

# Managing Projects for Absolute Success: The Role of the Executive Sponsor

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Manchester Business School, November 2009

- Exploring Success and Failure
- Purpose:
  - The Importance of Being E[a]rnest! (Wilde)
- Planning:
  - Great Expectations (Dickens)
- Control:
  - The Dog that Didn't Bark (Conan Doyle)
- Workstream Management:
  - Row, Row, Row your boat.... (American Minstrel Song, 1852)

- C-Nomis:
  - “Computer ‘shambles’ cost taxpayer £40m”
    - » Daily Telegraph, October 2009
  - ‘not even a minimum level of competence in the planning and execution’
  - ‘out of control’
  - ‘culture of over optimism’
  - ‘lacked the experience needed to manage the project’
  - ‘underestimated its size and complexity’

- C-Nomis:
  - Initial Budget: £234 million
  - Actual Spend: £700 million PLUS
  - Unaccounted for: £161 million!
  - Wasted: (Officially): £41 million
  
  - Wasted: (Unofficially): ALL of it
  - Because: Project Abandoned!

- Other Failures:
  - NHS: National IT Programme
    - Initial Cost: £2.3 bn
    - Latest Estimate: £12.4 bn
  - LIBRA: Court Fines Collection
    - Initial Cost: £146 mn
    - Latest Estimate: £487 mn
  - HM Treasury: Systems Integration
    - Initial Cost: £1.5 bn
    - Latest Estimate: £1.7 bn

- In the words of East Enders:
  - ‘wassgoinon?’
- Or if you prefer Gavin & Stacey:
  - ‘whats occurin?’

- Observed tendencies:
  - Understate
    - Costs, skills, time, resources, complexity
  - Overstate
    - Benefits realisable, capability of organisation and people
  - Executive Sponsors
    - Insufficiently close to the project
    - Over-ambitious
    - Working with a 'poisoned chalice'

## Exploring Success and Failure

- Who is at fault?
- You are!
- Because:
  - inadequate planning
  - adequacy of control
  - culture
  - experience
  - size and complexity
- all things that can be managed by the Executive Sponsor
- the Executive Sponsor creates the conditions for absolute success (or not!)

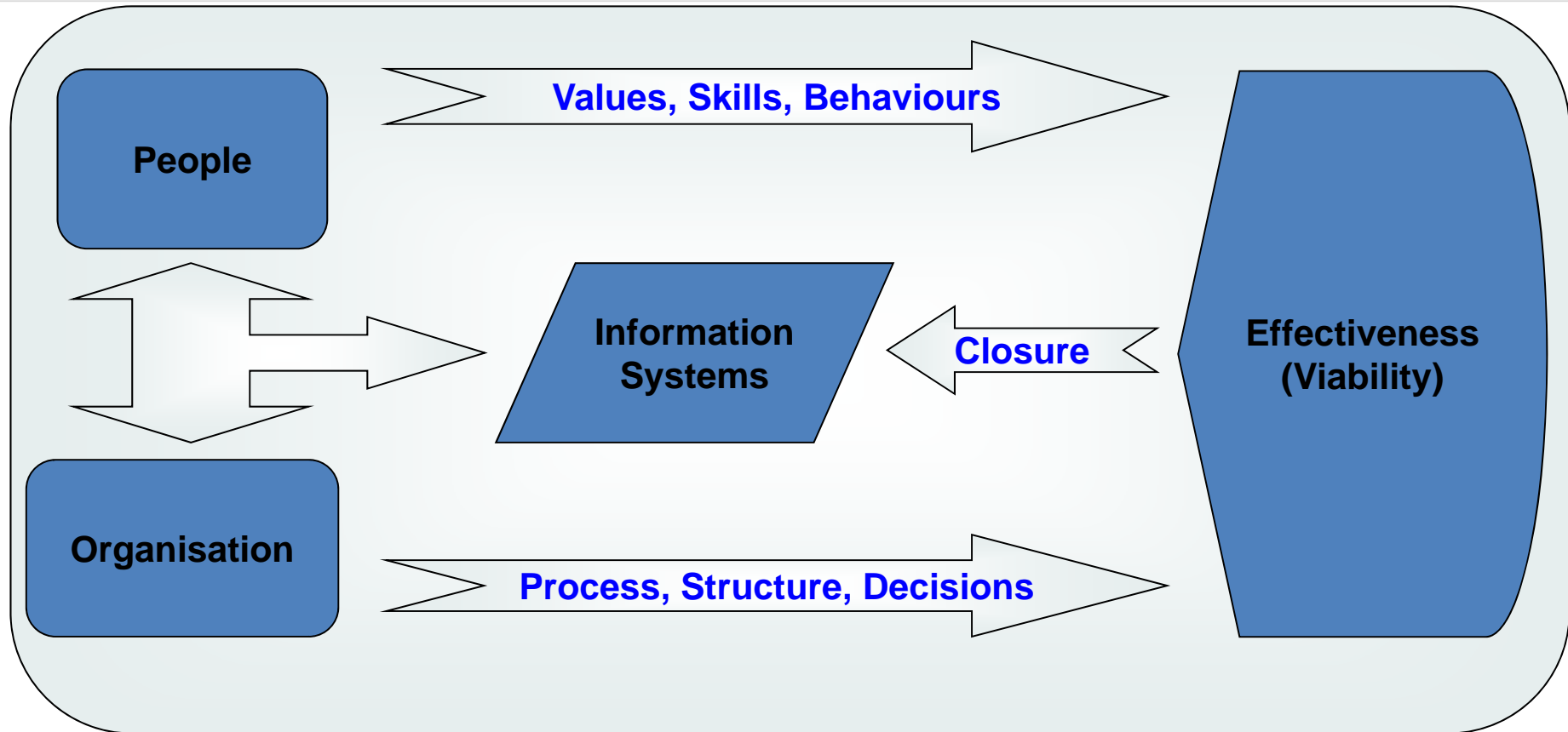


## Exploring Success and Failure

- Aren't there ANY successes?
- Yes!
- How?
  - Purposeful, planned, focused, precisely controlled and managed
- Viable
  - Capable of fulfilling intended purpose
  - Dealing with a changing environment – internally AND externally
  - Set in an organisation which is itself (reasonably) viable

- Capable of adapting to changes which were not foreseen at the time of its 'design'
- Indescribably complex
- Probabilistic
- Use feedback and feedforward control
- Adaptiveness designed in through:
  - Decision making aligned to fulfilment of purpose
  - Effective information exchange
  - Adaptive processes
  - Adaptive behaviour

# Viability



## Viable Organisation

- Purposeful
- Understands and modifies external and internal environments
- Effective resource management with respect to outcomes
- Substantial operational workstream autonomy
- Enabled by information systems

- Purposeful activity is goal or outcome focused
  - reflects the ‘identity’ (purpose, vision and values) of the organisation
  - set in the context of both organisational AND environmental needs (dynamism inside and outside the organisation)
  - articulated in any project through the behaviour and processes adopted by the Executive Sponsor
  - enables or inhibits planning and delivery
- Remember – if you can fake sincerity you can fake anything!

- The Importance of Being E[a]rnest



- The Importance of Being E[a]rnest
  - Environmental Fit
  - Achievable
  - Realistic
  - Necessary
  - Engaging
  - Sustainable
  - True



- Great Expectations
  - Understanding the environment
  - Understanding the business and its needs
  - Considering the ‘fit’ of the project
  - Determining the appropriate scope
  - Comprehending the limits
    - of the project and its deliverables
    - of the organisation and its capability



- **Great Expectations**
  - Understanding:
    - the environment
    - the business
    - its needs
  - Considering the ‘fit’ of the project
  - Determining the appropriate scope
  - Comprehending the limits
    - of the project and its deliverables
    - of the organisation and its capability

**Planning**

**Purpose**

- The Uncertainty Principle (Heisenberg)
  - You can know where it is
  - You can know how fast it is moving
  - You can't know both!
  
- Get over it!

- The dog that didn't bark
  - Control is a function of information
    - Information you provide (or don't)
    - Information you receive (or don't)
    - What you do with it when you get it (or don't)

**Planning**

**Purpose**

**Control**

- The dog that didn't bark
  - Control is a function of information
    - Information you provide (or don't)
    - Information you receive (or don't)
    - What you do with it when you get it (or don't)
  - Exercising Control
    - Highlights the gap between
      - What you wanted and what you got
      - Where the project is and should be
      - How fast it is moving (or isn't)

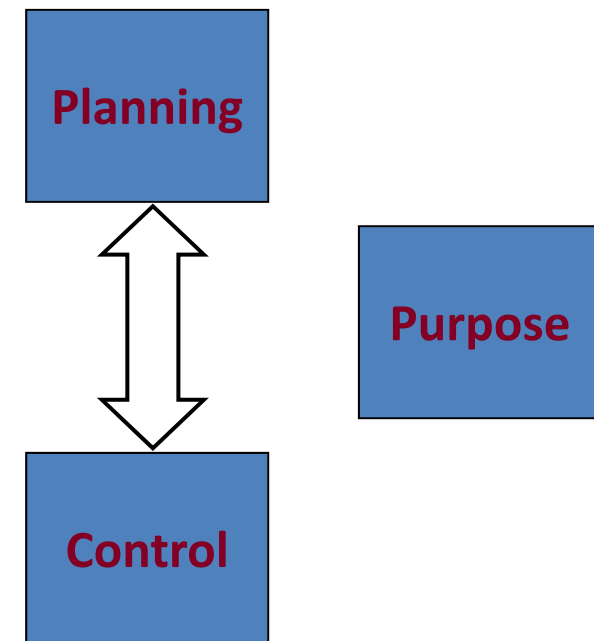
**Planning**

**Purpose**

**Control**

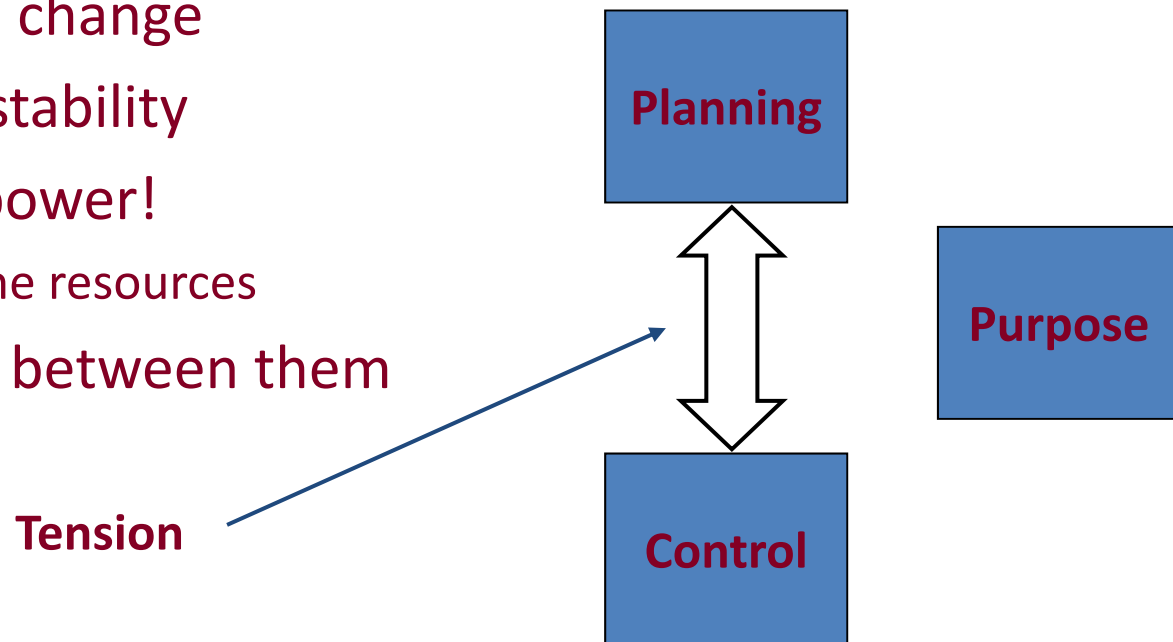
## Maintaining Control

- Planning pursues change
- Control pursues stability
- Control has the power!
  - because it has the resources



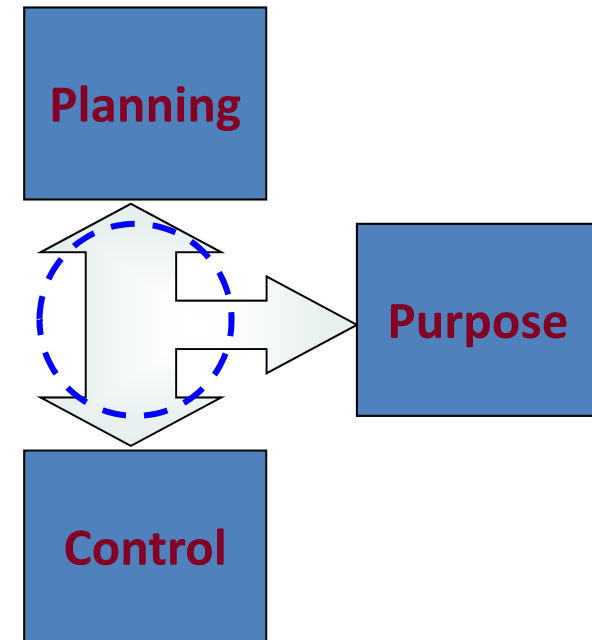
## Maintaining Control

- Planning pursues change
- Control pursues stability
- Control has the power!
  - because it has the resources
- Tension emerges between them



# Maintaining Control

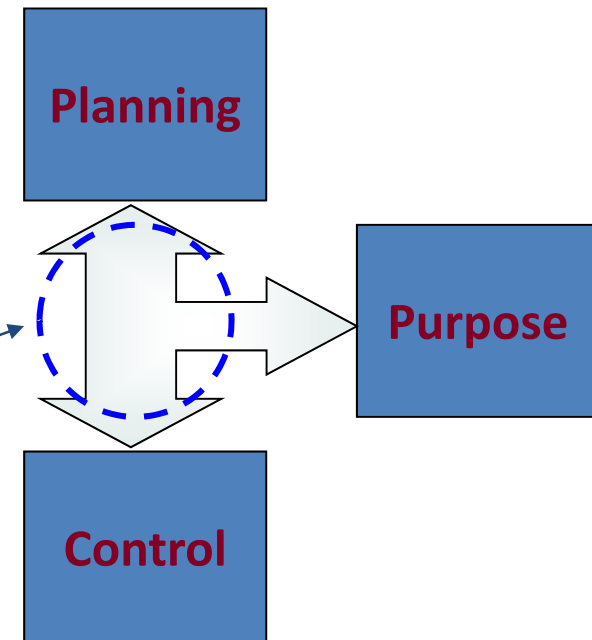
- The Triologue (Dudley, 2000)
  - Organisational Nurofen!



# Maintaining Control

- The Triologue (Dudley, 2000)
  - Organisational Nurofen!
  - A device for resolving tension

Resolves Tension  
Defines 'Rightness'  
Enables Effectiveness





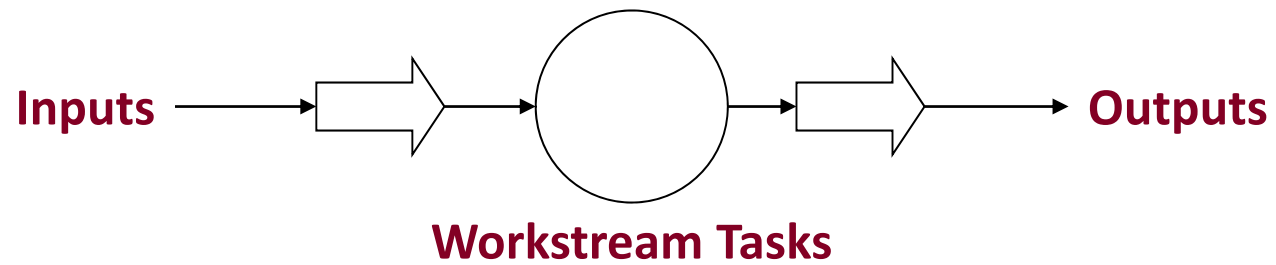
- Poetry in Motion?

Row, row, row your boat,  
Gently down the stream,  
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily,  
Life is but a dream.

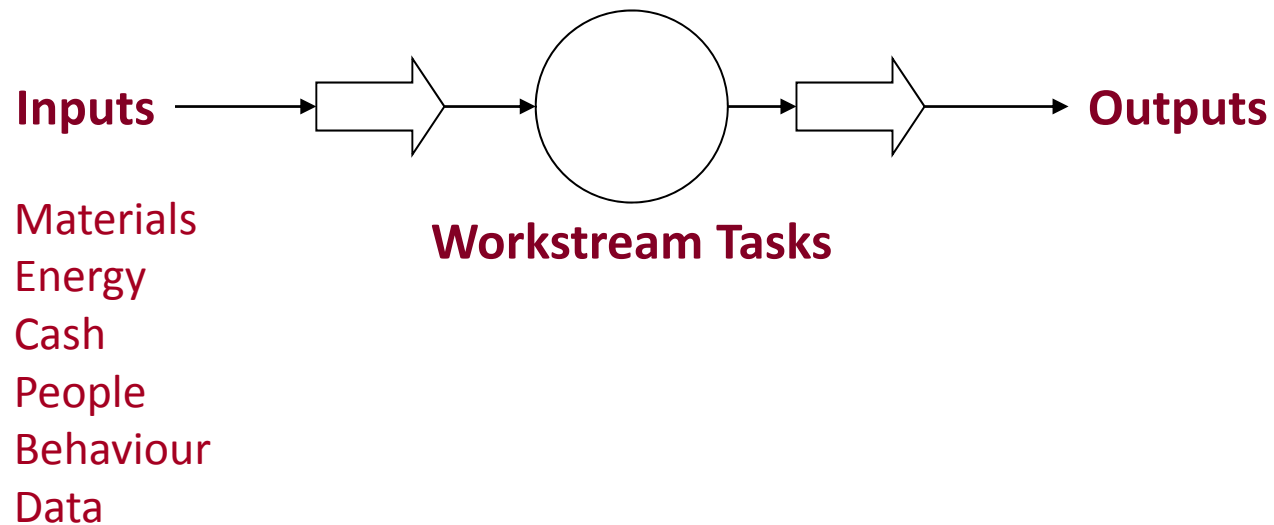
# Workstream Management

- A process for autonomically managing delivery

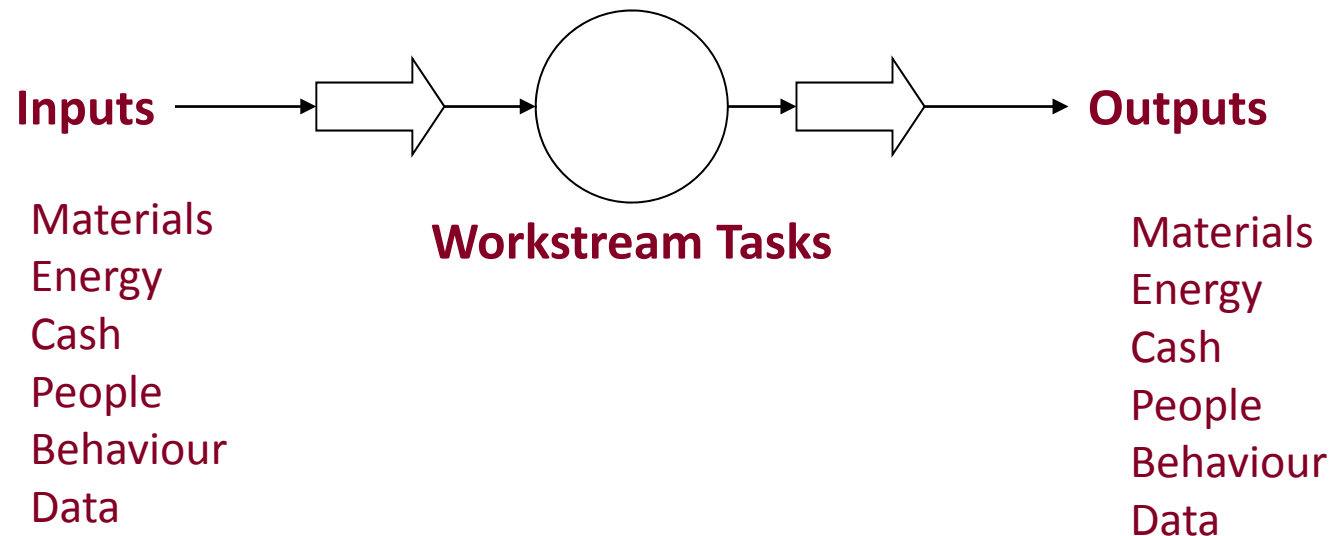
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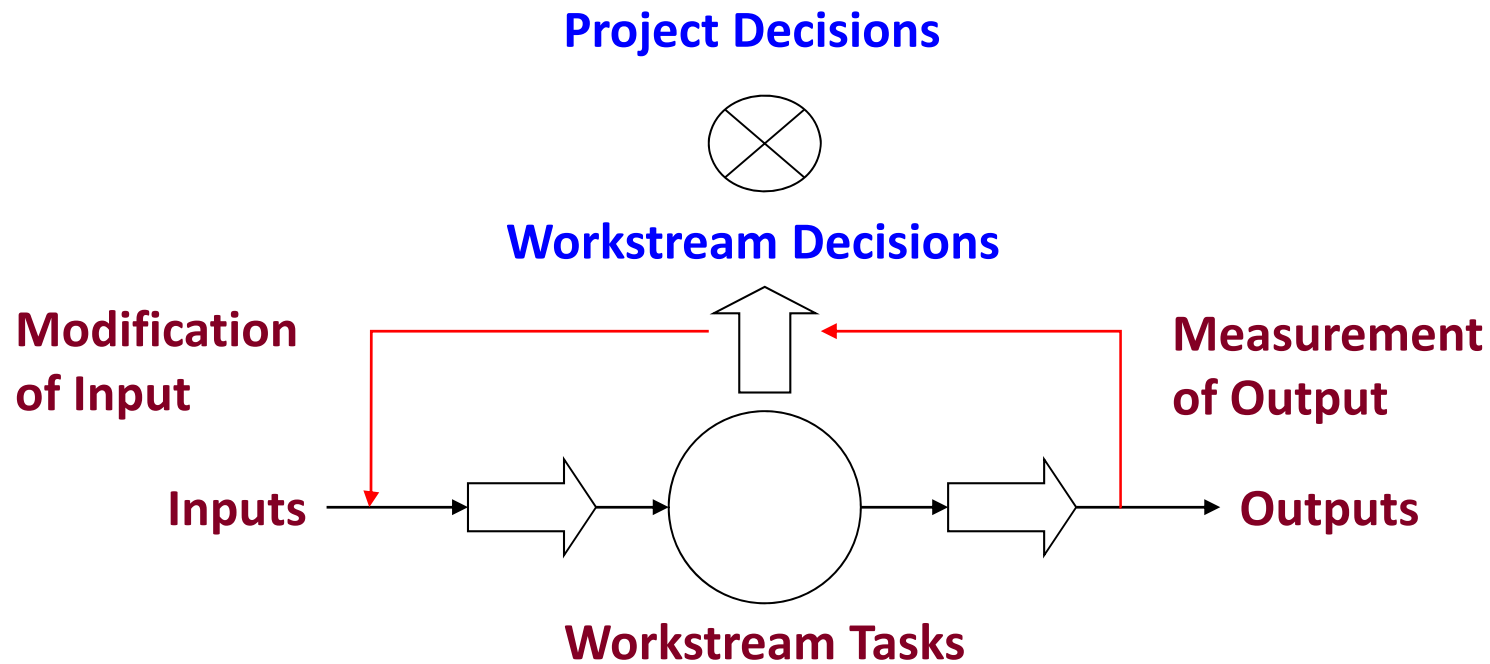
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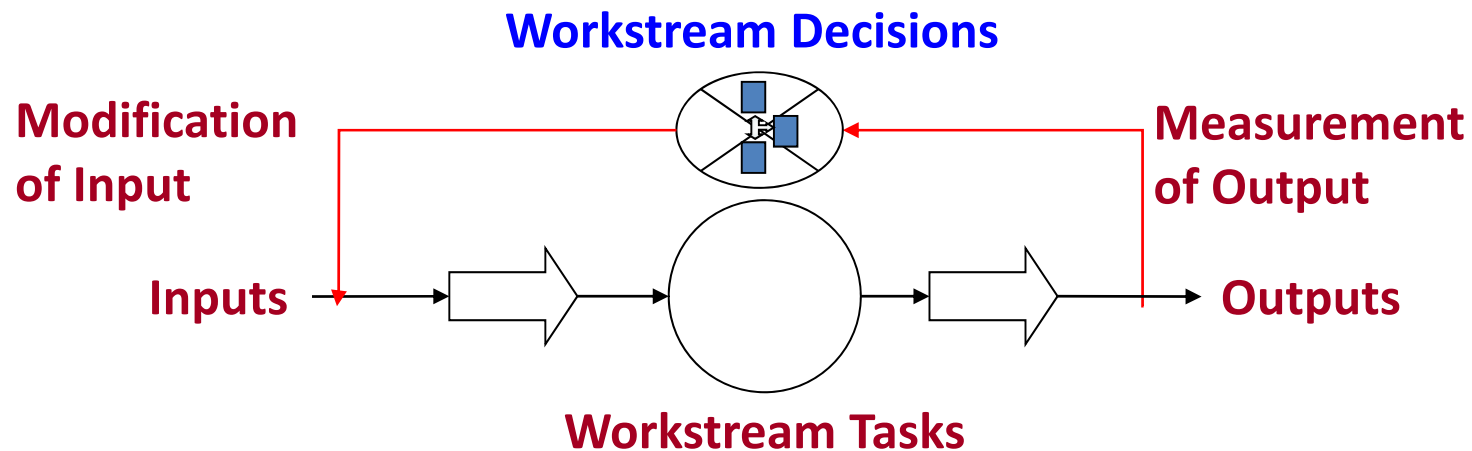


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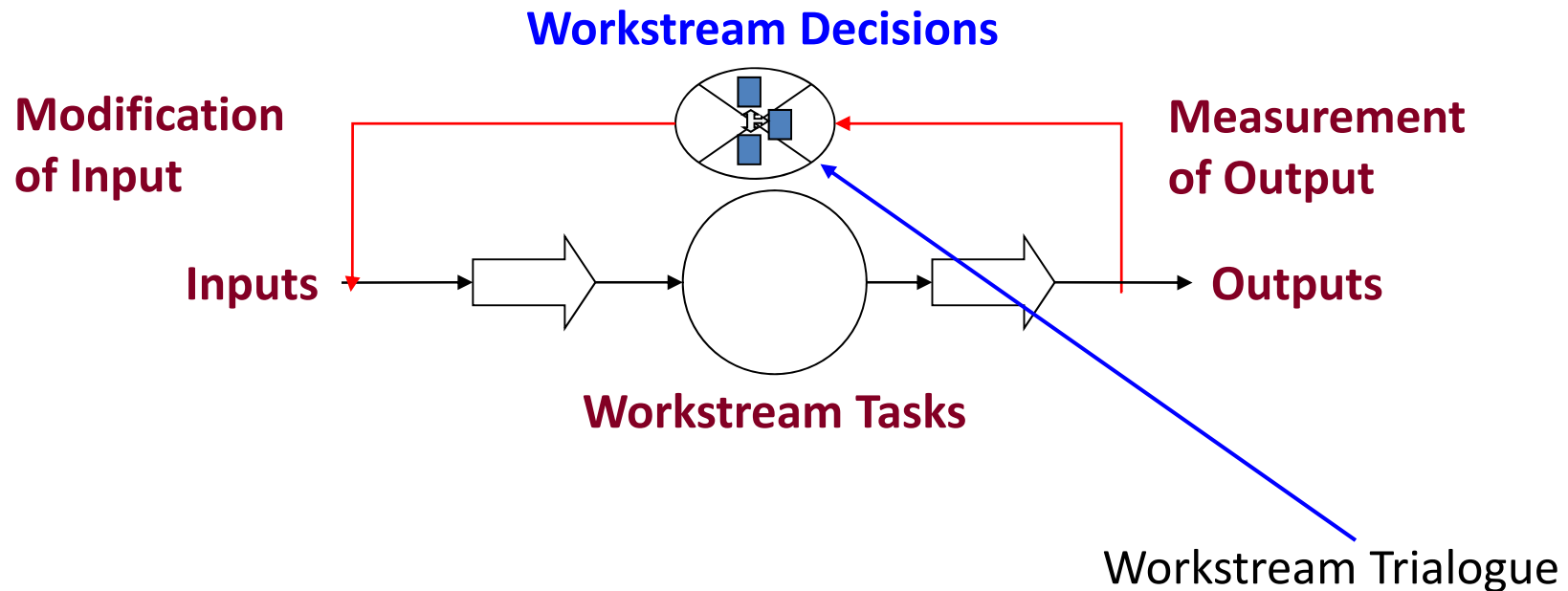
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What information do we need to provide to the Project Manager?  
What information do we need to obtain from the Project Manager?  
What must we do to achieve agreed outcomes?



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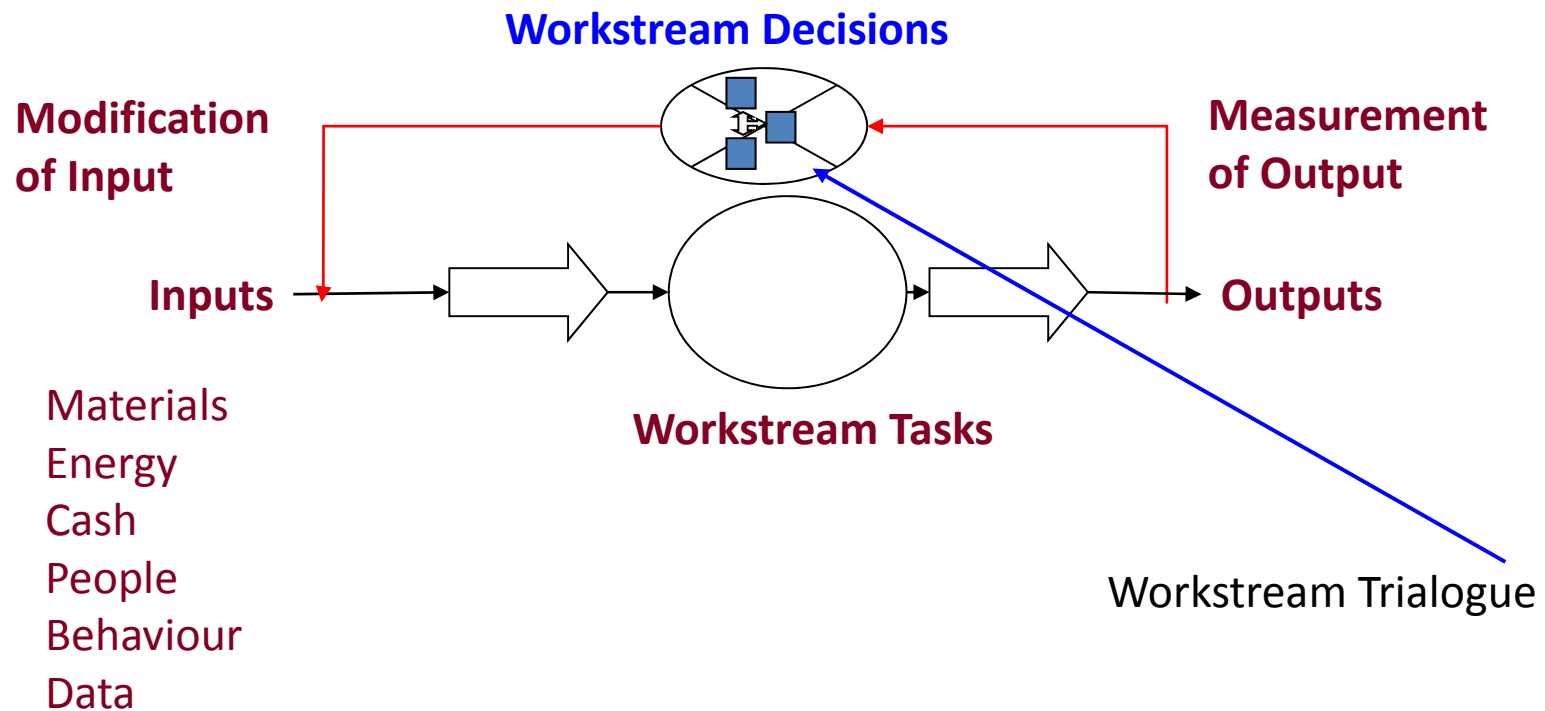
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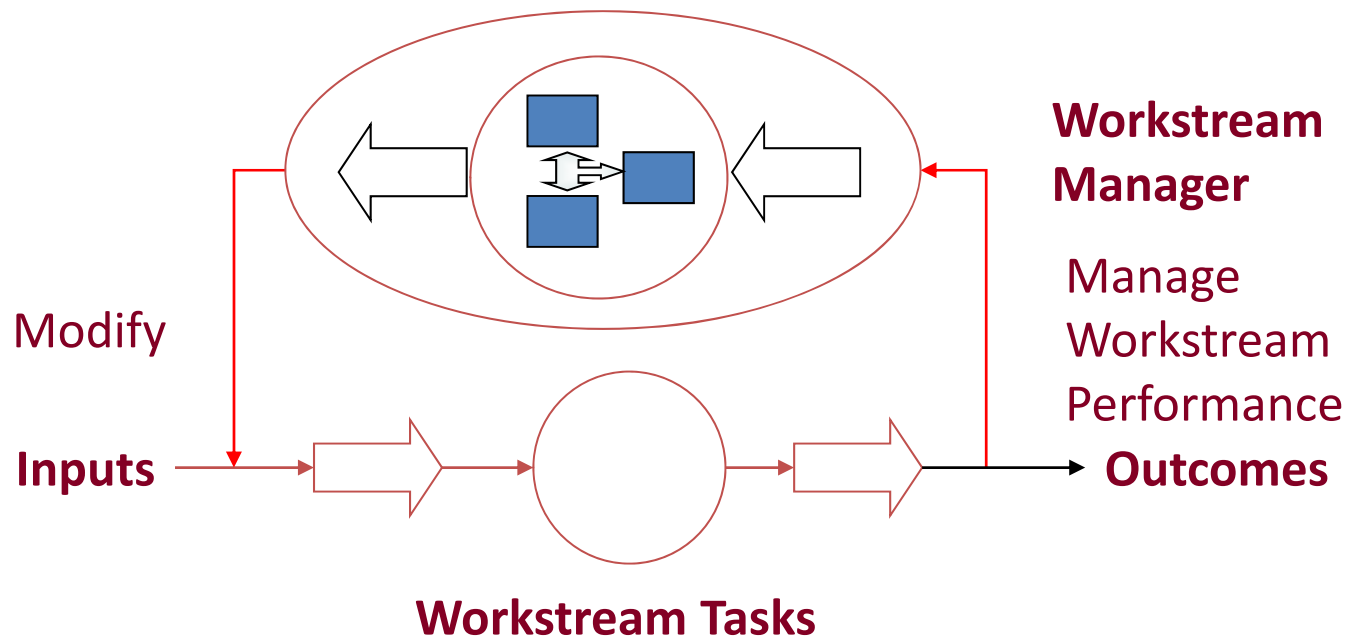


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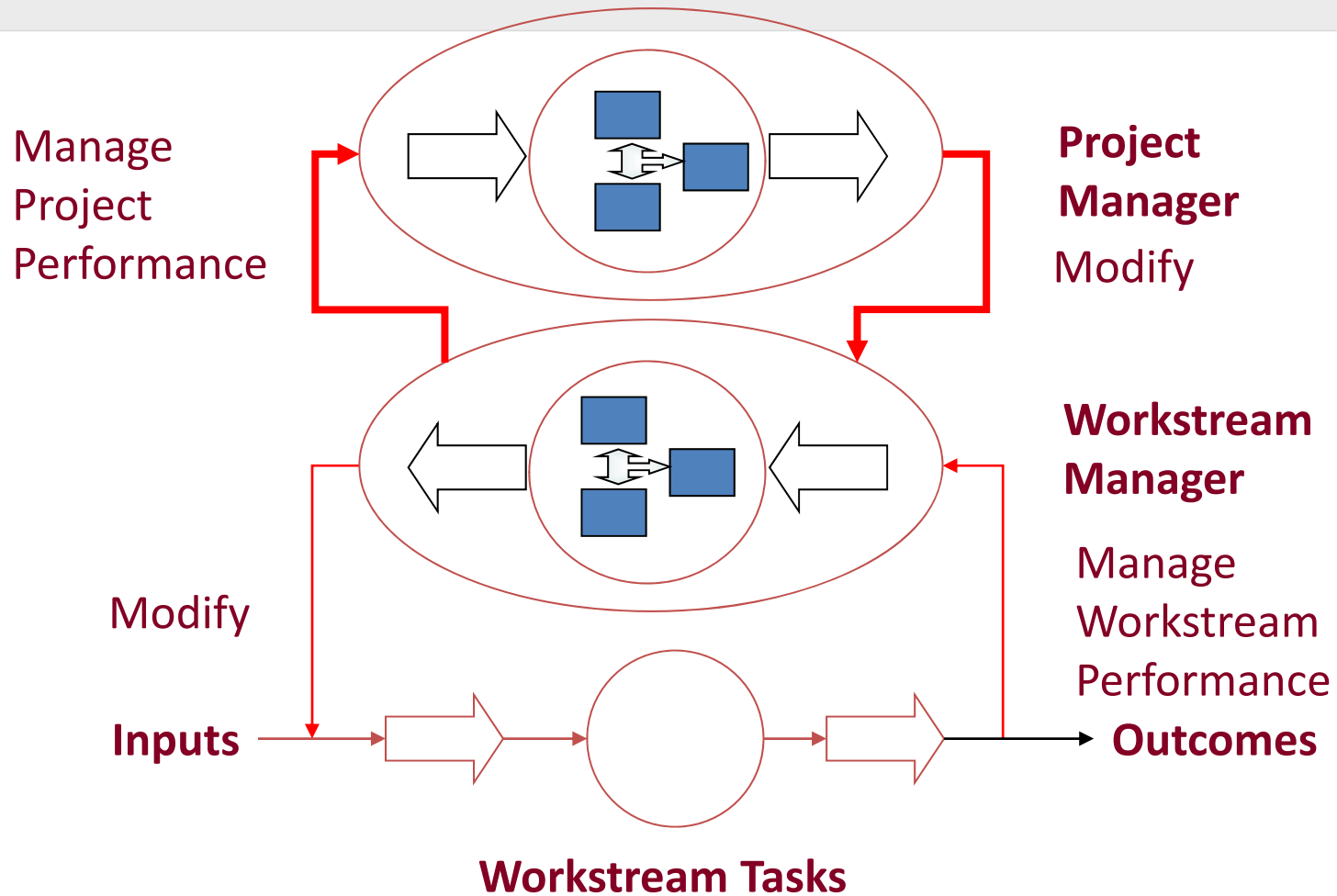
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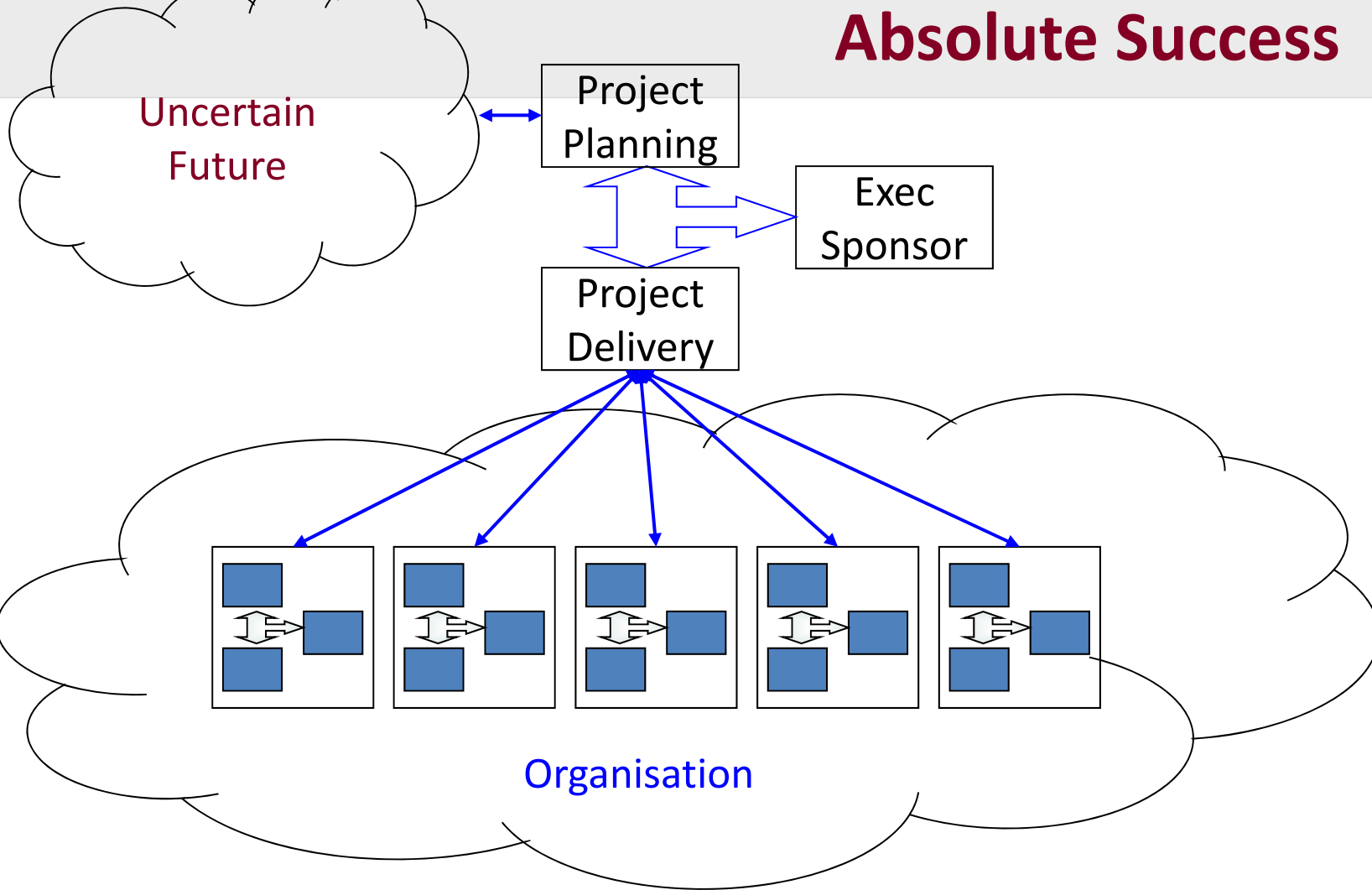
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