PRINCE2® methodology

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Introduction

What is the PRINCE2 methodology?

PRINCE2 is a globally recognised project management methodology [1]. It provides a structured, process-driven approach to managing projects, ensuring they deliver outcomes which realise a return on investment in the form of benefits.

Methodology

The term 'methodology' refers to a system of practices, techniques, procedures, and rules employed by professionals in a particular field. In the context of project management, a methodology is a model used by project managers and teams to initiate, plan, execute, control, and close projects. It provides a blueprint for project activities, offering a systematic approach to delivering projects successfully.

PRINCE2 project management methodology

PRINCE2 qualifies as a methodology due to its comprehensive, process-based approach to project management. It provides a clear, step-by-step roadmap for managing projects, ensuring all aspects are covered, from initiation to closure. This methodology is underpinned by a set of principles, themes, and processes that guide the project team throughout the project lifecycle.

The PRINCE2 manual (*Managing Projects Successfully with PRINCE2*) describes in detail the four main components within the methodology. These are:

Principles

The principles of PRINCE2 are the foundations of the method that determine whether the project is genuinely being managed using PRINCE2. These principles are universal, self-validating, and empowering, providing the basis for good project management practice.

Themes

The themes of PRINCE2 are common aspects of project management that must be addressed continually and in parallel throughout the project. Themes address aspects such as managing time, cost, risk, change, quality and scope that are often found in other project management standards and methods. The themes provide a framework for decision making and control, ensuring that the project remains viable, desirable, and achievable throughout its lifecycle.

Processes

The [processes of PRINCE2](#) describe what decisions need to be taken, by whom, and when throughout the project lifecycle. They start from just prior to the start of the project and continue to the closure of the project. The processes are aligned to management stages, which form 'go or no go' major decision points. These processes provide a clear path for the project, ensuring that investment in the project occurs on a stage-by-stage basis.

Tailoring

The principles, themes and processes are complemented by a 4th element – namely [tailoring the method to the project environment](#). Tailoring refers to the ways in which the project management team adopts the method to suit different shapes, sizes, or types of projects. Tailoring can also be affected by the organizational culture and management styles. Everything is PRINCE2 can be tailored except the principles. By their very nature, principles are inviolable.

Tailoring roles and responsibilities

PRINCE2 also defines a set of responsibilities for every member of the project management team. These responsibilities can be tailored by sharing (a role is performed by more than one person) or combining (multiple roles performed by the same person) them.

Tailoring management products

The PRINCE2 manual also describes a set of [26 management products](#) that can be used throughout the project lifecycle by the project management team. These help the team plan, manage, and control the project. These management products come in the form of a set of templates which can also be tailored, both in their content, structure, and the form they take.

When to use the PRINCE2 methodology?

Use PRINCE2 to plan, manage, and control every type and size of project in every sector and industry. Use it on both agile and not-so-agile projects to ensure that planned outcomes and the expected benefits are achieved. For managing agile projects [PRINCE2 Agile](#) is recommended.

To get the most benefit from PRINCE2, start using it just prior to starting up a project and continue using it until the project closes.

What is PRINCE2 used for?

It is used by organisations seeking a structured approach to project management. Used as a whole, PRINCE2's principles, themes, and processes, ensure that all project aspects are covered. It provides organisations with a clear roadmap for its projects, with clear guidance covering all the necessary steps needed to deliver any project successfully.

Its structured approach, combined with the flexibility to tailor the methodology to suit the specific needs and constraints of any project, makes PRINCE2 a robust and versatile project management methodology.

PRINCE2 enables organisations to apply a customisable method without having to reinvent the wheel by developing their own method from scratch.

Why is the PRINCE2 method helpful?

The PRINCE2 method is helpful to organizations because it helps them realise a return on their investments. It helps to avoid wasted time and resources spent on projects with little or no return. It achieves this by enabling key decision-makers to answer questions such as:

- What are we trying to achieve?
- When do we start?
- What resources do we need?
- Can we do it ourselves, or do we need the help or others?
- How long will it take?
- How much will it cost?
- What are the risks?
- What are the benefits?
- Are the benefits worth the costs, time, and risks?
- What quality is expected?
- Do we clearly understand what we are trying to deliver, and how?
- How will we manage changes?
- Who will take decisions?
- What is each person responsible for?

By focusing attention on answering these key questions, projects have a much better chance of success.

Summary

PRINCE2 is a methodology because it provides a comprehensive, structured, and process-driven approach to project management. It offers a clear roadmap for project activities, ensuring all aspects of the project are covered, from initiation to closure.

The method guides the project management team stage-by-stage throughout the project lifecycle, to help ensure sensible investment decisions are made. In PRINCE2, projects can and should be closed prematurely, if the forecasted return on investment is no longer achievable.

The flexibility to tailor the methodology to suit the specific needs and constraints of any project further enhances its status as an effective project management methodology.

By focusing minds on answering key questions about a project, an organisation can achieve a higher return on its investment, than might otherwise be the case.

Reference

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