

Imagine £700m sales, £500m supplier spend, 7,500 suppliers, 9 businesses, 3 divisions and 100 sites all with different customers, different systems, different policies, different business processes, different cultures and different ways of working.

Now imagine that you are convinced that you could get some big efficiency savings and you could unlock some big benefits from working in one best way across your group, but to get there you need to coordinate fifteen projects involving hundreds of staff all with their own 'day job' and often conflicting priorities. "That'd be like herding cats" you say.

Yes, well... that's exactly what we did. We became 'Chief Cat Herder' for a while and delivered almost £3m in efficiency savings, a 20% uplift in capability and some sustainable changes to business practice in a UK based group. "How did you do that?" we hear you ask. Read on ...



THE CHIEF CAT HERDER

THE BACKSTORY:

The client, a large group with three divisions and nine operating companies had tried several times in the past to get extra efficiencies by encouraging its businesses to collaborate more with each other, with limited success. A new leadership team wanted to try again but didn't want to have consultants with clip boards crawling all over their businesses and didn't want to tell their businesses what to do. We were asked to investigate this and come up with a way of getting efficiencies, without a 'you will do this' mandate and in a way that would stick. We suggested using our expertise and processes and some executive level support to get their own people to work on the issues themselves, come up with the answers and do the delivery.

THE PROBLEM:

To get over a hundred people aligned around a series of complex projects and to agree how to implement them together.

THE SOLUTION:

We devised a three phased programme, set up a programme management team, created an executive level programme board and coordinated the delivery of 15 projects.

THE OUTCOME:

All but two of the projects were delivered achieving £3m in savings, a net increase in capability as measured by independent benchmarks of 20% and an ongoing delivery process to ensure that the efficiencies continue into the long term.

THE REVIEW:

The overall programme approach worked really well, though it took a lot longer to get going than any of us initially imagined. The two projects we didn't complete were probably a step too far and the client will get back to them in the next year or so. We recruited three business analysts to help coordinate the projects, support the project teams with data gathering and analysis and this worked like a dream. We were lucky enough to secure three really fantastic people and they've gone on to take up new positions across the organisation and are doing really well.

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