

Building Lean Capability in Job Centre Plus Scotland

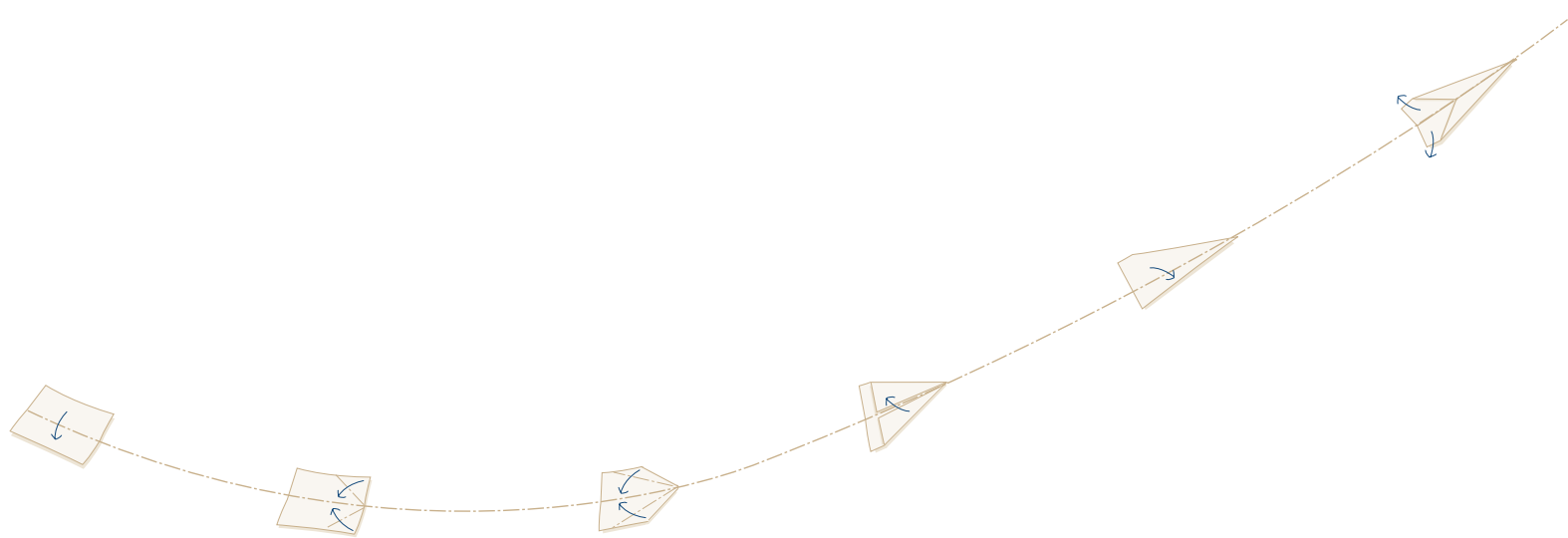
FROM POSSIBILITY...

In June 2007 The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) launched a programme to improve it's services by implementing Lean Thinking across the whole organisation. Initially this meant specific process improvements across a broad range of its customer facing and back-office processes and functions.

The Department is committed to developing a culture of continuous improvement and ultimately has set an initial 5 year transformation programme in place. As the objective is to be a self sustained Lean organisation a key element of supporting this programme was to transfer enough skills to create the an environment where no external consultant support was required. Although the strategic vision for the improvement programme was over 5 years the intention was to be free from external support a lot earlier.

In order to accelerate the capability transfer a number of regional "Capability Builders" were launched – one of those was in Scotland to build Lean capability in Jobcentre Plus Scotland – a total of 8500 staff in over 200 sites.

Although Ad Esse had supported the wider Lean programme since it started in 2007, Ad Esse commenced this regional support in Scotland in July 2008 working alongside the DWP internal Change Team.



The Approach

To help embed a Lean environment it was important to establish a network of internal staff competent enough to work alone in delivering process improvement in the absence of any external support. Although Ad Esse were supporting this programme with the internal Change team of the Department, they too will ultimately withdraw any support so sustainability was always key.

Due to the size and scope of the skills transfer a business Lean Champion was appointed to lead the JCP Scotland Lean initiative. A full time Lean core team was to be established that, over the first 2 years, could help manage the capability transfer, but also work with all the key stakeholders to help manage relationships with the business.

As with any Lean implementation it's as much about the people and culture as the tools and techniques. It helped having commitment and support from the key senior stakeholders in Scotland as well as the Lean Champion to ensure the pace of implementation was maintained.

It was vital to monitor and manage the level of capability transferred. Therefore a framework was developed against which success could be measured

The aim was to develop "Experts" – who could train and coach and "Practitioners" who could implement unaided what they had learned. On top of that were many more staff who would be "touched by Lean" either by attending awareness sessions or being coached on working in a Lean environment around an Information Centre

Each person on the "Practitioner" journey would go through 40 core modules of knowledge. Their journey to ultimately "Expert" level being monitored along the following capability pathway

Capability Levels (per module)

Level 1 – Aware of a topic/ module

Level 2 – Can implement with support

Level 3 – Can implement unaided (Practitioner Level)

Level 4 – Can coach and/ or train (Expert Level)

Progress was monitored via a passport system and each trainee had to be witnessed and signed off as achieving each level in each module Ad Esse as Lean experts, however once the internal Change Team had reached expert status this was handed over to them as internal consultants. This training was also accredited by an external college leading to these first capability team members achieving a formal qualification – BTEC Level 2 in Lean Organisation Management Techniques

Not only were individual passports maintained but the skills status was visualised on the project information centre for everyone to see and measure progress against the key milestones

But this project was about more than just transferring skills, it's about change management and the cultural issues that are prevalent in any large organisation. In conjunction with the internal stakeholders it was important that at all stages of the implementation the pace was such that it moved quickly enough to meet some fairly tough capability milestones but each site was managed such that the pace of implementation and change was not too rapid to switch people off. If this was not the case it would have proved much more difficult to continue what is going to be a long ongoing journey.

TO ACTUALITY...

In July 2008 15 employees from all parts JCP Scotland embarked on a 12 week intensive programme setting them on their way to "Practitioner" Status. This comprised 2 weeks classroom based training to cover all 40 modules followed by 10 weeks, part-time where the skills could be practiced on a "live" process.

To get the most out of this 10 weeks the teams were split into 2 teams with coaching follow-up split between the two locations – this enabled a geographically disparate group to be coached at the same time to get maximum benefit for the business.

From these original 15 a core team of 6 was established whilst the remainder from this first "capability build" went back into their home locations to act as "Lean Site Practitioners". Utilising their new skills where possible but importantly being a positive voice and communication channel within the business.

To facilitate sustainability the clients internal change practitioners were themselves being developed up to Expert status having been working on the Lean programme since 2007. So a balance of support was necessary where the Change Team were allowed to develop by coaching and maximising the use of their newly acquired Lean skills but still but were supported to ensure the quality and continuity of expert support.

Once the first capability tranche was completed, a further 12 people embarked on a second capability build in January 2009. By the end of March 2009 18 people had been signed off as Lean practitioners

Running in parallel with continued Capability Building is the deployment of Visual Management and in particular Performance Management via Information Centres. Local problem solving is encouraged to initiate local improvement activity as well as using the Information Centres as a medium to roll-out national process changes. Separate Training packages were developed to support the roll-out of information centres so importantly staff were involved and communicated with at every stage.

Then, March 09, as the implementation grew over time a more formal structure of Lean business partners was developed to provide a link locally with the business and the Lean team. This helps manage the whole process but ensures a consistent message across Scotland and increases opportunities for implementing best practice.

The Benefits

Ad Esse were able to withdraw support at the end of March 2009 and the client has been able to continue the progress already made. The combination of establishing a structure to manage the roll-out across the whole 8500 staff and continued capability build is ensuring the long term Lean vision in Scotland is being supported by the right actions.

Benefits to date:

1. 18 Lean Practitioners (by end of March 2009)
2. 1 Lean Expert (by end of March 2009)
3. 1000+ employees "touched by Lean"
4. 50+ operational Information Centres (June 2009)
5. A plan and structure to deliver further capability to March 2010
6. Confidence to lead on cross government process improvements
7. Key internal capability targets delivered on time to budget
8. Seeing processes "end-to-end" improving internal communication across "silos"

Quote from the Scotland Lean Champion:

"The Ad Esse consultant assigned to Scotland quickly identified the key issues for our organisation and worked closely with my team to embed Lean in a way which made good business sense. He shared not only his Lean skills and knowledge, but also his experiences of working with other organisations. He effectively engaged with the major stakeholders to facilitate their buy in to Lean, and advised on the overall embedding strategy."

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would to read more case studies from real Ad Esse projects please visit our website.

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