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Launch Program Framework: A methodology for managing the launch program of a new line of business

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Abstract

The article presents the Launch Program Framework (LPF), the author's methodology for managing the launch program of a new line of business in small and medium-sized service companies. A launch is treated as a program of seven interdependent projects in four priority phases led by a single program manager, with lightweight Agile delivery in weekly cycles inside the projects. The article proposes the "control before growth" rule and a platform decision rule based on the domain model, including a platform transplant within a group of companies. The methodology was generalized from two programs in the UAE led by the author: at Awatera Dubai, the license for the new line was obtained in two weeks and the branch grew from 2 to 19 employees; at Basera Properties, turnover grew about fivefold in 2024, with 99% of investor payouts made on time. Implementation steps and limitations of LPF are defined. LPF is applicable to SMEs in the service sector entering a new country, launching a new business line, or systematizing operations that have expanded without established systems.

Keywords: Launch Program Framework, program management, program manager, hybrid project management, new business line launch, operational debt, domain model, platform transplant

1. Introduction

Launching a new line of business or entering a new market involves several interrelated projects: licensing and legal structure, finance, information systems, the team, clients, and investors. Without coordination, sales outpace back-office operations, leading to the accumulation of operational debt - manual procedures, undefined responsibilities and authority, and deferred decisions that hinder growth. This article refines the concept of operational debt in the context of business launches, drawing an analogy with technical debt (Cunningham, 1992) and organizational debt (Blank, 2015). Operational debt accumulates more rapidly when companies face unfamiliar regulatory environments, lack an internal launch playbook, and rely on small hybrid teams. In such circumstances, what companies typically lack is not expertise but effective program management.

Program management coordinates interdependent projects to achieve shared benefits and implement organizational strategy (Pellegrinelli, 1997; Project Management Institute [PMI], 2024; Serra & Kunc, 2015), including within transformation programs (Anshin, 2016; Makeeva, 2014), but has been described primarily in the context of large organizations. Hybrid methodologies combine plan-driven management with iterative delivery

(Titov & Titova, 2022) and demonstrate performance comparable to Agile (Gemino et al., 2021); however, their application to nontechnical business launches in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) remains insufficiently studied. Internationalization theory explains market entry challenges in terms of a company's position as an outsider to local business networks (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009), but does not provide a method for organizing the launch process. A review of the available literature did not identify a methodology that would enable a single manager to oversee the launch of a new business line in an SME operating in a regulated service industry while integrating finance, compliance, information systems, organizational structure, market entry, and investor relations into a unified system.

The aim of this study is to describe and substantiate the Launch Program Framework (LPF) as a methodology for managing the launch program of a new line of business. This study builds on the author's previous research on Agile governance in business transformation (Berezutskii, 2026a), cross-functional dependencies (Berezutskii, 2026b), and the application of Agile approaches to corporate communication (Andguladze & Berezutskii, 2025).

2. Materials and methods

The study is based on a retrospective analysis of two case studies involving programs managed by the author in the United Arab Emirates (UAE): the launch of a consulting business line at Awatera Dubai (2021–2024) and the development of operational infrastructure at Basera Properties (2023–2025). Data sources included the author's participant observation and internal company documents, including standard operating procedures (SOPs), management and audited financial reports, and ERP implementation documentation. The programs were compared in terms of project composition, interdependencies, decisions, and outcomes. The methodology evolved through continuous improvement and was subsequently generalized based on these two programs. Therefore, the cases document the application of the methodology rather than its independent validation. Company names and performance indicators are disclosed with the companies' consent, and the author's estimates are explicitly identified.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Principles and architecture of LPF

LPF treats the launch as a program comprising seven interrelated projects managed by a single program manager. The outcome is an operational infrastructure developed incrementally and in parallel with sales activities. The projects are interdependent: without a license, the company cannot serve clients; without an information system, accounting records are unavailable; and without these records, reporting to investors is not possible.

LPF employs a hybrid management approach: at the program level, the program manager defines the project structure, priorities, resources, dependencies, and stakeholder engagement, while within individual projects, deliverables are produced in weekly cycles using a lightweight Agile approach. Methods are tailored in accordance with the PMBOK Guide (PMI, 2021): Agile principles of transparency, incremental delivery, adaptability, and outcome prioritization are applied without excessive artifacts, and only where work can be decomposed into manageable tasks (Rigby et al., 2018). LPF is not Scrum and does not adopt the full set of Scrum roles and events (Schwaber & Sutherland, 2020).

The projects are grouped into four phases (Fig. 1):

- Foundation: (1) program management system; (2) platform and domain model;

- Control: (3) financial infrastructure and control; (4) compliance and corporate governance;
- Structure: (5) organizational design of the hybrid team;
- Growth: (6) market entry; (7) investor and stakeholder relations.

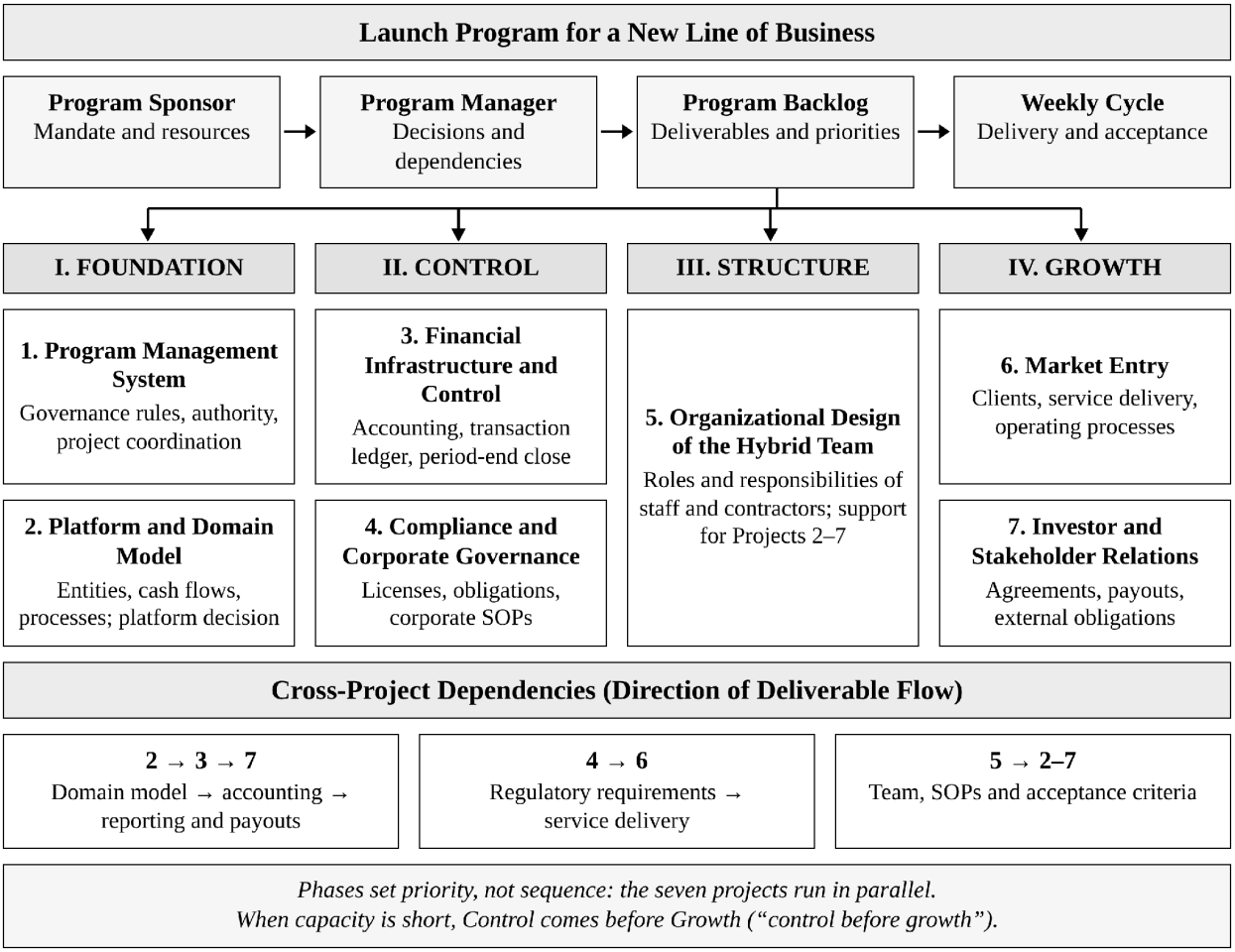


Figure 1. LPF architecture: four phases and seven projects of the launch program
Source: Developed by the author.

The phases establish priorities rather than a sequential order: projects are carried out in parallel within a shared weekly cycle, while Project 1 provides the framework for the others. The program manager's primary responsibility is managing dependencies: the platform stores accounting records that feed compliance reporting and investor reports, while SOPs make market entry processes repeatable. For example, at Basera, the domain model (Project 2) enabled cash flow forecasting for each property and provided a unified transaction ledger for financial management (Project 3).

The sponsor (the founders or CEO) provides the program manager with a mandate and resources; project contributors include employees, contractors, and a shared development team, while key users are managers responsible for day-to-day operations. The weekly cycle includes brief daily check-ins, planning, and reviews of results accompanied by process improvements. A unified program backlog records the owner, dependencies, the next deliverable, and the definition of done for each task, including nontechnical tasks. For example, an SOP is considered complete once it has been approved and applied at least once. To monitor operational

debt, LPF proposes tracking the proportion of operations without approved SOPs, the number of overdue obligations, and the time required to resolve cross-project blockers on a weekly basis.

3.2. The "control before growth" rule

When resources are limited, tasks that ensure the legality or measurability of business operations (the Control phase) take precedence over scaling tasks (the Growth phase). For each new task, the program manager checks for critical gaps in control related to licensing, accounting, or the fulfillment of obligations. Any such gap is addressed first, followed by the resolution of blocking dependencies, while growth is planned within the limits of available resources (Fig. 2).

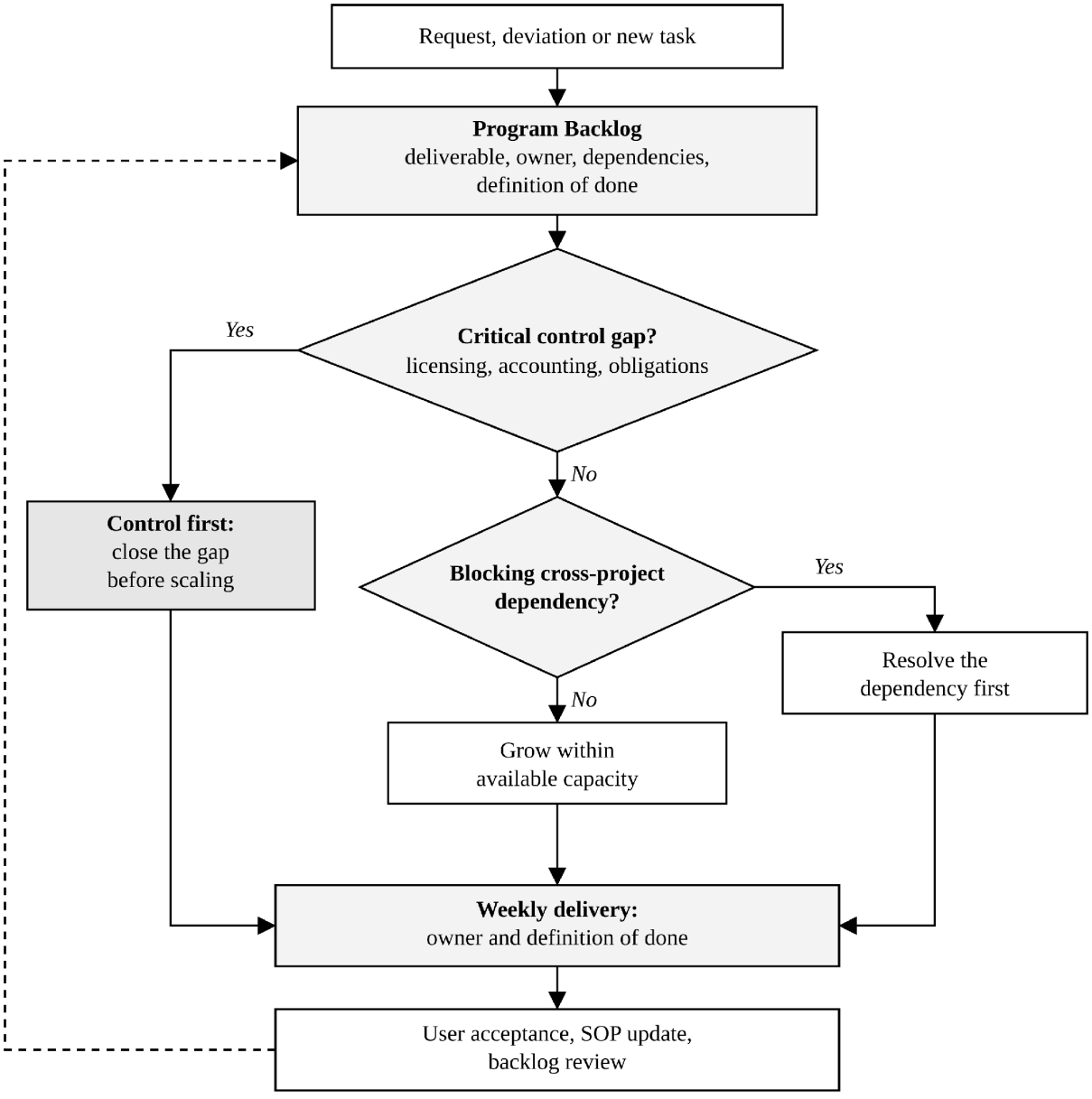


Figure 2. Prioritization algorithm based on the "control before growth" rule
Source: Developed by the author.

The rule does not halt sales but establishes task priorities until the necessary legal and financial conditions are in place. For example, Awatera Dubai began providing consulting services only after obtaining a license for the new business line, which was secured within two weeks.

3.3. Domain model and platform selection

Project 2 produces three deliverables: a domain model for the new business line, a platform decision based on an explicit rule and a cost calculation, and the phased migration of operations into the system. The program manager designs the domain model - entities, cash flows, and process logic - before selecting a software solution. This reduces the risk of a packaged ERP system imposing its own logic on the company (Davenport, 1998). The implementation itself is best managed as a project combining sequential and iterative methods (Tronina et al., 2023).

The platform decision depends on two conditions: whether the group has its own platform supported by a development team and whether the new business line is related to the existing business in terms of entities, cash flows, and process logic. The relatedness criterion is based on an analogy with related and unrelated diversification (Rumelt, 1974). The combinations of these conditions yield four possible options (Fig. 3).

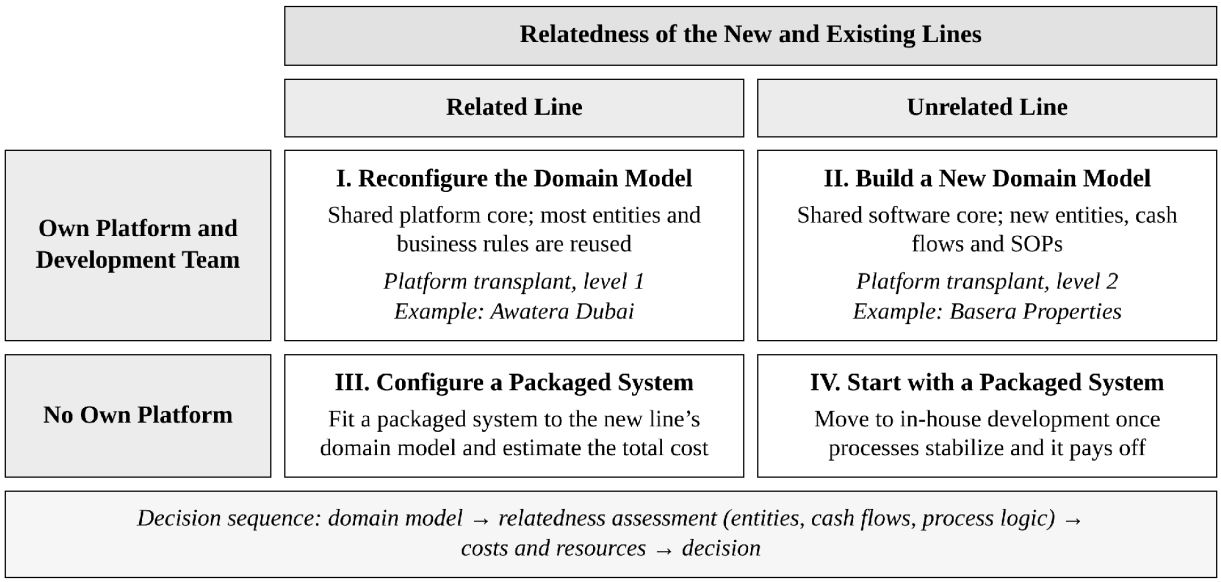


Figure 3. Platform decision rule
Source: Developed by the author.

When the group has its own platform, the strongest option is a platform transplant: the ERP platform layer (engine, database, interface, and core components), together with the development team, is transferred to the new business line within the group, while the domain model is reconfigured or developed from scratch. For a related business line, reconfiguration is sufficient (Level 1): when Awatera Dubai expanded from translation services into corporate consulting, the system's core entities and logic were retained. For an unrelated business line, a new model is required (Level 2): for Basera, the author designed a rental property management model encompassing buildings, apartments, tenants and property owners, a rent check register, and a unified transaction ledger.

The economics of a platform transplant are illustrated by an example calculation for Basera (author's estimate). A packaged system cost approximately AED 30,000 per year for four users. Development of an in-house system, which began in 2024 (with the first functional module delivered approximately six months later), cost

roughly the equivalent of one year's subscription, while annual maintenance costs amounted to approximately AED 5,000. A platform transplant requires an existing proprietary platform, a development team, and a legal basis for the transfer (in both cases, the companies belonged to the same group with common founders). The lower the degree of relatedness between business lines, the smaller the cost savings.

3.4. Application of LPF

LPF was applied in two programs in the UAE (Table 1). The programs partially overlapped: in 2023–2024, the author held concurrent roles at Basera and Awatera Dubai, before focusing exclusively on Basera from August 2024 onward.

Awatera Dubai is a branch of Awatera, a language services company headquartered in Moscow. The company had not previously offered consulting services, and the new business line was established in response to a request from its first client. The author, who served as Senior Project Manager from August 2021 and subsequently as Assistant General Manager (January 2022–August 2024), managed the entire launch program and was effectively responsible for all branch operations. The program comprised Projects 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6: licensing preceded market entry, the branch team relied on Awatera's contractor network (more than 5,000 regularly engaged freelancers), and SOPs made standard services repeatable.

Basera Properties is a Dubai-based rental property management company operating under a master lease model. It was established in March 2023 by the same founders as a separate line of business. The author worked at the company from its inception (Head of Back Office, March 2023–September 2025) and managed the program to build its operational infrastructure from scratch, including financial and legal frameworks, SOPs, the implementation of an Agile approach, and the ERP domain model (as implementation project manager and product owner, with development carried out by the group's shared development team). The program encompassed all seven projects; the author led Projects 6 and 7 only in part (processes, the system, investor agreements, and payouts). Property operations were managed by another manager, while investor relations were handled outside the ERP system.

Table 1. Results of the launch programs

Indicator	Value
Awatera Dubai (2021–2024)	
Launch of the new business line	License obtained within two weeks; first project launched immediately after obtaining the license
Branch staff	Increased from 2 to 19 employees by 2023, including 9 reporting directly to the author
Branch revenue, 2023	Approximately $7 million, with a net profit margin of approximately 40%
Turnaround time for a standard turnkey service	Reduced by approximately 55% (author's estimate)
Basera Properties (2023–2025)	
First property	Two months after the company was established
Scale of operations by summer 2024	9 buildings, more than 700 apartments, average occupancy above 90%
Team and investors	15 of 40 full-time employees reporting directly to the author; more than 10 investors
Turnover (audited figures)	Approximately $1 million in 2023 and approximately $5 million in 2024
Financial control	Month-end closing reduced from approximately two weeks to several days (consistently completed by the 5th of the month); 99% of investor payouts made on time; no overdue license renewals

Source: Compiled by the author based on company data.

Basera's performance indicators reflect company-level outcomes supported by the infrastructure development

program: turnover increased approximately fivefold without compromising operational control, providing evidence in support of the "control before growth" rule.

3.5. Discussion and limitations

Both programs used the same platform, management cadence, and approach to SOPs, while their different project compositions (five and seven projects, respectively) demonstrate the modularity of LPF. Unlike program management standards designed primarily for large organizations (PMI, 2024), LPF is intended for a single program manager and a small hybrid team, specifying where program management and Agile approaches should be applied. The study has several limitations: both programs were implemented in the same jurisdiction under the author's leadership; the methodology was generalized retrospectively; no control group was included; and some performance indicators are based on the author's estimates. Furthermore, the benefits of a platform transplant have been demonstrated only within a group of companies that possesses its own platform.

4. Conclusion

LPF structures the launch of a new business line as a program of seven interrelated projects managed by a single program manager, so that sales growth is not accompanied by the accumulation of operational debt. The scientific novelty of the study lies in the following contributions:

1. the launch of a new business line in an SME is conceptualized as a program comprising seven projects under unified management;
2. a hybrid model with tailored methods is proposed, combining program management at the program level with a lightweight Agile approach within individual projects;
3. the "control before growth" prioritization rule is formulated;
4. a domain-model-based platform decision rule and a platform transplant approach with two levels of transfer are proposed;
5. the transferability of the methodology is demonstrated through two programs in different industries.

The LPF implementation procedure consists of the following steps: (1) appoint a program manager with a mandate from the sponsor; (2) establish a unified program backlog covering all seven projects and identify key users; (3) launch a weekly management cadence; (4) apply the "control before growth" rule when resources are limited; and (5) design the domain model and choose the platform using the platform decision rule.

LPF is applicable to SMEs in the service sector entering a new country, including the United States, launching a new business line, or systematizing operations that have expanded without established systems. It is also applicable to groups of companies with shared services, franchise networks, and multi-location businesses. Future research should focus on validating LPF in other jurisdictions and under different program managers, with performance indicators measured from the beginning of the launch process.

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