

Driving transformation at the AA with Assurity Business Analysis.



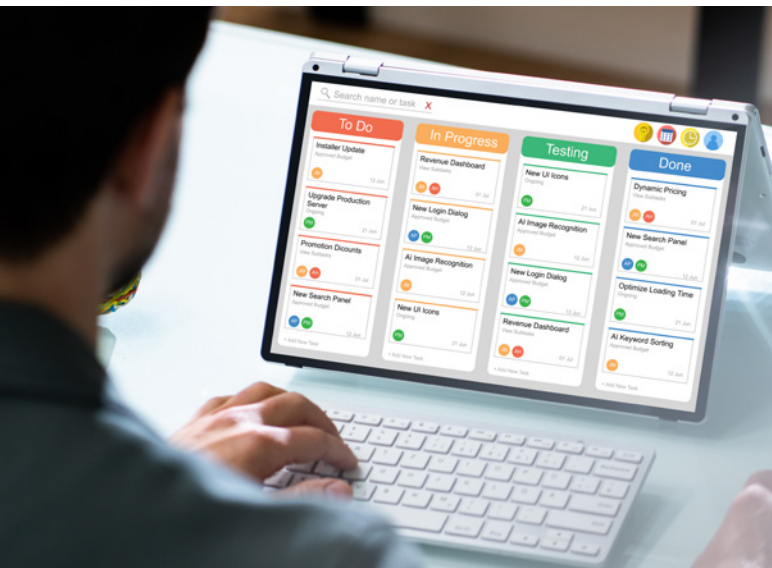
Looking for improved project and portfolio management, well-known motoring brand AA New Zealand has engaged with Assurity Consulting to deliver business analysis support, in the process maturing its own capabilities while delivering key outcomes improving resource management and information flow. Over the course of fifteen months, Assurity Consulting has helped establish and set standards, sharing best practices and proven experience, becoming integral members of the AA's project and portfolio management team, and helping the organisation accelerate its digital transformation journey.

Founded in 1903, the Association started as a small group of motoring enthusiasts in Auckland before expanding to 15 regional clubs, all focusing on providing roadside assistance and advocating for driver safety and motorists' interests. In 1991 the clubs consolidated into the New Zealand Automobile Association, and today has a membership base of more than 1.8 million. Among the most recognised and respected organisations in New Zealand, the AA offers multiple services and products generally related to its original operations as the Automobile Association. These services include roadside breakdown assistance, exclusive AA Smartfuel offers, insurance, finance, travel, a range of motoring services, advice, and more.

Situation

Like many organisations, the AA is in a time of transition. With a long history of success and a presence across multiple industries and sectors, the team faced the challenge of uneven use of technology and some elements of technical debt over time. As it works towards an integrated digital future, the organisation is executing a substantial book of projects and initiatives, says Paul Stevens, Head of Shared Services Delivery at the AA. “We’re going through a transformation involving multiple projects and products across the organisation, with those initiatives using a combination of methodologies. We realised we needed some support from a functional point of view with business analysis, looking to accelerate our capability while developing maturity across portfolio management and what you would traditionally call Software Delivery Lifecycle Management and Resource Management.”

Stevens adds that a further requirement was the establishment of best practice standards on which the AA could leverage and iterate as it improved the maturity of its project and portfolio management delivery capability. “This was considered essential in several areas, but particularly in our Value Delivery Office (VDO) – which is effectively the Project Management Office (PMO) – and help ensure every project we take on delivers the expected outcome.”



Solution

With Assurity already engaged in several existing jobs of work with the AA, Stevens says it made the consultancy an obvious choice for further support from a business analysis perspective. “Our experience has been that their capability is of a very high level, bringing a depth and breadth of experience with a range of verticals which is highly advantageous to our organisation,” he notes. “That helps the PMO engage with the business in a mature manner, along with setting standards which are now the basis for our frameworks.”

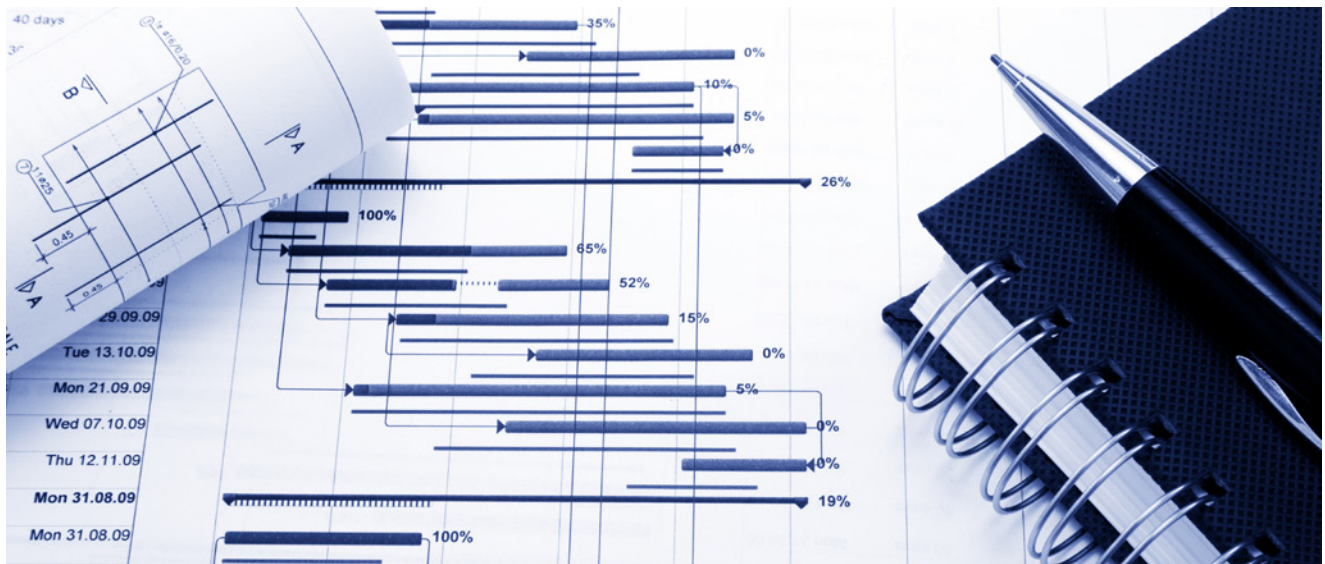
In the most recent engagement, Assurity has provided senior business analysts in support of several initiatives, including the AA Connect app and website and the development of a process and underlying spreadsheet for improved resource management across the Value Delivery Office. This last piece of work is considered crucial in project management, as prioritising allocating people and funds to competing projects is essential to their orderly delivery and, therefore, the creation of value.

Stevens stresses that while several tools are in place for Project and Portfolio Management (PPM), the spreadsheet is, in effect, a ‘bridge’ taking the AA to a formal companywide software solution supporting the VDO and its various initiatives. “The immediate issue is uneven information across multiple initiatives and divisions. This renders planning and resource allocation difficult from the ‘coal face’ side of the project. It also makes executive reporting challenging.”

He says Assurity engaged directly with his team, on-site and remotely, effectively becoming indistinguishable from AA employees. “It was expertise on tap; Assurity’s consultants have a clear methodology which starts with discussing the scope of our requirements, playing it back for confirmation, and then getting on with the work. They put a lot of effort into being clear about progress and deliverables – and something which proved perhaps a bit scary, but ultimately invaluable, was their ability to anticipate and deliver on requirements we hadn’t asked for, but which brought us to where we need to be.”

This latter point, Stevens explains, reflects the depth of experience on offer from Assurity’s seasoned consultants. “They’ve done this before, a lot. And it shows. This is the insight, acumen and experience we’re paying for.”

Furthermore, he notes that Assurity engaged fluently with both IT and financial teams, pulling together essential information from both domains, which project managers and company executives require in their efforts to deliver, on the one hand, and report on the other. “The work has helped in articulating a portfolio, with the appropriate metrics and information on each project, then putting it into a Gantt chart for executive reporting. That’s invaluable.”



Results

While the 'PPM dashboard' delivery is an immediate and tangible outcome of the most recent work done by Assurity, Stevens says there is more to it than that. "They've matured our capability considerably, specifically in the VDO, which now has three phases of Discovery, Design and Delivery, with approvals that are scaled to the delivery approach and a checklist of business documents and artefacts. This is one of the advantages of working with Assurity; they take time and effort to transfer knowledge and skills, equipping our team for the longer term."

With a standard tool and increasingly standard methodologies across resource managers, Stevens says a basic model is emerging for everyone to operate similarly. Again, this helps both up and down from the project manager, contributing to improved resource management and more accurate reporting. "Less is left to interpretation across multiple aspects of project management," Stevens confirms. "For example, in terms of how risk is rated and managed, whether an item is rated a red or an amber – it is now consistent across our project managers, and our steering committee packs are improved, so our executives know what they are going to get and what they are looking at. This aids decision-making while driving out inaccuracies."

Most importantly, through the engagement, Stevens says the AA's project teams enjoy the overall benefit of getting work done in good time.

"Assurity brings through its experience in working with other organisations going through similar challenges. They know the problems and anticipate them. One unexpected benefit was the level to which their consultants become integral members of our team. That matters because delivery is about people working effectively together."



Paul Stevens
Head of Shared Services Delivery, AA



At a glance

Company:
National Automobile Association (AA)

Industry:
Automotive Services

Requirements:

Looking for an improved project and portfolio management, AA New Zealand engaged Assurity Consulting for business analysis support. Uneven information across multiple initiatives and divisions hampered planning and resource allocation and made executive reporting challenging.

Solution:

- Business Analysis services developed a process and spreadsheet for improved resource management across the Value Delivery Office (VDO)
- The spreadsheet 'bridges' the AA's move towards formal companywide software solutions in support of the VDO.
- Engaged fluently with IT and financial teams, pulling together essential information required by project managers and company executives.

Outcomes Achieved:

- Delivery of Project and Portfolio Management (PPM) dashboard providing critical metrics for decision-making, eliminating inaccuracies
- Capability uplift of the AA team while delivering key outcomes and improving resource management and information flow.