I am ready now; but if you want me to present for five minutes I will need a week to prepare.*” This sentiment highlights the importance of two important concepts that are central to PM techniques: planning and clarity of thought. Despite the large scale of the project the overall goal of the LRR was written in 25/35 words (the Aim), what the project encompassed in no more than one page of A4 (the Scope) and a concise bullet pointed list described the key goals/outcomes of the project (the Objectives).

What did you learn from the project?

The main lessons that I have learned include enlisting the support of key influencers from the start of the project and keeping stakeholders informed at every stage. Having a project sponsor was crucial. The role of the sponsor is to chair the project board meetings, to ensure objectivity and keep the project within scope. Even with clear aims, scope and objectives it is all too easy for project managers to become so immersed in detail that their perspective is compromised.

What would you pass on to others about managing a project successfully?

The next time you consider beginning a new project you could do worse than asking yourself the following questions:

- What is the name of the project?

- Who is the sponsor?
- What are the aims / objectives?
- What outcomes do you want?
- What are the major deliverables?
- How will we get to those deliverables and the deadline?
- What role will each of you play in those deliverables?
- Timeframes associated with tasks/deliverables
- Ideas on resources needed for tasks/deliverables
- A list of the assumptions you're making in the plan
- What are the project milestones, when are these? Which team members will deliver on these and when will they provide feedback?
- What are the risks?
- What are the benefits?
- What support is needed from sponsor?
- What will be the measures of success?

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