

# Programme Audits

Investing as little as 0.5% of your programme’s budget on an independent assessment of progress and options for the future will pay back multiple times over

**An audit provides an honest and independent view on how the programme is performing and uncovers key problem areas. For the business, it means costs may be saved if issues are uncovered early enough. For the programme, an audit aids continued success by ensuring everything is in order. And for your team, it can be a great learning experience**

## Introduction

It is all too familiar that large programmes do not always deliver. Our research shows that 50 percent go significantly over budget, 58 percent overrun their schedules and 42 percent leave the business in a worse state after completion. And the larger the change, the greater the chance of failure. These stats are worrying, and highlight the importance of running a programme well and getting an objective and independent view of performance.

Yet large programmes are becoming more and more common. They often involve multiple teams that span across internal functions, third parties and external consultants – there’s a lot going on – and there are also countless examples of them working well.

So, how do you ensure your programme is geared for success? In our opinion, a low cost, high value way is to invest in an independent audit to truly get a sense of its direction and likelihood of succeeding.

## Benefits of a Programme Audit

An audit not only validates the good work people are doing (giving the senior team confidence), but when things aren’t going so well, it can reduce time and cost overruns by providing early problem diagnostics and prioritised recommendations. Other key benefits include increasing stakeholder and customer satisfaction levels, avoiding scope creep, evaluating performance of the project team and ultimately improving the programme’s overall status.

From our experience, the benefits of audits become especially evident in larger-scale programmes.

## What To Look For

There’s a common misconception that audits should only be performed when the programme is reaching its end – when panic hits in and the business feels it’s not ready for launch. However, we believe it’s critical

to ensure a programme is run well throughout its lifecycle – from pre-kick off to post-implementation.

<b>Leading indicators of a failing programme</b>	
✔	<i>Lack of stakeholder and executive involvement at different stages of the programme</i>
✔	<i>Continuously finding issues that weren't factored into the initial plan</i>
✔	<i>Test cycles are being squeezed and starting to overlap with each other</i>
✔	<i>Lack of documented requirements or process documentation</i>
✔	<i>Project team not sharing expectations and bad news (as well as good news)</i>
✔	<i>Signs of team fatigue, working overtime and lots of sick days from the team</i>

Below, we highlight some key questions you may be asking yourself across a programme’s lifespan:

### Pre-kick off

Setting up a programme in the right way is critical as it provides the foundation for success.

- Do you think budgets are being cut arbitrarily to fit approval thresholds rather than reflecting what the programme actually costs?
- Do you feel there’s not enough stakeholder buy-in and there’s a weak framework in place that may restrict effective engagement?
- Do you feel the initial business case has gaps and doesn’t cover all of the benefits, costs and risks?
- Does the programme plan cover all activities, milestones and assumptions, including plans for ensuring outstanding and continuous project quality?

## In-flight

It's good to take stock while the programme is in full flow as it's easy to get bogged down in the detail.

- Do you sense that you're hitting key milestones in an artificial way, and that scope is being pushed back into later phases?
- Do you feel that all project teams are struggling and waiting for other teams to cave-in first?
- Do you have weak links in your programme resource who are always delivering good news and reluctant to give you the difficult message?
- Is there someone in the senior team who isn't willing to listen to new ideas or suggestions?
- Are you planning backwards to hit an unrealistic go-live date, rather than allowing the right amount of time for activities? (e.g. test cycles and phases being cut short and overlapping)?

## Pre-go live

When the go-live date is near, you want to ensure the programme is bullet proof and ready for launch.

- Do you feel the end user or customer may not be fully aware of what's coming?
- Are you concerned about the amount of open defects ahead of go-live?
- Do you think third party handover is rushed and there are gaps in documents and requirements?
- Do you sense IT business functions don't have all of the right people, training or tools to perform their jobs well after go-live?
- Can you see the team are panicking to finish work quickly at the compromise of quality?

## Post-implementation

It's critical to keep the momentum going after launch to deliver the full benefits of the programme.

- Do you sense there's no real owner of data and teams are handling the same data differently?
- Do you think the business has not adapted its culture enough to accept the new change and there may be push back from users?
- Are you confident the programme has been reviewed correctly to assess its success, failures and weaknesses for future learnings?
- Do you feel that not all operating procedures are documented and plans in place to support colleagues while the changes embed?
- Do you believe the project has truly delivered its planned levels of benefits?

## Our Approach

We have extensive experience in performing audits across various large-scale programmes, from supply chain initiatives, to IT implementations to launching new website platforms.

Our approach goes beyond a generic checklist and reviews the risks across key programme, technology and customer areas. We meet the right people, review evidence to support the conversations, analyse key programme metrics and apply our knowledge (as well as gathering expert input from within our network) to provide an honest view. We also make it a point to capture the things that are working well throughout the audit to share with the team.

We aim to uncover the truth quickly, and because we're not tied to the programme, we can give the message in a rational and objective way.

We've led large scale programmes, audits and change management projects across leading retailers including John Lewis, M&S, Harrods, feelunique, Dunelm and LK Bennett.

## About PatelMiller

PatelMiller is a business consultancy that works closely with its clients to develop their strategies and deliver their full benefit. Our team have gained their skills from working for leading consulting firms as well as some of the world's best consumer facing businesses. Our service offerings include Strategy and Analytics, Programmes and Change and Lean Operating Models

We can help you manage change programme and deliver your strategic initiatives, as well as helping you with specific programme elements, including:

- Programme audits and health checks (this paper)
- End-to-end programme management
- Setting up your programme for success
- Helping you select the right partners
- Running your change management
- Recovering programmes in crisis

Find out more:

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Anish has built up considerable Retail consulting experience, both with top tier firms and as an independent advisor. Prior to starting PatelMiller, Anish held the leadership role of Retail Consulting Director for Deloitte UK.



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Vilas has gained retail experience having worked across consulting and industry for firms such as dunhumby, Tesco and Kurt Salmon. He specialises in store operations, Lean Six Sigma and programme management