Packaging and labelling – making it happen: project considerations for artwork improvement programmes

by Stephen McIndoe and Andrew Love

Structuring an artwork project

The basic structure of the project is likely to be relatively familiar to you and consists of five phases.

Project phase	End milestone(s)
Concept development	Situation and strategy development approval
Situation and strategy design	Project approval
Detailed design, build and test	Design approval Go/no-go implementation
Implementation	Go/no-go "go-live" Approve project close
Stabilisation	Embedding the new processes and tools Achieving initial target key performance indicators

Concept development phase

The concept development phase has a number of key objectives.

- Get buy-in from key senior management that there is an issue that needs to be investigated.
- Form an initial steering team to govern the project.
- Design the situation and strategy phase of the project.
- Identify the resources required for the situation and strategy phase.
- Gain formal approval for the situation and strategy phase.

During this initiation phase of the project, there is always a significant dilemma to manage. On the one hand, there is no project approved at this point, so there is no significant budget available and there are almost certainly only a very small number of part-time resources available to work on the project. On the other hand, management will always want a fully developed case for action and project design before moving forward. This latter desire cannot realistically be met until the end of the next phase of the project and usually requires a relatively significant amount of effort.

Situation and strategy design phase

The situation and strategy phase is the time to develop the compelling reason for action, thoroughly understand the as-is situation and define a to-be at a high level. This needs to be

> **Previous articles on packaging and labelling have discussed the processes and capabilities required to develop a performing artwork and labelling ability in your organisation. In the last article, we talked about some of the issues that need to be considered when setting up an artwork capability improvement programme and some of the change management aspects to consider to ensure the change is delivered in a sustainable way. In this article, we will look at the design of individual improvement projects to ensure effective delivery.**

done with the involvement and buy-in of the main impacted functions in the organisation, of which the steering team members are a key element. Having got the as-is and to-be, the gap between the two will be clear and the project can be designed, resources identified and cost estimates developed. If there are key suppliers to be selected, then this process should begin here. It may be advantageous or even necessary to complete the selection process in this phase for some or all of the key suppliers. This phase culminates in the approval of the resources and funds for the rest of the project and is, therefore, the critical project approval point.

The design phase of the project is concerned with collaboratively developing the to-be in more detail and also designing in detail all aspects of the remaining phases of the project. At the end of this phase, there should be a clearly developed to-be design at a level of detail that all parties can understand and that has been tested for robustness. As an example, this design would typically include:

- process flow maps;
- roles and responsibility tables; and
- information technology user requirements and initial functional requirements.

If there are key suppliers that need to be selected, then they will probably have been selected by the end of this phase and involved in the design. You will note that this design does not include writing standard operating procedures, education and training materials, or developing the detailed design of information technology systems. This phase would normally culminate in a formal approval of the to-be design by the steering team and any other key senior stakeholders who may be appropriate.

Detailed design, build and test phase

As the name suggests, the detailed design, build and test phase is the section of the project where the detailed design of the solution is completed, and capabilities are built and tested. This will include items such as writing and approving standard operating procedures and education and training materials. Information technology systems and tools will also be designed, built and tested. It must be remembered that in a GxP and validated environment, the development and execution of the system testing is a significant endeavour in its own right, requiring significant quantities of resource and time to achieve.

Implementation phase

Some time towards the end of this phase, a formal decision would normally be made that the design and tools are sufficiently well developed that the implementation phase can begin. The reason for this formal decision point is that the beginning of the implementation phase normally commits all impacted stakeholders to a significant amount of effort in preparation for "go-live" and, therefore, should only be commenced if the project is truly ready.

In our experience, many projects are delayed, or even fail, because managers underestimate the resources and time required to complete this phase adequately. This is often caused by too much optimism or bowing to pressure to cut timescales and cost in the situation and strategy phase. Ensuring some experienced, sufficiently senior views are brought to bear on plans in these early stages can help avoid this situation occurring.

Implementation, or deployment as some organisations call it, takes the detailed design, tools and information technology systems and implements them in the organisation. It is during this phase that the new processes and systems will "go-live" and be proven for real in the business. Typical activities in this phase would include deploying tools and information technology systems, data migration, training of staff and performing process qualification. We would recommend that there is a formal "go/no-go" decision made immediately prior to the first "go-live" of any new capability and that this decision is made by the steering team. This will ensure that the project and organisation are ready.

Stabilisation phase

Having successfully achieved the "go-live", the job of the project team is not over. The project team needs to support the initial implementation of the new capabilities until they are stable and handed over effectively to the people who will operate them and support them on an ongoing basis. This phase of the project would normally include the following activities.

- Managing the cut-over from old capabilities to new capabilities.
- Providing increased support to users during the initial period after "go-live".
- Ramping up new capabilities to design capacity.
- Actively identifying issues in the new capabilities and rectifying them.
- Completing process qualification.
- Decommissioning redundant capabilities.
- Closing out all project activities and reporting.

Key roles for artwork improvement projects

There are numerous roles that can be required depending upon the size and complexity of a project. The key ones (and corresponding responsibilities) we would identify are as follows.

Sponsor
- Executive ownership and support for the project.
- Stakeholder engagement at highest levels in the company.
- Provides strategic business direction.

Process Owner/Business Lead
- Business leadership of project.
- Owns the resulting capability.
- Project team's immediate customer.

Senior Subject Matter Expert
- Provides knowledge of artwork capability and improvement methodology best practice.
- Involved in strategy development, as-is assessment, root cause analysis, business case development, project design, supplier selection and solution design.

Functional Representatives and Change Agents
- Represent their function on the project and contribute to many aspects of the project.
- Champions the project in their own function.
- Plays an active role in readying their function for the change.

Project Manager
- Manages effective delivery of the project.

Change Management Lead
- Defines change management approach on the project.
- Ensures appropriate engagement of stakeholders at all levels.
- Ensures user readiness for change.

IT Lead
- Manages all aspects of IT solution design and delivery.

Business Analyst
- Develops IT business and functional requirements.
- Involved in detailed system design.

Implementation Lead
- Responsible for implementation approach design and execution.

Stream Leads
- Manage individual areas of the project.

Key Supplier Leads
- Represents their organisation on the project and contributes to appropriate aspects of the project.
- Champions the project in their organisation.
- Responsible for readying their organisation for the change.

In our experience, all change projects need sponsorship at a senior level in the organisation to be successful. Appointing a senior member of staff as sponsor for a project will go a long way to ensure this sponsorship occurs effectively. This person needs to be senior enough in the organisation to be able to provide significant influence over all of the key functions impacted by the project. They will support the project at very senior levels in the organisation and help guide the project though any political issues it may face.

Process Owner has the end-to-end responsibility to ensure that the process works effectively for the organisation. Therefore, this person needs to have the skills and capabilities to manage and develop a complex business process on an ongoing basis. The cross-functional and cross-organisational nature of artwork processes means that they also need to have the skills, respect and seniority to manage the process effectively across many parts of the organisation over which they have no line management jurisdiction. To be successful, they need to have the skills to manage and develop the process collaboratively with all impacted stakeholders. In many organisations, this role is also referred to as the project business owner.

The Senior Subject Matter Expert is a role that brings an overall knowledge of the artwork capability to the organisation. They should have a thorough understanding of artwork capabilities at all levels of capability, in order to help guide the organisation in the most appropriate solutions for them. Without this sort of input, many organisations will miss significant opportunities, make many avoidable mistakes and take significantly longer to achieve sustainable results than they otherwise could. More often than not, this role is external as it needs to bring an external perspective and experience to bear.

Functional Leads represent each of the business functions and organisations impacted by the project. They play an active part in the project and the development of the future capability design with other members of the project team. They also play a key role as what we will call Change Agents. As Change Agents, they need to consult with their functions during the design to ensure that the views and experience of their function is fairly reflected in the new capability design. They also need to be champions of the change whenever they get an opportunity, helping to ensure that their function supports the project. If this is done well, it will significantly improve the chances of the future capability being accepted by the organisation.

It almost goes without saying that this sort of change initiative needs strong and experienced project management to be successful. The Project Manager needs to be chosen for their project management skills, particularly in multi-functional/organisational environments and to complement the change management skills available in the rest of the project senior team.

We would recommend dividing a complex project into a number of discrete blocks of activity or streams and assigning a Stream Lead to manage each area. The Stream Lead is effectively a Project Manager for their area of responsibility. This is often an excellent opportunity for future project managers or department managers to develop their knowledge and skills.

Depending on the nature of the project, there may be significant external suppliers involved. They may be outsource suppliers who will have an ongoing involvement in delivering the overall artwork capability, or they may be suppliers who are just involved in the execution of the project. In all cases, lead representatives from these organisations should be invited to take active participation in the project and its management activities.

In the next article in this series, I will look at the programme management aspects of an artwork improvement programme.

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