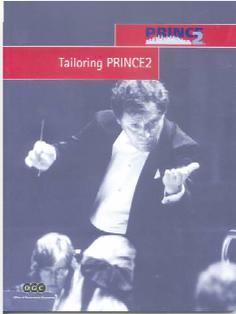


## Tailoring PRINCE2, by the Office of Government Commerce

*A Book Review by Ian Jay*

An organisation implementing PRINCE2 and anyone who has tried to use PRINCE2 in the past will find a wealth of practical advice in this book. It is one of several written and published by OGC to support the PRINCE2 manual. The main message is that PRINCE2 need not be document intensive, a common criticism. The book also explains some of the pitfalls of taking on a methodology and relying on a set of templates to manage projects. Where it covers these pitfalls, its relevance is to any methodology, which makes it useful reading beyond PRINCE2 users.



### **Do not use templates**

One problem with PRINCE2 is that there is so much of it. Trying to adopt it as an approach to projects results in many documents being prepared as templates for future use and distracts staff from the projects they are managing. The book points out that re-using templates containing standard text on subsequent projects, results in publication of incorrect information. The book advocates that each project team review the outlines in PRINCE2 and devise their own documentation from first principles. The benefit of this is that the content is relevant and its importance understood.

The basis of the book is research in organisations that use PRINCE2. It contains numerous anecdotes to support the advice that it provides. Structured in two main parts, the book first deals with the implementation of PRINCE2 and then with fitting the method to the scale of the project.

### **PRINCE2 adoption path**

The research indicates a common adoption path for organisations following six phases, starting with roles, then templates before moving to controlled start, quality centred approach, management stages. The final, though rarely taken step is adoption of product based planning. The benefit of product based planning is that it ensures early understanding of the full scope of the project. As they point out, this is a major paradigm shift for many project managers because it represents a focus of attention to quality and away from time and cost.

### **Scaling PRINCE2**

Most of the book is devoted to fitting PRINCE2 to the project at hand. The structure of the scaling chapters is a mirror of the manual making it easy to cross-reference between the two texts. Advice on scaling covers all the PRINCE2 Components, Processes and Techniques.

With large projects the project board can become a big group and this dilutes the decision making power of individuals on such a board. The book advises the adoption of Programme management to address this problem. They also suggest Programme management where there is resource conflict in a multi project environment.

At the small end of the scale examples are given where the content of the PRINCE2 templates form the basis for verbal interaction. This can be quite informal; the book gives an example of a board meeting being held in an entrance foyer! Concerning plans, they state the purpose of planning is to clarify targets, communicate goals, gain agreement on objectives and provide a baseline for control. With these points in mind, another anecdote describes an email, which sealed an agreement between two parties and met all the criteria for a plan.

The book contains a huge amount of practical advice about using PRINCE2. Its layout makes it easy to refer to when looking at specific aspects of the method. Because PRINCE2 is a Government mandated method, there is coverage of its use in non-profit, military and Civil Service use as well as in commercial settings. Application of the practices described will reduce paperwork and improve project performance in any of these arenas.

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