



How to staff your next transformation team



Transformation is the new business imperative; citizens expect it; and changing technological and regulatory environments demand it.

Business-as-usual is no longer an acceptable model. But transformation takes time and resources; often resources we don't have.

We are all trying to resource our transformation projects with existing staff who often cannot be released full-time from their core business and so are juggling transformation activities with their day jobs.

To achieve your transformation goals it is imperative your people work on the activities which matter, and you find trusted suppliers and partners to deliver the capabilities you don't have or don't have time to manage.

1

Put your team members in roles that count

Placing your best team member in a Product Owner role on a critical project is one of the smartest investments you can make. They are best placed to apply their experience and institutional knowledge to guide the project team and prioritise the workload to ensure you build the 'right' products and features. This is a critical leadership role which could make or break a project and should never be outsourced to an external supplier or a contractor.

Identify the critical roles in your project which require high levels of business context and institutional knowledge and staff them with your best and brightest. This doesn't just mean the leadership roles. Pairing one of your people with an external business analyst or discovery team to unearth issues and gather business requirements is another smart move as they will add great business context and flag any potential problems early.

2

Use blended teams

Blending your internal teams with external contractors and suppliers is a great approach. External contractors may have strong skills and experience, but they don't know you and your organisation. Blending contractors with your internal team gives them context and reminds them of the users they are building for. It is also a great technique for knowledge transfer as your internal team essentially work-shadows skilled professionals gaining skills and experience they will retain after project close. This form of experiential learning is extremely powerful and has been shown to drive staff retention and improve team motivation.

3

Build persistent teams

While it is true that most people like variety in their working day, there are also great benefits to building and maintaining persistent teams. A lot of time and energy is expended by team members in the establishment phase – all the forming, storming, norming takes time before you achieve the performing stage. But maintaining persistent teams reduces that and allows people to deliver outcomes faster. If a team is high performing, it's for a reason; give them the space to show you what they are truly capable of. Reward their efforts and let others experience their ways of working to understand why they are so successful. It's hard to build persistent teams with a transient workforce of individual contractors. Use resource augmentation judiciously.

4

Beware large-scale resource augmentation

So many transformation projects fail because they either didn't have the right people and capabilities to deliver the outcome, or the people weren't organised in such a way that they could be successful. Too often we see agencies going to market for large-scale resource augmentation. They buy in a bunch of individuals, keep them apart from the internal team, and expect them to achieve an outcome. This approach rarely works and only serves to blow out costs and leave all parties disheartened.

Agencies who are serious about transformation would be better served building blended teams, persistent teams, and complementing their teams with additional capability. The focus should be on delivering the outcomes that our customers, citizens, and employees expect and deserve.