

Part Three:
DELIVERING ON STRATEGY

History doesn't record if the British Bulldog Winston Churchill was about to tuck into a stewed fruit and cream flummery, a panna cotta or a rich sponge cake saturated in sauce. But we are famously informed that he once rejected a dish served to him in one of London's finest dining clubs, remarking that "this pudding has no theme."

The perennially-optimistic England football supporter who, every four years, remortgages his home and heads off to another World Cup finals, rucksack brimming with St George's memorabilia, will recognise this critique. Instead of bearing witness to the recreation of the 1966 glory days, the long-suffering traveller is more likely to be found glowering from a hushed terrace as eleven men puff and pant with little discernible pattern to their play. A gameplan, like a pudding, bereft of an organising theme.

A Programme Management Office needs a theme, or it will quickly regress into a cacophony of puffing and panting - earnest endeavour yielding no end product, let alone a feast worthy of a prime ministerial palate.

Implicit in 'Programme' - not by chance the first of the PMO's three key words - is the concept of an end-state which is different from today's (The OED defines programme as "a set of related measures with a particular long-term aim.")

Before any work can commence on establishing or mobilising a PMO, this target should be understood, described, visualised, and socialised. Notwithstanding the tempting intrigue of the Beatles' Magical Mystery Tour, it's generally unwise to embark on a voyage without knowledge of one's destination, if only because it could affect one's choice of attire, mode of transport, and travelling companions.

A PMO operating without any strategic framework can result in hordes of

enthusiasts preparing for a daytrip to Dudley when, in fact, El Dorado lies just beyond the hills in precisely the opposite direction.

One of the finest creations of the past three thousand years is, perhaps, the Strategy On A Page. This claim could perhaps be lambasted as rank hyperbole by sceptics who would prefer to elevate Rachmaninoff's third, or the Mona Lisa, or Ulysses, or the Hanging Gardens of Babylon (and on reflection I might concur with their position). Nevertheless, the Strategy On A Page - aka SOAP - is a fiendishly clever ruse to dispense with peripheral distractions and give prominence to the things that really matter.

The discipline of encapsulating an organisation's direction within the confines of a single sheet of A4 forces the twin disciplines of focus and incisive thinking. As former AXA chief executive officer Mark Wood once remarked, "it's far harder to write a short speech than a long speech. With a short speech, you haven't got the luxury of throwing around a lot of second grade stuff hoping some of it will work." Similarly, wordsmiths can obfuscate and dissemble in a 100-page strategic plan; in a SOAP they must sweep away the barnacles and display a central message without clutter or caveats.

The implication is stark. A PMO should not be created in isolation, with the expectation that it becomes a prime mover, a catalyst for a wave of ill-defined change, a tool to "make stuff happen".



On the contrary, it should come into existence once a measure of strategic clarity has been achieved.

An organisation is poised to extract maximum value from a PMO when it's considered, and has compelling answers for, questions such as these:

- What is our **purpose**?
- How do we **create value**?
- How is our **external world** changing?
- How will the **structure of our sector** evolve?
- What must we **do differently** over the next 3-5 years?
 - Will we be servicing new customer segments?
 - Will we be present in different geographies?
 - Will our product set be changed?
 - Will the customer experience be transformed?
 - Will we be using new and innovative routes to market?
 - How must our cost base look?
- Will today's **competitors** become customers, partners or suppliers?
- Will today's **partners** become customers, competitors or suppliers?
- How do we do business? (what is our **culture and values**)

Once these topics have been debated, and - ideally - the answers have been synthesised in a SOAP, the organisation is primed to kickstart its transformation experience.

However, transforming a business can be a costly endeavour, demanding significant investment over multiple years. In Transformation Spotlight Part Four, we explore how success can be tracked and measured, to reassure shareholders that funds are being prudently deployed.

Chase Noble help clients create strategies that build real value and are fit for the twenty-first century ... and then communicate them to staff, customers, investors and journalists in compelling ways. We have set up and run Transformation Programmes in sectors including financial services, healthcare and real estate.