

Imaging and workflow for a major bank: delivered on time and under budget projections

goals

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An Associate provided by Campion Willcocks led a multimillion-pound project at a major financial services group to develop and install a centralised imaging and workflow system for six large operations centres. The 18-month programme was completed on schedule and 40 percent below initial budget projections.

The challenges of change

The bank’s Group Operations division provides all back office functionality for its retail banking network. “We wanted to improve our operating model and the way requests were fulfilled – previously, there were hundreds of service centres handling the back office processes,” explains a Programme Manager in the bank’s Project Services division. “We had to put together business cases for projects to improve efficiency and achieve cost savings.”

One business case involved an imaging and workflow system, fully integrated with the bank’s systems. However, it was costed at £40 million and would have required a far greater development effort than could be justified. As a result, says the Programme Manager, “we decided to proceed with a scaled-down version, initially designed to centralise our postal mail system into a central location and save us between five and six million pounds annually – we were paying Royal Mail to redirect post to multiple locations. We wanted a centralised location for scanning mail, and then provide feeds to five or six strategic sites.” A restructuring programme had already seen the number of service centres fall as they were rationalised into six huge centres. “We’d be able to build on this system, including elements such as scanning customer documents into the system to support simple straight-through processing,” adds the Programme Manager.

This project was among the first of its kind to introduce imaging and workflow into ‘traditional’ bank account maintenance and payment operations.

The bank believed it would drive processing costs down while enhancing customer service in terms of speed of response, accuracy and consistency in processes. “With the original project cancelled, the Project Managers pencilled-in had been reallocated elsewhere,” the Programme Manager continues. “We couldn’t resource the Project Manager internally and the skills required weren’t easily accessible in-house. Campion Willcocks was one of the suppliers recommended and I requested CVs.”

The right match

“We chose Campion Willcocks for a number of reasons,” he continues “Responsiveness was very important as we had to move fast: they came forward with CVs of people with the relevant expertise. And in terms of cost, we believed working with a Campion Willcocks Associate would be substantially less expensive than some of the other suppliers under consideration.” Andrew Elfick, the Associate chosen, went on to lead total activity on the project, not only in IT development but also covering the cultural change aspects necessary.

His initial role, says the Programme Manager, involved “gathering requirements from the project sponsor and his representatives; each had a slightly different vision. He then looked at what IT had done, examined the project’s feasibility, and achieved a consensus on what we’d do. The biggest challenge was working with IT: putting together the plans and pushing IT to achieve them. He helped ensure momentum wasn’t lost. So I’d say Andrew brought three important characteristics: his expertise, his ability to challenge, and his sense of calm throughout the project.”

Elfick was in the role between the summer of 2002 and the end of 2003. “We had regular contact with Campion Willcocks through quarterly meetings,” adds the Programme Manager. “This brought a high level element to the relationship.”

The project

The project had up to 45 staff at any one time. Specialist staff developed interfaces to the bank's main accounting systems to support straight-through processing, while the suppliers of the scanning technology and workflow software made bespoke modifications to their products. The bank's infrastructural engineering staff also faced a massive task in designing the network configuration and integrating it within the physical operating model. In parallel, teams of staff were tasked with the design and delivery of a myriad of 'softer' requirements, including training materials, redesigning forms, internal communications, and so on.

Based on AS/400 and Windows NT server/workstation configurations, the system will be used by up to 900 staff in the initial tranche of operation. "Once development was complete we tested the infrastructure with our initial 'vanilla' solution," says the Programme Manager. "We then rolled it out to a number of operational processes, such as 'change of address', and handling paper-based deceased cases, of which over 35,000 were still open. With straight-through processing this sort of thing was then integrated with the bank's main systems."

The results

The system was delivered on schedule and cost £5 million rather than the projected £8 million. The aim is to continue building on the infrastructure, expanding it to additional sites and removing all paper inputs from the operation over the next six years. "This was a huge programme of work," says the Programme Manager. "I think Andrew's biggest challenge was delivering a highly complex system within the time frames that didn't fall over when it

was switched on. Our goals were certainly achieved, and with costings far lower than estimated. The bottom line is that the objectives stated at the outset were achieved within the time scale, which I think was a massive achievement.

"Another key point is that I was managing a team of 20 Project Managers and Andrew's participation was completely seamless. He was one of the team, taking a keen interest in internal issues like the reorganisation, the bank's policies, and so on. This gave us something extra, in that he understood the dependencies and inter-dependencies in the business that could affect his project. This was a critical success factor." He concludes, "Senior management was very pleased with Andrew, including the Director of Change for Group Operations. They have confidence in him – so much so that we're already planning to work with Andrew on further projects."

About the customer

The organisation featured in this case study is a leading UK-based financial services group. At the end of 2002 its assets totalled more than £250 billion and the group employed around 80,000 people. Its main businesses cover retail banking, mortgages, insurance, investments, wholesale markets and international banking.

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