

## What does Programme Management mean to you?

The team at The Program Management Group have spent many a happy lunchtime in our solar room chewing tuna butties and arguing over the terminology used in our specialist area.

Does, for example, programme management (PgM) refer to many projects, large projects or the management of change?

Many people seem to use PgM to refer to 'Internal' projects, projects designed to change the host organisation itself. But what about the many people in software houses and other contracting organisations who manage multiple 'External' projects creating deliverables that are destined to be handed over to a customer.

### The web-questionnaire

[www.e-programme.com](http://www.e-programme.com) is the website for those involved in the world of programme management. It has a mutually beneficial relationship with [ProgM](#) - the programme management SIG and is sponsored by my company - [The Program Management Group](#).

In an attempt to solve the arguments and allow people to eat their sandwiches in peace we launched a web-site based questionnaire to discover the terms that practitioners in programme management actually use.

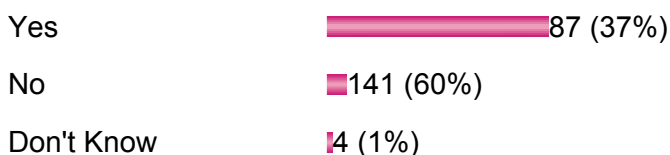
The questionnaire is now closed and the data analysed and this summarises the results. The detailed results have been posted on the website.

The first three questions made it clear that roughly two thirds of our respondents used programme management to refer to business change and three quarters use multi-project management to refer to multiple projects without the element of internal change.

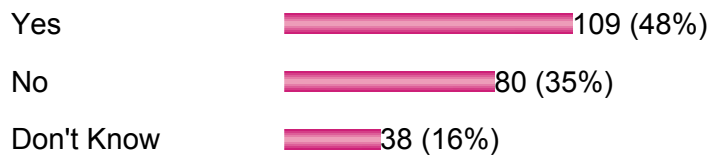
#### 1. Programme management to me means the management of organisational change through projects that bring about change. This nearly always involves benefits management. (238 votes)



#### 2. Programme Management to me means the management of multiple projects regardless of the purpose of the projects (232 votes)



**3. Portfolio Management to me means the management of multiple projects regardless of the purpose of the projects. (227 votes)**



This makes absolute sense. For most people PgM refers to the environment outlined in the CCTA's publication: Managing Successful Programmes, a fine publication you can buy through The Stationery Office amongst other places.

This publication describes a world where internal projects are conceived to deliver business change to the host organisation. The many IT projects within banks, government departments and other public bodies are examples of this environment.

Multi-project management is more commonly used to refer to a range of projects that do not involve change to the host organisation. This would include a software house developing and installing software at its client's premises.

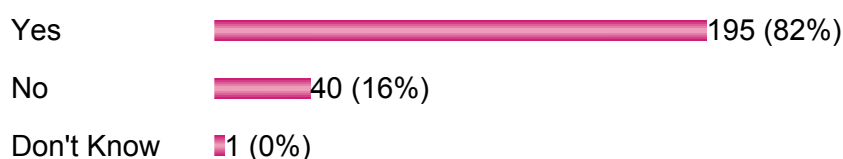
It had occurred to us that some people might find this all very confusing as they have always associated the term project management with multiple projects and have known no other environment. This proved not to be the case as you can see below.

**5. Project management to me means the management of multiple projects - I have always associated project management with a range of projects and have no experience of large single projects. (230 votes)**



I spent 15 years in construction and think of that time as my project management career and the rest of my work in the high tech environment as my programme management era. It seems that increasingly programme management means many projects, project management means one. These proved to be the common meanings.

**6. Project management to me means the management of a single project. (236 votes)**



## Software Plans

The next set of questions related to the respondent's use or intended use of software tools for project and programme management.

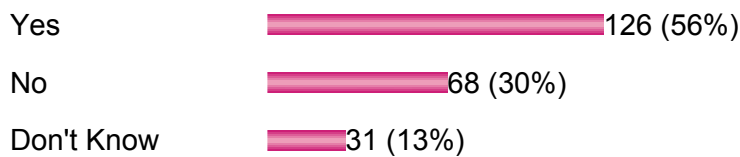
Nearly everyone filling in the questionnaire uses a project management tool and slightly over half suggested that they use a programme management tool.

We did not in the questionnaire define these two software categories but it is reasonable to assume that project management refers to a plan for each single project and programme management refers to some method of collating or consolidating many project plans into an overall plan.

### 9. Project Management software helps us to manage our projects. (235 votes)



### 10. Programme (multi-project) software helps us to manage our projects. (225 votes)



### 11. We are planning to implement programme management software tools in the near future. (227 votes)



If the 36% in the last question successfully implement a programme management system, once added to the 56% who have already done so, there will be a 92% majority using programme management tools!

The questionnaire gave room for personal comments and 70 people took the time to give us their thoughts.

The two strongest impressions were (a) welcome that there is an attempt to address the issues and (b) that everyone recognised the problem with programme management terminology.

I think that the comment from Mark Evans working on projects for a major telco summed up a common point of view:

*I believe there is a distinction to be made between managing several projects at once (an unfortunate but real situation for many project managers), a departmental effort to see across many projects (their portfolio), and putting a management environment in place within which a number of projects can be created and optimised such that each contributes specifically to the broad aims of the programme (programme management).*

*A Programme Manager needs a blend of business acumen and project management/control skills. They should be aware of the larger strategy to which their programme contributes so they can make informed recommendations to the programme board to optimise the projects making up their programme.*

There was one literal 'cry from the wilderness' and I felt such sympathy for this individual that I will offer to pass on your advice if you have any:

*Absar Husain: I will be really interested in experiencing the scope of programme management in Antarctica.*

I hope that you have found the results of this process have been useful and that it contributes to a process where the terms do eventually settle down.

I want to bring to your attention the work of [ProgM](#), the non-profit-making specific interest group for programme management that is supported by the APM and the BCS. You can read about ProgM's work and its schedule of events at [www.e-programme.com](http://www.e-programme.com).

Anyone with a genuine interest in programme management is welcome to attend ProgM's events all of which are interesting, informative and free.

Geoff Reiss  
The Program Management Group  
[geoff.reiss@pm-group.co.uk](mailto:geoff.reiss@pm-group.co.uk)