

Consultancy and Training Case Study



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Overview

Customer

Cheshire Fire and Rescue

Products and Services

Project Management Training

Organisation Size

Large (1,000 - 9,999 employees)

Country

United Kingdom

Industry

Government

Fire Service

Microsoft Partner

Specialist Competency

Wellingtone
PPM Intelligence▶

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Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service Mitigating Budget Cuts with New Project Management Efficiencies

When the UK Government announced budgetary cuts and proposed changes in the way public services should be delivered in future, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service identified its internal project management systems as insufficient to withstand major changes. After developing a new project management framework the organisation needed to launch and embed the new methodology across its people. Wellingtone Project Management was the partner of choice to build their capacity to do so, as Gillian Conway, Corporate Intelligence Unit Manager, explains.

Rather than buying something off the shelf as a generic project management package, we worked closely with Wellingtone to shape the training materials to our needs on a bespoke basis. We took our new project management framework as the baseline and this enabled them to ensure that the training was very much tailored to our needs.

Gillian Conway, Corporate Intelligence Unit Manager

The Scenario: Streamlining Systems in the Face of Budget Cuts

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service is committed to creating safer communities by rescuing people and protecting economic, environmental and community interests. But achieving its mission in an increasingly uncertain policy and economic climate has brought significant challenges to the surface. "As we're facing changes in the external context, we're having to gear up to respond to those" says Gillian. "That extends to looking at issues including changes to crewing and reviewing the locations of fire stations to ensure we can deploy resources efficiently and effectively aligned to the risk profile of Cheshire. We have seen this as an opportunity to revamp our whole approach to project management - from the system itself to templates, tools & personnel training."

The Challenge: Rolling Out Relevant Training to Embed New Systems

Having designed a new project management framework to replace the previous systems, one of the key issues identified was the ad-hoc approach to project management. "We wanted to get some consistency across our people and systems to equip them to deal with a new change programme over the next few years. There was no real structure in terms of tools and templates" Gillian explains. "So we engaged Wellingtone to design and conduct a training programme for around 100 different individuals at various levels across the organisation, which included around 90% of those at a managerial level."

The first priority was to build the appropriate training materials. "Rather than buying something off the shelf as a generic project management package, we worked closely with Wellingtone to shape the training materials to our needs on a bespoke basis. We took our new project management framework as the baseline and this enabled them to ensure that the training was very much tailored to our needs."



The Crucial Issue: Creating Incentives for Co-operation During Training

"When you try to embed something new it's always a challenge, but we developed the framework in consultation with a selected group who were already warm to project management as a discipline and had some experience" Gillian recalls. "We got them on board and we also involved a very senior champion to support the process. That really helped, because it achieved a high profile level of communication and the incentive for people to comply."

By working closely with Wellingtone, Cheshire Fire and Rescue was able to address some issues around embedding the new arrangements that reared their heads in the first phases. "After the first tranche of training there was some operational movement amongst personnel at the top level. That impacted to some extent on buy-in. But we resolved that by bringing Vince back in to conduct a workshop with more of a planning focus. That has allowed new sponsors to feel really involved in the changes we need to make, and improved the level of cooperation and enthusiasm for our new approach."

Initially we simply brought Wellingtone in to carry out the training. But once we picked up on the way in which they work and engage, we found ourselves wanting to work more with them. They possess such a wealth of knowledge, and that's invaluable for an organisation like ours which is about to embark on a massive change programme."

Gillian Conway, Corporate Intelligence Unit Manager

The Outcome: Embracing the New Framework

Feedback from participants overwhelmingly suggests that Wellingtone's training programme has helped people to gain new skills and feel more confident in implementing new processes.

"Initially, after each training course, we could sense a buzz amongst our people about project management" says Gillian. "I could walk into an office and people were applying the techniques that Wellingtone had taught – in particular techniques like designing critical paths using visual aids. I could see them getting really excited about it. Now, there's a lot more group work and collaborative work going on, rather than individuals just sitting in front of their own computers. There's a collective sense of brainstorming. These are the kinds of new ideas that people have welcomed as practical techniques that can help them to do their jobs better."

Wellingtone's input has come at the beginning of a four year plan of change and realignment, so ongoing impact is hard to measure at this stage. However Gillian is enthusiastic about the response from her team so far. "We evaluated after the training sessions and feedback was positive in terms of reactions to the content and delivery. We're on hand to offer further support and guidance but in general there's no doubt that we've started seeing better quality project documentation, and importantly there is a greater understanding of staff about project governance."

The Lessons Learned: The Importance of Tailoring

The training was very much tailored to suit Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service's particular needs. "That's where I think it was useful to find ourselves working with Wellingtone, because they were so flexible about that" Gillian confirms. "It's one of their key strengths – the ability to listen to our needs and respond accordingly. It didn't feel like a supplier relationship – more like a partnership where we worked closely to make sure everything was spot on for us. An added benefit is that Wellingtone were able to give us feedback on our framework and help us to improve some of our templates and tools along the way."

The Bottom Line: A Value Added Approach to an Ongoing Organisational Restructure

Wellingtone's approach and experience in project management and training offered Gillian far more than she expected. "Initially we simply brought Wellingtone in to carry out the training. But once we picked up on the way in which they work and engage, we found ourselves wanting to work more with them. They possess such a wealth of knowledge, and that's invaluable for an organisation like ours which is about to embark on a massive change programme."

To learn more about Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service visit www.cheshirefire.gov.uk