ABB, one of the world’s leading power and automation technology companies is a global corporation employing more than 147,000 people in 100 countries worldwide. ABB protects the underlying group result through hedging multi-currency transactions. As the company continues to expand into new countries complex accounting and compliance rules add greater pressure and management demand, ABB recognised the impact and established a global project to reduce the potential impact of foreign exchange rate fluctuations on ABB’s bottom line. Initially the project was established as a technical project using corporate experts.

How were the corporate experts going to solve the technical issues and implement them across countries in a challenging global environment? Having successfully used ABB on previous projects, the dynamic programme manager invited a small group of experienced practitioners from ABB’s Operational Improvement (OI) team to assess and support the significant change management requirements and to accelerate successful project delivery.

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“Demystify rather than impress”
Programme Manager

Solution
The technical issues were the key focus, with many months already spent understanding and developing theoretical solutions. A new dynamic programme manager was brought in to drive the project to an operational conclusion. ABB’s first input was to facilitate a kick off workshop for the project team, with ABB representatives from 11 key countries. Building on the ABB ‘i2i’ change management methodology the team assessed the current data, reviewed the scope and global reach and gave an opportunity for the team to discuss and debate issues before committing to an agreed vision.

To support the project ABB OI consultants worked with the programme manager to shape the change impact and requirements, identifying three areas:

- Change management support; including team development, coaching and mentoring individuals and stakeholder management
- A communication plan. Branding the project was essential to raise and maintain the profile, regular, relevant news to keep interest high, and a easy route for Q&A and FAQ - a project specific website
- A training strategy; including cost effective global delivery, who / when / what decisions, development of effective training material and utilisation of current ABB processes and routes
To keep energy and motivation high ABB OI practitioners supported and drove the project through regular review, frequent facilitated off site workshops, regular communication and hands-on support at the ‘rock face’ as needed. ABB OI consultants provided the resource to design, manage and deliver successful training in line with the project messages. A key lever to implementing successful training was by establishing and carefully facilitating a global training forum, with representatives from key countries.

To support project planning and review for such a complex project, Goal Directed Project Management (GDPM) was employed as an excellent way to clarify successful outcomes and help surmount barriers and silos. Applying GDPM alongside traditional PM tools encouraged flexibility and team review that the project needed. This created an environment where experiences and learning were shared; maximum benefit from minimum effort.

“Visibility of currency exchange impact now extends beyond the actual number to include the key currency pairs by country. This improved transparency is helping us to target further improvements.”

CFO

Benefits

Project benefits for ABB
- Significantly improving the visibility of ABB results due to exchange rate fluctuations “We can more easily explain what has happened and why”
- Reduced levels of exposure
- Currency and commodity exchange impact is visible. ABB now uses the information to ensure compliance and manage the business

Benefits of OI support services
- Delivery of a major culture change; project teams from across the world are now working as one team using one system
- Achieving project vision through quality results, on time and within cost
- Establishing an operational group to manage the process, a lasting legacy for ongoing improvements
- Recognition of positive impact of change management and transfer to other high profile projects to accelerate implementation

“Workshops and care in preparation - a brilliant lever to pull us together and sort out the tough stuff - an ‘island’ in a choppy sea!”

Team Member

“The critical contribution of the OI group was ensuring my very competent technical team had the skills and processes to implement a solution with real and lasting impact on the business.”

Programme Manager