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# Meet the Advantage trainer: Alan Dismore

For Alan Dismore being in control of business change is an element which is vital for successful long term business transformation and improvement. And PRINCE2's project management processes for controlling business transformation is one of the things that first attracted him to the methodology and has kept him loyal as, again and again, it allows the project team to get the job done, whatever the difficulties and problems that occur along the way.

"One of the real strengths of PRINCE2 is that it puts in place a framework so that everyone knows their responsibilities and they have a very clear understanding of what is required," says Alan. "Where changes occur – when the customers change their minds, or there's design changes – it's no longer frightening, we just roll into the set procedure that's been put in place right at the start of the project."

The reliability of PRINCE2 as a Project Management methodology has led Alan on to the OGC's latest best practice guidance, Portfolio, Programme and Project Offices (P3O). The P3O Foundation course has been around for a couple of years, but the first Practitioner exams were only introduced in 2010. Alan is an APMG-accredited P3O and PRINCE2 trainer.

Alan believes one of P3O's big strengths is how it puts in place best practice and guidance for an organisation – big or small – so that it can say which projects, or programmes, it should be doing and how they should be implemented. "P3O puts in place a framework for that sort of analysis to go on. P3O doesn't make those decisions. The staff working in the portfolio office are purely making recommendations, usually up to Board level in the organisation, providing the analysis for the board to make the strategic decisions."



**Alan Dismore**

This approach to portfolio management is even more important in the current economic climate. "A lot of organisations are having to cut back and having to make savings to reduce overheads. The last thing you want is projects or which are not going to be beneficial to the organisation."

Having added P3O to his trainer's repertoire, this means even more opportunities for Alan to share his expertise with students. "Training really gives me a buzz. It's the expression on people's faces that I really like. It's when you are explaining a concept and you can see people really struggling with it and then a few minutes later, as you have a discussion and get people involved, you see their expressions change and the lights start to go on. They say 'I see what you mean now' and 'I can see how I can apply that back in my office'."

Alan's success in training in the Project Management arena stems from his real life experience with companies like British Aerospace and British Airways and public sector organisations in both central and local government and the health sector.

He admits he has learned a lot since his very first project in the 1980s when he was working in East Africa for an aid organisation which operated light aircraft. "We had an aeroplane

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which had an accident and we decided to rebuild it and we gave ourselves a year to do it. I knew nothing about project management and neither did my team, although they were technical experts. When it came to project management, we were learning as we were doing it," explained Alan, who has a degree in aeronautical engineering and a commercial pilot's licence.

"It was fraught with problems. Nevertheless we achieved it to the very day. Even on the morning of that day we weren't 100 per cent sure that the aircraft would be ready, but I took it on its first test flight at 5pm and it was successful, so in my mind that's always been my first successful project."

Back in Britain, working for a large multinational design and manufacturing organisation, Alan became involved in more projects, eventually coming face to face with PRINCE2. "I first came into contact with PRINCE2 when I was involved with a one-year laptop rollout for about 1,200 senior professionals across several sites. Lots of changes took place so that the specifications at the start of the project were changed as the project went through and we ended up with a very different laptop by the time it was completed. And we had to finish on a specific date.

"All the changes were handled using a PRINCE2 model so that, in fact, where the big changes occurred it was very straightforward: we knew what to do, we knew the authority levels, we knew the procedure that we had to go through to get agreement and sign-off for the changes. It all just rolled and we did finish on time and it was an extremely successful project."

Alan has also seen at first hand the impact of not using PRINCE2 in a project. "It was a very fast moving multinational logistics operation. I worked closely with the project manager and his ideas on how to handle change were so different. Every time we came across something that needed to change, he had a different story on how to handle it. It caused utter chaos. That project was three years late – and way overspent. It was simply because every time there was a change, we all sat round and looked at each other and said 'what do we do now?' "

The lesson for Alan was obvious: "One of the most difficult aspects of any project is dealing with changes and very often it's how changes are handled that decide the success or otherwise of the project."

### 3 things we didn't know ...

**Which business figure do you respect?**
Richard Branson always strikes me as the sort of person who is prepared to step out and take risks give it a go let's dream big and lets see where we get to.

**What was the last concert you went to?**
A new year orchestral concert at the Barbican in London. I enjoy listening to music by Dvořák and Tchaikovsky.

**What's your hidden talent?**
I used to play the trombone when I was younger and enjoyed playing in an amateur orchestra in concerts at the Royal Albert Hall and the Royal Festival Hall in London.

**To book training in P3O or PRINCE2 please contact Advantage Learning**
email: info@advantagelearning.co.uk
Tel: +44 (0) 131 668 2445