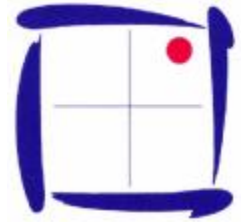


Case Study: Norwich Union Life – Building people strategy within the IT Function



The Challenge

Norwich Union Life (NUL) is a British based financial services business. The business had expanded through merger and acquisition and consequently has a number of sites within the UK. Each site was the home of a pre-merger business and had, until recently, its own organisational structure and portfolio of products.

Organising the front office structure and service delivery to fit in with NUL policies was relatively straightforward. However the back office scenario had proved more complex, particularly within the IT function:

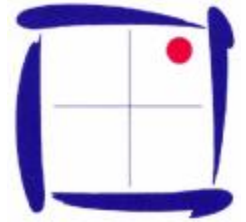
- Ø The inherited legacy IT systems from the acquired companies supporting the many pensions and life assurance products sold over the years presented two challenges: supporting those legacy systems and identifying the skills needed to maintain them and keep them abreast of changing legislation;
- Ø Each site operated different IT systems with differing approaches to maintenance and differing descriptions of similar skill sets;
- Ø 40% of the 1500 IT workforce were contractors recruited for their particular IT skills in support of specific projects, managing legacy systems and developing the business. NUL had no way of describing existing skills to assist recruitment, manpower planning, personal development and succession planning;
- Ø Staff turnover was high and the lack of career management and development were the main reasons for employees leaving.

The Solution – a dynamic skills framework model

To produce a user-friendly tool which would:

- Ø Identify the IT capability/skills/experience throughout NUL;
- Ø Review and clarify the training and development needs of each member of the IT function;
- Ø Capture all legacy and current systems – location and maintenance requirements in terms of skills, knowledge and experience;
- Ø Be a tool for planning the staffing of IT projects requiring specialised skills and/or training needs;
- Ø Provide an opportunity for employees to identify what areas they would like to work in and what training and development requirements they may have to support such moves;
- Ø Compliment HR processes such as performance management.

The tool would be completed by the individual and verified by their line manager. Each employee would be responsible for the maintenance of their own records and the achievement of their own training and development. A copy would be held centrally for other HR practices such as manpower planning and succession planning.



What we delivered

A project management structure was established including a steering team, operational team and implementation team. Members of the IT function representing all sites and pre-merger companies populated the teams along with specialists such as HR Managers and Operational Sales Managers.

- Ø Each site operated different IT systems which presented difficulties in data collection, ongoing administration and management of the financial products and ultimately service delivery.
- Ø A conclusive audit was made of all current and legacy systems
- Ø Through a series of workshops the teams developed an IT skills framework for the NUL organisation. All employees within the IT function were required to
- Ø Complete their personal skills framework document, which they discussed and got verified by their line manager. The personal skills framework document contained:
- Ø Skills attained in each skill category e.g. Cobol language
- Ø Level of ability in each skill category e.g. highly skilled at Cobol language
- Ø When that skill was last used e.g. on the XYZ project in 2001
- Ø What areas require further development to assist an employee carry out their current job e.g. advanced Cobol programming
- Ø In what areas would the employee like to work in the future?
- Ø Are there any training and /or development areas that would be seen as non-core to current role but could be of value to the organisation in the future?

The Benefits

- Ø Key result areas were met for example reducing the temporary labour supply to 10% within 12 months and reducing staff turn over to single figures after 6 months
- Ø Crisis manpower planning was reduced as Project Managers could identify relevant staff in advance and steps could be taken to ensure those staff members were available
- Ø Communication between sites improved as Project Managers shared information on projects.
- Ø Objective setting across the IT function became more relevant to the business and more targeted to the individual
- Ø Employees felt they were more involved as their career aspirations were discussed and where possible resolved.