Shaping transformations to deliver at pace and embed change

Highlights

Highlights from the Major Projects Association event held on 1st March 2023

MAJOR PROJECTS ASSOCIATION

The requirement to deliver major projects at pace is a challenge to which the Major Projects Association has returned several times in recent years. In that context, the theme of this half day seminar and the focus on the pharmaceutical industry – recently disrupted by a worldwide pandemic requiring development and delivery of brand-new vaccines at extraordinary speed – was particularly on point.

Clear focus

> ***'Organisations die of indigestion rather than starvation.'***

Fraser MacFarlane, VP, Demerger Lead & Special Projects, GSK

Having a clear focus emerged as one of the key means by which organisations can accelerate. From the outset this means:

- Prioritising the transformation portfolio.
- Making sure that your organisation has access to the right data and understanding that data.
- Aligning the organisation and its portfolio to your strategic objectives (consequently, preventing pet projects).
- Trusting in your people and your processes to deliver.
- Using forecasting to match the aspirations of your portfolio to the resources you have available.

Managing risk requires a particular kind of focus. The organisation's level of risk appetite needs to be sufficiently high to enable the kind of acceleration you are seeking. In some cases, alternative models of financing and risk sharing can facilitate greater speed in the face of uncertainty. Focus, in the context of risk, means rigorous risk planning and having a clear, transparent, decision-making process with a single decision maker.

All of this activity is dependent on the people involved in delivery. Delivery at pace requires external partners to be treated as a seamless member of a 'one-team' approach involved in shared kick-off meetings and joint workstreams.

> ***'In the Covid example, getting private business and regulators united on the cause helped a lot with breaking down bureaucracy. Where submissions were going in for review and approval, Covid applications were going to the front of the queue.'***

Steven Myers, Global R&D Project Leader, Bayer

A clear focus on outcomes is also essential. The whole enterprise needs to be transparent and agree: What programmes are in the portfolio and what resources are already committed? What is the vision and strategy behind the programme? What are the outcomes you are seeking and why?

> ***'… the Chief Scientific Officer asked the question: "of the X hundred million we spend on global health projects … what's the return on investment?'' He didn't mean the financial return, he meant the health outcomes they were trying to achieve.'***

David Griffin, Client Director, Moorhouse Consulting

Case study

In October 2022, the Association organised a site visit to the Rosalind Franklin Laboratory, the 21,000 square metre new-build lab that played a critical role during the Covid-19 pandemic. Built using modern methods of construction, the lab uses the latest technology, including ePCR, qPCR, automation and robotics, to deliver ultra-high testing capacity. Helen Buckingham, Senior Project Manager at WSP, told the story of how this project was designed and delivered at pace.

Delivery of the laboratory required a rapid ideation process that brought elements from manufacturing, engineering and logistics, and enabled the team to go from a standing start to the first Covid tests in just nine months.

Initially each of the testing lines was designed to deliver 25,000 tests per day – this later rose to 40,000. The design was modular, which allowed the laboratory to start working as soon as the first line was in place.

The highly collaborative nature of the project meant that there was no single decision maker from the outset, but the team set up a 'design authority' to provide a robust framework for collective decision-making.

The contractual elements enabled both full collaboration and a super-quick start-up. This was helped by the fact that the client took on the risk (the Department of Health and Social Care which then became the UK Health Security Agency). Progress was not without its challenges. The first project manager did not understand what was required of a project using an **NEC 3: Engineering and Construction Option F contract** (a cost reimbursable management contract with the financial risk largely born by the client) and was swiftly replaced.

This was a project where the big WHY? of the endeavour was bigger than each of the partners and provided them with the motivation and the compass to complete the work.

Ripping up the usual rules did not mean that there were no rules, but rather that the team were clear on what rules they needed.

Fast decision-making involved adopting ideas from the world of product design and development. The design authority translated the concept of minimum viable product to become minimum viable data. The team identified exactly what level of detail each decision maker needed to be comfortable in deciding, and provided it. Insufficient data meant that a decision was not presented to the authority.

Championing change

Successful change management involves getting people to believe in the purpose and the vision. Yet success means different things to different people, and demonstrating success depends on meaningful metrics, the criteria for which are established early on. Qualitative metrics require a clear understanding of how people feel – 'I understand it and I recognise the need for it' – and must be directed to your various audiences, with the right messages getting to the right people.

> ***'Change is ending up doing something differently (in a different way) or doing different things from what you are used to.'***

Danie du Plessis, Executive Vice President Medical Affairs, Kyowa Kirin International plc.

The biggest challenge in delivering change is getting the people on board. Any change needs a clear purpose – the big WHY? to engage people and provide a sense of urgency.

> ***'When Covid struck, successful change management in Astra Zeneca meant that everybody was driving for the good of every human being on the planet. There was a common goal and everybody understood that vision.'***

Denise Moody, Chair, Pharmaceutical Industry Project Management Group

The big WHY? also needs personalisation so that those involved can answer the key questions:

- Why is this important to the business?
- How does it impact me?
- What does it mean in the long term?

The responses to the questions need to be honest and up-front.

> ***'This is not all about an exciting, altruistic positive future, particularly if the more pointy end of change management or transformation means the organisation will be smaller, and there will be job losses. It's about leaning into that, embracing it with radical candour and saying: "this is what it is".'***

Tom Cooper-Woolley, Principal Consultant, Moorhouse Consulting

Candour needs to be tempered by realism and empathy. Different people will come through the change curve at different speeds. Be patient, help them understand their role in the change process and the impact it will have on them. And have a process in place for those who do not manage to change to help them transition out of the business.

The five Cs of a compelling case for change:

- Communication
- Collaboration
- Co-creation
- Co-delivery
- Consistency

Alongside the five Cs remember to be transparent, empathetic and measure your success.

Once the case for change is clear and priorities have been identified, senior leaders need to drive the change across the business. They must be secure in their understanding of the long-term implications as well as the short-term impacts, ready to communicate, communicate, communicate, and be adept at developing their change story as they progress.

> ***'Have an advocate in each group, I have probably achieved most of my success using advocates. They're the people who can understand the "native atmosphere". They are really very powerful people. My best advocates have been my saboteurs. before you do any communication and change management, you have to identify and isolate and get them onside.'***

Denise Moody, Chair, Pharmaceutical Industry Project Management Group

Points for further discussion

- How can we find space in major project delivery to ensure a deliberate focus on what are we going to be doing differently to secure earlier delivery of benefits?
- With the advent of increasing volumes of data, what tools and techniques can we use to ensure we do not see our decision makers overwhelmed by indigestion?
- How do we ensure a one-team approach from the start, whenever a project requires it?

Chair

Pamela Stacey, VP Risk and Compliance for a small Pharma Biotech Company

Contributors

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