“PERFECT IS THE ENEMY OF THE GOOD” COMPROMISE IN IT PROJECTS

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Moderator
Bill Richardson, Berry Dunn

Presenters
Teresa Karnes, Executive Account Manager, Xerox State Healthcare
Mark Pitcock, Medical Assistance Division Deputy Director, New Mexico Human Services Department
Rita Rutland, Chief Systems Information Officer, Mississippi Division of Medicaid
Duane Preshinger, Health Resources Division Administrator, Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services
“Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men’s blood.”

- Daniel Burnham, Architect
“I don’t want technology constraints driving our policy. ”

- Your Boss
“Nine women can’t have a baby in one month.”

- Every IT Manager Ever
“You get what you settle for.”

- Louise Sawyer,  
  *Thelma & Louise*
“The perfect is the enemy of the good.”

- Voltaire
“Failure is not an option.”
- Your Cabinet Secretary

“Define *failure*.”
- You
“PICK ANY TWO”
(’CAUSE YOU PROBABLY CAN’T HAVE ALL THREE)
WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN SOMETHING HAS TO GIVE?

• Reduce the scope/jettison requirements
• Delay the implementation of the project (add time)
• Hold the line and proceed as planned
• Defer requirements for a later “Version 2.0" of whatever you're implementing
• Add resources to the project (add cost)
REDUCE SCOPE

• Reducing scope can be the preferred option when:
  • Change in management = change in direction
  • Timeframes
  • Hard deadline
  • Competing priorities
REDUCE SCOPE

• Change in Management
  • New leadership
  • Previous objectives become obsolete
  • New vision and goals
  • Resources are diverted to new projects
    • Money
    • People
REDUCE SCOPE

• Timeframes
  • Long duration between defining requirements and signing a contract
    • Administration
    • New goals
    • Improved technology
    • Changes in state and federal requirements
  • No one remembers the intent or why this work is being done
REDUCE SCOPE

- **Hard Deadline**
  - Make the decision to do only what is required
  - Identify core requirements
  - Jettison the “bells and whistles”
REDUCE SCOPE

• Competing priorities
  • What functionality is not critical to agency success?
  • Resources were originally underestimated
  • Impact wasn’t understood
  • Key project resources are reassigned
DELAY IMPLEMENTATION

- Depends on the type of Contract
  - Existing Fiscal Agent contract
  - MMIS DDI contract
- Legislative mandate or enhancement
- Impact on providers
EXISTING FISCAL AGENT DELAY

• More flexible for existing vendor system enhancements
  • Vendor is currently running the system
  • In depth knowledge of existing system
  • Knowledge allows additional planning up-front
  • Available work-around and the ease to implement
DELAY IN DDI

• Considerations
  • Set a realistic date up front and include in contract
  • Changes to implementation date is a contractual change
    • CMS must review and approve
  • Strong contract language
  • Political fallout
  • Provider impact
  • Administration changes
VARIOUS FACTORS TO CONSIDER REGARDING CHANGES TO IMPLEMENTATION DATE

• Legislative Factors
  • Federal or State mandate (i.e. ICD-10)

• Criticality
  • Interface with eligibility system

• Data conversion
  • Testing
  • Ensure sufficient time for user acceptance testing and system testing
PROCEED AS PLANNED

• Factors that can influence the decision:
  • Legislative mandates
  • Financial/funding implications
  • Avoidance (of penalties/fees, of reality, etc.)
  • Stakeholder Influence (politics)
  • Ignorance (lack of understanding administratively)
ONCE THE DECISION IS MADE TO PROCEED AS PLANNED

• Clarify the definition of project success
• Upgrade your communication with Stakeholders
  • Overcommunicate – be deliberate and visible
  • Manage expectations
• Regularly review and update your Risk Register and Risk Management Plan
• Project Work Plan becomes your bible
  • Monitor and adjust daily
PROCEED AS PLANNED

• Manage from your Project Plan/work breakdown structure
  • Critical Path must be clearly defined and monitored daily
  • Are adequate resources assigned?
  • Is the target date realistic?
  • Can the schedule be crashed? Should it?
PROCEED AS PLANNED

• Are there any ‘extras’ that can be pushed out beyond the target implementation date?
  • Documentation, training, CMS Gate Reviews, etc. 😊

• Implications if the project is late
  • Who/what is affected?
  • Critical / Life threatening?
  • Political?
  • Financial?
PROCEED AS PLANNED

• Prioritize, prioritize, prioritize your resources.
• Focus on what matters most!
• Identify the barriers to success and remove them!
• Check your contract/consult with Legal…Is there leverage to keep the project team’s ‘feet to the fire’
  • Penalties
  • LDs
• How is the project team’s morale?
  • Motivate
  • Inspire
  • Make it fun
  • Celebrate milestone successes
DEFER REQUIREMENTS

“Help! We can’t get everything done by the deadline!”

• “OK, what can you get done?”

“You get what you settle for.”

• Be careful not to settle too easily or to always settle; you may not get what you need.
• But at least “settling” gets you something and a refusal to compromise can crater an entire project, getting you nothing.
DEFER REQUIREMENTS

• Questions to Ask
  • What is the impact if we defer this requirement?
    • Clients
    • Providers
    • Cost
    • Federal regulation
  • What is the risk to the project if we don’t defer this requirement?
  • Is there a workaround?
DEFER REQUIREMENTS

• Remember: We’re *deferring*, not cancelling
  • That’s an easier conversation

• Deferred requirements become the initial requirements for Version 2.0 of whatever you’re building

• Current New Mexico examples
  • ASPEN eligibility determination system
  • Centennial Care managed care initiative
DEFER REQUIREMENTS

• Centennial Care 2.0
  • Identify core requirements for a successful start-up for 1.0
    • Members have access to care
    • Providers are getting paid for the services they render

• As issues come up, view them in the prism of those core requirements

• Key components deferred to 2.0
  • Health homes
  • Payment reform (innovations in provider reimbursement)
ADD RESOURCES

• Adding resources is a tough call
  • Budget constraints
  • Can’t just throw more programmers at a project because they’ll just end up walking over each other

• But sometimes it’s the only viable option
ADD RESOURCES

• Problem
  • ASPEN was programmed to evaluate applications for ACA eligibility categories starting January 1
  • CMS required that ASPEN be able to evaluate applications for both legacy and ACA categories starting October 1, and to refer denied applicants to the FFM.

• Solution
  • Create a separate project team to design, develop and test a solution concurrent with existing work
ADD RESOURCES

• Separate project team
  • Project Manager
  • Technical Manager
  • Analysts and Developers
  • Testers

• Separate project schedule, JADs and status meetings
ADD RESOURCES

• Concurrent activities
  • ASPEN Wave 1 rollout (southern New Mexico)
  • Change requests scheduled for Wave 1
  • Fixes identified during pilot
  • ACA “mini-project”

• ACA and Wave 1 code was merged prior to UAT

• Changes are being tested together, but by different staff
ADD RESOURCES

Risky? YES
Did the Project Management Office think it was insane? YES
Was it disruptive? YES
Was it expensive? YES
Did we have a choice? NO

Were we successful? Stay tuned....
Questions?