



CASE STUDY

Slough Borough Council Project Management

“With all the stakeholders in one room, they came face to face with the underlying problem: over 55% of resource was expended on non-business critical projects.”

Tim Woodman, Lead Consultant, ML&C

The Client

Slough Borough Council covers 15 wards and employs around 500 members of staff. The Council was in the midst of a Change Management programme, which surfaced three separate training issues across the organisation.

- New and potential managers had no training or developmental training
- No standard competency framework across the Council for management staff
- Lack of capacity to develop and disseminate standard project management frameworks and inadequate knowledge transfer processes

In particular, ML&C identified that managers needed strong project management skills to ensure effective delivery of services that make a difference to residents and businesses (the Council’s service users).

The Council’s approach to training and development was constrained by limited budget and limited availability of its staff to be away from front line services, so the resulting training solution needed to be light touch, while still delivering the desired results.

The Outcomes

- Stakeholder management was improved across the organisation
- Leading to a reduction in the number of current open projects by at least 55%
- Without any loss of agreed, business critical initiatives and an increase in standards of completed projects



Our Approach

Taking into account the budget and time constraints for the Council, ML&C proposed a blended learning solution covering basic and intermediate management skills development delivered through an online portal. To meet the identified lack of standardised support for project managers, existing in-house material was updated to provide bespoke support for project managers at all levels, accessed in the same way.

This provided users with access to role relevant knowledge alongside the ability to test and improve their new skills with online exercises. On top of the learning resources themselves, ML&C provided consultation on optimal pathways for staff through these resources depending on their particular role requirements or skill gaps. Delegates could access all aspects of the training at times and places that suited them and fitted with the demands of their roles.



What We Found

As delegates progressed through the online learning, their stakeholder management skills increased. They became confident in raising problems and challenges to Senior Management level. Project managers, who were now confident in how projects should be operating, reported up to Senior Management that sheer volume of ongoing projects was a problem. They used their newly developed skills to present relevant evidence and coherent case that important initiatives were not getting the attention they needed.

Senior Management now had a clear directive and this challenge was raised in feedback sessions led by ML&C. Tim Woodman, lead consultant at ML&C, immediately recognised the value of this insight and proposed an emergency Senior Stakeholder meeting to address the problem.

What We Delivered

Tim Woodman convened a meeting of all Senior Stakeholders across the Council, requesting one afternoon of their time. He facilitated a prioritisation session, covering all current projects. With all the stakeholders in one room they came face to face with the underlying problem: there were several hundred ongoing and recognised projects with a workforce of around only 500 staff to deliver them.

It was instantly clear to all that a lack of organisation-wide prioritisation was creating problems for delivery across the Council. In the course of the afternoon the Senior Stakeholder group categorised projects into three types: Business Critical; Development work to support Business Critical projects; All other projects. Approximately 10% were agreed to be business critical with another 35% to support business critical work, providing clarity and consensus about where to focus time and resource.

This was, of course, in addition to the blended learning solution that continued to provide valuable skills training for managers increasing their confidence, capability and value to the Council.

