

CONNECTED

BT's, **Robert Buttrick**, speaks to *Project* about the development of the organisation's enterprise-wide approach to programme and project management.

"BT HAS DEVELOPED ACCREDITED LEARNING PATHWAYS – **GOLD, SILVER AND BRONZE** – TO INCREASE **KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS** SO THAT PROGRAMME AND PROJECT MANAGERS ARE **ABLE TO PROGRESS.**"

At any point in time, hundreds of programmes and projects are under way at BT.

The need to create a common management approach for its teams to use when working together became evident some time ago. It is the job of Robert Buttrick, BT's programme and project management method director, and his team, to bring clarity, consistency and control to project delivery.

"It saves a considerable amount of time and money as the individual teams no longer need to agree their working approach each time," explains Robert.

"It also means we can mobilise our programme and project teams much faster than in the past."

BT's PPM professional community operates within the overall governance of the BT-wide professional communities. It sits at the heart of BT's ability to meet its customers' needs and aspirations. The long-term vision is to be recognised as a critical enabler for business performance.

"We'll know we have realised that vision when programme and project management is recognised across BT as a critical discipline to deliver profitable growth and manage internal transformation," explains Robert.

There are a number of other aspirations, including having every manager in BT understand the key project management principles, roles and techniques and be able to apply them to their work. There are 10 vision statements in all. Achieving them requires consistency and so BT

has developed a common working approach – the BT PPM Method.

The company describes it as "the one way of directing and managing projects in BT". Rather than adopt a published approach it has embraced the best from a range of different methods including MSP, PRINCE2, BS 6079:2010 Part1 and the APM and PMI bodies of knowledge.

SPREAD THE WORD

The company has a series of booklets available to employees that explicitly describe how the principles of all these approaches are applied. Robert explains: "These are especially useful for customer, suppliers and people new to BT, as they provide a shortcut to understanding BT's method, based on something they know about."

"The method is role driven and written entirely independent of BT's organisational structure. In this way both our customers and staff benefit from having a stable approach."

Robert describes the method as "one size doesn't fit everyone".

"Tailoring is at the heart of the method," he says. "This is a vital aspect of any enterprise-wide method. Just as we have tailored PRINCE2 and MSP to create the BT PPM Method, our people can tailor it to suit their specific circumstances."

"However, tailoring is not something to be taken on lightly. We encourage people to tailor only when it adds value – it's not about personal preference."

Effective programme and project management is of vital importance to the whole of BT. Robert says: "It's a core operational capability and pivotal to BT's profitability and our reputation for delivering excellence. There have

been several recent examples of BT winning contracts where the customer has cited excellence in programme and project delivery as a key factor in their selection."

FASTER, BETTER AND CHEAPER

As in most sectors, BT is working to deliver programmes and projects faster, better and cheaper. Robert believes that to flourish in this new environment, practitioners need to be resourceful, resilient, prepared to accept wider responsibility and hungry for more knowledge and to gain new skills.

BT has developed accredited learning pathways – gold, silver and bronze – to increase knowledge and skills so that programme and project managers are able to progress.

The BT PPM community needs to continuously adapt and change to meet the company's needs. Robert says: "By encouraging feedback and suggestions from our users we ensure errors are taken out and improvements made."

One way in which this is achieved is through regular 'knowledge calls', which are presented by subject experts and practitioners, either helping others to grasp a particular topic or sharing real-life experience.

Offering advice for other practitioners, Robert explains that in order to create and implement a system effectively you must ensure the tools, skills and training are driven from the method. He adds: "Draw on all best practice sources – none of them has everything – and fix your terminology early, creating a published glossary will help people fully comprehend everything."



Robert Buttrick is BT's programme and project management method director and responsible for the development and continuous improvement of the method. Robert is also on the committee which developed the new international and national standards on project management as well as the emerging international standard on portfolio management. Robert, an Honorary Fellow of APM, is the author of Project Workout, which is now in its fourth edition and translated into five languages.



ROBERT'S TOP TIPS:

- Design your method architecture and then build the component parts in priority order.
- Don't expect to please everyone, all the time.
- Make the method independent of your organisation.
- Write the content for long shelf life.
- Make a website or internal portal for people to access the method. Ensure it is two-way to attract feedback and respond quickly and openly when it comes. This will help you to build trust.
- Ensure those who develop your method have experience and credibility.
- Design the method to be tailored.