

# ASSURING PROGRAMME DELIVERY IN THE PHARMACEUTICAL SECTOR

Having played a huge and critical role in the global response to the pandemic, the Pharmaceutical industry is now facing into the new challenges that are emerging. We are seeing prices rising at 10% p.a. and driving up the development cost of new drugs to well over the \$2bn mark, at a time when consumers are less able to afford to pay more, yet have increasingly high expectations for fast consumable services. The landscape is further challenged by rising 'beyond the pill' options, technology solutions, customer expectations and loss of exclusivity across a wide range of products – all of which are eroding margin and income streams.

Pharmaceutical and Healthcare companies need to respond at pace. This is driving an increase in the number of transformation programmes alongside merger, acquisition and separation activities, either to acquire new capability or to build separate business models.

However, these multiple strands of change increase the opportunities for things to go wrong and early signals can be missed, particularly when the change is being delivered by blended, cross-regional teams, involving multiple third parties. One solution to this is to arrange an independent assurance review.

## ACT NOW, BEFORE YOU BECOME PART OF THE PROBLEM

As senior professionals, we have all been there. That gradual realisation that **a transformation is slipping out of control**. The implications of calling out the problem are significant - admitting to increased costs and eroding benefits and then dealing with increased leadership attention while equally, **watching stakeholder confidence erode**.

## HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU NEED TO ACT?

The mechanical signs are there to see - programme status 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. There could also be softer, more people related issues that aren't so immediately clear e.g. stress levels and sickness on the rise.

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

Instead of waiting for things to happen to you, **take control**. Act now with strength while you can still recover. If done in the right way, this can be seen as a successful reset, not a recovery failure.

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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**:

- Deploy deep, independent expertise to properly assess, prioritise and focus in on the business outcomes, rather than the activity
- Make sure this is not an exercise in looking for excuses nor scapegoats. 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 all 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.

## WHAT IS THE RECOVERY APPROACH?

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

The second step is to develop and implement the recovery plan. This is the time to drive the initial programme reset as it is critical to focus in on some quick wins to start gaining momentum, rebuilding confidence in the programme and in the delivery team. Now is also the time to agree on any changes to be made 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 for the future of the programme.

## DOES YOUR PROGRAMME NEED CHANGE ASSURANCE?

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 any of this sounds relevant, we'd love to help you to act now and get on the front foot. Please get in touch. [jon.griffiths@projectone.com](mailto:jon.griffiths@projectone.com)