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### Purpose

The purpose of this Lessons Report is to pass on to other projects the useful lessons which have been learned from this project.

The Central Support Office, which is responsible for the site Quality Management System, should use the data in the report to refine, change and improve project management standards.

### Executive summary

*An overview of the project’s success or failure.*

**Scope of the report**

*Stage or project.*

*Below are examples of entries that might be found in a Lessons Report. Where there* *are sub-headings that might trigger thoughts for entries, these are shown in italics.*

**What Went Well**

***Organization***

The appointment and use of the Project Board contributed greatly to the success of the project. There was much more ownership by the Project Board than from senior management on projects not run under PRINCE 2.

## *Specialist methods*

Product-based planning was, apart from the problem with Product Descriptions mentioned under “What Went Badly”, very helpful, especially in the planning workshops held with Service Delivery and the Users. It eased the planning process and assisted in communication with the users. The planning process was easily understood, even by those completely new to planning of any kind. The involvement of Service Delivery at the planning stage of the project greatly improved their understanding and participation and contributed to much better co-operation between the development team and Service Delivery than has been the case in past projects.

It also provided the right basis for Earned Value Analysis (but see the problems we had with that under the “What Went Badly” heading).

The workshop to produce Project Initiation Documentation worked very well. It had a number of benefits:

* Taking the team off-site to a hotel was very cost- and time-effective.

The Project Initiation Documentation was produced in two and a half

days, whereas in some cases other projects have taken several weeks.

* Bringing together the team which represented developer, user and Service Delivery to create the Project Initiation Documentation created an excellent team spirit which lasted throughout the project. This is not the company’s normal experience.
* The workshop’s second objective was to give an overview of the project management method to those of the team unfamiliar with it. Apart from achieving the training objectives, this gave background and

understanding of what the team was trying to achieve with the Project Initiation Documentation creation.

# What Went Badly

## *Specialist methods*

The Product Descriptions produced originally were very bland and therefore virtually useless, particularly the quality criteria. A special exercise, using a PRINCE2 consultant had to be undertaken. The new Product Descriptions were much better (se above section).

There were some early problems with the quality review technique. Some users failed to turn up as planned. Some of these sent a late apology; others forgot or said they were too busy when asked why they were absent. None sent in Question Lists. Another problem was reviewers turning up who had clearly not read the product in advance. This caused delays and meant that the review could not be run according to the established procedure. Eventually these problems were sorted out through action from the Project Board, but much more “progress chasing” to get Question Lists submitted in advance had to be done.

The attempt to use Earned Value Analysis was not a success. Many mistakes in the figures were made by the PSO through lack of training. The results, even when corrected, did not seem to be understood by the Project Board, again through a lack of training.

## *Project strategies*

The insistence by the Project Board on monthly progress meetings was not very useful and these were stopped after three months.

The lack of a recognised document structure and approach to the production of the Business Case caused unnecessary work. The idea of using the Feasibility Study Business Case did not work. It did not contain benefit measurements which can be applied in any post project review.

## *Support Tool Assessment*

The use of PMW was in the main very successful. The ability to consolidate the Team Plans at stage and project levels saved a great deal of planning and reporting time. The network planning part of the tool fitted in very well with the Product Flow Diagrams produced.

Problems were encountered in using the automatic scheduling feature. This must be used with care and users must be very disciplined in filing the plan before using this feature.

The PMW ability to create timesheets for individual progress reporting saved the project support function much time.

## *Abnormal Events causing deviations*

The public announcement of an implementation date before the Project Plan had been produced had a serious effect on the project. When the Project Plan was produced it was obvious that not everything could be delivered by the published date. The project was pushed into an unnecessary exercise of de-scoping which was expensive and time-consuming because of the many project and product interdependencies which the project has.

# Useful measurements

*Effort required to create the products*

*How effective was the Quality Management Strategy Statistics on issues and risks*

After some teething problems with users who were not accustomed to the procedure, the Project Issue procedure worked very well. A breakdown of the Project Issues received and actions taken is given in the End Project Report.

Of the 33 Change Requests received, 8 concerned functions which were known before the project and should have been part of the User Specification.

Whilst the volume of Project Issues was not great, they did require considerable time to decide on the course of action, mainly due to the busy work schedule of the Project Board members.

# Recommendations

More and better training in the writing of Product Descriptions must be undertaken in order to make these useful products and not be seen as a bureaucratic waste of time. It would be worth our while to train up at least two people from CSO as experts in writing Product Descriptions. In the medium and long-term this is a more effective and cost-conscious solution than continuing to use a PRINCE2 consultant. (It should be said, however, that great value was gained by using the particular PRINCE2 consultant obtained for this work in this project).

Training in the quality review process should be given to all who may have to participate in these in a project.

The company should adopt a standard way of producing and documenting the Business Case. We should either work to the Product Description given in the PRINCE2 manual, or get our Finance Department to create one for us.

If Earned Value Analysis is to be used, all concerned with creating and using the figures must be trained in the technique.

Consideration should be given to the setting aside of a change budget for future projects to avoid having to go back to senior management for finance to cover required changes.

This project was not a particularly volatile one in terms of user requirements. It was still difficult to get Project Board consensus on the implementation of change requests. Future projects should consider very carefully whether decisions (within constraints) on changes can be handed down to a lower level, e.g. a Change Authority.