



Case Study

Improvements to Secretarial Services at a Leading Law Firm

Introduction

Behind every successful law firm is an efficient 'back office' function which allows the lawyers to focus on serving their clients and maximizing their chargeable hours.

If the 'back office' does not provide either the correct quality or right level of administrative service the lawyers have to waste valuable time on non chargeable activities.

This case study describes a successful project which has delivered real change on time and within budget with one of the leading International law firms where we led a transformation in the administrative service and culture.

Background

The service provided by secretaries was of variable quality and not meeting the needs of fee earning lawyers for more administrative support rather than just document production.

The Challenge

The role of the secretary and their team leaders needed redesigning to reflect the services required. The function needed focus and leadership and a voice at higher levels in the organisation.

Within law firms there has always been a close working relationship between partners and their secretaries which meant that any changes would only be successful if there was partner buy-in.

The client asked for an experienced consultant to:

- Work with the internal project team to provide project and change management expertise to ensure the programme would be completed successfully.
- Develop a business case to support the recommendations and then carry out the implementation.

What we did

Our support included:

- Interviewing lawyers and secretaries to understand the current service and areas for change and then running workshops with secretaries to gain their commitment.
- Providing project management expertise to ensure risks were managed and the implementation plan delivered.
- Implementing a change management approach that included a clear communications plan, and an analysis of those to be impacted by the change and advice on how to handle their objections.
- Capturing requirements for revised job descriptions and ensuring stakeholder's views were incorporated.
- Developing a business case which defined the benefits the changes would bring and gained senior sponsorship.
- Defining the benefits baseline and how improvements were to be measured.

"The project team were short of time as they were combining project work with their 'day jobs' and needed someone to establish project disciplines, enable a better understanding of people related change in a global firm, manage the risks and keep things on track".

Melanie Haydon
Consultant



Results

Immediate performance improvements and more stable long-term direction with:

- Appointment of a Head of Secretarial Services to champion the service and make better use of resources across the firm.
- New job descriptions and terms of reference for secretaries and team leaders.
- A development centre for team leaders to align them as more effective managers
- Greater focus on work allocation by team leaders.

What the client most appreciated:

- Rapid assimilation of the task and engagement with key people.
- A proactive approach to project management that entailed setting clear outcomes, accountabilities and management of risks.
- The ability to challenge the culture, engage with lawyers and support staff and ensure deadlines were met.

How we work

- Our approach combines our background and experience as senior managers in commercial, public and not-for-profit organisations and as management consultants working with a broad base of clients.
- Our consultants work in partnership with our clients to ensure that our proposals reflect your needs, resources and capabilities.
- We add value through working with you and understanding your needs rather than delivering off the shelf solutions which do not fit comfortably with your operating environment, organisational culture or budget.
- With every assignment we include the appropriate skills transfer so that the client is equipped to continue deriving benefit from our support even after the assignment is complete.

Can we help *you* improve the way you use your support services?

For an initial confidential meeting call Melanie Haydon on:

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