

Part Five:  
**OPERATING THROUGH WORKSTREAMS**

**A** pin factory with a 10-strong workforce can, Adam Smith teaches us, only produce tens of thousands of pins every day if it adopts the principle of the division of labour. Without such arrangements, Smith argues, the maximum daily capacity for each worker will be perhaps two dozen pins.

As it is for a pin factory, so too for a Transformation Programme.

In earlier editions in this series, we have explored how a Programme Management Office should be established, how its role should be closely aligned to the broader organisational strategy, and how a suite of success measures should be embedded.

Now, it's time to focus on getting stuff delivered.

Division of labour through workstreams is the most effective way for a Programme Management Office to generate a multiplier effect from its efforts. Chase Noble has seen many situations where workstreams release talent and energy, cutting through functional barriers and departmental obstacles.

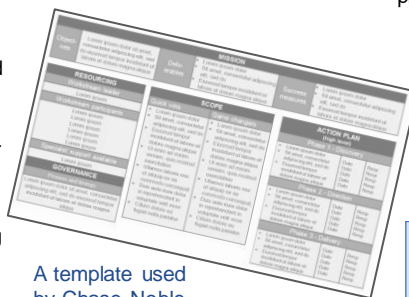
The effect is not dissimilar to the impact of skunkworks and incubation hubs in firms such as Lockheed Martin. A culture is fostered in which innovation can thrive – not faux innovation, as lambasted in Clayton Cristensen's 'The Innovators Dilemma', where he observed "most companies say they're innovative in the hope they can con investors into thinking there is growth when there isn't". But a genuine embrace of change as exemplified year after year by businesses such as transmission systems designer Xtrac, medical imaging pioneers Kromek, or cost-per-click content marketers Dianomi.

When mobilising workstreams within a PMO framework, a checklist of good practice would include:

- **The number of workstreams.** 4-12 is the Goldilocks Zone (to adopt the phrase astronomers use to describe planetary orbits which are neither too hot nor too cold for life)
- **Inspirational, punchy terms of reference.** There are plenty of TOR templates available (please contact Chase Noble for some of the best); headings should typically include a synopsis of the vision, measurable goals, resources available and – most importantly – a clearly-delineated scope. As can be attested by all those whose mental wellbeing has been threatened by out-of-control IT revamp, 'scope creep' and 'successful project management' are unlikely bedfellows.
- **A cross-functional remit.** Left alone, most organisations retreat to the comfort of departmental silos. A transformation programme cannot thrive if functional teams are in lock-down mode. Typically, workstreams will contain representatives from all affected areas of the business – manufacturing, marketing, finance, human resources – on the basis, firstly, that a complete solution involves the summation of different perspectives; and, secondly, in keeping with Lyndon Johnson's famous observation about tents.
- **Talent spotting.** Running a workstream can, in theory, give added zest and spice to the personal development of talented young high-flyers en route to the boardroom. But this simple and laudable aspiration can be fiendishly tricky to implement. The world's top 250 consumer product firms have aggregate global sales of \$2.5 trillion – titans of the modern world akin to Oceanus and Gaia in Greek mythology. Why would managers looking after established brands jeopardise their career trajectory to launch of new concepts whose future is uncertain.
- **Communication within and between the workstreams.** A half dozen workstreams operating independently should be able to nudge, cajole and catalyse. But, if they cooperate and collaborate, the combined firepower can prove irresistible. Sharing lessons learnt, managing interdependencies, and spotting opportunities for resource polling – for example if three workstreams decide to commission market research – are all areas of PMO added value.

Where workstream leaders have been seconded from the line, they may have little experience in the methodologies appropriate to delivering change projects.

In the next edition of Transformation Spotlight, we'll run the focus to a five-phase approach which leads inexorably from specification to benefits.



A template used by Chase Noble to establish workstream TORs

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.