

3Kites Consulting

Do you want the leather upholstery? Why saving on project resources can be a false economy

Imagine spending hundreds of thousands on a Rolls Royce only to kit it out with plastic seats or an underpowered engine – this would devalue the car from the outset... and yet we effectively do the same thing with projects all the time!

For law firms and other professional services organisations, business change projects can be costly and time consuming initiatives and there is often pressure to save money in the initial budget. However, whilst it makes sense for firms to cap or reduce budgets where they sensibly can, the use of contract backfill staff to free up internal resources can provide benefits far exceeding their cost and, as such, is something we at 3Kites usually advocate in an effort to help achieve the best possible outcome for a project. This is borne out by countless reference site meetings where firms have bemoaned the limited resources in their own projects after seeing how such false economies have hampered the implementation.

The impact of these decisions is felt most keenly in large projects such as a PMS replacement which affects the day to day working of employees across the whole business. Freeing up internal resources can provide these projects with real-world expertise from those who have a seasoned understanding of the business, and most especially how its processes *really* work (including shortcuts and areas open to gaming). Such individuals are well placed to merge experience with new systems so that useful knowledge can be retained, post-deployment, within the firm in a way that is difficult to replicate when someone is dipping in and out of a project only when their day-2-day workloads allow – these key internal resources provide knowledge of the new system that can be shared across the firm and also help with day-to-day queries whilst colleagues get to grips with changes in their working procedures, all of which improves adoption levels.

The alternative may include delegating workloads to other team members but this is not without risk. The pressure of maintaining a day job alongside being part of a project team can be overwhelming with the result that the day job takes priority and the project suffers resulting in, say, poorly defined processes for the new system. By way of example, this could lead to file opening delays which, in turn, may cause time to be lost which, added up over numerous matters, could more than cover the costs of backfilling in the first place. Unfortunately, firms consider back-fill at the start of a project which is precisely when costs appear to be daunting and resourcing can represent an opportunity to trim the numbers. This though is a short-term salve that is more likely to add costs further down the line.

Project management is less often put aside for reasons of cost but it still happens, especially where smaller firms see the supplier providing a PM and wonder why they should take on one of their own. This is another false economy, and not because the supplier will tend to exploit the situation to expand the workload but exactly the opposite! With so many

projects currently in flight, suppliers need to be monitored to ensure that projects are completed in full and not finished early with processes following defaults rather than being configured to meet the firm's real needs. It is here that a top rate PM will earn their corn, understanding and enabling appropriate business change in order to deliver real benefits.

These projects cost large sums of money but they need to have the proper resources to deliver the benefits... I'll have the black leather please.

Paul Longhurst and Danielle Leacock, 3Kites Consulting, August 2021

If you'd like to know more about how 3Kites can assist your firm, then please contact Danielle.Leacock@3Kites.com