

Introduction

If you regularly buy consulting services then you will naturally become more informed over time and it is likely that you may have experienced situations during the delivery stage that you wish you had considered earlier and potentially mitigated.

Here are the key things to consider when thinking about project delivery. They are worth reflecting on in a 'pre-mortem' fashion and certainly a team discussion around these questions will help to tease out potential risks before the project goes live.

Contract Discipline

- Have we considered how we might adopt a clear and simple contract methodology throughout the project which can be tracked?
- Are we clear how to contract for outcomes, (not inputs or processes)?
- Do we have clarity of outcomes and are our requirements clearly documented and signed off by all the right people in the business?
- Do we have the right knowledge, experience and capabilities to design a contract aligned to the delivery of outcomes?
- How will we ensure that we don't adopt a one-size-fits-all for all projects; how do we best evaluate the risk vs. value trade off and are we clear how this should be contracted?
- Can we agree a common language at the outset concerning the definition of outcomes?
- Do we have sufficient skilled and experienced resource with a good practice benefits realisation processes? (i.e. the tracking of the actual benefits vs. the benefits promised in the original business case)
- Are we clear who will actually map the deliverables and how they will be measured? Has this measurement process been signed off before the project starts and have we signed off any relevant historical baselines which may be used later in the project to indicate the value that has been added? Have we included the answers to these questions in the contract?

Communication

- What are the key outcome related messages for specific stakeholders, how and with what frequency will such stakeholders be kept updated regarding the progress of deliverables?
- How will the client and the supplier learn lessons from the project in an open and constructive way?
- How can we ensure that the business stakeholder who 'owns' the opportunity is closely aligned throughout the process of agreeing outcomes in order to avoid any 'lost in translation' risk.

Commercial

- Do we have a process for measuring intangibles (e.g. quality)?
- Where a gain-share or incentive-based commercial model is adopted, have the operational and financial lines budgeted for over-delivery?
- Before embarking on a risk-reward arrangement it may be worth splitting projects into phases, with the first phase being a 'discovery' process, perhaps with fixed costs, followed by the implementation phase which could be based on risk-reward. The key is that whatever construct is used, the commercials are clearly documented and agreed up front.
- Who will track the benefits/outcomes and is this person impartial?
- Can we agree exactly what constitutes a benefit so there is no ambiguity?
- Is there a process for recognising unplanned benefits?
- If a risk-reward scheme is agreed then are we clear about the detail; e.g. if the outcomes are savings, then be clear how rebates and rebates will be handled.
- If an incentive based commercial model is adopted, is there real clarity around which parts of the project are exposed to risk-reward?