

# WHOLESALE PROCESS REDESIGN IN COMPRESSED TIMEFRAMES

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Implementing wholesale process redesign in a compressed timeframe is a daunting task. Add political interest and an Auditor-General's report to respond to and the pressure is really on. This is what we faced when presented with the redesign significant business process for a NSW Government Agency.

## Context

The NSW Auditor-General handed down a report in May that identified significant deficiencies in the management of a process that required remediation and made a number of recommendations to address the process deficiencies, address identified risk and provide greater control of the agency's powers. The Secretary of the Agency committed to implement a new, organisation-wide, process by December - less than eight months from the release of the report.

We commenced this project on 1 July, giving us and our client only six months to deliver a wholesale redesign of a complex and critical business process. We were engaged to work side by side with the department to implement this significant project, working closely with teams across NSW.

We faced resistance and challenges to implementing such a complex program of work from the start. Some key challenges included:

- Wide and varied stakeholders, often with differing views, experience, and level of buy-in.
- Considerable change fatigue from 18 months of machinery of government (MOG) changes that implemented new ways of working and amalgamated legacy departments.
- Business as usual did not stop or slow while this project was being completed.

Our strategic approach was successful and ultimately allowed us to turn around a program of work that would normally take more than 12 months in a 6-month timeframe.



## **Facilitative Approach**

Our facilitative approach worked well to engage large groups of stakeholders through workshops to understand their current processes and challenges, map and step through critical process steps, and identify opportunities to improve and better practices within the agency. It allowed us to leverage their experience and expertise to design a future process that met their needs, supporting compliance with the legislated requirements and addressing the required outcomes for the project. This approach was used throughout the project starting with defining the high-level process design, down to developing individual operational steps within the process to ensure that those impacted by the change could be informed and contribute to the project, improving project outcomes and stakeholder buy-in.

## **Defining the End-State Early**

There were many documents to be produced as part of the project and it was not feasible for Senior Management to be across them all in detail. To address this, workshops were held with Senior Management to establish design principles and articulate the desired future state before starting to redesign the process. Twenty design principles and 14 future-state statements were endorsed by Senior Management and the Steering Committee and communicated widely to stakeholders. They were used to frame discussions and were introduced at the start of each design workshop to guide the participants towards the desired end state endorsed by Senior Management. These statements were also used at the end of the project to measure success of the program of work.

## **Leveraging Project Governance to Maintain Momentum**

As the pace of delivery of key documents picked up, we increased the frequency of working group meetings to engage directly with the management team, resolve issues efficiently, and make time critical decisions. We also utilised these meetings as needed for workshops or detailed walk throughs of the process documentation. For example, we used one meeting to step through in detail two different proposed process flows to resolve conflicting views between stakeholder groups and come to a resolution.

## **Lessons Learnt**

Like all high intensity and complex projects, the lessons learned provide valuable insights to inform our future strategies and planning. We paused at critical milestones throughout the project to reflect on what has worked well to date and what could be improved or done differently moving forward. Below we share some of our key lessons from this project.

## Dividing the Workload Doesn't Always Produce Efficiencies

In an effort to reduce the workload on individual stakeholders, we divided up the documents for review. In hindsight, a lot of time was spent providing context and explaining concepts contained in other documents. Making the draft documents centrally accessible to all stakeholders providing input to the project would have allowed them to delve deeper into the subject areas they were interested in and reduce the amount of time required during briefing sessions at the end of the project conducted as part of the change program.

Engaging stakeholders directly also resulted in siloed discussions and conflicting points of view that required further work to resolve. While it may be challenging to schedule discussions across stakeholder groups, the benefits are worth the effort. Having all stakeholders present for the same discussions leads to shared understanding and the ability to discuss differing points of view to resolution, rather than when consultation occurs in isolation.

## Integration of Project and Change Management to Embed Change

Change Management is critical to the success of projects of this nature, particularly when redesigning complex processes with considerable history within experienced teams. Due to resource availability, the client's Change Management resources were not brought into the project until we were well into development of the new process. Embedding a Change Management team from the commencement of the project and engaging them throughout the re-engineering process would have given them greater visibility of the technical and solution requirements and provided firsthand understanding of the impact of the change and the level of acceptance (and resistance) of the new process. It would have also greatly assisted in the development of key change artefacts and reduced the need to spend time with already stretched stakeholders at the pointy end of delivery to develop and deliver the Change Management program.

Wholesale process redesign will always be complex and challenging, with each project needing a tailored response to ensure success. However, with these lessons in mind, you may be able to quickly deliver your priorities and successfully embed lasting change.

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