Watching the behaviour of wild animals on safari to witness teamwork at its ultimate may seem a romantic notion, but one woman passionately believes that there are very real and profound lessons to be learned. James Graham visited Lindsay McKenna to discover more about her approach.

Arkness falls as a pride of lions hunt zebra. Working in concert, encircling the herd, utterly focused, quivering with anticipation, crouching, stalking, until the chosen target is isolated and within striking distance. Then one goes in for the kill. With expert skill, awesome power and perfect timing the prey is taken. The rest move in…

From a distance it looks like a perfect team in action, but Lindsay McKenna knows that this is a temporary situation. “Many assume that lions always operate as a team, but in fact they only co-operate when the benefits to the individual outweigh the costs. When hunting, the chance of a successful kill is significantly higher working as a team than operating solo. But as soon as they start to feed, teamwork rapidly disintegrates and it is every beast for himself – often with drastic consequences for cubs and weaker pride members.”

In contrast, African wild dogs provide an excellent example of teamwork. Their alignment to common goals and plans for change, developing the optimum solution, implementing change and review. These stages decompose into 32 sub-processes which are applied through 10 phases, starting with project initiation and ending with post implementation reviews. An outcome of this approach is that there is a strong link between the strategic aims of the change being implemented and the actions required to deliver it, with proper plans being prepared, as would be the case with any robust methodology.

The project-change frame has four main stages: foundations for change, developing the optimum solution, implementing change and review. These stages decompose into 32 sub-processes which are applied through 10 phases, starting with project initiation and ending with post implementation reviews.

Framework

“Change is primarily a human story”, says Lindsay. “As people go through the process, they need a framework to provide a common approach and understanding. The project-change frame was created because successful project delivery and securing sustainable results demands simultaneous attention to, and management of, both the ‘hard’ processes of project management and the people aspects of change.”

Where the project-change frame offers an interesting approach is in the holistic way that the process and human elements are intertwined to provide one pathway from the alpha to the omega of a project. There is no need to bolt on a ‘change management’ module to this tool, as this is engineered into the approach.

This approach emphasises that getting to grips with the people side of projects is not a mere ‘nice-to-have’ but an essential. ‘Involvement’ of teams and stakeholders from the outset ensures, for example, that realistic plans are produced. It also helps teams to recognise the importance of quickly identifying potential problems.

There is sometimes a perception that reporting risks or potential variance from plan is in some way negative. In reality, the business needs visibility on the risk/benefit balance, and

In the frame: Lindsay McKenna combines technical and softer aspects of PM in her project-change frame.