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## Summary notes lunch seminar 2 April 2008 “Maximising Project Success: Focus on Professional Change Management”

This document contains a summary of comments made during a Plutonic Zoo lunch seminar at 2 April 2008. The attendees enjoyed two speeches and a spirited debate to which most contributed.

From the feedback received we learned that the topic, information shared, and experiences discussed were highly relevant in today’s work environment and that the seminar was highly appreciated. The summary notes below focus on practical ideas to maximise success for IT related projects, with a special focus on professional change management.

Each item below has a story behind it. If you want to follow up on any of the summary comments made, or if you are currently in a project situation that requires input, please contact Plutonic Zoo and we will be happy to discuss the situation with you.

### **MAXIMISING PROJECT SUCCESS**

*Address by: Victor Konijn, Managing Director, Plutonic Zoo*

As an introduction to the subject, the following 4 observations of the business and IT market in Australia were noted:

1. IT frustration  
There is considerable frustration in businesses with IT. This is either internal (business-IT) or external (with IT industry players). There is still a lack of mutual understanding resulting in a lack of trust. Depending on the power base in an organisation IT projects are approved “just because IT wants it”, or they are rejected “because only IT wants it”.
2. Project under-performance  
As a result many IT projects don’t fully satisfy expectations for business results from IT implementation. The stakeholder relationships suffer further, creating an ‘us and them’ atmosphere, a spiralling effect on the mutual frustration, and a resulting bad conflict.
3. Legal inadequacy  
Recourse to litigation to resolve project disputes is often not adequate, as it is considered accepting failure, and expensive in many ways. Moreover, the project mess usually remains to be fixed at the conclusion of the legal path.
4. Expertise  
There is plenty of expertise in the market to fix most project issues.

Contributing to this mismatch is a lack of impartiality in most expert organisations, with most having their own agenda. As a result clients feel pushed, and don’t want to talk or hear only a different agenda when they listen: bad communication is the result.

The IT professional services market therefore needs impartiality in two dimensions:

1. Technology impartiality  
Choose products or technologies purely on the match with business requirements and avoid any incentive to use partners’ investments in products or technology, or any other motivation which is not clearly based on merit.
2. People impartiality  
Choose expert individuals to be part of the solution team purely on their skills and potential to contribute effectively within the client culture and avoid any incentive to use experts based on their under utilisation or any other motivation which is not clearly based on merit.

The value that an impartial professional services partner can add to maximise project success includes:

- Raising the client's awareness of what is going on; provide clarity and a neutral perspective
- Develop options to solve project problems from a 360 degrees, holistic perspective
- Take responsibility to fix the project from a technical, commercial, project management, and interpersonal communications perspective, by engaging and managing the right experts.

When clients first seek professional help it is often because they have been 'burnt' by failures and are suffering. Subsequently they typically realise that the failures were caused by a lack of performance on all sides, and that professional planning and implementation of the next project is necessary.

Note that in our experience there are two types of project conflicts:

- **Good conflicts**  
Confrontation can be very healthy as it is vital for a project that opposing opinions are expressed and discussed, in order to share perspectives and develop a common understanding and buy-in to the project and its complexities. These need to be nurtured and facilitated.
- **Bad conflicts**  
A conflict turns bad when winners and losers emerge. As long as there are losers the 'win' will only be short-term. These bad conflicts need to be prevented or fixed.

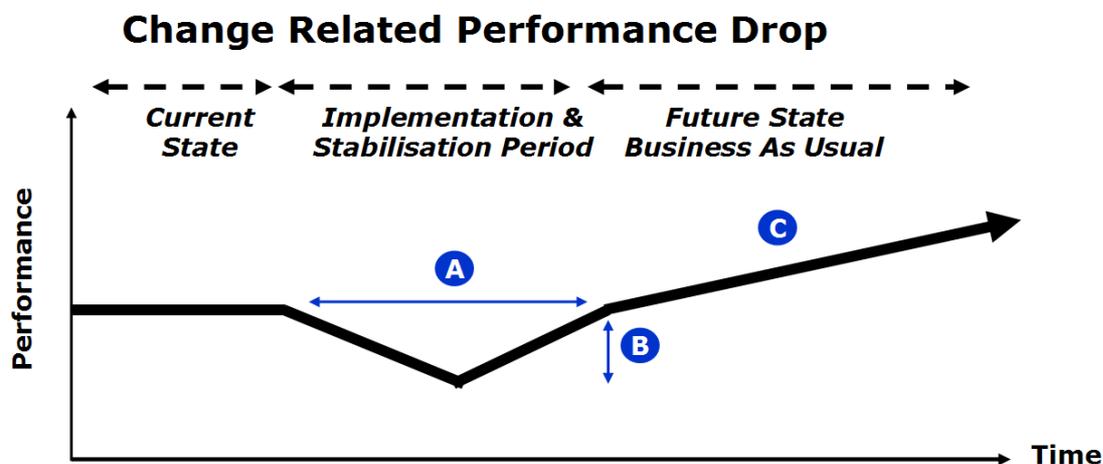
It is therefore vital to actively strive for consensus in project decisions.

*Maximising your project success* frequently requires extensive professional change management to achieve buy-in from all stakeholders.

## FOUR LEVERS OF MANAGING CHANGE PROFESSIONALLY

*Address by: Douglas Wolfson, Professional Change Manager and Zoo member*

Change management is an approach which is used to mitigate the performance drop typically experienced in IT projects which implement changes to existing business systems by addressing the people and organisational issues and impacts surrounding the implementation that cause the drop in performance.



To explain the diagram above:

- When you execute an IT related project, you can expect a temporary performance drop when your organisation transitions to the new solution. This dip in productivity occurs as you change an existing process, or introduce a new one.
- As shown in the diagram above Change Management seeks to Decrease the duration of the drop in performance (A), Decrease the depth of the drop (B), and Increase the benefits derived from successful implementation (C).
- Experienced IT project professionals know that this performance drop will happen. The challenge is to minimise this disruption to the business, both in duration and the magnitude of the drop.

It should be noted that any project will likely have change management costs for its implementation, either as a professional engagement supporting the change or as consequential costs of not managing the change professionally.

Change Management needs to be done objectively. Intimately involved product vendors, or business unit managers may not be ideally positioned as they can be blind-sided and not recognise broad overall issues.

Change management engagements are also an opportunity for talented staff to be tested, grow and contribute away from their current assignment.

### **Starting a Change Program - Measurements of Impact**

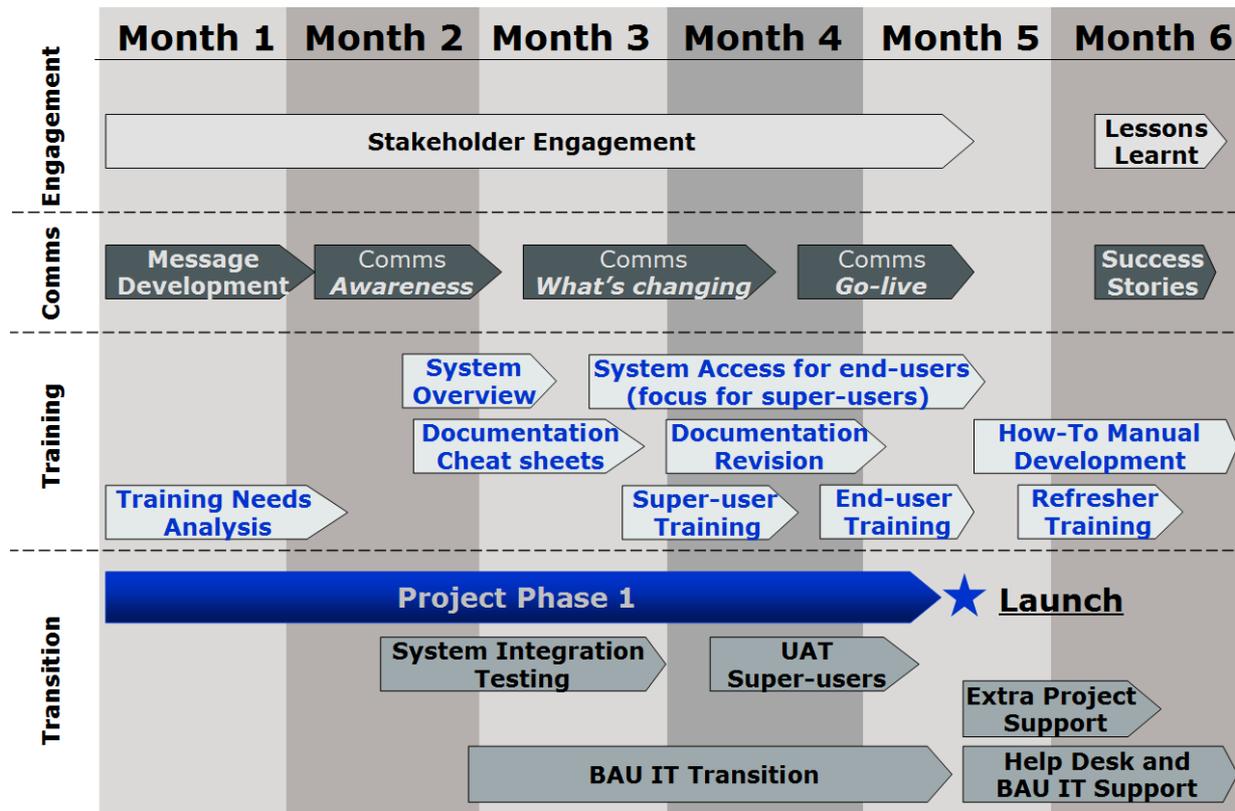
It is necessary to commence a Change Management engagement by assessing the impact of the change to affected stakeholders. This can take the form of:

- Data collection and initial analysis
- One-on-one interviews
- Focus Groups
- Data requests – comprehensive spreadsheet to be populated by each significant stakeholder group

This information allows an assessment of stakeholder impacts, and leads to a recommended engagement strategy and change interventions.

In the diagram on the following page the four levers of managing change professionally are presented as streams of activity.

## Overview of the four levers



### 1. Stakeholder Engagement

This lever is about business buy-in, acceptance of the IT Project and ensuring that stakeholders are adequately engaged at the appropriate times. The following points were made:

- A methodical approach ensures that you address all the right things at the right time.
- It is critical that the change manager builds buy-in from business leaders, super-users, and project champions, so that they promote the objectives of the project:
  - Leadership alignment - Key decision makers understand, commit to and sponsor the change vision.
  - Super-users / project champions - These are the expected high-users of the new solution. Look for the informal leaders. Identify key business team members and involve them in project activities and tasks.
- Honesty and openness are crucial to building relationships with stakeholders over time.
- The engagement processes and the message need to be adapted and customised for different stakeholders at different levels, and at different times.
- Expect there to be pockets of resistance, no matter what.

## 2. Communication



This lever is about ensuring that all those who have a role in the implementation, either as implementers or as those impacted by the implementation are appropriately informed.

The following key points were made:

- Clarify the project vision, direction and the key messages.
- Stakeholders really want to know: Project benefits, "what's in it for me" and the current project status.
- Distinguish between the two levels of stakeholders and focus on how the implementation affects each individual group:
  - Those involved (project team members, leadership and project champions)
  - Those impacted (business end-users)
- Recognise stages of communication in the project lifecycle and the differing communication content and approach including; Project awareness, What is changing, and Ready for go-live.
- Every form of (non-) communication sets expectations. Verify and manage expectations at all times.
- Keep all communication as simple as possible:
  - Avoid unnecessary details
  - Consciously decide when to tell what
- Use existing communication channels wherever possible
- Use local champions, or posters/paper to cascade out if not online
- Be ready to cross-communicate information encountered across the 4 lever streams.

## 3. Training



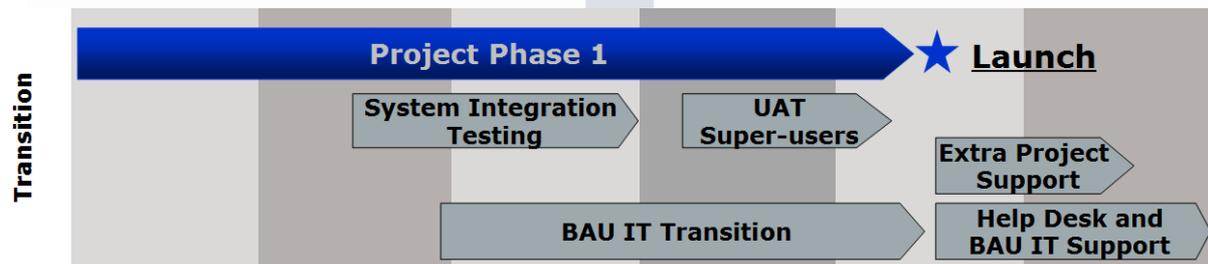
This lever focuses on targeted knowledge and skill transfer to everyone impacted. Training consumes (or should consume) significant effort in most implementations. A thoroughly formulated approach based on defined requirements, practical aids, and just-in-time delivery is the best way for this investment to be effective.

The following key points were made:

- Training Needs Analysis is required to define the knowledge and skill gap of people impacted. This can be an enormous task but needs to be done for each stakeholder group for both planning and delivery phases.
- Early familiarisation and involvement of super users is important. Get these people on board as soon as possible through a 'play environment' or 'sandpit'.

- Design and document training material carefully, from 'cheat sheets' to procedure manuals. Ensure it is customised and relevant for each group.
- Use the UAT (User Acceptance Testing) as a 'road test' of the documentation and training approach to the super users; make revisions based on their feedback, and modify the training plans for end-users accordingly.
- Provide 'just-in-time' training delivery. People will forget if this is too far in front of the actual implementation of the change.
- Include post-implementation support. Most business users are likely to learn the most on the job as the initial training is re-enforced.

#### 4. Transitional Support



This lever focuses on anticipating the impact of necessary disruptions and addressing the short term needs over the launch period and the handover of knowledge to the BAU (Business-As-Usual) stakeholders.

The following points were made:

- Discuss and agree period and plans for stabilisation. Ensure that extra resources are available for this period from BAU IT, project team, and departmental change champions. Focus on minimisation of any disruptions to business end-users during the stabilisation period.
- You never get a second chance to make first impressions, and they are most important. Anticipate a surge in issues for the initial period after launch, and over-resource the effort to deal with them. This is especially important for a project that has phased implementation, where other launches follow the initial launch.
- Identify business readiness in each area through development of a change readiness survey or 'temperature check'
- Recognise that different areas may be at different stages and require different levels of support at any point in time.
- Ensure that you understand the comfort level of the business and their knowledge of support available to them.
- Enable knowledge transfer from project team members to the business users by having project team members on-site in the initial period after launch.
- Active knowledge management should be a sequence of tasks in the implementation plan, to reduce dependency on individuals. This is especially relevant to be prepared for anyone leaving the organisation as a result of the change.

#### MORE INFORMATION

If you are interested in further maximising your own project successes, or discussing your changes with Plutonic Zoo, please contact our managing director via 1 300 654 523, or by email via [info@plutoniczoo.com.au](mailto:info@plutoniczoo.com.au). We will be happy to hear from you!