FUJITSU

Stop taking unnecessary risks - how to guarantee project outcomes

If it's outcomes you want, then stop procuring raw materials and start procuring outcomes-based services. Commercial businesses moved to outcomes-based service models years ago because they recognised the cost savings, increased revenue, and rapid pace of transformation this approach offers. It's time the public sector reaped some of the benefits too.

An outcomes-based service model shifts the organisation's focus from procuring materials, to procuring outcomes. In simple terms, you contract suppliers to deliver your business outcomes – the end state you desire – not simply provide raw materials and resources in isolation. This is a completely different approach to traditional procurement and places an equal share of the delivery responsibility on the supplier. Increased accountability is a key element of the success of this approach. Outcomes-based service delivery also reduces your risk as you share the responsibility for delivery with a trusted transformation partner who has done it before.

For suppliers who just sell technology and have no experience or interest in making it work, the outlook is bleak. But for the suppliers who have the real capability and depth of experience to lead transformation programs, the opportunity to partner with a government agency to deliver real change and improve citizen outcomes is intoxicating.

Most successful outcomes-based service models share some common features:

1. There is a clearly articulated business need

Successful outcomes-based projects serve a business need and are driven by the business, not just IT. There is a widely agreed and accepted business problem to be solved and a clear vision of the ideal future state which allows all parts of the organisation to work towards a common goal. There are clear and measurable metrics which describe what 'good' looks like so there is no question about what the final outcome is. When we openly engage the capabilities of all groups across the organisation and address people, process, and technology issues as a whole, the chances of success are greatly increased.

2. There is a strong user-centric approach

Successful projects put people at the centre of the solution whether they are customers, citizens, or our internal employees. People drive culture and change. People use (or don't use) the tools and technologies we give them. Focussing on use cases is a great way to maintain a user-centric approach. You clearly articulate the user, their business problem or task, and the outcome they seek and then you build a solution which meets this need. When we solve for people then our solutions are meaningful, impactful, and sustainable.

3. The project leverages latest technologies

The technology already exists to digitise, integrate, and automate our daily practices and transform our ways of working. There is no shortage of choices; the technology is the easy part. But selecting the right combination of technologies, integrating them in such a way that they deliver on their promise, and working at a pace that your people can manage are the tricky parts.

An outcomes-based approach is the best way to get the 'right' technology outcome for your agency and your people. You leverage your supplier's industry knowledge, previous projects, and R&D budget to get the best advice for your specific problems and context. You leverage their ability to sift through the available technology options and piece together an architecture and approach that meets your needs. They are on-the-hook for the outcome just like you are, so it is in their best interests to envision and implement a great solution. And choosing a supplier who understands the importance of human-centric design and change management ensures your technology will work for your employees, customers, and citizens.

4. The project is supported by a digitally savvy team

Often, transformation means digital and data. Digitising processes and leveraging your data to work for you are common outcomes required in the public sector. We all want to free our employees from manual labour and duplicated effort, and we want to know not only what happened in our organisation yesterday, but also what is going to happen tomorrow. We need digital- and data-savvy people to lead this new way of working.

Organisations who prioritise training in digital ways of working and provide data and analytic tools and platforms are starting to get ahead. And those that include core digital and data skills in their position descriptions are already seeing benefits.

Our mothers always taught us to ask for what we want. If you want outcomes from your next transformation project, then ask for them, in the way you procure suppliers and in the way you expect them to operate. The suppliers who are willing to partner with you and assume responsibility for your outcomes are the ones you want to deal with. The others will rapidly be left behind.