

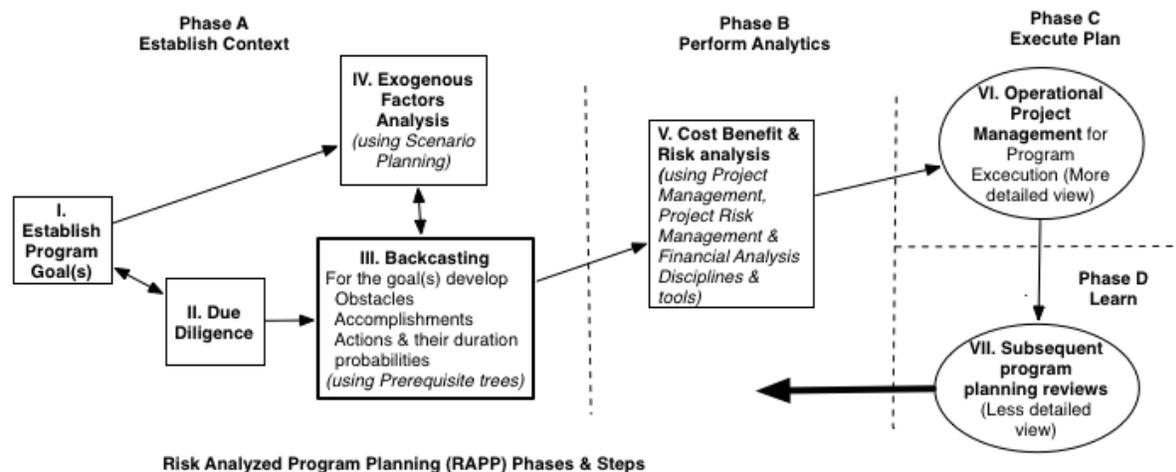
Risk Analyzed Program Planning (RAPP): Confronting the Challenges of Change

The long history of major transformation programs is replete with disappointments and frustration. Irrespective of the planning methodologies promulgated, by vendors and consultants, beginning with Business Process Engineering in the 1990's, the majority of change efforts fail. These planning methodologies focused on individual enterprises have been inadequate to cope with obstacles to change. More recently it has become clear that extant methodologies are also inadequate to cope with shared threats such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the challenge has become two-fold. Plan changes for your own institution while concurrently planning short and longer-term collaborative change programs with other institutions toward achieving common goals to realize the vital common good. Risk Analyzed Program Planning (RAPP) described below is applicable to both needs.

RAPP is a planning framework designed to overcome obstacles to change. RAPP carefully vets all transformation programs before their launch and then returns at program review and evaluation points to test assumptions and conclusions made at program launch and thereafter. This framework was realized in June of 2017 when the US Patent Office issued a patent to Dr. Joel Adler for Risk Analyzed Program Planning (RAPP).

RAPP's objective is to engage key appropriate stakeholders throughout change programs from strategic planning through program retirement, to insure positive benefits. RAPP achieves that purpose by enabling leaders to:

- Identify innovative changes needed to confront uncertain or complex environments.
- Assess inherent uncertainties and structure evidence-based action plans for feasible change at acceptable levels of risk.
- Prioritize change program initiatives by evaluating their likelihood of achieving program goals and objectives.
- Coordinate continuity among plans to implement change, recognizing the complexities confronting each change initiative.
- Minimize unintended consequences.
- Combine domain experts' judgement with quantitative analytics
- Establish a common frame of reference for all program stakeholders
- Complement strategic structural change with continuous Improvement (Lean 6 Sigma) priorities



RAPP works in 4 phases, Establish Context, Perform Analytics, Execute Plan and Learn in the 7 steps shown above and described below.

The RAPP planning process begins with the articulation of one or more actionable goals, step I. However, to develop actionable plans, goals need to be specific enough to generate accomplishments that overcome obstacles to achieving goals or sub-goals. Prior known obstacles and corresponding accomplishments are identified in step II, RAPP *Due Diligence* by learning from relevant prior change initiatives (if any). More sub-goals, obstacles and the corresponding accomplishments to overcome them are derived in step III, RAPP *Backcasting* where domain experts/stakeholders are interviewed collectively. For one or more goals and sub-goals they are asked,

- What is an obstacle to achieving your goal?
- What accomplishments overcome the obstacles?
- What are the obstacles to this accomplishment?
- What accomplishments overcome *this* obstacle?
- Repeat

This iterative process ends when no more obstacles can be articulated.

These interviews uncover management's intuitive understanding of the cause and effect structures in their domains. The theory for backcasting was developed by Dr. Larry Hirschhorn partially based on Prerequisite Trees developed in the Theory of Constraints.

Given the specific accomplishments derived in backcasting, the actions required to achieve each of the accomplishments are identified and sequenced in the order they are performed. These comprise a stakeholder/domain expert planning model. Estimates for the range of durations of the actions are provided by domain experts who are also informed by step IV *exogenous factor analysis* if factors beyond the control of the program should be considered. The exogenous factor analysis borrows techniques from Scenario Planning.

In step V, *Cost/Benefit and Risk Analysis* an analysis framework is directly derived from the planning model. The nomenclature is changed from accomplishments to milestones and actions to activities, with the activity duration ranges now represented by probability distributions. These representations are called Activity Networks that allow established analysis techniques and software for Financial Modeling and Project Risk Management to be applied.

In step VI, Activity Networks are fleshed out with additional granularity for the *Operational Project Management* that controls the implementation of the program at the task level. This increased level of granularity is then reduced/reversed for step VII, the subsequent *Program Planning Review* cycles which return to earlier steps of RAPP. Reviews are repeated regularly and also may be triggered by what is learned during Phase C, *Program Execution* or changes in the exogenous factors (step IV).

In Step VII, a method of review is employed drawn in part from techniques for Program Theory for Monitoring and Evaluation that recognize the distinctions between simple, complicated and complex (emergent) environments within which change is conducted, see Purposeful Program Theory (Funnell & Rogers 2011). Planning and management Information collected in RAPP during a change program becomes input to the review process.

The planning effort involved with RAPP scales with the scope and complexity of the change initiative and is foreshortened when there is early recognition that the change initiative should no longer be considered.

Conclusion

Failures of major change programs can inflict irreversible damage. The potential penalties of lost time, energy and cost can be reduced with the use of RAPP. Executive leadership can compare alternative change proposals with confidence knowing that (a) stakeholders' knowledge and experience is well represented, (b) major elements of the change strategy are understood, (c) gaps in the strategy have been identified, (d) well known management frameworks are used to implement the plan, and (e) a method to learn from program implementation is in place. RAPP utilizes a combination of well-established methodologies that are uniquely assembled to reduce the likelihood of failure. The frameworks are proven but their combination is novel. RAPP is increasingly valuable given the history of change program failures, and an increasingly complex, interdependent and global economic environment. UIA provides the team expert in these methodologies and in helping clients benefit from them.

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