

A2B: crossing the finish line

Implementing a major change programme at Xerox required a clear and simple approach to a complex process

Since the launch in 1959 of the Xerox 914, the first plain paper copier, Xerox has maintained its market position as a leading document management technology and services company through a combination of innovative, high-quality products and services and a strong, locally-based sales force.

However, this local focus had given rise to fragmented operations across Europe which were hindering the development of common and efficient ways of working. In an increasingly competitive marketplace, Xerox realised it needed to transform its European operations in two key ways: it needed to achieve significant cost reductions, and to become a company that customers and resellers alike would find easier to do business with.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INTEGRATION

At a time when many companies were avoiding broad-scope change programmes because of the risk of failure, Xerox took the bold decision to kick off its largest change programme to date. The first phase focused on the indirect business; changing all major operations, including sales, accounting, customer service, supply chain, revenue collection and reseller management. This had an impact on activities in the UK head office, 16 different European countries and five call centre locations.

The programme, named A2B, aimed to fundamentally redesign every aspect of the company's business in order to create standardised and streamlined ways of working, via:

- a new operational structure: the supply chain would be redesigned, with customer service being 'best-shored' to deliver higher levels of customer service at lower costs
- new business processes: all processes in areas such as sales and finance would be rebuilt around best practice and shared across 3,200 staff, improving transactions for 16,000 partners and 65,000 customers
- new, innovative technology: this would see Xerox moving from more than 500 disparate technology systems to a single, integrated solution that would manage all client accounts.

Xerox selected SAP as its enabling technology and a systems integrator to help design and build the system element of its vision. The programme was led by senior Xerox staff from IT and the business.

With the programme well under way, but having missed some interim milestones, Xerox looked to Berkeley for extra support. Berkeley initially conducted an independent review of the A2B programme and then led the work to re-plan and restructure it, before taking on a range of key leadership roles to ensure its successful delivery.

KEEPING IT SIMPLE

The first step was to conduct a short health check, reviewing key project deliverables and interviewing key team and steering group members to help identify and mitigate any major risks to the work. This identified several potential





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‘hot spots’ that required attention; for example, the scale and complexity of the data migration exercise, which was falling behind plan. Clear action plans were put in place to address each of these areas.

There were also challenges around how the programme was organised and run, mainly around key roles and responsibilities in the different work streams and supplier relationships. With Berkeley’s guidance, Xerox took into account the personalities and ambitions of all those involved, rather than focusing on skill sets alone, to create a highly motivated and integrated team. This approach was broadened out to third parties to help redefine the parameters of their relationships and iron out any issues.

With the programme re-stabilised and the team reorganised, it was full steam ahead to the delivery. But how to maintain clear oversight over a programme of such scale, without becoming over-burdened with unnecessary administration and bureaucracy, remained a key question.

John McDermott, Xerox’s Group CIO, picks up this point: “Berkeley used simple metrics that belied the programme’s complexity to track progress against targets and milestones and identify the key challenges and issues. As a result, the Xerox team felt increasingly confident to make the big decisions and commitments necessary to get a programme of this scale launched.”

Communication was vital throughout: regular team and one-to-one meetings, as well as cross-team briefing events, enabled the leadership to stay close to the different work streams and prevented silo working.

The first release of the project supported Xerox’s small and medium-sized business customers

throughout Europe, who are serviced through a network of resellers. The solution went live in 16 countries in mid-2009.

The transformation of organisation, processes and systems has dramatically improved the way Xerox’s partners and customers do business with them. For example, they are now able to transact core business processes (such as ordering their consumables and service for their equipment) directly, using a new web portal. Key processes initiated in this way are managed end-to-end by the fully integrated system, providing better service and reducing operational costs by integrating the information used by each part of the organisation. Integrating front-line services with back-end processing has also helped to improve efficiency and reduce error rates.

WORKING AS ONE

“The Berkeley consultants were a great addition to our team,” says Matt Jackson, Programme Business Release

Manager at Xerox. “Not only did their energy and expertise keep us on track and help us deliver, but they also acted as coaches and role models to our staff. In fact, they supported the development of their Xerox colleagues so successfully that in the next phase, Xerox people will be taking on the majority of the key leadership roles on their own. That, for me, is a real mark of success.”

The team has now switched its focus to the second phase of the project, which supports the large corporate accounts, and is due to deliver to the UK and France in 2011. While there is still much work to be done, Xerox is confident it is up to the task. ■

The secrets of their success

- Winning and retaining strong top-level support: hands-on sponsorship from the European CFO, Group CIO and European President were vital to the successful delivery of the programme
- Building an integrated team with a single shared objective: Berkeley and Xerox created a highly motivated programme team taking into account people’s personalities, motivations and skill sets
- Getting the right balance of rigour and control with flexibility: control is essential for driving a programme of this scale. However, the leadership team regularly challenged themselves to find new and more effective ways of delivering
- Creating the strong ‘pull’ required from the business to support implementation: in the latter phase, the programme team deliberately switched some of its focus to challenging the business to demonstrate its readiness for implementation

The Berkeley Partnership’s work with Xerox on the A2B programme has been shortlisted for the 2010 MCA Management Awards. [Click here to find out more](#)