

Why is a good Project Manager so hard to find?

Simon Roller

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Given the amount of skills required to deliver a PRINCE2 project, it is not surprising that project managers either walk on water or drown in workload.

This white paper explores the range of skills that make up a Project Manager role, utilising both the PRINCE2 methodology and the Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA).

These insights will help to show that there are other factors influencing what makes a Project Manager "good", and challenge the statement that "good" Project Managers are hard to find!

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What does a good Project Manager do?

I was speaking with a client a while ago on the role of SFIA, and how this relates to Project Managers, when we got onto the subject of Project Managers in general, and the availability of good ones. Why is a good Project Manager so hard to find? Well, to answer that question, first we need to dissect what a good Project Manager does, and where they sit in the 'Business Change' hierarchy.

Looking at SFIA, the Skills Framework for the Information Age (www.sfia-online.org), there are a number of different skills which might be applicable within the 'Strategy and Architecture' and 'Change and Transformation' categories, as shown in figure 1. In addition, the 'Relationships and Engagement' category and others can also provide relevant skills, but the unique mix of skills may vary for different organisations or teams dependent on the specific nature of the project management role – for example, if the Project Manager has to manage a team of software developers, the "Systems development management (DLMG)" skill may also be considered for inclusion.

Skills Framework for the Information Age version 6



		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
		Follow	Assist	Apply	Enable	Ensure, advise	Initiate, influence	Set strategy, inspire, mobilise	
Strategy and architecture	Information strategy					IT governance GOVN			
						IT strategy and planning ITSP			
						Information management IRMG		Information systems coordination ISCO	
						Information security SCTY			
						Information assurance INAS			
		Information content publishing ICPM			Analytics INAN				
	Advice and guidance					Consultancy CNSL			
	Business strategy and planning			Research BSCH					
						Technical specialism TECH			
						IT management ITMG			
					Financial management FBMT				
					Innovation INOV	Business process improvement BPRE			
Technical strategy and planning					Business risk management BURM				
					Sustainability strategy SUST				
					Emerging technology monitoring EMRG				
					Continuity management COPL				
						Sustainability management SUMI			
						Network planning NTPL			
						Solution architecture ARCH			
Change and transformation	Business change implementation					Methods and tools METL			
						Portfolio management POMG			
						Project management PRMG		Programme management PGMG	
						Portfolio, programme and project support PROF			
						Business analysis BUAN			
	Business change management					Requirements definition and management REQM			
						Business process testing BPTS			
							Change implementation planning and management CIPM		
							Organisation design and implementation ORDI		
						Business modelling BSMD		Benefits management BENM	
					Sustainability assessment SUAS				

Figure 1: SFIA Skills within 'Strategy and Architecture' and 'Change and Transformation'

The sub-category of 'Business Change Implementation' defines the classic Portfolio, Programme and Project Management skills.

Portfolio Management: The development and application of a systematic management framework to define and deliver a portfolio of programmes, projects and/or ongoing services, in support of specific business strategies and objectives. Includes the implementation of a strategic investment appraisal and decision making process based on a clear understanding of cost, risk, inter-dependencies, and impact on existing business activities, enabling measurement and objective evaluation of potential changes and the benefits to be realised. The prioritisation of resource utilisation and changes to be implemented. The regular review of portfolios. The management of the service pipeline (proposed or in development), service catalogue (live or available for deployment) and retired services.

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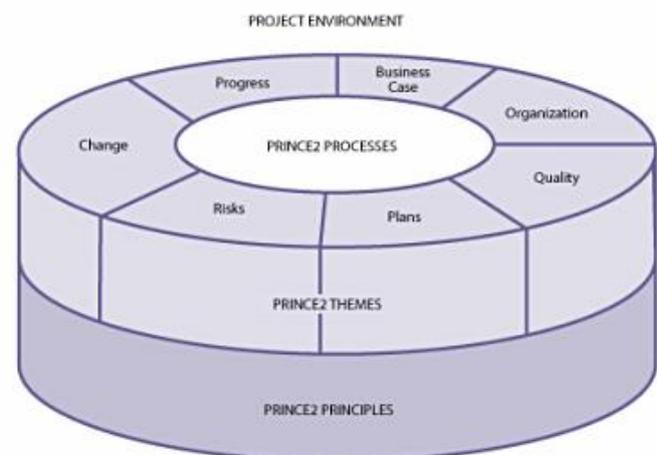
Programme Management: The identification, planning and coordination of a set of related projects within a programme of business change, to manage their interdependencies in support of specific business strategies and objectives. The maintenance of a strategic view over the set of projects, providing the framework for implementing business initiatives, or large-scale change, by conceiving, maintaining and communicating a vision of the outcome of the programme and associated benefits. (The vision, and the means of achieving it, may change as the programme progresses). Agreement of business requirements, and translation of requirements into operational plans. Determination, monitoring, and review of programme scope, costs, and schedule, programme resources, inter-dependencies and programme risk.

Project Management: The management of projects, typically (but not exclusively) involving the development and implementation of business processes to meet identified business needs, acquiring and utilising the necessary resources and skills, within agreed parameters of cost, timescales, and quality.

Portfolio, programme and project support: The provision of support and guidance on portfolio, programme and project management processes, procedures, tools and techniques. Support includes definition of portfolios, programmes, and projects; advice on the development, production and maintenance of business cases; time, resource, cost and exception plans, and the use of related software tools. Tracking and reporting of programme/project progress and performance are also covered, as is the capability to facilitate all aspects of portfolio/ programme/ project meetings, workshops and documentation.

These skills align very well to the PRINCE2 (Projects IN Controlled Environments) methodology, and given the heritage of both SFIA and PRINCE2, this is not really surprising. PRINCE2 recognises that project management is different to programme management, which is also different to portfolio management. Within the PRINCE2 guidance, there are roles defined for both project management as well as project support.

So, if we look at project management in isolation, what would PRINCE2 suggest are the key activities associated with effective project management? Well, a clue would be to look at the 7 themes.



The PRINCE2 themes describe aspects of project management that must be addressed continually and in parallel throughout the project and explain the specific treatment required by PRINCE2 for various project management disciplines and why they are necessary.

SFIA has a number of skills within the 'Change and Transformation', 'Strategy and Architecture', and 'Relationship and Engagement' categories that align well to these themes.

By linking the SFIA skills to the PRINCE2 themes, we will get a better picture as to the role of the Project Manager.

Table 1 details the typical relevant skill definitions within the SFIA Framework.

SFIA Skill	Skill Code	Skill Description
Project management	PRMG	The management of projects, typically (but not exclusively) involving the development and implementation of business processes to meet identified business needs, acquiring and utilising the necessary resources and skills, within agreed parameters of cost, timescales, and quality.
Change implementation planning and management	CIPM	The definition and management of the process for deploying and integrating new digital capabilities into the business in a way that is sensitive to and fully compatible with business operations.
Benefits management	BENM	Monitoring for the emergence and effective realisation of anticipated benefits (typically specified as part of the business case for a change programme or project). Action (typically by the programme management team) to optimise the business impact of individual and combined benefits.
Relationship management	RLMT	The identification, analysis, management and monitoring of relationships with and between stakeholders. (Stakeholders are individuals, groups, or organisations who may affect, be affected by, or perceive themselves to be affected by decisions, activities and outcomes related to products, services or changes to products and services). The clarification of mutual needs and commitments through consultation and consideration of impacts. For example, the coordination of all promotional activities to one or more clients to achieve satisfaction for the client and an acceptable return for the supplier; assistance to the client to ensure that maximum benefit is gained from products and services supplied.
Business risk management	BURM	The planning and implementation of organisation-wide processes and procedures for the management of risk to the success or integrity of the business, especially those arising from the use of information technology, reduction or non-availability of energy supply or inappropriate disposal of materials, hardware or data.
Consultancy	CNSL	The provision of advice and recommendations, based on expertise and experience, to address client needs. May deal with one specialist subject area, or can be wide ranging and address strategic business issues. May also include support for the implementation of any agreed solutions.

The PRINCE2 themes and their alignment to SFIA is shown in Table 2

Theme	Skill Code	PRINCE2 Theme Description
Business Case	BENM	The project starts with an idea which is considered to have potential value for the organization concerned. This theme addresses how the idea is developed into a viable investment proposition for the organization and

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		how project management maintains the focus on the organization's objectives throughout the project.
Organization	RLMT	The organization sponsoring the project needs to allocate the work to managers who will be responsible for it and steer it through to completion. Projects are cross-functional so the normal line function structures are not suitable. This theme describes the roles and responsibilities in the temporary PRINCE2 project management team required to manage the project effectively.
Quality	CNSL	The initial idea will only be understood as a broad outline. This theme explains how the outline is developed so that all participants understand the quality attributes of the products to be delivered – and then how project management will ensure that these requirements are subsequently delivered.
Plans	CIPM	PRINCE2 projects proceed on the basis of a series of approved plans. This theme complements the Quality theme by describing the steps required to develop plans and the PRINCE2 techniques that should be applied. In PRINCE2, the plans are matched to the needs of the personnel at the various levels of the organization. They are the focus for communication and control throughout the project.
Risk	BURM	Projects typically entail more risk than stable operational activity. This theme addresses how project management manages the uncertainties in its plans and in the wider project environment.
Change	CIPM	This theme describes how project management assesses and acts upon issues which have a potential impact on any of the baseline aspects of the project (its plans and completed products). Issues may be unanticipated general problems, requests for change or instances of quality failure.
Progress	PRMG	This theme addresses the ongoing viability of the plans. The theme explains the decision-making process for approving plans, the monitoring of actual performance and the escalation process if events do not go according to plan. Ultimately, the Progress theme determines whether and how the project should proceed.

What are the barriers to success?

If we accept the PRINCE2 view of the world, and we acknowledge the different activities and skills required to run a project, we see the diversity of skills for a PM is probably one of the greatest within the IT profession.

Given the number of skills required to deliver a PRINCE2 project, it is not surprising that project managers either walk on water or drown in workload. The table below shows an example of some of the different roles, and the SFIA skills and levels typically required for these roles:

Role	SFIA Skill Code and Level					
Business Analyst	BPRE 5	BUAN 4	RLMT 5	DTAN 4	REQM 4	
Senior Business Analyst	BPRE 5	BUAN 5	RLMT 5	DTAN 5	REQM 5	
Project Manager	CNSL 5	PRMG 5	RLMT 5	CIPM 5	BENM 5	BURM 4
Senior Project Manager	CNSL 5	PRMG 6	RLMT 6	CIPM 6	BENM 5	BURM 5

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Systems Analyst	CNSL 5	DESN 4	PROG 4				
Senior Systems Analyst	CNSL 5	DESN 5	PROG 4	STPL 5			
Software Developer	PORT 4	TECH 5	PROG 4	TEST 4			
Senior Software Developer	DLMG 5	TECH 5	PROG 5	PORT 5			
Test Manager	TEST 5	METL 4	HSIN 4	PORT 4			
Tester	USEV 3	TEST 3	HSIN 3	PORT 3			
Technical Author	INCA 4						
Snr Infrastructure Engineer	CNSL 5	TECH 5	EMRG 5	HSIN 4			
Solutions Architect	CNSL 5	TECH 5	EMRG 5	ARCH 5			
Systems Auditing & Security	SCTY 6	ISCO 6	GOVN 5	CNSL 6	BURM 6	SCAD 5	
Programme & Portfolio Mgmt	POMG 6	PGMG 6	PRMG 6	GOVN 6	BENM 6	BURM 6	PROF 5
Strategic Business Planner	CNSL 5	REQM 6	INOV 6	RSCH 5	EMRG 5		
IT Advisory & Consulting	GOVN 7	ISCO 7	STPL 6	CNSL 6	RSCH 5	BURM 6	

Clue 1

Having the ability to 'spin the plates' on all the required activities whilst displaying the skills associated with these activities, is a rare talent.

What seems to be the norm is that project managers are proficient in 3 to 4 of the skills required to support the themes, and this needs to be taken into account when deciding what sort of PM is required for each project. In a PRINCE2 project, the selection of the PM is made by the 'Senior Executive' responsible for the project. In this situation, the choice of the PM should be influenced by the type of project. For example, if the project is mainly infrastructure related and relatively low risk, then the level of risk management and relationship management may be reduced. If we are looking to manage a complex project with multiple stakeholders and involving business risk, then the RLMT and BURM skills will need to be higher.

Another issue is the size and complexity of the project. If we look at some of the Project Management skills, the skill description changes between levels 5 and 6, illustrating those roles may require a high skill level depending on the task at hand.

This distinction would often be seen as the difference between a Project Manager and a Senior Project Manager.

Skill Name	Code	Level 5 Description	Level 6 Description
Project management	PRMG	Takes full responsibility for the definition, approach, facilitation and satisfactory completion of mediumscaled projects (typically with direct business impact and firm deadlines). Identifies, assesses and manages risks to the success of the project. Ensures that realistic project plans are maintained and ensures regular and accurate communication to stakeholders, consistent with the methods in use (agile, waterfall, etc). Ensures Quality reviews occur on schedule and according to procedure. Manages the change control procedure, and ensures that project deliverables are completed within agreed cost, timescale and resource budgets, and are signed off. Provides effective leadership to the project team, and takes appropriate action where team performance deviates from agreed tolerances.	Takes full responsibility for the definition, documentation and successful completion of complex projects (typically with significant business, political, or high-profile impact, and high-risk dependencies). Selects methods and tools, using iterative techniques where appropriate, ensuring that effective project control, change control, risk management and testing processes are maintained. Monitors and controls resources, revenue and capital costs against the project budget and manages expectations of all project stakeholders.

Change implementation planning and management	CIPM	Creates the business readiness plan, taking into consideration IT deployment, data migration, capability deployment (training and engagement activities) and any business activities required to integrate new digital processes or jobs into the "business as usual" environment. Determines the readiness levels of business users with regard to upcoming changes; uncovers readiness gaps and creates and implements action plans to close the gaps prior to going live. Assists the user community in the provision of transition support and change planning, and liaises with the project team. Monitors and reports progress on business readiness targets, business engagement activity, training design and deployment activities, key operational metrics and return to productivity measures. Defines the series and sequence of activities to bring stakeholders to the required level of commitment, prior to going live.	Ensures that there is a business perspective on how any new technical capabilities will be integrated into the business, including planning around key business cycles, selecting appropriate customers for migration, etc. Initiates the business implementation plan, including all the activities that the business needs to do to prepare for new technical components and technologies. Ensures sites deliver site implementation plans that align with the overall plan. Tracks and reports against these activities to ensure progress. Defines and manages the activities to ensure achievement of the projected business benefits after delivery. Outlines key business engagement messages that need to be communicated throughout the programme/project.
Benefits management	BENM	Identifies specific measures and mechanisms by which benefits can be measured, and plans to activate these mechanisms at the required time. Monitors benefits against what was predicted in the business case and ensures that all participants are informed and involved throughout the change programme and fully prepared to exploit the new operational business environment once it is in place. Supports senior management to ensure that all plans, work packages and deliverables are aligned to the expected benefits and leads activities required in the realisation of the benefits of each part of the change programme.	Promotes the change programme vision to staff at all levels of the business operation, brings order to complex situations, and keeps a focus on business objectives. Works with senior people responsible for the line business operation, to ensure maximum improvements are made in the business operations as groups of projects deliver their products into operational use. Maintains the business case for funding the programme and confirms continuing business viability of the programme at regular intervals.
Relationship management	RLMT	Identifies the communications needs of each stakeholder group in conjunction with business owners and subject matter experts. Translates communications / stakeholder engagement strategies into specific tasks. Facilitates open communication and discussion between stakeholders, acting as a single point of contact by developing, maintaining and working to stakeholder engagement strategies and plans. (For example, may oversee the organisation's promotional/selling activities to one or more clients, to ensure that such activities are aligned with corporate marketing objectives). Negotiates with stakeholders at senior levels, ensuring that organisational policy and strategies are adhered to. Provides informed feedback to assess and promote understanding.	Builds long-term, strategic relationships with senior stakeholders in the largest client organisations (internal or external). Acts as a single point of contact and facilitates access to colleagues and subject experts. Maintains a strong understanding of clients' industry and business, assists clients in the formation of IT strategies, and acts to ensure that they are offered products and services aligned to these strategies. Negotiates at senior level on technical and commercial issues. Influences the development and enhancement of services, products and systems, and oversees the management and planning of business opportunities. Oversees monitoring of relationships and acts on relevant feedback.

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In my own field of IT Governance, this has been highlighted a number of times. For the roll out of a Process related project, where we are adopting a set of new processes across an organisation, you would want a PM with excellent relationship [RLMT], consulting [CNSL] and Change Management [CIPM] skills. Often when a 'technical' PM tries to run a 'people or process' oriented project these skills may be lacking, and the desired outcome is not achieved.

Clue 2

Not all projects are the same, and the profile and mix of skill of a project manager needs to be aligned to the type and scope of the project brief.

Using a framework like SFIA helps organisations define the skills required to perform a role, and mitigate the risk if a particular skill is missing. Knowing where deficiencies exist within an individual allows the manager to develop the person with a targeted development plan. Lastly, using the 7 themes to classify the project will assist in identifying the correct resource to support the project.

Lastly, organisations do not develop or grow their Project Management capability, nor provide the structure and support to get the best value from their PM's. Most of the PM type courses (like PRINCE2) detail the principles and the processes required for project management, but rely on the PMO to foster and develop those skills.

Many organisations we speak to have a PMO (Project Management Office) in name only, and do not provide either the processes, artefacts or support structures required to assist the project manager. We do not often see organisations use knowledge management techniques to assist in lessons learned or templates for common project management artefacts. It is very rare to see project managers trained in ITIL, Risk Management, Benefits Management or Relationship Management. Instead we train them in Microsoft Project and the use of Gantt charts.

Clue 3

Being trained in Project Management and the supporting technology will only be partially successful unless organisations create a supporting and nurturing environment to grow the skills and capabilities within their project management profession.

So, in summary, having a methodology like PRINCE2 is a useful governance model to assist with project delivery. Linking this with a framework like SFIA will assist in developing the competencies required to support the project teams and deliver better business outcomes. Organisations need to appreciate that good Project Management requires the coordination of a large number of complex skills, and these skills need to be matched against the projects they support.

Given the complexity and the diversity of business and IT projects, and the pressures of time, cost and quality, perhaps the issue is not that good Project Managers are hard to find, more that we need to be more selective as to how Project Managers are used, and recognise the risks associated with skills gaps.

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About the author

Simon Roller's career started in the UK, where he worked in IT Operations and Data Centre management for Fortune 100 companies, focusing on the Financial Services industry and asset management in particular.

On moving to Australia, Simon joined Hewlett Packard and continued to provide consulting services in IT Best Practice and Data Centre automation. Simon held a variety of country, regional and global roles during his time at Hewlett Packard, ranging from business management, marketing and strategy.

All through his career, Simon has enjoyed working with people. His deep technical capabilities allow him to liaise between IT and the business, and many of his consulting activities focus on strategy, management of change and internal communications. Simon has been through a number of large and complex mergers (Digital, Compaq and HP), and is uniquely positioned to understand how large organisations adapt to change.

Simon is a Chartered Fellow of the BCS, the Chartered Institute for IT. He has contributed to the on-going development of IT Service Management and holds an ITIL v3 Expert certification. He is a Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP), a Certified Information Systems Auditor (CISA), and Certified in Governance Enterprise IT (CGEIT), a Prince 2 Practitioner, an Accredited SFIA consultant and a member of the global SFIA Council.



For more information, contact

Nicole Minster

Marketing Manager

PO Box 1070

Darling VIC 3145

M: +61 447 178 010

E: nicole.minster@bsmimpact.com

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