

TRANSFORMATION SPOTLIGHT

Part Six: BEYOND MOBILISATION

In the last edition of Transformation Spotlight, we focused on mobilising workstreams and ensuring they are clear on their purpose and priorities.

Now, attention turns to the crucial issue of ensuring they progress seamlessly and methodically towards the right result. Chase Noble's experience suggests that a process framework is essential if workstream activity is to stay on track. Human nature can often tempt workstream leaders to catapult their teams directly to the payoff, bypassing the hard work along the route.

It would be like Roger Federer walking onto Wimbledon's Centre Court on Men's Final Day, having neglected those gruelling hours in the gym and discussion of tactics and scenarios with his coach, and still expecting a straight sets victory.

Equally insidious is the temptation to limit discussions to friends and family. In the office environment, it's often all too comfortable to stay within the confines of the familiar four walls. We talk with colleagues on the next bank of desks, occasionally venturing to the water cooler where we can mingle with staff from the other side of the office, or even from the floor above or below. Groupthink is reinforced. Our situation seems gloriously trouble-free because, without realising it, we're avoiding contact with anyone who would challenge us with uncomfortable home truths. If a prime minister, at an election, only campaigned in the ten safest constituencies, their doorstep experience would give them a very distorted view of reality.

The diagram below shows a process framework, nicknamed BULLSEYE, which Chase Noble often uses to ensure workstreams don't succumb to these risks. It involves six sequential phases: mobilisation, scoping, discovery, direction, delivery, closure,

delivery, and closure. When applying this framework, workstream leaders are encouraged to adopt a few key principles:

- **The sequence matters.** It shouldn't be possible for workstreams to progress to the later phases until the earlier ones have been completed and full value extracted
- **Celebrate progress.** It isn't necessary to wait until 'mission accomplished' closure before achievements are recognised. Each phase involves deliverables of value. Federer might not secure a trophy after a week of training, but (I suspect) his coach will have set shorter-term objectives that evidence progress towards championship success
- **Transparency.** The output from each phase should be documented, shared, and available for challenge
- **'Divergent to convergent'.** Each phase requires a different mindset, and possibly different people. The earlier phases involve being open-minded to new, disruptive ideas without constraint – as many as possible. As 3M state in their corporate values, "Thou shalt not kill a new product idea." The later phases involve focus and prioritisation. No organisation, even the largest, can deliver every business case with a net positive scoring

It's worth drawing attention to two phases which are often under-appreciated.

Phase Three: DISCOVERY

A powerful discovery phase is the key to new insight and a step change in the strategic outcome.

It should involve:

- **Data gathering:** assembling the raw information that illuminates the business challenge, whether from publicly available sources, or from benchmarked peer organisations, or from bespoke research

- **Engagement with a wide range of stakeholders:** staff, suppliers, customers, policymakers, distributors, media commentators – all may hold a piece of the jigsaw, and no clear picture will emerge until all those pieces have been assembled. Wherever possible, engagement should be structured so that innovative thinking flows. Multiple choice questionnaires, rather than in-person discussions, put artificial boundaries around the issues and options.

Phase Six: CLOSURE

Most projects wither rather than reach a defined end-point. Enthusiasm wanes, participation slips, the board moves on to the next great thing. Once, I was invited to a fortnightly 'project progress meeting' 18 months after the major deliverable had been landed; there were only two other people in the room.

Effective closure involves:

- A 'lessons learned' workshop – this is an essential component of continuous improvement, typically addressing: a recap of output versus plan (and budget), an open discussion of what worked, and a critical assessment of anything that could have been managed better. The focus is not on blaming transgressors, but identifying ways that future projects can be even more successful
- A public recognition of what's been achieved
- Formal transition of activity to business as usual

In today's increasingly complex business world, it's rare that major programmes are confined within a single functional department. In Edition 7, Transformation Spotlight will explore the value of effective cross-functional working – as well as the common pitfalls.

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.



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