

Governance and end-to-end assurance

As organisations strive to remain competitive and also comply with regulation, the delivery of multiple, large scale and complex change programmes will be an increasing challenge. Ensuring that a programme is going to deliver on its objectives with the right business outcomes has therefore never been more important.

As the UK's leading outsourcing organisation, Capita has years of experience in managing highly complex, business critical programmes on and offshore. We have developed a proven and strategic approach to governance and end-to-end assurance. Our consultants use their experience to guide you through the process of defining and articulating your strategy and then provide a step-by-step practical and pragmatic approach throughout the programme to assure high quality delivery and take care that the business objectives are achieved.

Governance and assurance are closely interlinked yet subtly different. Governance is about directing or setting policy and it is also about evaluating and monitoring progress. Assurance on the other hand is more about monitoring and evaluating the risks and making sure we stay on the right course and fixing it if we don't.

Governance

Governance is a process that establishes chains of responsibility, authority and communication as well as measurement, policy, standards and control mechanisms to enable people to carry out their roles and responsibilities¹. It is about ensuring we build the right thing, for the right reasons, in the right way. We may need to ask questions and it is crucial we should know when we are doing a good job or a poor one.

Capita's structured yet flexible approach provides consistent management, cohesive policies, strong processes and appropriate authority levels, underpinned by independent audits, to ensure that quality always stay on track. We provide regular and clear reports using accurate, up to date information. This not only allows ongoing monitoring but also enables the business to look forward at the emerging picture and make informed decisions so that they can be proactive rather than reactive.

End-to-end assurance

Benefits of an end-to-end assurance approach:

- > Earlier identification and handling of problems
- > Objective, realistic and accurate reporting of progress and coverage to support decision making
- > Assuring delivery right across the programme
- > Clearer insights into developing quality and highlighting performance against success criteria
- > Reduced overrun on development and testing as the factors that are important are addressed first, and are addressed correctly
- > Better relationships with the business as the solutions presented to them are more robust and meet their needs
- > Better overall processes and a platform for further improvement as the culture of objective measurement of success starts to be adopted
- > Focus on the real risks and define leaner approaches to solution delivery

1. Operational IT governance by Murray Cantor and John D Sanders, The Rational Edge.

Assessing your business objectives

We believe that an assurance strategy will mobilise programmes in the right way from the start. It sets the scene for QA plans and testing strategies and allows them to be articulated within a more focused framework, as well as ensuring that stakeholder expectations and risks are understood and captured at the beginning of the programme.

An assurance strategy will help to achieve a balance between the conflicting demands and priorities across different stakeholder groups and helps to obtain buy in.

Typically, an assurance strategy includes:	
Programme and stakeholder engagement approach	How we will define, discuss and agree
High-level programme assurance approach	How we propose to capture all the requirements and how we will assure that these are delivered
Stakeholders' critical business issues related to the programme solution	Their concerns about the impact of the programme on their operations and the assurance they need to witness
Relationship between the assurance strategy and the test strategy, test plans and end-to-end assurance approach	How this will guide what gets done by suppliers, the programme and stakeholders themselves

Delivering what the business needs and wants

Right from the start we also need to ask the question "How are we going to get this programme accepted?" Acceptance is a pre-stated condition that if met, enables us to move to the next phase; it is an escalation or a success. We pre-define these criteria so that we know what constitutes success or failure for us and this allows us to make objective decisions on whether the business objectives are met.

It is crucial therefore that acceptance criteria are properly articulated up front. They should be relevant to the outcome of the project or programme and the business change being delivered. They need to be objective and measurable, clearly articulated and communicated and adhered to by all concerned.

If not, typically each phase of the programme gets passed based on the opinion of the people making the decision and by the end, there are issues with functionality, fit to requirements that haven't been addressed and are usually discovered in user acceptance testing. This will often result in difficulty getting the business to accept the outcome of the programme and there will often also be significant overspend and overrun.

We use a quality assurance framework to provide three core activities throughout the programme which assure that the deliverables are the 'right things, built in the right way':

- > **Solution assurance** – Does the solution deliver against the requirement? Was it specified? Does it comply with appropriate standards?
- > **Delivery assurance** – Are we delivering it correctly and safely - based on our judgement?
- > **Quality assurance** – Do we have a valid process and are we following it?

See Figure 1.

At any point in the programme, once operational, the framework provides an objective view of the quality of deliverables and any residual programme delivery and product risk. It provides timely information to key stakeholders so that they are fully aware of the business consequences of any findings and metrics can be used as evidence to support compliance.

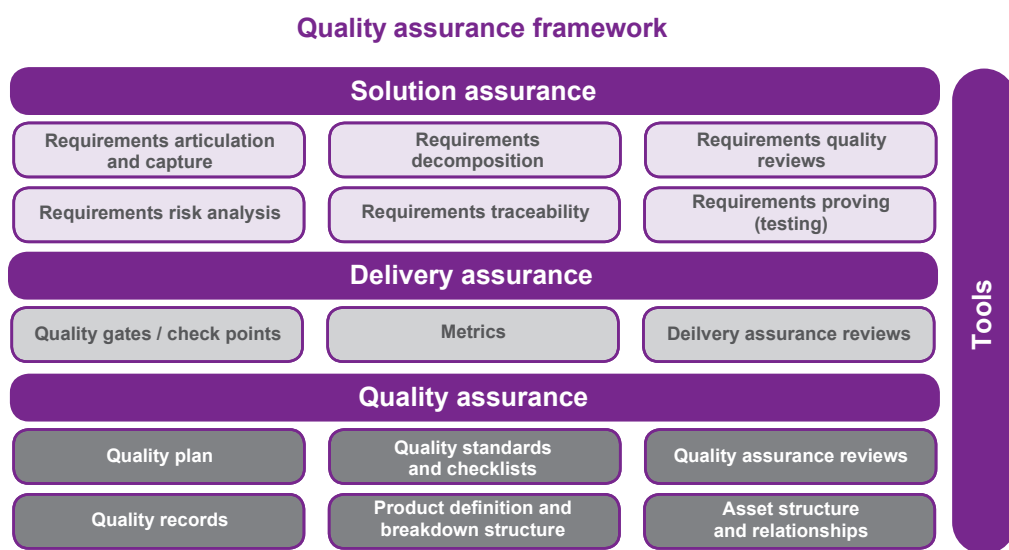


Figure 1

Managing risk

In order to allow robust analysis of the programme risks and to drive out the appropriate responses we need a basis for comparison. This should capture the key characteristics of the risks and the drivers of complexity. The P³DAT model explores the impact of changes on People, Places, Process, Data, Application and Technology.

It is the combination of the models that allows us to understand the risks, for example, a data / application model allows us to understand how the application uses data, and which elements of the application are sensitive to data items or values; a people / application model allows us to understand which roles use which elements of the application. See Figure 2.

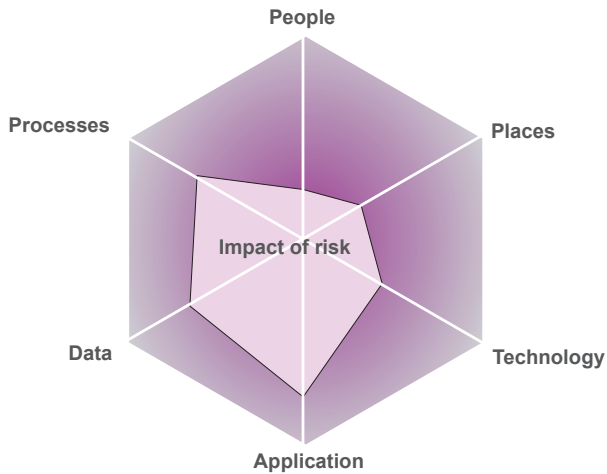


Figure 2

These models, used in combination, allow us to perform comprehensive risk analysis and define a comprehensive set of risk scenarios that should be addressed.

Comparison against common and agreed characteristics allows changes to be correctly assessed for their impact and testing to be objectively balanced. It highlights business critical aspects of any change and ensures that the assurance activities are similarly focused.

Integration with business as usual

A business also needs to understand and mitigate any risk associated with integrating and supporting a new solution in a live environment. Ensuring that operations are ready is critical to success and will include areas such as training, management, back up and disaster recovery, maintenance and security amongst others.

Our operational acceptance service demonstrates through thorough testing, how a new system operates and would be maintained and supported in a live environment including testing in a model office environment where appropriate.

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