

# The Ascent of Projects

How to plan and manage and survive the evolution of projects and  
project & programme management in your organisation

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Last year a very competent Programme Director, who had saved and made his organisation hundreds of millions of pounds through the world class team of project managers he had created, was 'squeezed out'/allowed to leave his organisation. I was sad to see this – I'd counseled him to beware of the risks of being too good at delivering programmes of projects. I knew there was risk with success because I'd seen exactly the same thing happen to another very successful programme manager before.

There seems to be a pattern, a journey an 'evolution' organisations go through once they discover that they can use projects to deliver organisational and business change. Unfortunately progress to management-by-projects isn't simple and forward but involves twists, turns and assassinations. I wish to caution you on the personal risk that this evolution brings you through a Cautionary Tale. Once you recognise the stage your organisation is at look in the table at the bottom for your survival kit.

### A Cautionary Tale:

A long, long time ago in a kingdom far, far away very little changed from day to day. The King ruled, supported by a tidy and tall hierarchy, of first minister, second minister and ministers for several different things. Each knew their place and the status was quo. "Everything and everyone in their place"<sup>1</sup>

But the King grew restless and wanted to know more of the rest of the world so trade and travel increased with surrounding kingdoms. Suddenly there were lots of new things to do. The ministers tried to do the new things but the day-to-day affairs of state got in the

way and mostly they failed. Finally after failure after failure (or success only on the express orders of the King) The first minister announced "We need Project Management." Peasants were randomly selected and appointed to be project managers, each ministry had its own project managers and they were given different, unfamiliar, complex software tools and asked to do whatever the Prince II asked them to.<sup>2</sup>

Although there was much ticking of boxes the success rate of the projects did not rise much. Any project which required people from across the ministries to work together stalled and the project leaders simply waited for a clear brief before doing anything. Eventually the First minister announced "We need better project leadership, we need senior sponsors who can help make this work!" With that the projects began to deliver and since success breeds imitation in no time at all you couldn't move around the Kingdom without tripping over a project or initiative. The problem was that many projects were duplicates or contradictory. Because it had been so difficult to deliver any project at all, it was assumed that delivering anything at all was 'good' and no one checked to see if the project had made the kingdom wealthier.

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<sup>1</sup> Stage 1

Document1

<http://lulu.com/PentacleWorks>  
<http://PentacleTheVBS.com>

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<sup>2</sup> Stage 2

