Building A Culture Of Agile Governance

PLEDGE CONSULTING

Louise Gardner – Founder & Managing Director

Building a culture of agile governance

Amis & Greenwood (2020) - Post Covid, "organisations have been forced, almost universally, into programmes of rapid and radical transformation. In many cases, this has caused a significant rethink in how work should be carried out; in virtually all cases, there will be further major changes ahead for those organisations that survive"

Is it better to deliver fast, accepting it might not be 100% right? Or, do we need to check all the boxes as we've always done?

Case Study

- Federal Government Agency
- Variety of project types and sizes
- Increasing volume of work
- Tendency towards highly bureaucratic governance
- Some resistance to change at senior levels

The overarching aim of the engagement was to increase the speed of getting things done without compromising on governance outcomes

GOVERNMENT

PLEDGE CONSULTING

Case Study – What did we do?

Initial actions:

- We did an assessment of the portfolio
- Workshopped with the delivery and leadership teams which projects would need the 'heaviest' or most robust governance
- Workshopped what 'fit for purpose' governance could look like for the other 30% of the portfolio
- We also (most importantly) started by defining the 'non negotiables' from the leadership team
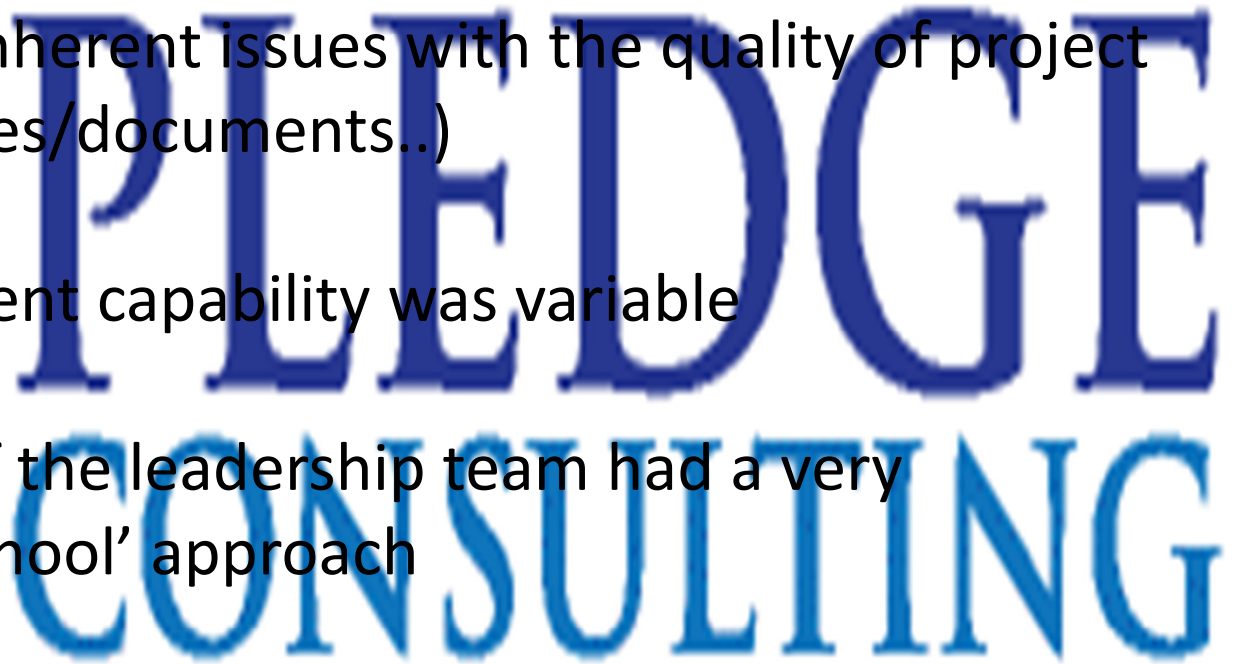
Understand the non-negotiables

- All projects (regardless of governance pathway) need to be planned (appropriately)

- Time, cost and scope outcomes should be managed through change control – no exceptions!

- All projects will pass through a minimum of three hard stage gates.

Challenges

- There was some inherent issues with the quality of project artefacts (schedules/documents..)

- Project Management capability was variable

- Some members of the leadership team had a very traditional, 'old school' approach

Outcomes

- Training – raising the capability of the 'accidental PMs – plus putting the right PMs on certain projects

- For large/complex projects – existing controls enforced

- For small/simple projects we leveraged the concepts of business agility – encouraged a culture shift

Fundamentals of agility

- **Concept 1 -** People over processes
- **Concept 2** – Collaboration over Contract Negotiation
- **Concept 3** – Focus on value
- **Concept 4** – Ask '**Is This Fit for Purpose?**'

After 12 Months…

- Better quality documentation
- Better and more consistent project outcomes (cost/time)
- Higher levels of morale and empowerment reported from the delivery teams
- Approx 30% increase in leadership availability time
- PMs report more control and faster decision making on smaller projects in particular but on all project to some degree

Lessons Learned

- Identify which governance activities/processes are considered of lesser value
- Build a culture of trust – most people will do the right thing most of the time.
- Understand which governance activities/processes are essential and not likely to be removed or changed
- Stay focused on the overall goal of the exercise – to build organisational agility
- Try not to fall down rabbit roles relating to delivery methodologies and terminology
- Ensure levels of PM capability and project management hygiene factors are addressed up front. You don't want to put lipstick on the proverbial pig!
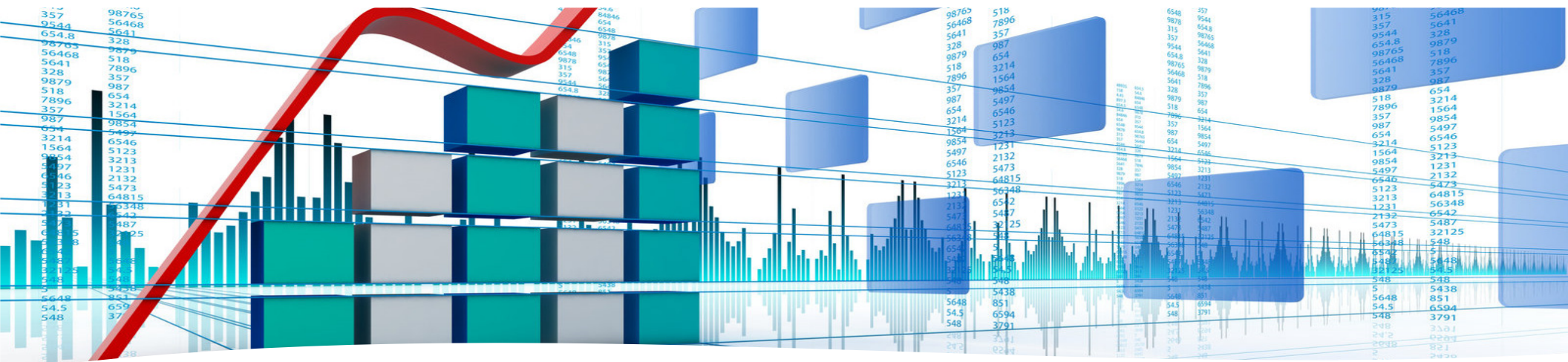
Next Steps

- Review and revise the model – shouldn't be 'set and forget'
- The empowerment and development of the delivery teams should be an ongoing exercise
- Keep asking 'is this fit for purpose'

In conclusion

- Every organisation can become more agile – even (especially!) those that say 'it won't work for us'
- The tension between having higher degrees of organisational agility and robust governance is higher than before
- There has been a real, tangible culture shift – It's great to see people change their minds!

Last Word

"People and interactions over process and tools. It's the very first agile... principle and the most important. Yet, over and over, the focus in agile implementations is on process:

Of course, process is important But the real leverage point, the key to sustainability, the driver of agility, is people and their interactions".

Taken from the book People over Process
Leadership for Agility
By Michael K. Levine 2019

PLEDGE CONSULTING

Questions?