Project Intelligence News
Spring 2009

Welcome to Pelicam's Project Intelligence newsletter.
If you want to improve the success rate of your projects and programmes we're committed to helping you in that cause.

In this issue:

pelicam
Project Assurance

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Confidence in a credit crunch?

Sub-prime mortgages; the credit crunch; re-capitalisation; deflation; economic downturn...a new vocabulary to some. Recession, however, is all too familiar and unwelcome for many, symbolic of reduced (or even removed) budgets, cuts in discretionary spending, expense tracking; and an all-round reduced tolerance often coupled with rising unemployment.

Before we get too depressed (and end it all), shouldn't we first reflect on what has been learnt from previous recessions? Credit is defined as 'belief, faith, trust, reliance' and (believe it or not) 'confidence!'

A key characteristic of the (very few) organisations that successfully deliver projects is their unerring ability to select the right projects to do... and that from an almost indecently small number of projects in their portfolio. Consequently, resource is occupied on projects that have been rigorously qualified before they begin; are committed to delivering because they cannot afford to fail; and communicate true progress because they recognise that openness is the only way to get the resources required to succeed!

The root of the problem?

Recession has a tendency to sharpen the focus: failure simply cannot be tolerated. Genuine project requirements are sifted like wheat from chaff. Pet projects not only vanish, but no longer surface.

It may seem like over-simplification to identify three major causes for the credit crunch, but if there were three they would probably be:

1. Banks trying to operate in areas of business outside their normal area of expertise
2. Doing deals that have no business case
3. A lack of governance to identify and deliver the benefits and deal with emerging issues

So are there any lessons to learn from this?

It may seem like over-simplification to identify three major causes for ongoing project failure, but if there were three they would probably be:

1. Companies trying to operate in project areas outside their normal area of expertise
2. Doing projects that have no business case
3. A lack of governance to identify and deliver the benefits and deal with emerging issues

So are there any lessons to learn from this?

Sharpening the focus

On-schedule delivery equates to budgetary targets achieved and the planned realisation of benefits realised. This enforced, no-nonsense, approach drives hard towards a much-coveted reality, grounded by the fear of failure and motivated by the need to out-perform competitors. So if these are keys to success, then what is the price of failure?

What can be measured should not drive the action!

Despite the lessons of history calling us to respond accordingly, the need to be seen to do something...anything...takes over: training and marketing budgets are cut; expenses authorisation becomes a major focus; and personnel reductions are sought from every area of the business, particularly those close to retirement. But what do these measures really achieve (aside from the fact that they can be measured)?

- ▲ A lack of training reduces delivery capability and sends an explicit message to staff that their careers are, at best, on-hold...so why wouldn't the best staff now look for alternative employment? Moreover, at a time when companies need their residual staff to perform even better when under pressure, training is the key to better performance!
- ▲ A lack of marketing removes products and services from the shop-window reducing the chances of doing the business so desperately required to remain recession-proof.
- ▲ Expenses authorisation reduces senior management to the role of administrators approving the minutiae of everyone and, therefore, not doing what they are needed to do in a recession: to provide vision, leadership, stability and a calm head in stormy waters. Added to which it can seriously irritate staff who have genuine expenses to claim in order to do their job.
- ▲ Personnel reduction appears to offer a panacea to increased costs; yet the very staff whose experience is really required to navigate a recession are the ones often targeted for departure, leaving the ship under the control of those who have never before navigated a recession.

Surviving a recession

So before we rush headlong into panic-mode, perhaps we should step back and consider what our plan to survive the recession looks like.

- ▲ Do we have a plan (or are we just doing "stuff")?
- ▲ Is our plan borne from experience and the lessons of history or sheer panic?
- ▲ Have we fully thought through the implications of our plan working and/or not working?
- ▲ What positive lessons can we learn and apply not just during, but after the recession too?
- ▲ Have we considered what our company will be like when the recession is over; and what our key staff will think of us then?
- ▲ Will our company still be viewed as the kind of place staff would want to work?

So much of survival is about keeping calm. As Kipling famously began, "If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs..."

Apply the lessons you know to be true; and keep focused on the vision that is our goal. It is how the greatest sportsmen and women perform under the greatest pressure. But do we aspire to greatness? Or do we panic?

Some of the ways we help you in a recession

1. Recover project certainty
2. Realising Project Intelligence
3. Health Checks
4. Test leadership

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1. Recover project certainty
Assuring success in a downturn

In a downturn, budgets and resources get cut - it's just the problems

that remain! Your internal PMs are doing their best but with limited resources. So how can you be confident they will deliver? And without that extra-budget, how do you ensure (I mean, **really** ensure) your project is on-track to deliver? And how much will that confidence cost you? And without hiring a contract PM or giving a blank cheque to a consultancy! Let's take a look...

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2. Realising Project Intelligence
Energising project managers for delivery

"The facilitator inspired us to go back and redefine our projects; he acted as the voice of reason. He invigorated the delegates and motivated us to think long and hard about how to run a project well." John Walsh – Project Manager

It seems hard to believe but even our RPI workshop in November delivered a bright, sunny weekend and a highly enjoyable weekend.

"Overall fantastic – I did have my doubts in terms of 'how good can it be' however no doubt the most insightful, thought provoking and valuable 'course' I have been on – in the most pleasant company and environment."

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3. Health Checks
Assure success - identify and fix critical issues

"I'm worried about that project...it's just that we, no I, cannot afford it to misfire: especially in a recession."

How many times have we heard that?

But we can help you: easily, quickly, cheaply and with maximum effect. Our famous Health Checks that can provide a massive injection of confidence to project sponsors and project managers alike, through one of the quickest interventions imaginable. And if you don't believe us, why not ask one of our clients directly about their experiences.

We don't just audit what's going wrong, we tell you what needs putting right, and what is really important to your project's success...and we help define and prioritise any remedial work.

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4. Test leadership
Planning and execution

The delivery of consistent test execution is a significant challenge for many organisations. Despite spending large amounts on testing infrastructure, management systems and training, the results of testing remain poor.

Traditional responses such as outsourcing the test function, calling in a big-company or simply throwing more people at the problem have proved to be ineffective (and costly). Feedback shows that over 50% of test phases with a significant IT element are still failing to meet their schedules and budgets: why is this?

Pelicam is involved in many rescues and recoveries so we have an in-depth understanding of why and how to engage quickly; and an ability to focus on what needs doing when and by whom in order to succeed. Sounds easy? Apparently not...

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Summer schedules

Get your diaries out because here are a number of dates...

May 9/10th – Pelicam RPI weekend
July 4th - 1 Day RPI/Pelicam Introduction

If you would like to take the opportunity to join us at Pelicam, Helen.Morgan@pelicam.com has all the details.

NEW - One-day introduction to Pelicam

"By popular demand", we have just successfully completed a fast-track one-day introduction to Pelicam as some of our practitioners have struggled to "get out the house" for a whole weekend. The content is in a similar vein to the two day course but with a greater focus on Pelicam, its objectives, values and approach; the necessary preparations for a practitioner to work with Pelicam on assignments.
Some feedback from one of our delegates…

"Great location for an informal but professional day. Time pressure helped the adrenaline! Liked Neil's passion and delivery. Can't improve the training there is nothing like it out there! Thanks for inviting me!"

Pelicam Events

There will be plenty of opportunity to learn how project intelligence delivers success for Pelicam and our clients by coming to one of our networking events during the year.   We are looking forward to seeing our practitioners and clients at either one of our evening events, morning seminars, and executive lunches or at the football!   Further details and invitations to participate in the Pelicam community will be sent out over the forthcoming weeks.

Meet Gareth Nicol

Gareth has been working with Pelicam for the last 12 months having previously been Global Technology VP for JP Morgan and recently concluded a programme of work at DHL, turning around a major programme of work to migrate DHL's UK businesses from two core legacy domains to the corporate Global Active Directory domain.

"I enjoy working with Pelicam as it is a positive business - very rewarding. Pelicam encourages a strong collaborative environment for Practitioners, based on a very strong company ethos of success and quality; and underpinned by the Project Intelligence approach and framework."

Away from the office, Gareth is married to Suzanne with three children Angus, Charlie and Natalie. Gareth is a keen golfer and enthusiastic London Irish Rugby supporter.

And finally...

Despite the recession, or maybe in part because of it (?), we continue to serve new and existing clients:

- Nationwide BS - Health Checks, project management support and project assurance
- Eircom – Project Assurance for a major billing and CRM upgrade
- Parcelforce Worldwide – Project Assurance for a major systems project

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Submit an article

If you have any interesting articles about improving the chances of project success or more explicitly delivering project intelligence that you would like to share please send them to us

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This newsletter is brought to you by:
Neil Richardson – Managing Practitioner – neil.richardson@pelicam.com
Kate Woodmansee – Marketing – kate.woodmansee@pelicam.com

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LOOK FOR A BETTER WAY   CHALLENGE ACCEPTED THINKING