

Programme Risk Management – The Shock Absorption Process



Square Peg Support

We used Square Peg's 5 step Shock Absorption Process which applies the lessons of traditional disaster-recovery, business continuity disciplines to managing the risks associated with predictable internal projects.

Step 1. Face Up - To identify where the bumps might lie, we conducted individual interviews and solicited war-stories from those who had experienced similar ERP roll-outs, gathering great insights into potentially overlooked risks.

Step 2. Put Necks on the line - We stage managed a one day project crisis simulation. Some 30 members of the project team undertook a number of problem prioritisation and reporting exercises and the day culminated in a simulated briefing to a very frosty Executive Committee. As a result, the team took ownership for managing risk and putting in place their own shock absorbers.

Step 3. Drill contingency plans ruthlessly - Square Peg created a 'Punch-list Template' to guide process owners as they prepared for a bumpy landing. These became checklists to complete pre-go-live and prompted timely discussions ensuring plans dovetailed where necessary. For the Exec, reviewing progress against punch-lists proved a simple means of evaluating the now decreasing levels of business continuity risk facing the project.

Step 4. Embrace Central control - Square Peg advised BEIG on the development of a detailed, centralised Incident & Problem Management process (see mini case study 8).

Step 5. Let what doesn't kill you make you stronger - Following successful closure of first month end on the new IT platform, we surveyed team members and users to understand what had gone well and what could have gone better. The collated lessons learnt were then fed into the preparations for Phase II go-live in the next wave of countries in scope.

Result

The success of this approach was acknowledged by Birds Eye Director, Operations Tania Howarth: 'Square Peg's common sense approach made a huge difference to the success of Project Pioneer. With their help we planned for success but prepared for a bumpy landing and as a result of the work they led, our landing has been smoother than we ever dared to hope for...'

The Challenge

With the separation of Birds Eye Iglo Group (BEIG) from Unilever, the business had to re-platform all its activity from telephony to reporting, across eight European countries. The project, known as Pioneer, was change at every level of the organisation.

All programmes of this size and complexity encounter difficulties. To proactively manage risk we followed a process designed to help the organisation 'Plan for success but prepare for a bumpy landing'.

This meant creating a frame of reference against which the Exec might evaluate business continuity risk levels and inform a series of stage-gate go-no-go decisions.

In addition, it was necessary to have all employees engage with the coming change and prepare contingency plans for use in the event of disruption. In managing the latter we needed to create the right sense of urgency without causing panic.