



Farnborough Projects Limited

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Case Study – Security Project Rescue

Background

We were called into a project that had been running for a number of months but had begun to flounder. The end using customer was unhappy with progress and there was little in the way of communication to communicate where the project was and what was required from the customer.

Working for the services contractor Farnborough Projects were asked to assist the incumbent project manager to put the project back on track. Unfortunately (or fortunately) the incumbent decided that he would leave just prior to us taking up our appointment.

What we found

The project was quite complex and involved the introduction of internet security and a disaster recovery system. The project had been “planned” using an Excel spread sheet. The sheet was a task list and that was about all. There had been no planning when to purchase equipment, what resources were required and what the customer had to do and by when. No dependencies or any order of work was detailed so the sheet was more like a disorganised shopping list.

None of the resources had a plan to work to and no one knew what the other was doing. The specification (as it was) did not explain what was actually going to be delivered in terms of functionality and whilst there was a list of equipment, the documentation could hardly be called all encompassing. On interviewing the end using customer and their team as well as our customer’s team we heard more tales of woe and despondency.

Solution

Following an initial meeting with the end using customer and the installing team, we put in place an action plan that entailed providing a fully detailed specification, a project plan and an agenda for future meetings. Meetings were scheduled daily to commence with and after a very short period these were made weekly. Team meetings were instigated and the team produced a full specification of work that all could agree and sign off. We prepared the plans including the effort required by both parties and procurement schedules. We ordered the plan so that the work was shown in a waterfall plan showing the order of the work and clearly indicating inter dependencies.

Moving on, we ensured that the end using customer was fully informed of the steps we were taking and that they were fully aware of any issues that we found as it was in everyone’s interests to tackle and solve the technical issues we were facing. Plans were reviewed weekly and a change process was introduced as the customer’s requirements began to change through the re-design process. Risks and Issues were recorded and reviewed and owners were appointed to action and manage each. It is important to note that the customer has as much responsibility for risks and issues as the services contractor and some of these must be managed by the customer.

Within a very short period of time we got control of the project and our customer and the end using customer were satisfied because the work was progressing to plan, issues and risks were being managed,

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the team knew what to do and when to do it and we were proactively monitoring and managing the project. The team's morale improved dramatically and this helped productivity and the spirit changed to a can do attitude/

Conclusion

Proper planning and good communication are key to customer satisfaction and to the successful management of projects. The whole project needs to have structure not just from understanding what the components of the project are but also to communicate what you are expecting from the resources doing the work including the customer's people too.

When a project goes wrong it is important to tackle this as soon as possible and discuss with the customer what you are going to do to change things. We spent a lot of time reviewing the problem with the customer and working through the way we were going to tackle turning the project around. There were issues on both sides but using a structured approach, good communication and firm management, projects can be recovered and as long as the steps to be taken are clearly defined and understood, recovery can lead to success. By the services contractor calling us in early enough we were able to demonstrate to the end using customer that we had noted their concerns and were doing something to rectify it. Generally, customers appreciate that problems can occur and will help to ensure that a successful project is delivered. Seeing their supplier noting the problems and taking quick and decisive action ultimately made them confident that they had chosen the right supplier and further work was ongoing.

Farnborough Projects were later appointed to set up the PMO function for our customer and were instrumental in bring best practice in Project Management to the service team. Additionally we helped them set up templates and check lists, reporting and planning tools and a well defined methodology to follow on future projects.

About Farnborough Projects Limited

Farnborough Projects Limited is a privately owned Project and Programme Management company specialising in Project and Programme Management in the Finance (Retail and Investment), Telco, Logistics and Insurance markets. With in excess of 25 years experience in managing projects, using project tools and project and programme recovery, Farnborough Projects Limited experience is helping project teams and customers improve the way they deliver, track and plan business change.

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