



The ***vision***
to stay ahead

Seven Deadly Sins:

Programme Management

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Let's face it, we wouldn't be human if we didn't make mistakes, and we have seen many in our time.

In the early stages of maturity, there are many common errors that people make when delivering programmes, so we thought we would jot a few down for you.

As part of our Seven Deadly Sins series, we have highlighted below the key reasons why programme management often doesn't work.

1. **Thinking like a project:** if you fill a programme with project people, guess what happens, they behave like project people and it gets run like a project. Programme management professionals have a different skill set, don't mistake qualifications for skills.
2. **Forgetting the vision:** at the start it is all about the vision. Once it starts rolling and people get busy it is easy to forget why the programme exists. It loses direction, scope drifts and before you know it, all people are talking about is what the projects are doing and not what the programme is doing.
3. **Forgetting there is a lifecycle:** programmes have a start and an end so if your programme doesn't have an end then it is probably a portfolio. They go through very distinct stages of evolution. In the programmes that fail or lose direction, it is because these stages (tranches) are indistinct and the whole delivery becomes a blur.
4. **Not having a blueprint:** this one is simple, if you don't have a blueprint to describe the end game for the programme, you will not know where you are going. This is a fatal error for most programmes, not thinking enough about the outcomes which means there will be no benefits.
5. **Leaving change till later:** programmes deliver change, whether it's major infrastructure build or internal business transformation. Failing to plan and cost the change from the outset will lead to failure in the future. Benefits come from change, so without change there will be no benefits.
6. **Looking in the wrong places for risks:** programme risks are not 'pumped-up' project risks. The risks that kill programmes rarely come from projects, they are normally linked to strategic changes of direction, underestimation of the cost and impact of change to the environment they are impacting, business or social.
7. **Getting the governance wrong:** you may not be in a position to affect this, but the people on a programme board should have very clear terms of reference and authority. Programme boards are full of important people with big egos not making the important decisions.

Have a look at your own programme and see if you think any of the above 'sins' might be true for you. If you think they are, get in touch as we're keen to see programme management being done really well.