

RECOVERING YOUR CHANGE PROGRAMME

You can feel it in your bones - something isn't right.

As programme and change professionals, we have all been there. That gradual realisation that a change programme, or an entire transformation, is slipping out of control and needs recovering. The implications of calling out the problem are significant - admitting to increased costs and eroding benefits and then dealing with increased exec attention and potentially personal recriminations.

ACT NOW, BEFORE YOU BECOME PART OF THE PROBLEM

It doesn't have to be like that. Instead of waiting for things to happen to you, take control and make it happen. Act with strength and act now while you can still recover. If done in the right way, following a robust approach and with the right capability by your side, this can be seen as a successful reset, not a recovery failure.

HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU NEED TO ACT?

It may be obvious, and you may have just inherited the problem, in which case you know you can act immediately. Or you could be the Programme Director or accountable sponsor who has lived and breathed the programme which has started to exhibit some worrying signals.

The mechanical signs are there to see - programme status suddenly shifting to red from a sea of green; milestones continually moving; activities on the plan becoming more and more overlapped; costs overrunning; and benefits diminishing.

Or there could be softer, more people-related issues that aren't so immediately clear, but you can't ignore. Stress levels and sickness on the rise; increased defensive behaviour from your suppliers; stakeholders distancing themselves and required decisions not being made.

These all point you towards the need to act - get on the front foot and the path to recovery.



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WHAT IS THE RECOVERY APPROACH?

It's really important to get a good up-front sense of the root cause issues. The key to a good recovery is to solve these in a sustainable way.

The approach to dealing with the situation is also critical - your team may be bruised and tensions will be high, so there is a need to strike the right balance between impactful action and empathy. The first step is to **discover and stabilise**:

- Are there underlying problems with the business or programme environment, or are the issues more in the leadership capability and approach?
- Do you have your best team on the ground, or do you need to immediately boost this to gain the necessary recovery traction?

This stage will mitigate the highest impact risks and issues, in addition to developing the recovery strategy and confirming if continuing with the programme is the right thing to do. It will then re-confirm the programme sponsorship, exec buy-in and gain approval to proceed.

The next step is to **develop and implement the recovery plan**, driving the initial programme reset. This will involve collating and analysing the issue areas found in the discovery phase and determining who and what resources are needed to reset. It is critical to focus in on some quick wins to start gaining traction, rebuilding confidence in the programme and in the delivery team.

This phase will agree any changes to scope, design, plan, costs and benefits.

Finally, you need to **embed and sustain the recovery** by driving delivery with rigour and establishing key KPIs and a 'single version of the truth' on progress and risk tracking. At this stage, really focus in on the team - rebuilding morale, making sure that everyone is on board and pulling in the same direction.



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WHAT ARE THE KEY THINGS TO GET RIGHT?

Recovering a programme is often a very sensitive exercise, ensuring the right balance between driving the programme back on track and reviving the team, who may well have taken a dive in morale. Every situation is different, but there are some key themes to get right throughout all the stages of recovery:

- Deploy deep, independent expertise to properly assess, prioritise and focus in on the business outcomes, rather than the activity. Make sure this is not a witch-hunt, this is a time for clear direction and essential action, whilst logging the lessons learned
- Regular and clear communications are critical to the immediate team and stakeholders; this should be part of an overall people plan, whilst re-engaging and re-building morale as you go
- Never be afraid to ask the killer question - should this programme continue? Not every situation should be recovered, especially if it has been running a long time and the business environment around it has significantly changed.

NEED SUPPORT?

At Project One, we have deep experience in effective programme recovery. Our proven approach is to deploy a small team of highly experienced change leaders, with the initial goal of re-focusing the programme, re-gaining stakeholder control, minimising the cost and risk impacts and then transitioning to a sustainable delivery model.

So, if you're coming out of lockdown with a feeling that something isn't right, we'd love to help you act now and get on the front foot. Please get in touch. **david.knappett@projectone.com**