



IN SUPPORT OF ACTIVE PLANNING

a solid basis for achievement

Planning is the key to ensuring that a programme achieves its desired objectives. Inspired Partners always uses **Active Planning**, which means starting with the end in mind.

Four elements play a key role in shaping an Active Plan:

- **Assumptions**
- **Risks & Issues**
- **Resources**
- **Opportunities**

These are present throughout the life of a programme and affect the detail and timing.

The importance of these elements should be clearly explained to everyone involved in the programme in order to build a shared understanding. Information about each element should be captured during the planning process, either visually or electronically.

Assumptions

Something that you accept as true without question or proof - fact-like statements that affect other things but are not necessarily true

Plans are generally based on a series of Assumptions which need to be identified to test the plan's robustness. The size of programme, the desired outcomes, the time-scales and the activities to be completed can all be dependent on the Assumptions made.

Typically, Assumptions are outside the control of those doing the planning, often involving other areas of the business or senior management. There may also be Assumptions that are outside the control of the organisation – these should be raised as Risks to the programme.



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Information to Capture:

- Description of the **Assumption**
- **Confidence** of how likely it is that the Assumption is correct (as a percentage)
- The **impact** on the programme if the Assumption is correct – high, medium, low?

Risks & Issues

The possibility of something bad happening and a subject or problem which people are thinking and talking about

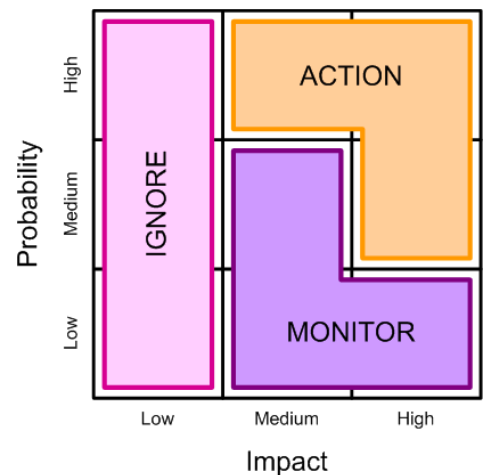
These are blockers that could have an impact on the overall success of the plan.

Risks need to be evaluated and understood:

- Some need mitigating **actions** to ensure that damage to the plan is minimised
- Some should be **monitored** over the life of the programme
- Some are insignificant and can be **ignored**

Senior management should also be made aware of Risks so that they can determine appropriate actions.

Issues are less definite than Risks but need to be recorded and actively monitored to prevent escalation. Where possible, they should be resolved via the most expedient route.





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Information to Capture

- Description of **Risk** or **Issue**
- **Probability**, or percentage likelihood, that the Risk or Issue will occur
- The **impact** on the programme if the Risk or Issue does occur – high, medium, low?
- Potential **mitigating actions**

Resources

Resources required to deliver a programme will include technology, facilities, knowledge and people (see [Programme Roles](#))

It is important to identify the Resources that are key to the successful delivery of the plan and establish whether they are available to the team. If the Resources are external, will they always be available? Can alternative Resources be employed without impacting the quality of the delivered plan?

Information to Capture

- Description of the **Resource** - skill set or named individual if a person, or technical description if a physical resource
- The **criticality** of that Resource, as a percentage, to the completion of the plan
- The **required involvement** of the Resource during the programme - full-time, part-time, single intervention



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Opportunities

Occasions or situations which make it possible to do something that will bring additional benefits to the programme

During Active Planning, opportunities may be identified where the programme can deliver additional benefits for some extra effort. The organisation should be made aware of these Opportunities so that they can decide whether the extra benefits justify the additional effort required.

Information to Capture

- Description of the **Opportunity**
- The area that will be **impacted** by the Opportunity
- The **potential benefit(s)** to the programme with an indication of size - significant benefit, limited benefit, quantified financial benefit

When these four elements have been assessed, and all relevant information captured, you can be confident that you have laid the foundations for a robust plan. You should continue to build the plan throughout its life by regular reviews of the

- **Assumptions**
- **Risks & Issues**
- **Resources**
- **Opportunities**

