



W www.esightgroup.com.au
E info@esightgroup.com.au
P 02 9430-6676

Case Study

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THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE SERVICE

IT Interim Executive Helps Shoulder the Load of a Busy CIO

By Steve Pitt

Abstract

The CIO of this national provider of health insurance services engaged our consultant to assist him to “provide strategic direction, leadership and management of the company’s Information Technology department” during a period of significant change that included:

- the decision to implement an effective IT Governance framework;
- a restructure of the IT department;
- moving the whole organisation to a new purpose-built multi-story building;
- relocating its web-facing applications and infrastructure into a new outsourced relationship.

In addition the CIO was a major contributor to a confidential discovery process in conjunction with a pre-merger due diligence program. Essentially the CIO needed to clone himself to achieve his objectives. Our consultant had the experience and knowledge to step in and take ownership of a number of these important initiatives. Our consultant also had a roving charter to observe IT in operation and make recommendations to the CIO on any aspect of the department.

For more information : Contact info@esightgroup.com.au

The Client

This client is one of the top 10 health services providers in Australia. It provides a full range of health insurance products and customised health management programs. It has consistently leveraged information technology as a competitive advantage and uses a combination of integrated call centre processing and web-based health claims as an alternative to having high-cost branch structure.

The Challenge

There were too many initiatives either requiring direct senior management involvement or indirect oversight. With a relatively inexperienced IT management team, the CIO did not have the skills internally to delegate some of his priority objectives, but nonetheless he needed access to senior IT management experience ASAP. Our consultant was engaged and it was subsequently agreed that he would "assist the CIO to oversee the utilisation of all IT resources across the company to ensure economical management of information technology.

The Approach

Our consultant started by reviewing a range of documents such as the IT Strategic Plan; internal audit reports; and a recent independent 3rd party assessment of the IT department. He also met individually with the IT management and other IT stakeholders and started attending the regular IT Management meetings and IT staff meetings.

After presenting his initial findings to the CIO, he was further asked to:

- Advise on the proposed IT department restructure;
- Provide guidance, advice and mentoring to the IT management team;
- Work with the IT management team to develop the annual department Operating Plan;
- Provide recommendations to the CIO on any aspect of the IT department;
- Provide project intervention triage support on any project as and when required;
- Provide an IT management review of key IT contracts and agreements.
- Develop an IT Governance program based on CobiT;
- Project manage the web relocation project; and
- Develop new position descriptions for the IT management team, based on Cobit.

Our consultant then proceeded to work closely with each member of the IT management team and developed an open and honest rapport with them. He organised a number of briefing sessions to discuss IT Governance and specifically CobiT. The need for an effective governance process soon emerged and when the IT department restructure occurred soon after, a new role of IT Governance Officer was created, reporting to the CIO.

A plan to target the following operational areas of IT was developed:

- Project Portfolio Management – the process, the prioritisation, the quantification of real benefits, the reporting on an individual project and consolidated portfolio basis;
- IT Risk Management
- Vendor Management – the process to assess performance and the relationship profile for senior management
- The company's intranet was selected as a key method of communicating the emerging IT Governance processes and was also used for storage and access to all project documentation and reporting.

The Outcome

The restructure of the IT department resulted in a boost in department morale and the newly promoted Business Systems Manager was recognised across the business and received the company's Employee of the Year award. All key objectives of the CIO were achieved and the following tasks were successfully completed:

- A new IT Project Management methodology that included a short-form business case with a benefits realisation scoring capability and consolidated project reporting across business units was developed and implemented
- A IT Risk Management Plan based on CobiT was developed
- A Vendor Management program that included a vendor performance scorecard and a vendor relationship profile for senior management was developed and communicated to major vendors
- A CobiT-based IT process maturity self-assessment tool was developed for ongoing use by the IT management team.

What the Client Had to Say

The CIO acknowledged the work of our consultant and wrote: "Hiring [the consultant] was one of the best decisions I have made in my career to date. He brings results!

I engaged him for a period of seven months full time to provide me with additional Executive bandwidth at crucial time for our organisation. During this time [the consultant] transitioned his exceptional knowledge in IT Governance across the Information Technology domain and our organisation. He significantly contributed to the IT strategic planning process and the overall development of my management team & business unit

[The consultant] provided essential management support and professional Executive advice. He quickly developed an understanding of the core challenges facing our business and proactively engaged with key stakeholders without my involvement to enable solutions

[The consultant] developed an incredible rapport with my management team and their staff. He regularly shared new insights and provided additional guidance to all staff that he came into contact with. In summary [the consultant] is a professional Executive with exceptional experience in Information Technology, corporate business and governance. He is person of integrity and now a great friend."

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