

# PENTACLE HIGH PROFILE SUCCESS STORIES

## TELEFONICA O2

### CONNECTS TO BETTER PROJECTS, VIRTUALLY

O<sub>2</sub>

Life certainly was challenging enough for Sarah Craig, Head of Programmes, faced with delivering an enormous programme of change in O2, the UK operating arm of Telefonica.

The year ahead, as well as involving a shift to deliver to a new strategic direction set by CEO Ronan Dunne, also contained the complexity, challenges and disruption which would be brought by the London Olympics. This meant new stakeholders, many of whom had little understanding of the traditional business and of project management, as well as projects that were either repeats or completely brand new. And all this change was to be delivered successfully with fewer and more-stretched resources and, if possible, faster than usual. "I need a way to support my programme and project managers as the pressure builds for them," said Sarah Craig. "If we can work together as a community to build our skills and capabilities we should be able to rise to the challenge."

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The stakes were high since the industry in the UK was consolidating and forming complex alliances with competitors agreeing to share and spread the fixed costs of their operations. At the same time the customer profiles and demands were shifting faster than ever.

O2 had already established the concept of a Project Academy, coordinated by Michael Mousley, by the time they involved Prof Eddie Obeng of Pentacle. But the questions were: Which project and programme managers do we develop? What do we develop them in? And how do we begin to forge them into a community which will work together to make the heavy lifting easier? "It was important to find

something that could add value and be relevant to even the most battle-hardened project manager, while still engaging those with less experience," said Michael. "The solution needed to be persistent, not just another course. And the last thing we needed was another methodology!"

At the initial engagement meeting, held in one of the O2Ville-styled meeting rooms, Eddie Obeng and Dr Michael Anaman of Pentacle had a chance to meet a wide range of O2 programme and project managers, and to explore their learning needs. Dr David Lomas, who was attending on QUBE, took the opportunity to



teach GapLeap, the 15 minute business case creation tool. David said: "One thing we're really clear on at Pentacle is that if you can't learn and apply the tools we teach in a very short space of time, there's probably not much point; by the time you're ready, the world will have moved on! This gave us the perfect opportunity to test that belief and demonstrate to O2 we meant what we said. Within minutes, the O2 senior project managers were building a compelling case for the O2 Academy, and embedding a strong New World thread across the whole of the PM community."

The transformation sought by O2 was to ensure that the project leaders had the courage and capability to step up and lead focussing on the softer skills which would allow them to involve stakeholders as an integral part of their teams without bamboozling them with 'project speak.' And above all, moving their mindset to see the change as an opportunity rather than a threat. In addition, it was crucial that the participants didn't let any biases towards specific project methodologies prevent them from applying the learning.

The course was designed according to Pentacle's *Learning to Transform* principle, which meant that there would be a focus on real-life projects and not on case examples, and that the participants would continue to apply what they had learnt in order to either transform themselves through development of personal style and skills or transform the performance of their projects or business units. The other design principle applied was *Learning Without Boundaries*, which meant creating frictionless and seamless support and challenge for participants back in the workplace, where ever they were on the planet. For this Pentacle proposed using QUBE instead of a more traditional on-line e-learning solution.

“It was like being given the exam answers before the test and being able to predict the future...”

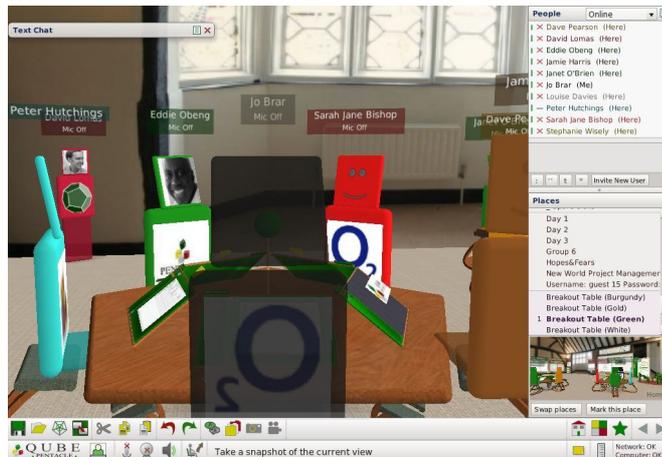
Before the face-to-face course, participants would complete quizzes on themselves and a HealthCheck on their existing project in order to highlight the areas to develop and focus on. The three-day face-to-face course involved simulations, presentations by participants, videoed exercises and much more, and was designed to really challenge the programme and project management capabilities of the participants. “The course was a breath of fresh air, leading to a few eureka moments. It also gave me a strong desire to support the aim of keeping the flame alive within the PM community.” said Devon Scott.

The learning was provided in bite-sized tools called PETs (Performance Enhancement Tools) rather than as a fixed methodology, meaning that they could be used with existing methodologies in the organisation as well as making them applicable to all project types, from ambiguous '**Lost in the Fog**' ones to challenging

'**Going on a Quest**' ones right the way down to detailed and complicated '**Painting by Numbers**'.



After the face-to-face session participants were given access to a *qubicle* (online space) containing all the flipcharts, exercises and learning materials. In addition, a regular weekly drumbeat workshop was set up for an increasing number of alumni in a separate *qubicle* where participants could meet each other and the tutors in order to get new learning or clarification and also share what they had done in their projects to make a difference.



The first course was attended by Bridget Connell, programme director at O2, in order to demonstrate the management commitment to the process. Many of the participants took on the role of **PET Champions** (a person who had mastered the solution to a particular project problem and could coach colleagues).

Getting QUBE up and running was an initial challenge, but once the firewalls had been sorted out the bigger challenge was to get through the mindset wall for many participants that “you go away on a course and then you go back to work”. Slowly, people started to realise that learning should be without boundaries, and also that by sharing with colleagues in a community and periodically meeting tutors, their performance at work though the application of the

learning could be ensured. Some participants have used support on QUBE to significantly improve their performance and that of their projects. "Although the PETs were introduced to us in a Project Management environment, I've quickly seen that the techniques apply to many other areas as well," said Steve Henderson. "I've used them in general management to prepare for meetings and difficult conversations, and also in leadership situations including 1:1s and mentoring. To me the PETs and QUBE environment provide a set of ingredients that help to develop a manager's recipe for leadership." Billy Johnston added: "Using the PETs is like adding the yeast to the dough. They provide the small additive gains throughout the project to make the process rise to the challenge."



Toby Scott of Pentacle, together with Michael Anaman, David Lomas and Eddie Obeng, spent over 80 hours on QUBE, looking in detail at what keeps O2 project managers awake at night. Ken Dore said: "This was a life changing experience. It was like being given the exam answers before the test and being able to predict the future - delivering successfully in a fast moving world just became a lot easier...."

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Topics included: picking up projects mid-stream, accelerating projects without impacting quality, working with underperforming vendors and dealing with tricky stakeholders. During these sessions the PjMs created route maps using Pentacle tools to navigate their way successfully through these issues, leaving them with insights to apply immediately to their real life projects.

By the time of the fourth cohort, the New World Project Management approach was beginning to infiltrate the psyche and culture of the organisation with project groups using **Here2There** for their reviews, **GapLeap** to ensure that only projects with great business cases are being pursued, **TimeRevers** in action for catching up on late-running projects and many more meetings starting with **Hopes&Fears**. Jo Howard said: "The initial fear of what the New World was about was quickly quashed through using Pentacle's PETs and QUBE. It's given me the confidence to tackle situations differently where I find myself saying 'I know just the PET for that' and often linking many together to support achieving the right result."



Susan O'Dea said: "I'm loving New World Project Management. I came off the course to find a major decision had been made which would impact the mood of my team for the third time in as many months, but we had to remain focussed to ensure that we carried out further investigations to a tight deadline. I immediately introduced the 'Mood-O-Gram' to the team, followed by 'Hopes&Fears', which injected an element of fun, raised the mood, and allowed everyone to express concerns. I recently handed over a programme of work where we utilised 'Here2There' and 'StakeholderGrids' and was blown away by how easy it seemed to make our handover - incredible. Proving once again to be a substantial time saver."

"The O2 New World Projects courses achieved the overall goal of injecting some fresh thinking and new possibilities into our PM community," said Michael Mouldsley. "We've seen increases in performance, confidence, capability and motivation across the project managers. We've reached the point where the New World techniques and language are common currency among the PMs and they are spreading the techniques across the organisation." Michael Anaman

of Pentacle, who was also responsible for the working relationship, added: "We wanted to instil new behaviours that matched the vibrancy of the O2 brand and equipped project managers to tackle the challenges ahead with renewed confidence, and I'm pleased that we have been able to achieve this."

Commenting on the success of the working partnership with Pentacle, Sarah Craig points out: "The journey has only just begun, but we have the start of a virtual community to drive our success in programme and project management further."