In a complex college merger environment, Barvas would have delivered many additional efficiencies in project management

Barvas

Sharon Driver, Owner and Director of GSD Project Management Ltd, specialises in strategic planning and project management consultancy and training. GSD's "Plan to Succeed" approach is based on 25 years' operational experience, a proven track record of delivering positive change and an appreciation of stakeholder engagement and communication. Sharon has been an avid user of MindGenius for managing complex projects since 2012 and she recently shared her views on her experience of managing a large college merger project using MindGenius as well as her initial impressions of Barvas.

In 2012, Sharon was appointed Merger Project Manager for the merger of three colleges in Ayrshire, Scotland into one large flagship college – Ayrshire College from 1 August 2013.

This major project ran until March 2015 and involved Sharon leading all aspects of strategic planning, project design, development and operational delivery to meet an aggressive Government timeline and budget for merger then developing and delivering process and systems integration for the merged college.

MULTIPLE COMPLEX PROJECTS

The size, nature and complexity of this high-profile project brought many challenges during a time of significant cultural change, including:

- Establishing strategic direction and strategic plans in a complex stakeholder environment;
- Integrating and adapting to dynamic scope change within an evolving project;
- Identification and delivery of critical activities to operate as a single institution such as legal compliance, organisational infrastructure, ICT infrastructure for college services and communication across multiple campuses, integration of critical business systems (eg - admissions/applications, HR, Finance systems), rebranding and regional curriculum review;
- Harnessing the existing experience and expertise of cross college workstreams to develop action plans to meet strategic objectives both pre and post merger

GSD Project Management Ltd
Plan ... to succeed

"The standout benefits of Barvas for me are the opportunities for real time collaborative working and the dashboard interface. Being able to plan, adapt, manage, monitor and report within one Project Management tool allows Project Teams to get the optimum balance between project action and project admin. As an existing user and advocate of Mindgenius, I'm excited to see Barvas grow in capability and functionality and become a real game changer for everyone involved in managing projects."

CLARITY AND FOCUS ON PLANNING AND COMMUNICATION

With a strong focus on strategy, preparation and thorough planning, Sharon's first focus was to use MindGenius to map and visualise the projects' scope, starting with stakeholder analysis and the communication strategy.

Sharon had experience of other mindmapping tools and also of linear planning tools such as MS Project in the past but following a recommendation from a colleague, discovered that MindGenius provided a clearer and more engaging approach to aid clarity of purpose and manage dynamic change right from the start. Sharon stated:

"Mind mapping helped to engage staff at every level of the organisation as they could clearly see the plan take shape and could see their own contribution rather than feeling constrained and overwhelmed by the linear format of traditional project management tools"

VISIBILITY AND TRACKING OF PROGRESS

Sharon used MindGenius to visualise and structure project phases and tasks and was able to leverage off the maps to communicate the requirements and deliverables both to senior management and project stakeholders. The ability to export maps to Excel also proved valuable as a baseline to create dashboards to track and execute project

deliverables with each of the workstreams. At one point within the critical path of merger, there were 18 concurrent project plans at various stages within their project lifecycle with multiple workstreams. On completion of the successful project in the challenging timeframe Sharon and the team appreciated how pivotal MindGenius proved to be to provide a clearer picture of the requirements and key issues emerging from preliminary mapping:

"Mindgenius was invaluable in helping me to quickly collate and assimilate high volumes of information from 3 separate Colleges to identify critical activities to meet strategic objectives and set milestones and deadlines"

EXCITED ABOUT THE FUTURE AND DEVELOPMENT OF BARVAS

With regards to the project management of current challenges that Sharon is now facing she has now started to use Barvas and instantly recognised the benefits of the new functionality and how beneficial it would have been to have had this during the College merger project. In a complex project that involved 8 college campuses in Ayrshire, the capability of online collaboration would have helped with time management and travel costs for workstream meetings and also for real time progress tracking.

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