

# ORCHESTRATING AN EFFECTIVE TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

Employ the right conductor and let the lead violinist play. True transformational change is critical; businesses simply cannot afford to get it wrong.

In recognition of this, a senior leader is invariably made accountable with the brief to act as the sponsor and figurehead throughout the transformation programme. At the outset, this all makes perfect sense.

However, programmes of significant, business-critical change have many, moving parts. Each part needs to be recognised, managed and co-ordinated, starting on day one and maintained for the duration. This creates significant and, at the outset, unforeseen additional workload for transformation programme sponsors.

Frequently, the work required is on unfamiliar ground and at a breadth and depth that will challenge the experiences of the most seasoned business leader. It is this additional strain that soon dominates. It distracts the sponsor from delivering the coherent trusted change leadership that was the very reason they were selected in the first place.

As a result, sponsors often look for, or are offered, help from external partners to provide transformation programme leadership experience and bandwidth to help shape and drive delivery, therefore enabling the sponsor to invest their limited time most effectively.

This is a well-trodden path, so why does this often not work? Why does the 'noise' from internal stakeholders continue? Why do fractious relationships within the transformation programme continue to hamper delivery? How do you really get on top of the transformation programme to provide transparency and effective programme delivery? Crucially, how do you ensure that the programme continues to be led with integrity, so that it consistently does the right things for the good of the business, not for some other reason?



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## THERE IS A WAY

**Firstly**, you have to accept that transformational change leadership is a significant, niche capability in its own right. It's certainly not just about delivery.

All too often, having shaped an outline programme of change, businesses dive straight into delivery and unfortunately become distracted by the critical path, big budgets and (hopefully) the prospect of progress against key milestones.

In addition to focusing on delivery and keeping the programme in control and concentrated on results, successful transformation also requires balanced attention to ensure clarity and buy-in to the vision; to ensure the required conditions exist to enable successful change; that the business does actually change as a result of the programme; and that the business benefits are realised.

In doing this, understanding, and then winning the hearts and minds of the entirety of the stakeholder landscape, it allows you to effectively scale the programme leadership work, with everyone informed and pulling for the change:

**CxOs**, who will be responsible for the business results that the transformation will deliver

**Business owners**, whose teams will be impacted and who will lead the delivery of benefits

**Those impacted by the change**, who must be engaged to recognise why the change is needed and understand how they need to think and act differently

**Sourcing partners**, who may deliver certain services on behalf of the business

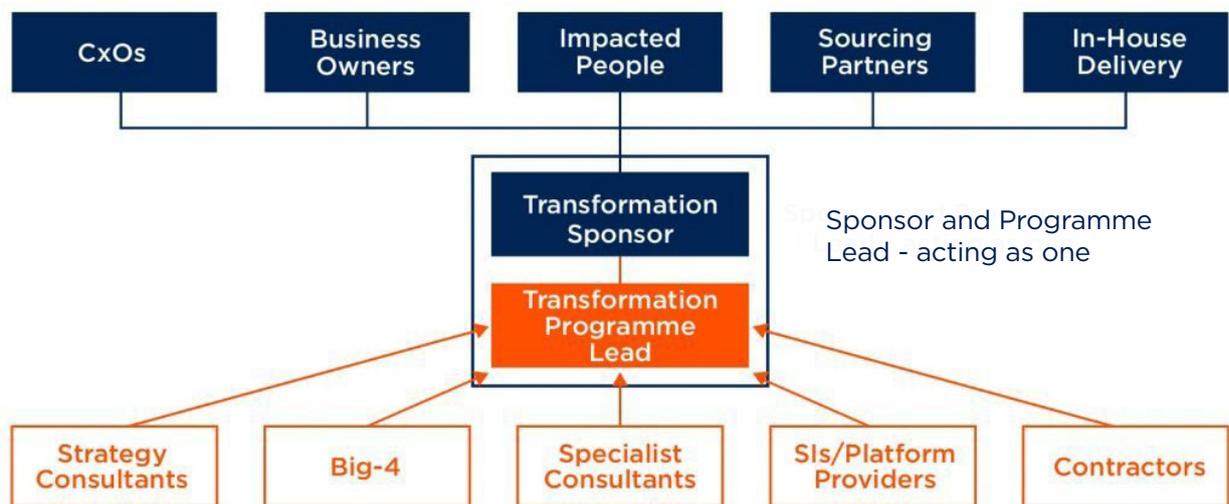
**In-house delivery**, who will want to lead key aspects of their work and use it to develop the capability of their teams.

**Secondly**, and arguably the most underestimated success factor, is having the experience and ability to understand (without bias) and then draw the best out of the external partner ecosystem.

In large transformation programmes, inevitably there will be multiple organisations providing a variety of core services to support delivery - the programme's "ecosystem".

Businesses often look to these same organisations to provide the programme leadership experience and capacity that they seek. It should be no surprise that these same organisations fall over themselves to provide that transformation leadership support.

**Draw on the core strength of your suppliers but be wary of the hidden pressures they face to sell you more.**



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## ASK YOURSELF THREE KEY QUESTIONS

Tread very carefully. Honestly and objectively ask yourself three key questions:

- 1. To what extent is transformation leadership at the heart of the organisation's business?**
- 2. Is the organisation able to deploy deeply experienced transformation leadership in its own right; able to act independently, unconstrained by underlying economic and political pressures within their firm?**
- 3. If the organisation is also part of the overall solution delivery, how confident are you that they would call out issues that lie with their own firm?**

Hire the wrong transformation leadership support and experience shows that as a business sponsor, rather than optimising your own leadership impact, you will instead be further increasing your problems and workload.

Over the years, Project One has hired many highly experienced, highly capable change leaders. Most of whom join us from the organisations in the diagram above.

Before joining, most cite significant frustration with internal pressures, frequently at odds with their clients' needs and certainly their own career aspirations. The comments below share some insights and a simple assessment against the key questions...

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## OUR CHANGE EXPERT INSIGHTS INTO THE THREE KEY QUESTIONS

**Big-4 consultancies:** bundle transformation leadership as part of functionally aligned consulting proposals. The problem here is that the experienced practitioners that you actually need to orchestrate complex business-critical change are now at Director or Partner level.

To be successful, these talented individuals are incentivised to sell and lead significant teams of more junior people who you probably don't really need, or who could be sourced through other channels. Directors and Partners operating as a standalone neutral orchestrator don't meet their personal sales targets, it hurts their careers and eventually affects behaviours (or they leave).

**Strategy consultants:** promise seamless transition from strategy support to transformation programme leadership and PMO. Great strategy advisors and great transformation leaders are like chalk and cheese.

Transformation leadership is rarely a core competency of strategy firms and the typical economic model means either there will be a high price to pay, or junior resources will be deployed without the experience and practical delivery skills required.

**SI's/Platform providers:** normally proposing more technology centric solutions, but in generic terms, suffer the same internal politics as the Big-4. Their talented Directors and Partners needing to sell even bigger teams or deals, due to tighter margins! Too commonly fixed price proposals de-scope, or underestimate highly significant business change elements.

The consequence is that even if the technical solution delivers, business performance improvement lags, or worse. Too often, internal pressures to deliver committed margin from the deal means that more of their leadership time turns to managing the contract position rather than driving for best outcomes for the programme.

**Contractors:** the talent is certainly out there. The best people are hard to find and without lots of experience, are very difficult to test in a selection process. The issue here is that you are placing your own success in the hands of an individual.

Who is bringing the second and third perspective or filling the gaps where even the most experienced have weak spots? Who steps into their shoes if something doesn't work out? If you actually need two, or three people given the demands on the programme, who arbitrates on contending points of view/ ways of working?

**Functional domain specialist consultants:** in generic terms 'a much smaller Big-4', specialising in supply chain, customer management, digital etc. The model is smaller, the pyramid pressures are the same. The heavy hitting orchestrators you need are either busy running the company, or more likely not there at all - specialist subject matter expertise is the currency of promotion or success in these businesses.

If they do exist, once more it will not be economically viable to deploy that individual in a stand-alone capacity, nor politically acceptable for that person to call out issues that in many cases may fall in their own firm's delivery.

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## WHAT DEFINES THE RIGHT KIND OF LEADERSHIP SUPPORT?

In all cases, by sourcing support through these channels, there is a significant risk that programme leadership will lose neutrality and objectivity. You run the risk of letting delivery partners 'mark their own homework', or being overly biased on how they mark the work of their ecosystem competitors. Why would you do that?

**So, what defines the right kind of transformation programme leadership support?** As a sponsor, how can you ensure that your "right-hand" shares your own passion to act with your business' interest at all times? Here are some suggestions:

- 1) Seek the deep experience and wherewithal to manage both the internal stakeholders and external delivery partners – acting as one with you as the transformation sponsor
- 2) Look for an approach that manages all dimensions of successful transformation (not just delivery), knowing how these need to be managed from the outset to set the transformation up for success
- 3) Ensure there is delivery know-how (and resilience) to tenaciously drive delivery, despite the inevitable humps and bumps along the way
- 4) Demand the necessary independence and collaborative ethic to co-ordinate all the delivery partners involved – setting them up for success, holding them to account, keeping them in their sweet spots
- 5) Make sure that you are very comfortable that your support stands alongside you, giving you the objective and impartial advice, placing your business interests first, rather than influenced by some other external motive

Transformational change is hard enough, without letting other interests get in the way. Businesses need to secure the right partner to orchestrate the transformation programme in their best interests. Choose the right partner and the transformation music will be sweet. Choose the wrong partner and the orchestra will disband before exiting rehearsals!

### DO YOU NEED CHANGE EXPERTISE?

At Project One, we are Change Experts. We are one of the fastest growing independent change consultancies in the UK and are proud to have been named a Leading UK Management Consultancy by the Financial Times.

We work with many of the UK's leading organisations, across multiple sectors, to deliver transformational and business-critical change, at scale. If you'd like to learn more or just need a sounding board, please get in touch with **David Knappett@projectone.com, Consulting Director.**