

Managing Successful Projects with PRINCE2[®]: Book review

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Introduction

The PRINCE2 manual *Managing Successful Projects with PRINCE2*^[1] is a comprehensive guide to the [PRINCE2 methodology](#) for project management, recognized worldwide for its structured, process-based approach. This book is the official PRINCE2 guidance manual, published by AXELOS, the owners of [PRINCE2](#).

This authoritative guide equips project management professionals with the necessary tools to handle their projects effectively, from inception to conclusion. The PRINCE2 methodology, an acronym for Projects in Controlled Environments, is a brainchild of the UK government and is widely used in both the public and private sectors.

This book isn't just a resource for understanding the basics of project management. It's a meticulously detailed playbook that provides an actionable, step-by-step roadmap for the successful execution of any project. The book covers all the 4 main components of the PRINCE2 methodology: principles, themes, processes, and tailoring.

A digital version of the manual accompanies PRINCE2 training courses by coming bundled with the PRINCE2 Foundation exam. For students or project management practitioners who prefer an old-style printed book, the book is still sold in its original form.

Who should read the PRINCE2 manual?

Managing Successful Projects with PRINCE2 is a book that caters to a wide array of readership. Here are some of the people who would benefit from reading this book:

Project management professionals

Experienced project managers looking for a systematic approach to manage their projects will find immense value in this manual. It offers a structured, standardized methodology for managing projects of any size or type, allowing for consistency and quality in project delivery.

Project management novices

Individuals new to project management will gain a strong foundation in the PRINCE2 methodology. This guide breaks down the complex concepts into understandable chunks and provides real-world examples to support learning.

Project team members

Not just project managers, but anyone involved in a project - team members, coordinators, project support staff - can benefit from understanding the principles, themes, and processes of PRINCE2. It facilitates improved collaboration, understanding, and effectiveness within project teams.

Executives and senior management

People in strategic roles, who may need to make decisions about project initiation, resources, and risk management, will find value in this manual. Understanding the PRINCE2 methodology allows them to make informed decisions and ensures they know what to expect from their project teams.

Students of project management

Students studying project management or related fields can use this manual as an academic resource. The PRINCE2 methodology is globally recognized and understanding it could be a significant asset in both their studies and future careers.

Consultants and trainers

Professionals who advise organizations on project management or provide training in this field will find this guide invaluable. It provides an authoritative resource on the PRINCE2 methodology, serving as a basis for training programs and consultations.

Structure

The manual contains nineteen chapters and five appendices. The first two chapters cover introductory concepts about projects and project management in general, and the benefits of using the structured methodology. Chapters 3 to 19 cover the principles, themes, processes, management products, and tailoring and embedding the method.

The five appendices detail the 26 management products, how PRINCE2 meets other standards, roles and responsibilities, an example of the product-based planning technique, a health check to be used on projects to assess whether the key aspects of PRINCE2 are being adequately address, and a comprehensive glossary.

Principles

Chapter 3 covers the seven [PRINCE2 principles](#). These principles form the bedrock of the PRINCE2 methodology. These are universal, self-validating, and empowering norms applicable to every project. The guide dives deep into these principles - continued business justification, learn from experience, defined roles and responsibilities, manage by stages, manage by exception, focus on products, and tailor to suit the project environment.

For a project management novice, these principles are an invaluable foundation, enhancing their understanding and interpretation of how effective projects are designed and managed.

Themes

After a brief introduction to the PRINCE2 themes in chapter 5, chapters 6 to 12 cover each of the seven [PRINCE2 themes](#) in detail. The themes are facets of project management that need to be addressed continuously throughout the project lifecycle. The themes - business case, organization, quality, plans, risk, change, and progress - each have their own chapter.

Each theme chapter helps readers comprehend the multifaceted nature of project management. Each theme is covered in-depth, in a language that a newcomer to project management will appreciate. For each theme, the manual describes the purpose, key concepts, procedures, who is responsible for aspects of the theme, and the management products which PRINCE2 recommends can be used on a project.

Processes

Chapter 13 provides a brief overview of the PRINCE2 process model. Chapters 14 to 20 cover each of the [seven PRINCE2 processes](#) in the methodology. These chapters follow the chronological flow of the project, offering a logical path to follow.

Beginning from the starting up a project and moving through directing a project, initiating a project, controlling a stage, managing product delivery, managing a stage boundary, and closing a project, each process is described in detail in its own chapter.

The detailed breakdown of each process, with its associated activities and responsibilities, demystifies the sometimes-overwhelming journey of managing a project. With its detailed but clear guidance, even novices will be able to grasp the essentials of each process.

Tailoring

The final chapter of the manual is one which covers tailoring and embedding. [Tailoring](#) is what the project management team does to adapt the methodology to suit the needs of an individual project. [Embedding](#) refers to the adoption of the methodology across an organization and within all of its project management processes.

Strengths

One of the strengths of *Managing Successful Projects with PRINCE2* lies in its ability to seamlessly marry theory with practice. Its structured approach doesn't just educate about the 'what' and the 'why' of project management but also the 'how'. Real-world examples and case studies make the material relatable and easily digestible. It is a commendable effort to bring to life a methodology that can otherwise be perceived as dry or overly complex.

The manual shines in its ability to maintain simplicity while discussing complex subjects. This quality makes it a valuable resource for both the novice stepping into the world of project management and the seasoned project manager seeking to refine their skills further.

Readers should approach this guide with the understanding that it is indeed a comprehensive manual. It's not a quick read and digesting the wealth of information contained within its pages requires a certain level of commitment. However, the rewards for persevering are immense: a deep, practical understanding of a globally recognized project management methodology that is adaptable across a range of industries and project types.

Summary

In summary, *Managing Successful Projects with PRINCE2* is a robust, detailed, and practical guide that stands as an authoritative text in the world of project management. While it requires a dedicated effort to fully absorb, it offers the reader a complete education in the PRINCE2 project management methodology.

Its ability to break down complex concepts into comprehensible elements in a language that a project management novice can understand is a testament to its calibre. For anyone embarking on a project management journey, this guide is an investment worth making.

Reference

^[1] Stationery Office (2017) *Managing Successful Projects with PRINCE2*. 6th edn. Stationery Office.