

DIGITAL UK'S TEN TRANSFERABLE LESSONS FROM THE UK'S DIGITAL TELEVISION SWITCHOVER PROGRAMME

The UK's digital TV switchover programme has been completed in nearly 25% of the country, and remains on track to finish on time, under budget, and with the minimum disruption to TV viewers by the end of 2012. Digital UK is the independent and not-for-profit organisation set up by the broadcasters in 2005 to deliver this public policy project.

There is still some considerable distance to go before we reach the finishing line, and we will no doubt encounter hitches and glitches on the road to 2012. While we are in no way complacent about the challenges that lie ahead, we have nonetheless already learned a great deal about what can make a large-scale, public policy change programme – like TV switchover - work.

Our 'ten transferable lessons' are observations we have compiled over the past five years, and that we hope might be useful pointers to others setting out to implement similar private or public change projects. Not all ten lessons will be relevant to every project, but we believe that each one can be an instructive guide to creating success in change programmes.

Our lessons have been divided into two parts:

Five lessons on governance, which might guide how a new project is set up:

1. A 'single-purpose, centralised delivery model'
2. Legal and regulatory underpinning
3. Commercially-minded management delivering a public purpose
4. Sufficient, safeguarded funding
5. Alignment of infrastructure and communications

Five lessons on implementation, which suggest ways of ensuring success in the implementation phase of a project:

6. Working with the market
7. A clear, attainable and secure timetable with a 'moment of compulsion'
8. A layered communications model which reaches deep into communities
9. Practical support for the most vulnerable
10. Mobilising existing support networks

Five Lessons on Governance

1. A 'single-purpose, centralised delivery model'

Digital UK is a single-purpose organisation with the clearly defined remit to implement the TV switchover programme in as simple and straightforward a way as possible for the UK's television viewers.

As a new, special vehicle created to implement TV switchover, it is free from any commercial or political concerns of its programme partners (Government and Ofcom) or shareholders (the broadcasters and multiplex operators). Its impartial nature means it has been able to forge fresh, open, listening relationships with the Programme's many stakeholders – from electrical retailers to the third sector. It has consistently performed well in stakeholder surveys, most recently achieving an average 'favourability' rating of 7.8 out of 10 in an independent survey of 175 stakeholders conducted in January 2010.

As a single-purpose organisation, it has absolute clarity of mission, both internally and for stakeholders, and the scope of Digital UK's operations has been defended against the common 'scope creep' that tends to afflict successful projects in particular.

Digital UK's 'centralised delivery model' means that it acts as a central organising hub for all switchover activity. It operates the programme's central 'Programme Management Office', which manages and communicates plans, changes to plans, and new information out across the Programme. Digital UK owns the critical success factors and targets for the programme. And, very importantly, Digital UK informs and co-ordinates the work of stakeholders to support switchover. As such, it is able to align a wide variety of stakeholders, nationally and locally, towards the common goal of a successful digital switch.

Lesson 1: Digital UK has seen the benefit of being a new, single-purpose, centralised delivery vehicle that has a clear remit to lead the implementation of the project; is impartial and can therefore develop fresh and unbiased relationships with stakeholders; and can become the central organising 'hub' of programme activity, supporting and co-ordinating stakeholder activity towards a common goal.

2. Legal and regulatory underpinning:

The UK's TV switchover programme has been securely underpinned, from its inception, by a legal and regulatory framework which includes:

- A public Government commitment to achieve digital TV switchover by 2012, made by Tessa Jowell, then Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, in September 2005.
- Ofcom's formal recommendation to Government in April 2004 that TV switchover was "desirable and achievable", and then in December 2004 the issue of 'digital replacement licences' to the commercial public service broadcasters, requiring them to work towards a digital TV switchover.

Matching conditions are written into commercial multiplex licences and the terms of the BBC Charter and Agreement.

- The commitment of Digital UK's broadcaster and multiplex operator shareholders to co-ordinate to support switchover, as described in the Articles of Association of Digital UK Ltd.

These commitments signal the cross-departmental, regulatory, and cross-industry support that exists for the Programme, but also guarantees that support in unequivocal terms. That in turn provided – and continues to provide - certainty that the Programme will finish, as planned, at the end of 2012.

Lesson 2: Any public change programme must be lead by unequivocal Government and regulator support, and industry engagement should be formalised - from the outset - in agreements or licences.

3. Commercially-minded management delivering a public purpose:

Digital UK is an independent organisation, staffed by conscientious and energetic individuals with commercial experience, delivering a Government policy project. That unusual combination of a business mindset and commercial practices, applied to a public policy programme, has created an agile and adaptable organisation, which is motivated to find efficiency and cost-saving in what we do, and is committed to delivering its task on time.

Lesson 3: Commercial expertise can fruitfully be brought to bear on public change programmes, and can inject the energy and drive to achieve the project on budget and on time.

4. Sufficient, safeguarded funding

The TV Switchover Programme's funding is supplied primarily from the BBC's Licence Fee: both the £200 million budget for Digital UK's communications activity and the £600 million budget for the Switchover Help Scheme (between 2005 and 2013). Digital UK also has a £30 million operating budget, funded by all its broadcaster members, to support the running of the company; and the broadcasters will incur around £800 million of expenditure on the conversion of the terrestrial network.

This funding was originally scoped on the basis of extensive benchmarking, and is now certain to be sufficient, with savings of at least £55 million on Digital UK's communications budget, which can be released for new uses.

It is also safeguarded, being specifically ring-fenced within the BBC Licence Fee for switchover uses only. This has provided the peace of mind that the programme's funding cannot be cannibalised by competing uses of those funds.

Digital UK's long term budget is revised each year, funding drawn down each quarter, and spending then reported in a comprehensive review process with the BBC that emphasises effectiveness and value-for-money metrics.

Lesson 4: Large-scale programmes must have sufficient and safeguarded funding secured. All parties must have confidence that the finances are available to complete the project successfully and on time.

5. Alignment of infrastructure and communications

Digital UK comprises both a technical infrastructure team (tasked with co-ordinating the roll-out of the UK's high-power digital terrestrial TV network), and consumer, trade, stakeholder and press communications teams.

The side-by-side working of those responsible for the technical changes and those charged with communicating those changes to the public enables the communications teams to understand the necessary detail of technical changes that may impact TV viewers, and confirms to the infrastructure team the need to manage the technical works to minimise viewer impacts.

Parallel planning of infrastructure and communications has also made it possible to design a regional communications plan to accompany the regional roll-out of switchover; allowing a region by region focus, and for lessons learned from one area to be applied to the next.

Lesson 5: Side-by-side working of technical infrastructure teams and communications teams in any private or public project greatly facilitates accurate and timely communication of technical changes, and drives engineers to minimise consumer impacts in their planning.

Five Lessons on Implementation

6. Working with the market

Digital television is a vibrant and competitive marketplace, with a wide range of compelling content (BBC Three, BBC Four, ITV2, More4); enhanced functionality (on-screen guides; easy recording); and you can convert your existing set from as little as £25, or choose to spend more for access to premium content. Such is the appeal of digital television, that nine in ten homes choose to go digital well before switchover.

When the switchover was announced in 2005, two-thirds of UK homes had already chosen digital TV, and since then the switchover programme has ridden the wave of natural market conversion and digital TV's inherent and near-universal appeal.

This ability to work with the grain of the market, and to support the electrical retail industry and TV platform providers as they converted more and more UK consumers to digital TV, has propelled digital TV conversion to more than 90% today, and has steadily diminished the numbers of so-called 'resistors' or 'refuseniks' to such an extent that, in reality, we find that everyone who wishes to continue watching television will convert for switchover.

Lesson 6: Any public change programme must work with demand and provide real, tangible benefits to consumers. It must also choose its moment carefully. Moving too early risks running ahead of the market and bringing into question the potential for success of the programme; moving too late would miss an opportunity to ride the wave of consumer demand and trade support.

7. A clear, attainable and secure timetable with a 'moment of compulsion'

At every stage of the TV switchover programme dates have only been announced when work or planning is sufficiently far advanced to give absolute confidence that those dates are achievable. The UK's TV switchover programme has never reneged on a public date once announced, and the certainty we give dates in the public domain has built considerable confidence in the process among stakeholders and viewers.

In 2005, the Government announced a 2008 to 2012 timeframe and annual regional roll-out order only once the broadcast engineers had completed detailed analysis confirming that timetable was viable.

From then on, Digital UK has only ever announced dates when work is sufficiently far advanced to ensure they can be delivered. In practice, this means the exact date will come from eight months to a year in advance, once any critical mast engineering works in that area are well progressed.

The common practice of announcing 'aspirational' dates for large-scale projects can help to catalyse a market (or a contractor), but will ultimately undermine confidence in the programme when those dates are either subsequently revised (as has happened with switchovers in other countries); the 'launch' is downgraded to a 'soft launch' or similar; or goes ahead but finds itself beset with teething problems.

In addition, the UK's TV Switchover Programme has the benefit of a 'moment of compulsion': a point in time when the old analogue signal is switched off, and so consumers are compelled to act. While the notion of 'compulsion' is often met with a degree of resistance, it does provide a time horizon for viewers to plan towards, and a trigger for action. For consumer change programmes where this does not naturally exist, it may be useful to artificially create a similar 'moment', even if only a day or week that can be promoted; or a goal at a particular point in time. Without it, consumers who are reluctant or even somewhat frightened of change, do not have the incentive to try something new or change their behaviour.

Lesson 7: Any large-scale programme with multiple dependencies should only ever announce dates (with increasing granularity) when work is sufficiently far advanced to give confidence that those dates can be met. Use of 'aspirational' dates (that can subsequently change) undermines public confidence. It is useful to have (or create) a 'moment of compulsion' within a programme, that can drive consumer action.

8. A layered communications model which reaches deep into communities

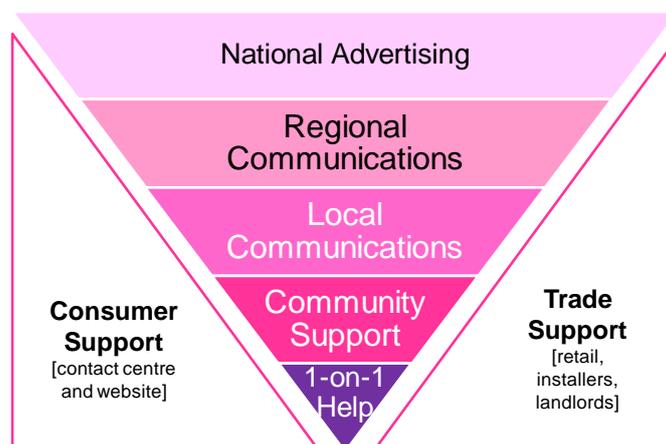
Digital UK operates a layered communications programme, which extends from national advertising right through to local communications and the one-to-one help provided by the Switchover Help Scheme and our third sector partners.

National advertising has given early warning of switchover, and helped drive overall awareness of switchover. Beyond that regional communications can communicate the switchover date and more detail on what to do.

In the weeks before switchover Digital UK reaches deep into communities with ultra-local activity including lamppost banners on the high street, roadshows in the market square, and advice points around town on the day of switchover.

That depth of communications and support is buttressed on the one hand by our Advice Line and website; and on the other by our work with the trade, where many consumers will turn for guidance at switchover.

Figure 1: Digital UK's 'Full Service' Communications Model



Using national communications only as far as necessary, and then moving to regional and local communications ensures greater relevance and creates a 'word-of-mouth' effect – in turn driving significant cost savings

Lesson 8: An all-encompassing communications programme should layer national advertising (to raise overall awareness), a local communications campaign to drive understanding, and community support to provide reassurance and encourage action.

9. Practical support for the most vulnerable

Digital UK works closely with the Switchover Help Scheme, a programme providing practical support for those who might find getting digital TV more difficult: those aged 75 and over, eligible disabled people on certain benefits, and those registered blind or partially sighted.

Comprehensive research by Government at the outset of the programme identified these individuals as those who might need some extra help to get,

install and use digital TV, and the establishment of a 'help scheme' was a condition of the switchover process from its inception in 2005.

Not all who are eligible will choose to take up the offer of help (many will naturally turn to friends, family, carers and community contacts), but the Help Scheme has helped more than 300,000 people to date, and the provision of extra, practical help provides significant reassurance for older and disabled people, and their relatives, friends and carers. That, in turn, takes away a great deal of fear of the change, and has enabled broad support for the switch to digital TV, with nearly 9 in 10 saying that they are comfortable with switchover (Source: *Digital UK Switchover Tracker, February 2010*).

Lesson 9: Public change programmes should explore ways of making practical support available to those who most need it. The presence of a 'safety net' enables public support for the programme, and will make sure that vulnerable individuals are helped through the process.

10. Mobilising existing support networks

Digital UK has pioneered an innovative means of 'cascading' information and help through the existing charity networks. Working with Age UK, CSV and Foundations, a new charity consortium - Digital Outreach Ltd – was set up to filter switchover messages down from Digital UK and the Switchover Help Scheme to 'lead organisations' in each area (well-known charities who enter into an agreement with Digital Outreach), who in turn communicate to and co-ordinate with other local charities, encouraging them to attend training sessions, apply for grants, and ultimately talk to their end clients about the switchover and what they need to do to prepare.

The 'outreach' model makes excellent use of the existing networks of relationships between charities, and between charities and their clients, and leverages these networks rather than replicating them. It is now being used in other areas of public policy, including the drive to increase broadband take-up.

Lesson 10: Public change programmes should seek to mobilise existing relationships and support networks, using the highly-developed third sector infrastructure to 'cascade' messages and help through charities to their clients.