



Project Facilitation Case Study

National Packaging Waste Database

"This project would not have been delivered without Jeremy Renwick's involvement."

John Turner, Chair, Advisory Committee on Packaging

"The NPWD project brought together a large number of partners from the public and private sectors, with vastly different cultures, ways of working and perceptions of risk. Jeremy quickly recognised and dealt with the potential problems, and his facilitation skills were instrumental in ensuring that all quality, time and budget requirements were met."

Keith Stonell, NPWD Project Executive, Environment Agency

Introduction

Jeremy Renwick of Kubernetes took on the role of Project Facilitator for the development of the National Packaging Waste Database (NPWD). This major IT project, to modernise the regulation of packaging waste, had a budget of nearly £1½ million and needed to be up and running in just over one year from the start of the project.

The Project

The National Packaging Waste Database (NPWD) is an on-line system, managed by the Environment Agency (EA), which allows the UK to meet its obligations under the EC Directive on Packaging and Packaging Waste. The system needs to show that the UK is meeting its recovery and recycling targets. The first stage of the project involved putting in place an online system for reprocessors and exporters to input their quarterly returns; the second stage involved completely replacing the existing paper-based system of returns with an electronic system.

A particular challenge of this project was managing interpersonal relationships between an unusually large number of stakeholders, including government regulators, compliance schemes and the packaging industry. There was a history of tension between some of the parties, stemming from past regulations and requirements; each also had very different organisational cultures and priorities for the project.

Jeremy's Role

The diverse range of stakeholders presented major challenges. Not only were there 12 of them, drawn from both the public and the private sector, but between them they had very different ways of working and perceptions of risk. Getting this very disparate group to work together, not to mention delivering the project's quality, time and budget requirements, needed the skills of an exceptional facilitator. This is why Jeremy Renwick was given the job. With significant experience in bringing clarity, energy and focus to projects, he is able to bring together people from different backgrounds and get them quickly engaged and working together to achieve results.

How did it happen?

Managing the relationships between all the stakeholders was the project's main challenge. Jeremy's skills were tested to the limit dealing with different cultures, agendas, perspectives and terminology. In less experienced hands, some of these difficulties would have derailed the project.

Jeremy also succeeded in meeting following challenges:

- Achieving the project's extremely ambitious target of moving from a paper-based system to a fully electronic one
- Meeting very tight deadlines. The project started on 16 December 2005; the first stage was delivered by 11th April 2006, additional functionality delivered on 3rd July and 1st October with the final phase following on 1st February 2007



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- Dealing with a major office move and complete change of team by one of the key project stakeholders around the time the system was due to go live
 - Overcoming resistance to the 'iterative' approach taken by the software developers for the project. Though necessary in order to deliver the project on time, this presented difficulties for one of the key stakeholders, used to the traditional approach of working to a detailed upfront specification
 - Problem-solving a series of IT issues, the most serious of which caused a 6-week delay in the middle of the project.
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A Successful Project

Despite the enormous challenges and potential pitfalls, the NPWD was delivered on time and to budget. There were no major and few minor defects in the system. The system was used by over 80% of the waste reprocessors and exporters in 2006 and feedback so far on the 2007 system has been overwhelmingly positive.

For this project, where there was initially a wariness between some of the stakeholder groups, an exceptional project facilitator was needed to bring people together and keep them working together to bring in the project on time and on budget. This is where Jeremy Renwick's skills proved invaluable. He successfully created a distinctive project team culture, which proved extremely resilient even when it was challenged by external events or individual behaviour. Because of this, when problems emerged, the commitment of team members to the process meant that the problems were overcome. Even though the project's formidable overall target of doing away entirely with paper-based reporting could easily have been demoralising, in fact it proved highly motivational, such was the team spirit Jeremy was able to foster.

Ben Bradshaw MP, the Minister then in charge of the packaging regulations, speaking to the parliamentary committee overseeing the regulations, described the NPWD as "***...an unusual piece of Government IT in that it has been successfully delivered on time and to cost.***"

Contact

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Links

DEFRA/ACP <http://www.defra.gov.uk/Environment/waste/topics/packaging/index.htm>

NPWD <http://npwd.environment-agency.gov.uk/>

Kubernetes <http://www.kubernetes.co.uk/>
