PRINCE2®

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PRINCE2® IN ONE THOUSAND WORDS

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WHAT IS PRINCE2®?

PRINCE2 is a non-proprietary method used extensively in more than 150 countries around the world, and its take-up grows daily. It is widely considered as the leading method in project management, with more than two million certifications taken worldwide and in excess of 20,000 organizations already benefiting from its pioneering and trusted approach. This is largely due to the fact that PRINCE2 is truly generic and universal: it can be applied to any project regardless of scale, type, organization, geography or culture.

PRINCE2 comprises a set of principles, a set of control themes, a process lifecycle and guidance on matching the method to the project's environment (see Figure 1). PRINCE2 provides a process model for managing a project. This consists of a set of activities that are required to direct, manage and deliver a project.

BENEFITS OF PRINCE2

PRINCE2 provides the following benefits:
- It can be applied to any type of project
- It provides a common vocabulary and approach
- It integrates easily with industry-specific models
- The product focus clarifies for all parties what the project will deliver to agreed quality standards
- It applies 'management by exception' providing efficient use of senior management time
- It ensures a focus on the continuing viability of the project
- There are scores of accredited training and consultancy organizations operating worldwide, which can supply expert support for PRINCE2 projects or for organizations planning to adopt PRINCE2
- It provides explicit definitions of roles and responsibilities so that everyone understands what is expected of them and what to expect of others.

The structure of PRINCE2
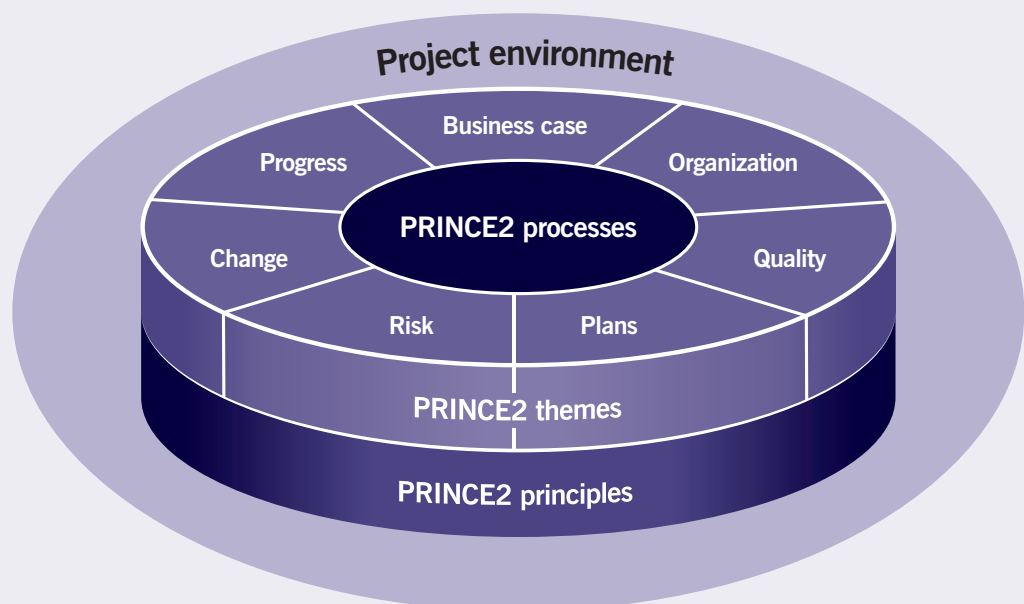
PRINCIPLES

The seven PRINCE2 principles are the guiding obligations for best practice that a project should follow if it is using PRINCE2. These are derived from lessons, both good and bad, that have affected project success.

The principles provide a framework of best practice for those people involved in a project – ensuring that the method is not applied in an overly prescriptive way or in name only, but applied in a way sufficient to contribute to the success of the project.

The PRINCE2 principles

Principle	Definition
Continued business justification	A PRINCE2 project has continued business justification
Learn from experience	PRINCE2 project teams learn from previous experience: lessons are sought, recorded and acted upon throughout the life of the project
Defined roles and responsibilities	A PRINCE2 project has defined and agreed roles and responsibilities with an organizational structure that engages the business, user and supplier stakeholder interests
Manage by stages	A PRINCE2 project is planned, monitored and controlled, management stage by management stage
Manage by exception	A PRINCE2 project has defined tolerances for each project objective, to establish limits of delegated authority
Focus on products	A PRINCE2 project focuses on the definition and delivery of products, in particular their quality requirements
Tailor to suit the project environment	PRINCE2 is tailored to suit the project environment, size, complexity, importance, team capability and risk

THEMES

The seven PRINCE2 themes are those aspects of project management that need to be addressed continually throughout the project lifecycle (i.e. not once only). They provide guidance on how the process should be performed. For example, numerous processes in PRINCE2 involve creating or approving plans and explanatory guidance on this can be found in the plans theme.

The set of PRINCE2 themes describes:
- How baselines for benefits, risks, scope, quality, cost and time are established (in the business case, quality and plans themes)
- How the project management team monitors and controls the work as the project progresses (in the progress, quality, change and risk themes).

The organization theme supports the other themes with a structure of roles and responsibilities with clear paths for delegation and escalation.

Table

Theme	Questions answered by the theme
Business case	Why?
Organization	Who?
Quality	What?
Plans	How? How much? When?
Risk	What if?
Change	What's the impact?
Progress	Where are we now? Where are we going? Should we carry on?

PRINCE2 process model

	Pre-project	Initiation stage	Subsequent delivery stage(s)	Final delivery stage
Directing	Starting up a project	Directing a project		
		Managing a stage boundary	Managing a stage boundary	Closing a project
Managing		Initiating a project	Controlling a stage	Controlling a stage
Delivering			Managing product delivery	Managing product delivery

PROCESSES

PRINCE2 provides a process model for managing a project. This consists of a set of activities that are required to direct, manage and deliver a project.

Starting up a project: covers the pre-project activities required to commission the project and to gain commitment from corporate or programme management to invest in project initiation by answering the question: 'do we have a viable and worthwhile project?'

Directing a project: describes the project board's activities in exercising overall project control. The activities focus on the decision making necessary for project board members to fulfil their accountabilities successfully while delegating the day-to-day management of the project to the project manager.

Initiating a project: describes the activities the project manager must lead in order to establish the project on a sound foundation. Every PRINCE2 project has an initiation stage. The key deliverable from this stage is the project initiation documentation, which includes an overall project plan and defines baselines for the six project performance targets of time, cost, quality, scope, risk and benefits.

Managing a stage boundary: describes the activities the project manager must undertake to provide the project board with sufficient information to enable it to review the success of the current stage, approve the next stage plan, review the updated project plan and confirm continued business justification and acceptability of the risks.

Controlling a stage: describes how the project manager manages the project execution/delivery activity during a stage, and reports progress and exceptions to the project board.

Managing product delivery: addresses the team manager's role in supervising the detailed work of creating the project's products and provides the link between the project manager and the teams undertaking the project work.

Closing a project: describes the closure activity towards the end of the final stage of the project. The project manager leads the process which provides for an orderly decommissioning, including any remaining project acceptance and handover requirements.

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THE PROJECT ENVIRONMENT

It is a PRINCE2 principle that the method must be tailored to suit the particular project context.

Tailoring refers to the measures taken to apply the method properly to an individual project, ensuring that the amount of governance, planning and control is appropriate – neither too burdensome for a simple project nor too informal for a large or complex project. The adoption of PRINCE2 across an organization is known as embedding.

Tailoring and embedding PRINCE2

Embedding (done by the organization to adopt PRINCE2)	**Tailoring (done by the project management team to adapt the method to the context of a specific project)**
Focus on:	**Focus on:**
• Process responsibilities	• Adapting the themes (through the strategies and controls)
• Scaling rules/guidance (e.g. score card)	• Incorporating specific terms/ language
• Standards (templates, definitions)	• Revising the product dtescriptions for the management products
• Training and development	• Revising the role descriptions for the PRINCE2 project roles
• Integration with business processes	• Adjusting the processes to match the above.
• Tools	
• Process assurance.	

REFERENCES

Managing Successful Projects with PRINCE2®, TSO, 2007 edition.
Directing Successful Projects with PRINCE2®, TSO, 2008 edition.
Effective Project Management; the PRINCE2® method, TSO, 2020

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Andy is a chartered director and management consultant who delivers strategic change through Project, Programme and Portfolio Management, with over 30 years of varied experience (public sector/ private sector, SME/corporate, domestic/international). He has a focus on project governance, the treatment of inherent project complexity and organizational development of project capability. Andy is a respected author, having worked with HM Treasury, Cabinet Office, the Association for Project Management (APM) and Axelos to develop best practice guidance on their behalf. He was cited in the Sunday Telegraph's business supplement as one of the most influential people in project management. Andy is a collaborative and inclusive senior leader with a track record of building high-performing teams both within his organization, across partnerships and with voluntary groups. He is the Executive Director of the Major Projects Association (MPA) and a freelance consultant and non-exec (proprietor of the Project Non-Exec Ltd).

ABOUT AXELOS

AXELOS is responsible for developing, enhancing and promoting a number of best practice methodologies used globally by professionals working primarily in project, programme and portfolio management, IT service management and cyber resilience.

The methodologies, including ITIL®, PRINCE2®, PRINCE2 Agile®, MSP®, and AgileSHIFT®, are adopted in more than 200 countries to improve employees' skills, knowledge and competence in order to make both individuals and organizations work more effectively.

PRINCE2®

EMPOWERING PEOPLE.
ENABLING PROJECTS.
DRIVING BUSINESS SUCCESS.

GET IT DONE

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