

WFA A fast response to replacing systems

Changing processes by differentiating goals and deliverables, one step at a time

3

weeks in and Assurity had already changed processes to make the project work

CASE
STUDY

“Assurity was really keen to get to the bottom of the issues – not just dealing with what was on the surface”

THE ISSUE

Wellington Free Ambulance (WFA) provides ambulance services to the Wellington region. Started in 1927, it's a charitable organisation with around 300 staff and 80 volunteers, including 150 front-line paramedics.

As a charitable institution, it's always a challenge to set aside funds for rostering, timesheets and payroll etc. WFA developed organically, with bits and pieces being outsourced, parts handled through Excel spreadsheets or applications built on by staff. These systems reached the point where they were no longer coping with the demands and even small changes in back pay could take months to process.

Sarah Lewis, Executive Manager Corporate Services, realised the need to replace the existing systems, but had no clear picture of the options. Previously, WFA had been considered 'different' and 'special' given its complex shift patterns. She really needed a clear picture of WFA's core functions and to understand what was so different between that and standard packages on the market.

BETTER OUTCOMES

- Quick realisation that WFA didn't have to replace the whole IT system to get some quick wins
- Assurity made changes during the first three weeks
- WFA learnt that it's ok to ask for small regular delivery rather than wait for big bang implementation
- WFA were armed for conversations with vendors about how work could be delivered without being nailed to a fixed scope
- Active workshops gave them food for thought
- It was easy to read the resulting output and understand the options available

“Assurity was living the values of small regular deliveries of valuable ‘stuff’”

THE SOLUTION

Sarah had heard that Assurity was a company that approached things differently. If this project was to get off the ground, WFA would need an organisation that could work out why this was ‘so hard’.

To help WFA get a good understanding about the best direction to take, they asked Assurity to provide some help analysing the current situation and determining their options. This would put WFA in a solid position to decide what to do next. Assurity’s Senior Business Analyst Ceedee Doyle started by visiting the WFA offices and getting to know the people on the ground.

“We were really impressed with the amount of ground covered and how Assurity was really keen to get to the bottom of the issues – not just dealing with what was on the surface” Sarah said.

Looking at the type of place WFA is, the funding model for the organisation and the type of outcome needed, Assurity tailored an approach to fit.

“The best thing Assurity did was make everything simple and visible” said Heather Leckie, payroll specialist. “We had a couple of workshops where Assurity took over the walls with big sheets of paper and we ‘story mapped’ the entire process of rostering->timesheeting->payroll.

“Ceedee helped us to narrow down what was really important to do now versus later and, of those, what few things we should focus on first”.

THE RESULTS

As sponsor for the project, Sarah said it was the quick wins which WFA really benefited from and the Agile approach to delivering something small from the start. “Would you believe Assurity actually changed our processes while they were doing the options analysis?”

“In just a few short weeks, they not only gave us a bunch of ideas we could implement – both short and long-term – but actually made some changes in the time they were here which removed redundant paperwork and set us up to make this project work. Assurity was living the values of small regular deliveries of valuable ‘stuff’”.

Digging down revealed that there were requirements for a non-standard payroll calculation which were based on THWADI – That’s How We’ve Always Done It! No one really knew why that was required, but Ceedee’s investigations discovered that it had been set up that way so that it was easy for someone manually creating leave payments! Times and systems had moved on, but the ‘requirement’ was still there.

Putting together a solutions document provided a firm footing for making the next decisions – not everything has to be solved by building an IT system! What WFA

originally asked for was the requirements to do an RFP. What they got was an understanding that goals and deliverables are different things.

WFA gained a clear understanding on what goals they were trying to achieve, how they would know when they achieve them and an understanding that there were other things they could do which would help them achieve the goals e.g. changing policy. This made WFA realise that software is only part of the solution.

They also concluded that with only moderate extra investment, their current system could do what was required. “We’re no longer tied to that rigid ‘you must tell us what you want and that’s what you’ll get’ way of working” said Heather. “We still have the sheets with the ‘steel thread’ and the big picture to help guide us.

“It was really good to see that in everything Ceedee did, she was shadowed by a junior analyst. It shows Assurity is investing in its own people and training up the next generation” Sarah observed.



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