

## ***Advances in Project Management Series<sup>1</sup>***

# **Governance in a portfolio, programme and project managed context <sup>2</sup>**

**By Robert Buttrick**

## **What is “governance”?**

### **Some definitions and perspectives on governance**

The Oxford Dictionary’s definition of governance is simply:

conduct the policy, actions, and affairs of (a state, organisation, or people) with authority.  
control, influence, or regulate (a person, action, or course of events).

The OECD defines corporate governance in its *Principles of Corporate Governance* (2015), as:

*“Corporate governance involves a set of relationships between a company’s management, its board, its shareholders and other stakeholders. Corporate governance also provides the structure through which the objectives of the company are set, and the means of attaining those objectives and monitoring performance are determined.”*

The OECD, with the G20, sets out what it believes are the essential features of corporate governance a state should promote to build an environment of trust, transparency and accountability necessary for fostering long-term investment, financial stability and business integrity, thereby supporting stronger growth and more inclusive societies. The objective is that countries should enshrine the principles in their own legislative and regulatory frameworks to improve business practices and hence, performance.

The public sector faces many of the same challenges as the private sector and so adopts many of the same principles of corporate governance. In the UK public sector, for example, governance is covered in *Managing Public Money* (2019) and in *Corporate governance in central government departments: code of good practice* (2017). These concentrate mostly on roles and accountabilities but also cover risk management. The code of good practice states:

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<sup>1</sup>The PMWJ Advances in Project Management series includes articles by authors of program and project management books published by Routledge worldwide. [To view project management books published by Routledge publishers, click here](#). See this month’s author profile at the end of this article.

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*“Corporate governance is the way in which organisations are directed, controlled and led. It defines relationships and the distribution of rights and responsibilities among those who work with and in the organisation, determines the rules and procedures through which the organisation’s objectives are set, and provides the means of attaining those objectives and monitoring performance. Importantly, it defines where accountability lies throughout the organisation.”*

### **Governance – you can’t ignore it**

‘Governance’ is an important word and can make our business and public sector leaders prick up their ears. Governance is nearly always associated with two other words: ‘risk’ and ‘accountability’. Twenty years ago, governance was rarely talked about but now it is enshrined in law, regulations and codes of conduct. What happened? In the private sector, there were a number of well publicised cases of financial irregularities. Enron in the USA is the most notable, but by no means an isolated case. This event immediately, and severely, impacted Enron’s share price leading to bankruptcy; senior executives were imprisoned and Enron’s auditor, Arthur Andersen was found guilty of destroying documents and ceased trading world-wide. More importantly, this scandal knocked people’s confidence in business generally. The Enron scandal happened in 2001 but despite the publicity and increasing regulation, malpractice continued, led from the top, as evidenced by the profit scandal at Tesco in 2014, at Volkswagen in 2015 (falsifying car emissions), at BT Italy (alleged accounting fraud), at Carillion in 2018 (overestimating future income on large contracts), plus a rash of news reports in 2018 around malpractice and abuse in major charities.

Governance, however, is not just about avoiding scandal. Good governance promotes good performance, whether in the public, private or charitable sectors. In the opening pages of *Good Governance, A Code for the Voluntary and Community Sector* (2001) Dame Suzi Leather, Chair of the UK’s Charity Commission says:

*“The central importance of good governance to all sectors of the economy is now clearer than ever. The crisis which beset our financial system has highlighted how dangerous a tick-box approach can be. Truly good governance has to be lived. Each and every trustee and board member needs to embrace its values, and apply them to the particular needs and circumstances of their organisation.”*

This Code was updated in 2017 and top of the list of changes were:

- a new section on the importance of effective leadership;
- recognition that culture and behaviours are as important as structures and processes.

In other words, governance is about *being* good not just *looking* good, starting at the top of an organisation. Good processes and systems are not enough.

## **Governance in the context of portfolios, programmes and projects**

Clearly, 'governance' is a hot topic. All private and public sector organisations run programmes and projects, which should always be undertaken within the context of a higher-level organisation and its governance. In fact, the governance of portfolios, programmes and projects should be an integrated part of overall organisational (or corporate) governance, and should not be treated as an added extra. There needs to be consistency and compatibility between the governance of parts of an organisation's activities and governance of the whole organisation.

How can governance be applied in practice in the context of portfolio, programme and project management? The characteristics of effective governance are a mix of:

**purpose:** to set the vision, values and objectives which are compelling, realistic and take a long-term view of achieving the organisation's objectives;

**knowledge:** an understanding the business of the organisation and political, economic, social and technological context it operates within;

**behaviour:** in terms of culture, ethics, reputation and integrity;

**process:** to enable the right level of control, delegation, operational efficiency and effectiveness;

**structure:** having the right tiers of accountability.

These characteristics, shown in Figure 1, are wide-ranging and can help you challenge some common misconceptions about governance:

- governance is NOT a structure, although structure is a vital element;
- governance is NOT a process, although processes are a vital element;
- governance is NOT just about decision making, although decision making is a vital activity within governance.

If you restrict your perception of 'governance', you risk limiting how you apply governance and how people perceive governance, and as a result you can end up by ignoring people's behaviours and attitudes. As emphasised in Figure 1, process or method, systems and tools, structure and accountability, and culture and behaviours do not sit in isolation as each affects the others. Good governance relies on using these four levers together, appropriately and proportionately, to focus on a common purpose.

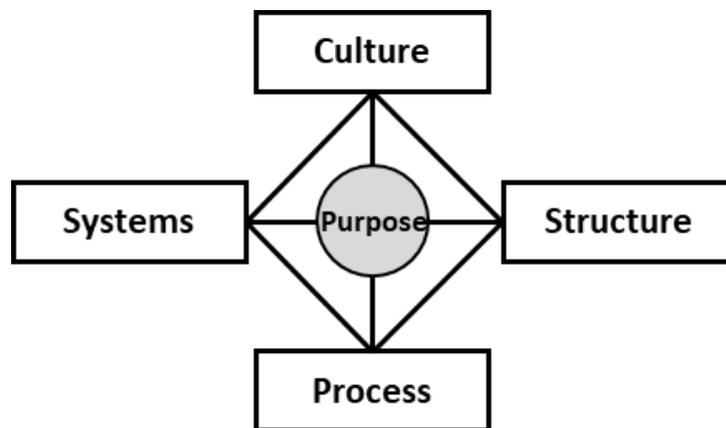


Figure 1 The characteristics for effective governance

The term 'structure' in the OECD's definition of corporate governance can be interpreted as 'organisation' or 'arrangement' and I believe that is what the OECD meant. Unfortunately, the word 'structure' is often interlinked with 'organisation structure' in the business world, it can be misinterpreted. Often 'governance structure' is used to describe the reporting line of senior management boards within the company. While this does need to be defined, it is not enough for good governance, especially in the context of portfolios, programmes and projects, which operate in a matrix, across the organisation structure.

Similarly, the term 'process' can simply mean 'activities' but in a management context, it frequently refers to the formal management of activities where an input is converted to an output, using resources. Governance is not just about blindly following a process, although following defined processes is often an essential part of governance.

Decisions are a vital aspect of governance but if governance is concerned solely with decision making, that could lead to the right decisions being implemented in an illegal or unethical way. For effective governance, the leadership team needs to ensure their organisation has effective policies, processes and systems in place but must also promote the right attitudes. To achieve this, the leadership team needs to:

- work effectively, both as individuals and a team;
- understand its role, as individuals and as a group;
- ensure delivery of organisational purpose;
- exercise effective control;
- visibly behave with integrity;
- be accountable.

Sometimes, there is a requirement to be 'open'. In some organisations and in some situations openness can be difficult, or even contravene statutory or legal requirements. For example:

- there are restrictions relating to publicly quoted companies on what the directors may say at particular times in the year (so called closed periods);
- certain work is classified under legislation (such as the Official Secrets Act in the UK);
- information might be restricted for commercial reasons.

Rather than 'open', I would say that leaders need to lead by example, visibly displaying the types of behaviour they wish to promote and ensuring those with governance related accountabilities have access to the information they need.

## **Constraints on the governance of portfolios, programmes and projects**

### **No-one has complete freedom to do what they want**

Understanding what governance is should lead to the realisation that it is not possible for a manager to have total freedom to apply governance on a particular portfolio, programme or project. Constraints are imposed by external factors, as well as by the organisation itself. Organisational constraints should not be regarded as 'bad'. The more consistent an organisation is in its approach to directing and managing its work, the less time is wasted in deciding 'who is accountable' when decisions are needed. This particularly applies to an organisation's most senior people: they simply do not have the time and energy to find out all the different nuances of naming and lines of authority on every programme or project they are the sponsor for or stakeholders in. Consistent governance leads to good practice. A portfolio, programme or a project is simply a set of activities within a larger organisation and the leaders of that organisation have an obligation to apply effective governance to everything the organisation does. As such, portfolio, programme or project governance is a part of their corporate governance; the different aspects of governance should be traceable from the top to the bottom of the organisation.

Constraints on governance come from a number of sources, such as:

- laws, regulations and codes of practice;
- corporate policies;
- technical conformance;
- processes and methods to be used;
- contracts with suppliers, clients and customers.

### **Legal and regulatory**

In any country, the legal and regulatory frameworks are paramount. All business activities must comply with both civil and criminal law. In many cases, there are also regulators and voluntary codes of practice which prescribe certain behaviours, processes and practices. Some industries, like pharmaceuticals, telecommunications, finance, utilities, railways and aviation, are more highly regulated than others.

## **Corporate policies**

To protect its reputation and operate within the law and other binding agreements, organisations have policies dictating the boundaries of governance for particular topics, such as diversity, safety, environment and sustainability, as well as the more routine human resource and technical topics. Policies determine the way processes are designed and which practices are used, setting the overall vision for each topic.

## **Technical conformance**

With the rise of platform-based product, service and management systems, many organisations seek to promote operational efficiencies by ensuring the maximum reuse of standard solution components. This might be a financial or ERP platform, like SAP or Oracle, or an automotive chassis serving a number of car models. It could be that only certain components or ‘parts’ are selected from specific preferred suppliers or from the organisation’s internally certified catalogue of products or components.

## **Processes and methods**

Standard processes and methods dictate or advise how to undertake certain activities. Some (processes) are very rigid, others (methods) are looser, leaving a lot of discretion in their application. Using consistent processes and methods creates the opportunity to share experience and for people to work together more efficiently.

## **Contracts**

Contracts with the suppliers limit degrees of freedom and may impose, on both parties, particular governance requirements, say for meetings, procedures and payment triggers. Similarly, a contract with a customer can limit management’s autonomy and impose, on both parties, particular requirements influencing how governance is applied. It might, for example, dictate that a supplier has to inform a customer as soon as they believe a delay or overspend is likely; it might define how changes to the contract’s scope are approved and paid for; it always defines how and when payments will be made.

## **Making governance work in practice**

### **Think in terms of a governance framework**

In simple terms, a leadership team should set the organisation’s long-term vision and protect its reputation and values. Central to this is a focus on accountability and risk. As ‘governance structure’ and ‘governance process’ are inadequate vehicles for defining governance, I refer to ‘governance framework’ as this is more inclusive and can mean all the aspects shown in Figure

1. A governance framework needs to be established which meets the need of all overriding legal and policy constraints. The framework should include the authority limits, decision making roles and rules, degree of autonomy, assurance needs, reporting structure, accountabilities and responsibilities, together with the more detailed management frameworks for portfolio, programme and project management, as well as for any other possible type of work. Looking at governance in this way means that it encompasses how the entire organisation works (or should work).

### **Keep governance appropriate and proportionate**

The number of topics that need to be considered when designing a governance framework can be daunting and could, in inexperienced hands, lead to a plethora of systems and processes being developed that hardly anyone can follow, or if they are followed, could leave the organisation moribund. Inappropriate and disproportionate processes could lead people to ignore the very controls needed to keep the organization and its people 'safe'. It is for this reason that good governance must include cultural and behavioural aspects. In an organization where people have an instinctive view on what is right (or wrong), those behaviours act as a defence mechanism. Getting the **principles** behind a governance framework is therefore very important as those principles can over-ride processes and help when dealing with extraordinary situations where there is no predetermined action plan or process.

Whilst it is easy to say that governance should be appropriate and proportionate, the right balance can be difficult to achieve. Light touch governance with significant delegation and less prescriptive processes can be more effective than tight governance where controls are centralized. For example, the closer decision-making is to the action, the quicker and more relevant it usually is, yet most finance departments control spending based on the amount to be spent and the manager's pay grade. That is to say, spending authority is based on **who** spends the money and **what** it is spent on, rather than **why** the money is spent and the **impact** that might have on the wider organisation. In a portfolio, programme and project management context which is not supported by a matrixed financial system at operational level, this can severely delay work as spending decisions can move from the portfolio boundary into the organisation's line management, who might have little knowledge of what the portfolio or programme is set up to achieve.

Good information flow, up, down and across the organisation can be an enabler for greater local autonomy without which upper tiers of management lose visibility. For this reason, deciding what information is needed, who needs it and when is critical. One major organization had the strap-line "Accountability, visibility and control" to emphasize the points that unless we know who is accountable for what, and can see the information we need, we cannot apply the appropriate controls.

For most organizations, one enterprise-wide method or process for portfolio, programme and project management is not usually appropriate for every type of work in every circumstance.

Some adaption is normally needed if the work is to be run both effectively and efficiently, to suit both the type of work and the people involved. Tailoring alters or adapts methods or processes for use in a particular situation and tailoring guidelines describe, for commonly found circumstances, permitted modifications to a process or method. For the less usual situations, managers would need to fall back on the principles, discussed earlier and decide the appropriate approach – after all, isn't that what managers are for?

### Harness the matrix

By working across departmental or functional boundaries, you are operating a matrix. You probably already have the accountabilities and targets defined for each function (or department) but, in a matrix it is also necessary to define them for the 'horizontal' dimension, where activity follows the value chain, rather than the cost centre budget. In the modern world, I would argue that every organisation is operating in a matrix, but many do not recognise this and so do not have the appropriate systems in place for effective management. In a matrix, it is necessary to define:

- roles, which work across the departments, independent of jobs;
- processes, designed to enable end-to-end working, including whatever activities from whatever departments are needed;
- systems which support the cross-functional processes;
- structures to show tiering, so that there is traceability from organisation to work package and vice-versa.

These horizontal facets are not to be used instead of the traditional vertical structures, but in addition to them. The vertical and horizontal roles, processes, structures and systems need to be defined to work together. See Figure 2.

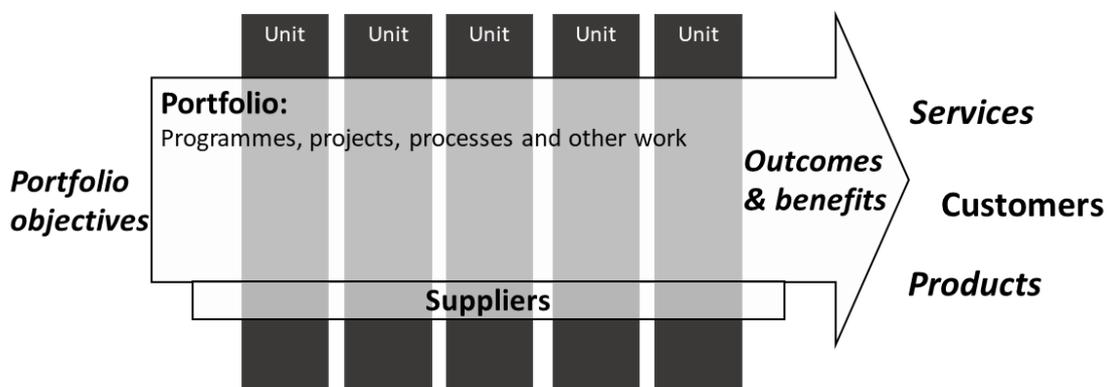


Figure 2 Portfolios, programmes and projects are key management structures in a matrix

### **Take account of complexity**

Complexity is an indicator of how difficult it is to undertake a programme or project. The greater the complexity, the greater the risk of not delivering the intended outcomes and hence realizing the benefits. Complexity can be measured in relative or absolute terms:

- absolute complexity relates to how inherently difficult the work is to do, regardless of the organisation undertaking it. It is therefore useful for benchmarking across organisations.
- relative complexity deals with how difficult an individual organisation would find undertaking the work.

Complexity is useful for identifying aspects of the programme or project that contribute to risk and might therefore need special governance arrangements or the support of specialist suppliers. This would relate to:

- the organisation's prior experience and track record of similar work;
- what makes the work new or innovative;
- whether the organisation has the skills, knowledge and tools needed to undertake the work

In most cases, the application of relative complexity is more useful for portfolio and programme managers. Tools have been developed to support this, of which Figure.3 is an example output and uses a range of topics to illustrate different dimensions to complexity, including:

- business criticality; how important the work is to the organisation;
- reputation exposure; the damage that could be done, if it goes wrong;
- financial exposure; the amount of money at risk;
- interdependencies; how complicated the schedule network is;
- legal, regulatory constraints; the level of externally binding constraints;
- business transformation; how much the organisation needs to change;
- schedule flexibility; how rigid the target dates are;
- requirements and scope; the extent to which the desired outcome is known;
- output innovation; whether it has been done this before;
- delivery processes; whether there are already processes to undertake the work;
- team dynamics and size; how well established or dispersed the team is;
- supplier involvement; the extent you need to rely on suppliers.

These topics might not be the most significant factors for every organisation, but give an idea of the types of topics to consider in a specific situation. If each factor does not carry equal weight, weightings can be applied.

### Complexity Chart - Weighted Scores

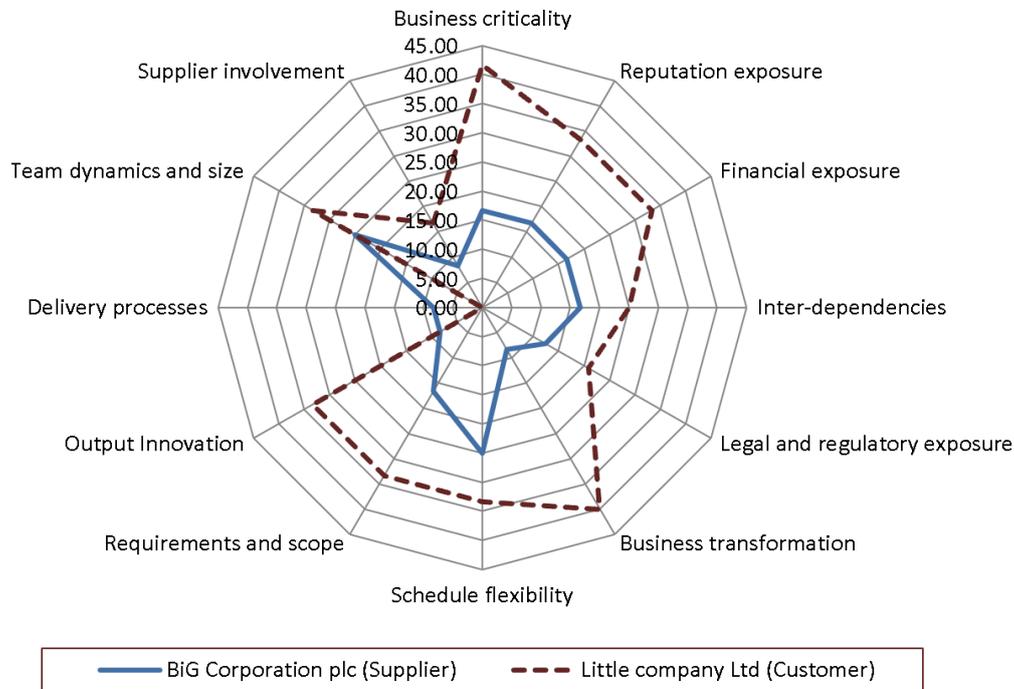


Figure 3 Example of a complexity assessment for a large organization (BiG Corporation) providing services to its smaller customer (Little company ltd).

Complexity should be assessed regularly as it can change through the life of a programme or project. On long standing programmes, the necessary tools and processes might be developed, the team could become well-established, requirements better understood and thereby reducing complexity (and hence risk). Furthermore, by assessing a portfolio in terms of the complexity of its component parts, the portfolio manager can critically examine each in terms of their risk, and enable them to be managed according to the organisation’s overall risk appetite, applying available resources and skills in the best way to deliver the most desirable outcomes. It can also be used to make the organisation’s senior managers aware of the most complex, and therefore risky, work in their portfolio and prompt the application of appropriate assurance and management attention. If used consistently within an organisation, a complexity assessment might also form part of the review prior to a “go”, “no go” gate decision.

Complexity assessments can be extended to support other decisions, such as recommending the grade of programme or project manager required for a particular piece of work. This can be useful, especially when convincing a Human Resources department of the reasons you need, what might seem to them, an expensive programme manager. For customer programmes or projects, you can use the tool to assess a bid from the customer’s viewpoint. This can throw up some startling results, the most striking being that what might seem a to the supplier a trivial

piece of work could, for the customer, be a ‘make or break’ point for their entire organisation. This is often the case, when procurement managers choose, so called ‘safe’ suppliers, on account of their scale and market power; perhaps, not always so safe! If the work failed, the supplier could shrug it off, but the customer might go into liquidation. Figure 3 shows an example, where the work form the large supplier’s viewpoint is of medium risk, but for the smaller customer is high risk.

**Tiered and traceable roles and accountabilities**

The roles and accountabilities of those working within a portfolio, programme or project need to be defined as a whole. This includes, but is not limited to, who each role holder is accountable to and what activities, outputs or outcomes they are accountable for. If you are not accountable to anyone, you can’t be held to account; neither is anyone counting on you, so your efforts might be futile.

Figure 4 illustrates the typical leadership roles, ensuring they are consistent with both structure and process. The people at each level in the hierarchy are accountable to those at the next higher level in the hierarchy. At each level, there are two primary roles, one senior role which has overall accountability for setting direction and a lower level role which has day to day management accountability. For example, a project manager is accountable to a project sponsor for the day to day management of the project; a team manager is accountable to the project manager for the delivery of a work package. The roles associated with ‘other work’ are dependent on what that other work is and should follow the same two-level pattern.

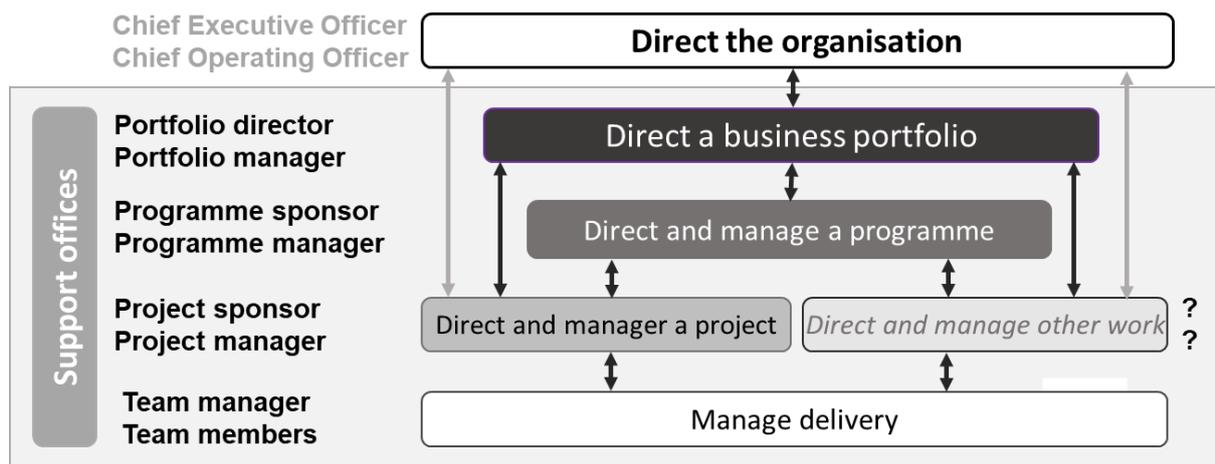


Figure 4 The primary portfolio, programme and project management roles

For simplicity, Figure 4. only shows a single level for each of portfolio, programme, project and work package. In practice, there could be multiple levels such as a portfolio having sub-portfolios, and a programme having sub-programmes. This affects the lines of accountability. For example,

a manager of a sub-programme would be accountable to the programme manager, rather than directly to the programme sponsor. A team manager for a low level work package might be accountable to the manager of the next highest level work package and not to the project manager. It might seem obvious but this does need spelling out to ensure those involved are absolutely clear.

### **Decision making**

An organisation's performance is really no more or less than the sum of the decisions it makes and implements. A new organisation chart or new process does not make much difference unless it somehow leads to better, faster decisions and implementation. In the context of portfolios, programmes and projects, decisions might relate to:

- approving a strategy;
- initiating a programme, project or other work;
- starting a new project stage (e.g. decision point/gate) or a new programme tranche;
- suspending or terminating work;
- selecting suppliers;
- deciding options for further study;
- selecting the solution;
- approving plans and baselines.

Decisions should be holistic, taking account of what else is happening within the organisation, the external context and the whole life of outputs (such as in life service and disposal).

Decisions should be made in light of any known, negative impacts and may be:

- phased to take risk into account;
- conditional, with responsibility for fulfilling such conditions defined.

People are often confused about decisions and reviews and so when depicting them diagrammatically, make sure they are denoted with different icons. Figure 5 shows a project lifecycle with the decision point prior to starting each project stage clearly marked (often called "gates") and the reviews, which happen prior to them. Decisions can often be taken in a few minutes provided the right information is to hand, whilst reviews can take hours or even days, requiring the right expert reviewers to be available. The conclusions from a review should be part of the information required in later decisions.

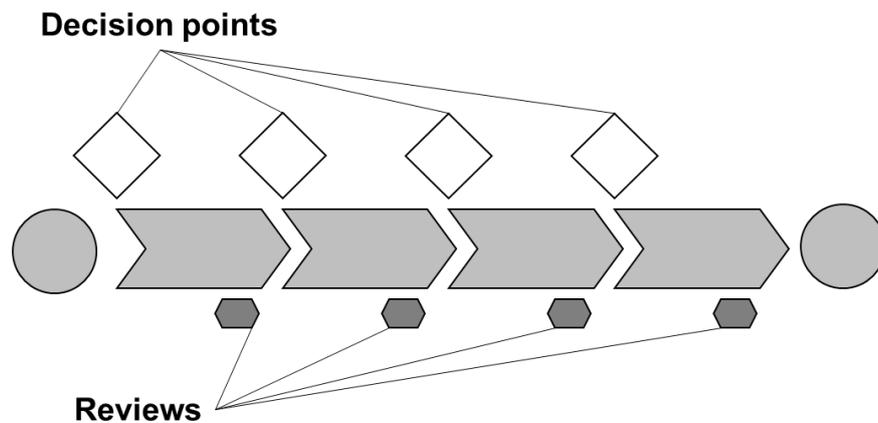


Figure 5 Decisions and assurance reviews

Decisions should be made in a timely manner by evaluating alternative choices against agreed criteria. Stakeholders and subject matter experts should be consulted and informed of the outcome.

The setting of decision rights for a modern, matrix organisation can be difficult and controversial. For a bureaucratic hierarchy, it is simple: whoever 'owns' that part of the business makes the decisions. Today's integrated organisations are more complicated, with many decisions impacting many parts of the business. Badly constructed decision rights (or schemes of delegation) can lead to an inefficient, sluggish and moribund organisation. To optimise decision making, decisions need to be made as close as possible to where the work is done. Delegation is good but the prime risk associated with placing decision at lower levels is that the lower level manager's motivations and aims might not align with those of the organisation's leaders. The way decisions are allocated, therefore, needs to take this into account, particularly in the way the hierarchy and flow of decisions are designed.

Effective decision making relies on having enough information at the right time. To achieve this, processes and support systems need to be designed to enable the flow of information to the decision maker, with the right stakeholders being involved. I would argue that you cannot design a 'decision making process', only ensure processes support the decision maker and feed them the right information. The costs of this, however, have to be commensurate with the value of the information gained. Any gaps in knowledge require assumptions, which represent a risk. General wisdom in corporate governance is that single point accountability for each decision is essential.

In this context, portfolio, programme and project management practices promote good decision making, through the web of roles, work breakdown structure, processes and individual practices. The crucial part is ensuring decision making at one level (say, project level) dovetails into decision making at the next higher level, such as programme, portfolio or sponsoring organisation. Like accountabilities, decisions should be traceable. The failure to ensure decisions fit into the

governance of the wider organisation is fundamental to why even well-run projects fail. Hence, in the quest to ensure every project succeeds, more and more attention needs to be directed at high level management techniques such as programme and portfolio management.

Decision making also takes time and unless this is taken into account when planning, senior management can become blockers on progress. Figure 6 shows a real-life example of the number of decisions needed in a complex change programme in a manufacturing company. In the planning phase, the project managers identified each point which they believed required either a board decision or the decision of one of the directors. Over 200 decisions were identified, spanning nine key change projects. This was in addition to all their other responsibilities. As a result, the accountabilities for decisions were reviewed and a number of decisions were delegated. Further, the schedule was adjusted to make sure there was sufficient time for critical decisions to be made, bearing in mind what else was happening in the company.

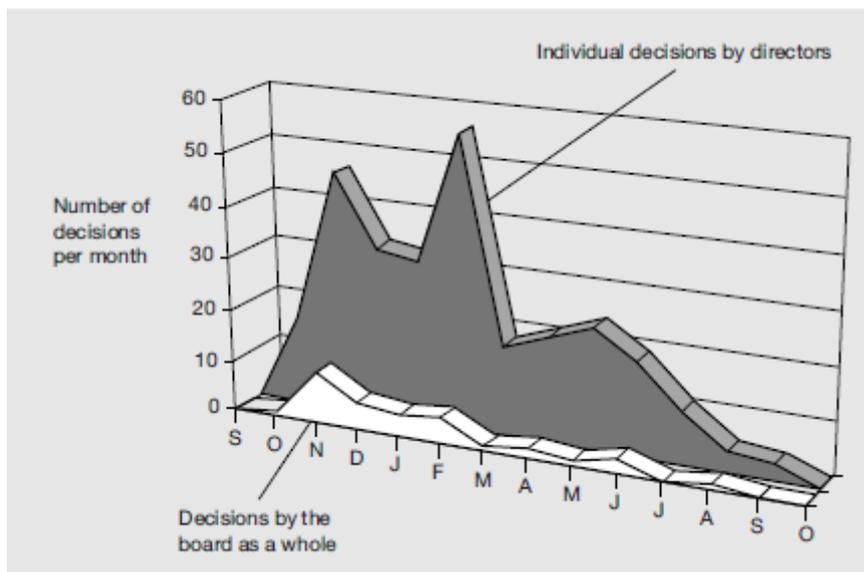


Figure 6 Decision making load on main board directors

### Assurance

It is impossible for a business leader of a large organisation or sponsor of a complex programme to personally oversee everything that is going on or be involved in every decision. In such circumstances, how is it possible to know that the work is progressing well and risks are being contained? This problem is what assurance seeks to address.

Assurance is the systematic set of actions necessary to provide confidence to senior leaders and stakeholders that work is controlled, on track to deliver and aligned with strategy. Good governance, brings the confidence that:

- the people managing and undertaking the work are competent and experienced;
- they are following well managed processes and using defined methods;
- behaviours are conducive to good working relationships;
- plans are rigorous and viable;
- reports are complete and reliable;
- risks and issues will be escalated, when necessary.

Good governance gives senior management the assurance that their objectives are highly likely to be met. If things start to go wrong, it will be apparent in time to take action.

Imagine sponsoring a programme with over 600 people involved, plus a number of suppliers and contractors that was being managed in an ad-hoc way, with each project manager and team manager deciding individually how to organise their decisions, plans, progress monitoring, metrics, reports, communications and interfaces. How would a programme sponsor know the status of the programme as a whole? How would the team know when to escalate issues? In what form would all this information be held and where? Even if each project manager was following a best practice standard, such as BS6079, it would be virtually impossible to manage the programme as a whole. It might sound progressive to allow each team to decide its own approach but that would not necessarily mean the programme will be successful. Having common working methods and processes are vital for simplifying management and communication. This is why so many organisations choose to build enterprise-wide portfolio, programme and project management methods and encourage or expect their people to use them. That does not mean teams cannot be self-organizing; in fact, they should have the freedom to apply the methods to suit the particular context and circumstances of their work; This is commonly called ‘tailoring’.

As part of good governance, organisations should have a defined and consistent approach to assurance. Assurance should be undertaken on at least three levels:

**1st line:** carried out by, or on behalf of, the operational management that own and manage risk to ensure appropriate standards, processes or methods are being used;

**2nd line:** undertaken by, or on behalf of, those, who have no first line responsibilities, to ensure first line of defence is properly designed, in place, and operating as intended;

**3rd line:** carried out independently, by internal audit, to provide senior management with an objective opinion on the effectiveness of governance, risk management, and internal controls, including the effectiveness of the first and second lines of defence.

Organisations can interpret these lines of defence in different ways and might even have more levels, with each higher level overseeing the lower levels. In effect, this is a formal way of answering the question, “Who guards the guards?”

In a programme or project context, the second line of defence is concerned with:

- ensuring the methods and processes are used effectively, through observation and analysis of metrics;
- undertaking reviews prior to significant decisions or when a significant issue has arisen; the initiator is usually the programme and project sponsor as that role is accountable for assurance.

Formal assurance reviews should be scheduled prior to significant decisions (such as before a projects' gates) to provide decision makers with an assessment of the status and outlook for the work. Such reviews should be planned to minimise the impact on the programme and project teams and workload of the reviewers. This can be done, for example, by combining project and programme reviews.

The third line of defence is usually concerned with audits; these might be externally driven, say through ISO 9000 quality audits, or by the organisation's senior management and undertaken by an internal audit group. Audits are normally defined and planned well in advance as part of an annual audit plan which addresses where the organisation sees the risks.

## **Conclusion**

Governance is about being good, not just looking good.

Governance is not a structure, nor a process – think in terms of governance as a “framework”.

Do not ignore the behavioural aspects of governance. *Be good, not just look good.*

Use matrix management to make your business agile.

Understand what influences and constrains governance in your organisation.

Build time and money for governance into your plans.

Know who guards your guards: assurance.

Make sure your governance is appropriate and proportionate.

## References for further reading

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## About this article

This article is adapted from Chapter 4 of *The Programme and Portfolio Workout* which provides practical advice and techniques to direct and manage your business in a structured, yet agile, way. Aimed at both business and programme managers, it takes you through different approaches to portfolio, programme and project management and shows you how they can work together. The practical approach is enhanced throughout with a series of ‘Workouts’: exercises, techniques and checklists to help you put the book’s advice into practice. The Workouts are supported by an on-line resource of tools.

The book contains a wealth of new material on the governance and management of portfolios and programmes, including how to work with standards and methods, such as GovS 002, ISO 21503, ISO 21504, BS6079 and MSP. The companion to this book, *The Project Workout*, deals with directing and managing individual projects. It uses the same concepts and approaches so that you know, when directing your portfolio or programme, that your sponsors and managers are taking the same approach.

## About the Author



**Robert Buttrick**

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**Robert Buttrick** is an independent advisor on portfolio, programme and project management, specialising in business-driven methods, processes and standards. Recent clients include the UK's Cabinet Office, Network Rail, and AXELOS. He is and a Visiting Teaching Fellow at the University of Warwick, a member of the British Standards Institute's committee MS2 for project management and is a UK Principal Expert on the equivalent ISO technical committee, TC258 (dealing with international standards on portfolio, programme and project management.)

As well as being the author of "The Programme and Portfolio Workout" and the "The Project Workout", Robert has worked in one of the world's most turbulent and challenging industrial sectors, telecommunications, where he has been accountable for creating and running project-based frameworks for managing change, involving the direction of portfolios of over 2500 projects, totalling £4bn spend per year. Before this, Robert was with PA Consulting Group, a management and technology consultancy. There, he specialised in business-led project management, advising clients such as TSB Bank, National Rivers Authority, Property Services Agency, Avon Industrial Polymers, National Westminster Bank and RHM.

After graduating from the University of Liverpool with a first class honours degree, he joined Sir Alexander Gibb & Partners (now Jacobs) who provided consulting, design and management services for infrastructure, working in countries as diverse as Kenya, Mauritius, Yemen, Senegal and Sudan. He has also worked with the World Bank, in Washington DC on investment appraisals for major development projects.

Robert is a Master of Business Administration (Henley Management College), a Member of the Chartered Institute of Marketing, Chartered Engineer and a Member of the Institution of Civil Engineers. In 2010, Robert received a Distinguished Service Certificate from the BSI for services to national and international project management standards, and in 2013 he was made an Honorary Fellow of the Association for Project Management.