

Lift Off! – Delivering more ‘thrust’ to a major change management programme at RAF Brize Norton



AMTEC and Hitachi Consulting address issues of governance and change management for a programme affecting one in six RAF personnel.

Executive summary

Programme Future Brize is a £340m programme to establish Brize Norton as the RAF's centre for air transport and air-to-air refuelling operations, and significantly reduce costs through the closure of RAF Lyneham.

In a turnaround project, partners AMTEC Management Consulting and Hitachi Consulting addressed the key programme management components required for a successful outcome. These included:

- Ensuring programme stability
- Providing visibility of current project status
- Transferring skills

The result is that the Future Brize programme now has the structure, governance and momentum needed to succeed. With the programme back on track, cost savings are projected at £23 million per annum, morale is high and people aspects (such as the impact on RAF families) are a top priority.

What AMTEC/Hitachi Consulting achieved (that the client could not):

- Provided stability in a rapid/sustainable way,
- Applied 'Managing Successful Programmes (MSP)' management theory to provide appropriate governance and clear delivery tools for the programme,
- Created the expectation of success, giving those involved a new confidence in delivery.

The problem/opportunity faced by the client

RAF Brize Norton is already the largest and busiest station in the Royal Air Force, and constantly in the public eye as the main airfield used for deploying UK troops worldwide.

Future Brize is a £340m programme to establish Brize Norton as the RAF's centre for air transport and air-to-air refuelling operations and to generate savings of £23m year-on-year through the closure of RAF Lyneham and the transfer of its capabilities to RAF Brize Norton.

The size and complexity of this programme is immense. It involves around 7000 personnel (15% of the total RAF), new aircraft types, new and refurbished buildings, improved IT, increasing numbers of passengers, greater freight capacity, and the relocation of military and civilian personnel, including 800 RAF families.

Whilst Service personnel have a tremendous "can-do" attitude, the programme's Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) recognised that gaps in programme management expertise were putting the high-profile programme at risk. It lacked planning, governance, structure, tools and delivery expertise. 'Silo' working (everyone working separately) meant that the implications of decisions and changes were not considered. It was difficult to assess the status of the programme and consequently, its chances of success. Two-year rotational tours of duty amongst the staff also dampened continuity and momentum.

The bottom line problem was how to make this change happen without affecting day-to-day operational support.

Brief project background

Recognising that access to suitably experienced specialists was critical to the success of Future Brize, a joint AMTEC/Hitachi Consulting team was appointed to establish all the key programme management components required for a successful outcome.

“ *Not only did the AMTEC/Hitachi team provide focused and professional advice in order to put this programme onto a proper structured footing, but they also engaged enthusiastically with their RAF counterparts to provide essential, real-time support on a daily basis. Their energy and motivation helped to revive a struggling programme and gave the RAF team the tools and the confidence to take this programme forward with vigour.* Air Commodore Paul Oborn CBE RAF, Programme Future Brize Director

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The team's highly innovative collaborative proposal was a key factor in its success over other vendors. The joint team offered complementary programme management expertise, knowledge of the MOD/RAF and experience of turning around struggling programmes.

The objectives of the project were to deliver and implement a robust and stabilising programme management environment, to enable the SRO and Programme Manager to accurately assess current programme status against planned activity and to meet the varied audit and reporting requirements of the Government, the Ministry of Defence and the Secretary of State.

Consulting activity

- **Solution proposed by consultants** - The AMTEC/Hitachi Consulting team proposed to meet these objectives by focusing on three areas: a) programme stability, b) giving a clear visibility of current status against plan and c) skills transfer. The team recommended the OGC "Managing Successful Programmes (MSP)" methodology (a commonly used and easy to understand language), as well as drawing on industry best practice. This meant giving the programme team a framework and working with them on how to use it. The solution comprised: (i) the introduction of a governance approach, programme structure and the baselining of plans, and (ii) the embedding of the framework amongst the RAF community impacted by the programme.
- **How this solution was arrived at** - MSP is based on proven best practice in complex programme management environments and was chosen to provide a pragmatic approach appropriate to the client's way of working. The solution was intended to encourage a pro-active attitude, remove blockages, predict and identify problems and allow everyone to understand and value the programme as a whole.
- **What actions were taken?**
 - (i) Review - The first task was to review the current programme arrangements.
 - (ii) Programme visioning – The AMTEC/Hitachi Consulting team redeveloped the programme vision, scope, principles and assumptions with the client. Together they re-branded the programme as Future Brize. The team unravelled the complexity of the programme using assumptions, such as: RAF Lyneham must be declared surplus to RAF requirements no later than 31 December 2012.

(iii) Programme structure – A credible programme structure was implemented using a "big bang" style with immediate senior briefings and adoption of programme practices across all layers of the organisation, from senior levels to grass roots, on both RAF stations and within the local community.

(iv) Base-lining – A clear programme plan provided visibility of key milestones, risks, issues and dependencies.

(v) Reporting - A high-level "dashboard" introduced clear visibility of the overall health of the programme, and was welcomed despite many indicators swinging initially from green to red.

(vi) Skills transfer – The executive team needed the confidence to manage the programme once the consulting team had left. A great deal of attention was given to "up-skilling" through coaching and mentoring of the programme staff and the wider team.

(vii) Design Authority - The team introduced the innovative Design Authority concept, a single point of truth for the design of the programme's end state solution.

Success factors and challenges

The consulting team delivered a comprehensive programme management framework that will allow the RAF to achieve a successful conclusion to the programme, i.e. the transfer of capabilities from RAF Lyneham to RAF Brize Norton by 31st December 2012 and the realisation of further efficiencies to 2015.

The team focussed on stabilising the programme and creating the expectation of success. Previously regarded as a failing programme, those involved are now proud to be linked with the project and the change in attitude was recognised amongst external stakeholders outside the programme team.

Tangible benefits:

- Projected cost savings of £23 million p.a. as a result of putting the programme back on track,
- Reduced exposure to the risk of slippage, estimated at costing £2 million per month,
- Elevation of programme status to one of 12 Defence Change Portfolio programmes – making it more visible at ministerial level and ensuring pan-Defence support.

“From the outset the AMTEC/Hitachi team integrated seamlessly with our team. There was an excellent cultural fit with consultants appreciating our “can-do” attitude and matching it with their own energy and enthusiasm. That integrated relationship allowed them to challenge our thinking and deliver difficult messages. They went the ‘extra mile’.” Group Captain David Houghton PhD MSc MSc BA RAF, Future Brize Programme Manager

Intangible benefits:

- An increase in morale and employee engagement, resulting from a new confidence in programme delivery and working in an open environment,
- Dramatic increase in the speed of progress, as a result of the quicker resolution of problems. For example, decisions are no longer revisited unless a working assumption has changed,
- An increase in knowledge, skills and understanding amongst programme personnel, resulting from skills transfer,
- Less disaffection amongst RAF families, as a result of a greater focus on people aspects of the programme,
- Less anxiety among 'on-the-ground workers' who are benefiting from regular, clear and consistent messages.

Sustainable/long term benefits:

- Application of capabilities elsewhere in the RAF, for example on the Air Transport and Air-to-Air Refuelling Project Board,
- A confidence in delivery, which bodes well for handover and beyond.

Lessons learnt from the intervention

- A "can-do" attitude needs harnessing in order to be effective.
- Deep-seated 'silos' can be broken down by establishing links, information flows and communication channels.
- It's better to embrace the client's culture and working style rather than fight it.
- Creating the expectation of success makes the rest of the job a lot easier.
- A core team can really help a collection of people, whose main focus is on their "day jobs", to contribute effectively to the programme.



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