CLEAR STAR

CASE STUDY

Transforming an Organisational Change Programme in a Large Government Department

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Situation

This large Government department, responsible for delivering and operating vital digital solutions for defence, struggled with a **poor reputation for delivery, including multiple red rated programmes**:

- **Projects consistently ran over budget and behind schedule**, delivering poor and out of date solutions misaligned with user needs.
- **Rigid waterfall delivery models** prevented responsiveness to global changes and evolving operational requirements.

Senior management launched a large-scale transformation programme to improve delivery performance, but the programme faced significant challenges:

1. **Unrealistic Plans**: Re-baselined frequently, wasting resources and eroding confidence.
2. **Siloed Teams**: Five independent work packages created critical dependencies that stalled progress.
3. **Intangible Outputs**: Deliverables often included documentation or standards with little organisational impact, which failed to address the root causes of the problems.
4. **Overreliance on Contractors**: External personnel proposed solutions misaligned with strategic goals and struggled to ensure upskilling of Crown Servants to support sustainability of solutions.

Task

Clear Star, working in collaboration with Cprime and Logiq, had been supporting one work package and demonstrating the value of agile approaches. Based on this success, the combined team was asked to:

1. **Re-engineer the delivery model and break down silos**: Transitioning from a failing waterfall model to iterative, agile processes.
2. **Strengthen governance and leadership**: Establishing alignment and shared responsibility across senior leaders. Delivering a governance model that supported new ways of working
3. **Embed user-centricity**: Involving impacted teams to shape solutions aligned with real needs and help them understand how to maximise their value.
4. **Build sustainable capability**: Coaching and mentoring teams to independently sustain improvements post-transformation and embed a continuous improvement approach across the organisation.

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Actions

1. **Re-engineer the delivery model and break down silos**

    - Facilitated a **Big Room Planning (BRP)** event to bring teams and stakeholders together, define shared objectives, and co-create a 3-month plan, which could then be embedded into ways of working
    - Shifted planning responsibility from centralised control to team ownership, fostering understanding, commitment, and inter-team collaboration to resolve dependencies.
    - Transitioned to **incremental delivery**, focusing on releasing valuable deliverables early and often.

2. **Strengthen governance and leadership**

    - Established a **Guiding Coalition** of senior leaders to collectively address risks, remove blockers, align objectives, and set clear priorities based on learning.
    - Shifted leadership focus from managing independent work packages to shared responsibility for programme outcomes, ensuring alignment and cross-functional collaboration.
    - Reduced reliance on written reports by enabling leaders to engage directly with teams through planning sessions and coalition meetings.
    - Increased use of metric-based reporting to drive clarity and data informed decision making.
    - Improved decision making through clear delegations and improved flow of reporting, making sure that decisions were taken by the closest people to the information with the authority to do so.

3. **Embed user-centricity**

    - Engaged impacted teams and users through **workshops, communities of practice, and role-based coaching**, transforming them into active participants in defining and delivering change.
    - Created a **transparent backlog** to prioritise and track requirements collaboratively with users.
    - Fostered partnerships between programme teams and users, shifting the focus to solutions addressing real needs and generating buy-in across the organisation.

4. **Build sustainable capability**

    - Redefined the Programme Management Office (PMO) from a controlling role to an enabling function, responsible for coordination and facilitating agile practices.
    - Delivered ongoing training, mentoring, and coaching, empowering teams to independently sustain improvements and create a culture of continuous improvement.
    - Supported impacted teams like the Portfolio Management Team to take responsibility for their own change delivery, ensuring long-term ownership and alignment.

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5. **Managing the Engagement**
    - Worked closely with the contract manager through weekly meetings and an evolving backlog to focus on high-priority tasks.
    - Integrated **risk and dependency management** into daily, weekly, and quarterly reviews, ensuring adaptability and continuity.

Results

This work delivered transformative outcomes:

- **Improved On-Time Delivery**: Milestone delivery increased from 56% to over 80% in less than 6 months.
- **Empowered Teams**: Staff empowerment rose by 20%, fostering a collaborative culture.
- **Sustainable Change**: Teams adopted a culture of continuous improvement, delivering real solutions shaped by and for users.
- **Senior Leadership Development**: Leaders gained hands-on experience with agile practices, enabling them to champion and sustain changes across the wider organisation.

Recognition

The transformation was recognised with a **CIO Director General Team Commendation**, and the resulting operating model became a template for similar transformations across Defence.

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