

1. Title of Presentation, Author/s, Organisation

Getting aged care IT projects to succeed

Konijn V.

Methven K.

Plutonic Zoo Pty Ltd, Sydney, NSW

2. Topic area and paper objectives or hypothesis

This paper explains how impartial professional IT project steering for aged care organisations greatly increases the chance of project success while reducing the total cost of ownership.

3. Background

IT projects in aged care often prove more difficult than anticipated; fail to deliver the business value required; cost several times the budget allocated; and consume substantial management time. This happens despite all stakeholders' intention to streamline administration, improve efficiency, and improve the aged care organisation's ability to focus on quality of service and care.

Aged care organisations typically have a highly compassionate, human, and practical orientation; a wide variety of IT literacy amongst staff; and are highly flexible to meet frequent regulatory changes imposed on them. IT professionals typically work in a rigorous, exact, logical, rational, and highly structured environment.

These differences make it particularly challenging for both parties to team up effectively in a project to realise the intended business benefits. Despite all good intentions their disparate worlds collide when they work together. Ensuing misunderstandings contribute to project issues.

Legal intervention sometimes arises when problems have escalated and the relationship between the parties has strained. But even a 'successful' settlement often fails to fix the underlying project issues, leaving the aged care organisation with unrealised business benefits. Moreover, the project has to be tackled again.

This presentation will cover 2 case studies of aged care IT projects where independent third party project steering made the difference.

4. Methods

In Case Study One an aged care payroll and rostering project requires impartial professional help when the conflict between the client and the vendor has already been put in the hands of lawyers. You will hear how professional project

steering de-escalates the conflict, analyses and resolves technical, commercial, management, and inter-personal issues, and successfully brings both parties to formal agreement to put the project back on track.

In Case Study Two an aged care financial management system project is guided by impartial steering from the start. You will hear how a professional planning and implementation process makes both parties' "common sense" explicit and ensures it becomes common; how it bridges paradigms and manages expectations; and how by detecting and dealing with misalignments in an early phase it avoids project problems spinning out of control, all to the benefit of a successful first-time implementation.

5. Results and discussion of implications with references

These case studies show that a good system and a good vendor do not necessarily result in a good project. Independent professional project steering can make the difference, work towards unanimous decisions, and greatly reduce the overall project cost.

The benefits go beyond the success of the projects. The process gives the aged care service providers and the IT vendors involved a wider invaluable perspective on differences in viewpoints, personalities and idiosyncrasies within the teams and between teams, and shows participants how the effectiveness of their interactions can be improved.