RECOVERING A DELAYED PROJECT

This case shows the importance of the introduction of "easy to introduce" measures and techniques when managing a project with a troublesome history and long delays.

GREENLIGHT
PROJECT MANAGEMENT

INITIAL SITUATION

A project managing a brand new Website for a medium sized company had delays by over a year, a budget overrun of more than 100% and it was still highly uncertain when the website would go-live at the point when GreenlightPM was asked to get involved.

CHALLENGES

No confidence around delivering the project with its current schedule and plan was seen among the majority of the stakeholders. The steering group members were ill informed around the project and it's parameters to the extent that the Project Sponsor answered "I do not know and that is the problem" to the question posed by the GreenlightPM consultant "What confidence do you have that the project will deliver according to its current schedule?" The project team was disillusioned and under a lot of pressure to deliver according to the (by them) perceived non-realistic and numerous re-planning schedules presented to them. There were signs in the organization of trying to find a scapegoat for the delays. On top of all this, the team was under an excessive workload in relation to their capacity from other pressing tasks, mostly BAU (Business As Usual).

THE GREENLIGHT PROJECT MANAGEMENT SOLUTION

Initially GreenlightPM led a two week project review with key stakeholders (with the direct focus on the Project team and the Steering group) followed by some prioritized immediate actions for improvements.

Through the introduction of clear responsibilities between the product and project manager's roles, followed by looking closely at the required skillsets for each role, a certified PM (PRINCE2®) was put in charge of the project, thus freeing up the current PM to play to his strengths, taking on a more strategic view in the project. This was later seen (came out strongly in the lessons learnt) as one of the simplest and most powerful steps taken to turn the project around. A request was also made from the customer to ensure a more senior PM from GreenlightPM was the overall PM on a part time basis to ensure that the correct level of support was in place for the more junior PM and to ensure that the correct level of seniority was available to hold the overall responsibility of the project.

The GreenlightPM Project Manager stayed on the project for 8 months, 5 months to deliver the website and 3 months post-delivery to ensure any overspill from scope negotiations were planned out in a phase 2 plan of the project.

Out of the three project constraints, "Time" was agreed to be the highest priority to ensure a clear focus was held for the go-live date. "Quality" could not be compromised, however "Scope" was the main factor which could be treated with flexibility since it was clear that the project was lacking focus and was overambitious in its current format.

A project plan was drawn on the whiteboard of the project war-room, with day to day granularity to ensure transparent and clear visibility of the plan and progress. A simple project report with clear milestones and clear progress/risk indication using Red/Amber/Green signals was created and distributed on a weekly basis.

RESULTS

1) The key improvements for the project were introduced within less than 2 weeks.

2) Clarity around targets and expectations on the project team was introduced and moral in the team was boosted.

3) The website was delivered with 100% accuracy on the date set out in the reworked plan by GreenlightPM with no major technical issues seen at launch.

4) A well informed steering group moved from rating the confidence in the project plan and schedule initially as "2" on an average (on a scale of 1-5) to 4 on average within 2 weeks of changes introduced.

5) Best practice examples created for planning, reporting and scheduling created for re-use in any other projects the customer intend to run.