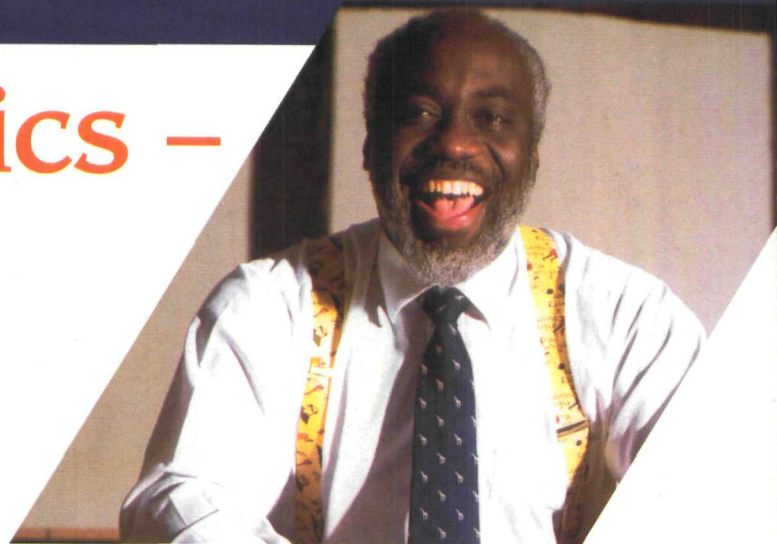# Back to basics – back to the future

Change is the cause and the effect of itself

The last decade has taken us on a whirlwind journey. Social and technological changes have provided opportunities for enterprise which have led to the explosion of communication, travel, trade and infrastructure changes such as the Internet. Each opportunity exploited simply creates another. For example, the availability of a graphical user interface allowed the development of browsers which in turn allowed the development of websites requiring better browsers with faster access than a modem to digital connections and so on, almost exponentially. And even when the market slows, the change accelerates and your workload and pressures go up! Large drops in share prices lead to opportunities for deals, acquisition and merger and synergies requiring retraining, re-organisation and so on, almost exponentially.

Unfortunately, organisations including yours are caught up in this buffeting. Buffeted by tides and changes greater than themselves. Most organisations are creatures of habit, preferring the industry sectors they understand to the business- sphere they don't. Preferring internally driven programs to those inspired from outside the organisation, say by customers. For many organisations their concession to their customers in a wired world is a website, developed by an out-source supplier which is simply an animated version of a corporate brochure or annual report. This leaves a real opportunity and advantage for any competitor who takes the time to carry out real change, big change, effectively and successfully.

Now, change feeds on change to the point where, for most organizations, the pace of change in their business-sphere has outstripped their ability to learn and change. This is the New World.

Big change tamed

Programmes and projects have taken over from processes and procedures

In the New World the opportunities for change are almost endless. In the 1990s the focus of most enterprises was on change, but simultaneous change – the type found in operations, processes and procedures. Improving, redesigning and re-engineering them ran a close second to realigning functional reporting lines as a way of getting better, of getting change to happen.

After a long but unsuccessful innings enterprises began to realise that to alter anything at all in the organisation, from its structure to its supply chain, to its market access, required that they learnt how to tame change, how to deliver BIG change, how to deliver sequential, discontinuous change. They discovered the need to deliver very big change by breaking it into smaller chunks. They have begun to understand that in the New World with significant change it becomes effective to ensure that the projects (chunks of change) are aligned closely into programmes (big flocks of chunks which, like birds, fly in the same direction, close to each other) in order to have effective implementation. They have discovered the essential need in the New World to manage projects and programmes of change.
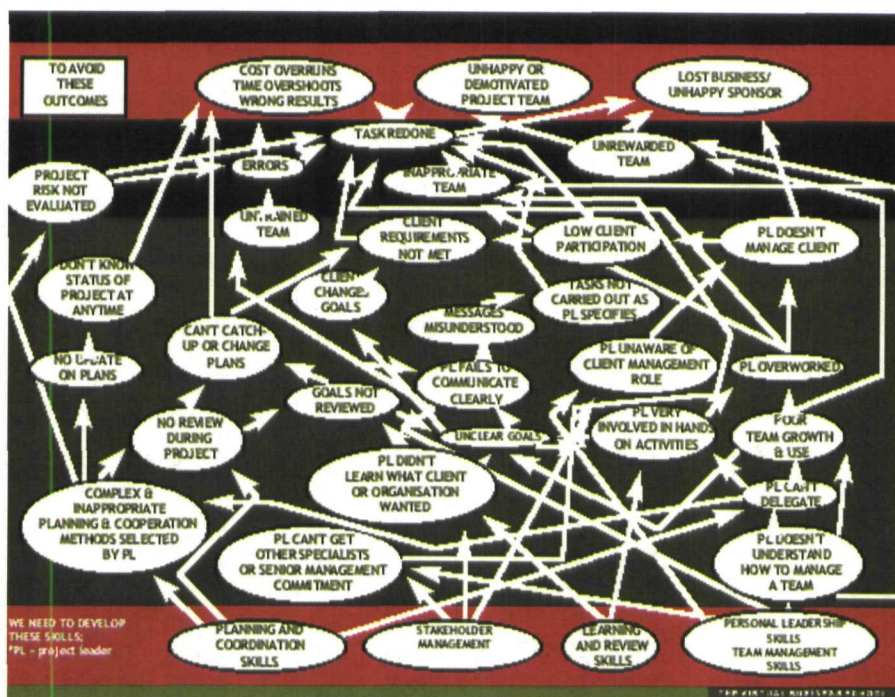
This is the decade of the project and programme manager.

Predictable change

If you understand what type of change you're dealing with, the issues are about 95% predictable

Now we have begun to understand that projects go wrong, following common patterns. My now famous and widely published bubble diagram (below) summarises the typical ways in which projects go wrong and why.

We have begun to understand how to interface a project or programme and its organisation with the rest of the enterprise. Now we have begun to understand what tools to use, and when; the importance of stakeholders; the critical difference between open and closed change. We have begun to understand how in the New World projects exist against a backdrop of uncertainty. This means that often we cannot completely pre-

plan everything but have to evolve the plan during the project. At the same time, however, risk and loss of focus become real threats to making projects, and range in type from 'foggy' (something must be done but what and how?) through 'quests' (the goal is known but not the method) and 'movies' (the technology or method is decided but the deliverables have to be negotiated) to the traditional and closed 'painting by numbers' projects (goals and methods known).

We have begun to understand why a significant proportion of joint ventures end acrimoniously. In several countries the legal system is being revised to encourage completion of projects which, in turn, deliver benefits rather than continued legal wrangles, which result in non-completion.

As New World project and programme change management becomes more precise the focus must shift from the delivery of the project to ensuring that a real benefit is achieved.

Global change

Leading across cultures and virtual teams requires a full 'utility belt' of tools and the ability to create an overriding supportive environment

In the next decade our ambitiousness on both project and programme delivery will continue to increase. As 'global' becomes a standard scale even for medium sized-organisations, programmes and projects will routinely have to cope with rapidly building teams made up of multiple national cultures. A good ability to lead and develop virtual teamworking will be essential. The ability to create 3x8 hour teams (where the implementation team passes the baton from one team to the other around the globe on eight-hour shifts) and many other new forms

of work will be required.

Of these, the most challenging will probably be that of quickly creating a common project/programme culture across different national cultures.

Web-enabled change

The web is the tortoise upon whose back we create our new world of programmes and projects

The ever-pervasive web of the Internet will provide the unique infrastructure for supporting projects. It will provide training and development for you, project leaders and programme managers. It will provide the tools that you will use for knowledge management, reporting and communication, It will provide the link between you and the stakeholder benefits that the programme or project is to achieve.

It will provide just-in-time advice lines and expert guidance and opportunities for collaboration. (For example, visit http://allchange.com or phone +44 (0) 121 111 3286.)

Change as the organisational structure

If change is the norm, the organisation structure and environment ought to reflect it

In the coming decade, projects and programmes will further eat into the Old World hierarchical command and control functional structure of organizations, as the relative amount of repetitive, operations-process-based activity declines in favour of the upgradable, one-off project/programme activity. It will make less and less sense to think of a career in linear hierarchical terms. To think of a function such as marketing being anything other than just a long string of programmes will seem old fashioned.

Delivering change in a new world

Speed, perspective and discipline beat everything else

The New World encourages the faster, more effective delivery of successful projects at an increasing pace. The key factors of speed, perspective and discipline become essential to the success of programmes and projects. However, to achieve speed it is essential to understand the place and role of stakeholders in order to achieve emotional engagement, and as a result to reduce resistance to change. To achieve perspective it is important for the project to always be viewed from the big picture of the enterprise as well as the immediate objectives. The development of project leaders, the development and fulfilment of team members' aspirations and the guidance and support of the programme managers, all contribute to the disciplined delivery of benefit.

Harvesting the benefits of change

Change and improvement are not the same thing. With improvement there is benefit. It's because of the benefit that we bother to change

I also believe that our ability to understand and implement big change using projects and programmes will make us more selective of the challenges we take on. The focus on benefits will mean the death of functional projects. All projects will be business projects. Enabling and infrastructure projects will transform themselves to be intricately linked with the benefits that they underpin. They will no longer stand alone.

Skills for creating a new world

When I grow up I want to be ... a project leader?

A statement never, or rarely, heard from a five year-old, and yet the New World makes the roles of a project leader and programme manager more exciting and challenging than they have ever been.

The future is bright, based on what we have learnt in the past, the basics of project success. To your advantage, project leadership and programme management will continue to be the most transferable and sought-after management skills.

Dr Eddie Obeng is author of several books including All Change! The Project Leader's Secret Handbook (Financial Times, ISBN 0273 62221 8) and Putting Strategy to Work! The Blueprint for Transforming Ideas into Action (Financial Times, ISBN 0273 60265 9). In addition, he it the lead facilitator at Pentacle The Virtual Business School's exclusive on-line electronic learning club for project leaders and change managers: allchange.com.

QUEST
Goal (WHAT) Known
Method/ Approach (HOW) unkown

PAINTING BY NUMBERS:
Goal (WHAT) Known
Method/ Approach (HOW) Known

World changing faster than you can learn

Change is slower than learning

FOG:
Goal (WHAT) Unknown
Method/ Approach (HOW) Unknown

MOVIE
Goal Unknown
Method/ Approach Known

PENTACLE