MSP Survival Guide for Senior Responsible Owners has been written specifically for you (the SRO), full of helpful advice to make your hectic life easier.

There are many reasons why programmes fail, but failure to grasp the scale of the change being delivered and weak leadership of the programme teams are often contributing factors.

As you are unlikely to have time to read the MSP guide or to go on courses, we have covered the main things that you will need to know in a format that can be easily referenced.

In this series of extracts we are publishing a summary of the key points from each of the chapter of the MSP Survival Guide for SROs.

The author of the MSP Survival Guides is Rod Sowden, who is the current lead author of the main MSP® manual. He is the Managing Director of Aspire Europe and has been heavily involved in delivery major programmes and developing ideas and guidance that are used around the world.

Magnificent Seven tips

Keep the Vision it simple - a simple, compelling, vision statement is a powerful communications tool you can use to harness support and engagement with your programme, avoid management speak and clichés and don't be afraid to use images to illustrate the world you want to create

Don't duck the blueprint - without one you have no destination to navigate to. Blueprints do not have to be long and complex, but they must be clear enough to show where the e benefits, projects, business case and tranches come from.

Don't release the Vision without considering the blueprint - when developing the blueprint, start with the process and focus on the customer's experience. Use experts and outsiders to provide challenge as well as experience. Don't go public with a vision until you have given ample thought to the blueprint and what the end game is likely to be – this is a very common mistake.

Give the blueprint time - take the time needed to develop the blueprint and to get buy in from key stakeholders, especially the BCMs. The blueprint is describing the organization that will be in place when the programme completes and it will be your personal legacy.

Use intermediate blueprints - depending on the duration and degree of uncertainty, consider using intermediate blueprints and accept that there is ambiguity and it will evolve. Where there are gaps in detail make sure they are managed as part of the risk process.
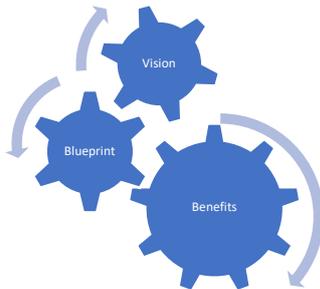
Blueprints can be politically sensitive - this is where the detail of what you are creating will be defined, so you will be exposing your hand and you can expect opposition to be more vocal if you have not won their hearts.

Develop the blueprint iteratively - you will not get the blueprint right first time, you may have to run with a number of potential scenarios, particularly if there are external events outside of your control. It needs to reflect the evolving organization and the benefits sources.

"**'If we don't know where we are going, how will we know when we have arrived let alone how we are going to get there?" - Yendor Nedwos**

You need to grab the vision for the programme. The vision is the guiding star that should inspire those working on the programme on what may be a long and challenging journey. People expect the leader to have a vision for a better future that they can follow, if you don't believe in the vision, you will find it very difficult to be an effective and successful SRO

The best way to describe the role of the vision is that it is a "postcard from the future", acting as a "beacon" for the programme, setting out the direction and justification for the change. The vision is developed early in the programme. You may lead this, you may inherit or be handed a vision, either way you and the team need to believe in it.

However, the vision is developed, make sure that it is supported by the key players in and around the programme, especially the programme board, key stakeholders and the BCMs, otherwise the programme will lack support and clarity of direction, and will struggle to achieve

The blueprint is the detailed definition of what will be in place to achieve the outcomes. Without a blueprint you cannot assess the benefits and your selection of projects and their requirements will be guess work.

The creation of a compelling vision statement and a blueprint for the future operation of the organisation or sector are essential early elements of a successful programme. The vision statement is often easy to develop, but the blueprint is a different prospect and altogether more challenging.

Creating a blueprint challenges people to think through the consequences of the vision, which may identify issues and decisions that people would rather not have to make. Those decisions will fall to you to make, or you will need to present them to the sponsoring group or other senior people for them to make decisions. Without a blueprint it is not possible to effectively estimate benefits or what capability you will need delivered by the projects

The blueprint contains key sets of information upon which the programme design and delivery will be based.

1. **The 'As-is' state** – how the parts of the organisation that will be changed work at present
2. **The 'To-be' state** – how the organisation will work when the programme has completed
3. **Intermediate states** – how the organisation will be working at major control points (Tranches in the MSP® guide) during the lifecycle of the programme. Delivering in stages helps avoid a single "big-bang" change, a common cause of failure.

There are a number of fundamental reasons why blueprints don't get written:

> If you would like to buy a copy of the MSP Survival Guide for SRO's, please **follow this link** and use the following code **SG15.**

> **The blueprint is the definition of will be in place when the programme completes, it can also be referred to as the target operating model, so it will be a much more significant piece of work.**

- Inexperienced programme team and leadership, who do not understand the need for it
- Just-do-it approach from sponsors, key stakeholders and programme leaders - let's get going and see where we end up
- Lack of clarity within the programme or the organization on where it is going and the process of blueprinting asks too many difficult questions
- Assumption that everyone knows where you are going.

History tells us that without a blueprint your programme will probably fail or as a minimum you will not be able to prove you have succeeded, which could be worse

One of the problems is actually to know where to start with the blueprint, as the creation of an effective blueprint that matches the vision and the degree of change required is a challenging and complex task.

The majority of vision statements aren't really fit for the job. If anything, they are a tick in a box to get the programme moving rather than focusing on the end game, and very few provide the basis for a blueprint. So here are a few tips on how to pull together a decent vision statement that has longevity.

The vision is yours. Don't be scared to make a few strong statements that stand alone. That is often easier than crafting a page of words. To test your vision statement, use the following checklist:

- Will it make sense to the stakeholders it is intended for?
- Does it clarify the current reality and justification for change?
- Will it survive changes of scope and timescales?
- Can you develop a blueprint from it?
- Will it act as the beacon and underpin decision-making?

Programmes are big on the vision thing. They come in many shapes and forms and have varying degrees of success, but they can be put into the following categories:

- **The to-do list:** A list of things that need to happen to achieve something. Such visions tend to focus on the obvious and often lack longevity and come to a stop in the first year.

- **Mission statement:** Some blunt statements which sound good are not really a foundation for a programme. These statements tend to define what will happen, rather than the direction or destination.

- **Management waffle:** A few sentences that are vague enough so that key stakeholders can agree but have little relevance to what needs to happen; or perhaps nobody is really sure what they mean.

- **Sermon:** This kind of vision goes on for quite a long time, makes lots of promises that can't be achieved or measured, but excites some people for some of the time. It provides something for everyone but very little for most.

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