

CASE STUDY

**> PRINCE2 AGILE:
BALANCING
PROJECT AGILITY
AND GOVERNANCE
AT SALAM TELECOM**

BACKGROUND

Salam Telecom Company (Salam) is one of the leading businesses in the Saudi Arabian telecommunications and information technology market.

Its solutions include broadband internet, network connectivity, cloud services, managed services, cyber security and satellite communications for a variety of sectors including government, business, carriers and operators and consumers.

Competition posed by more mature organisations in the Saudi Arabian market meant that Salam needed to continually improve its customer experience to win customers and build trust in the company's services.

Therefore, projects to deliver new capabilities, improvements and ultimately value needed greater focus and a standardised approach that would combine effective project management governance and control with agile delivery methods.

The organisation's enterprise project management office (EPMO) selected project management standards from internationally recognized professional bodies such as PeopleCert and PMI, covering different delivery methodologies including agile, waterfall and hybrid approaches. PRINCE2 Agile was one of the methods used to support this transformation, particularly where structured governance needed to be combined with agile delivery practices.

CHALLENGE

Projects and programmes within Salam to deliver strategic ICT and digital solutions needed to happen faster.

As both a business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) service provider, the company was more mature in its B2B services area. Therefore, it became a priority to provide better B2C customer experience by enhancing transformation in this area.

For example, improving the digital journey – including greater automation – was necessary to enhance the consumer experience in, for example, activating services, managing customer complaints and ticketing.

The company's enterprise project management office (EPMO) was established in 2019 with the purpose of standardising projects, programmes and portfolios. This was about creating a common governance model, greater consistency in project handover from vendors, enhancing risk management, communication and facilitating more unified ways of reporting. This also included co-operation with one of the major international consulting firms to assist in managing projects.

A previously manual approach to managing projects was then replaced by moving to tool-based management, though this generated mixed results. Shifting to a customised version of the Jira tool, tailored for use in projects and connected to another tool for live reporting dashboards, was a way of trying to connect project activity to the strategic goals of the organisation.

However, a reluctance to communicate and coordinate effectively between business and technical teams remained a challenge.

Hozaiifa Elebdelah – Senior EPMO Manager, Salam – said: “We knew that major benefits could be achieved by solving problems collaboratively. Therefore, we needed to create an environment where faster and more effective communication was encouraged.”

OBJECTIVE

The overarching goal was to enhance Salam's program and project delivery capability by:

Delivering solutions faster

Enhancing B2C customer experience by improving the digital journey

Embedding common governance

Improving vendor handover of projects

Strengthening risk management

The EPMO identified a structured approach for managing agile projects that integrates governance with agile delivery practices. For example, when collaborating with a major software vendor, the final shape of a product to be delivered by a project was not always clear from the outset.

Therefore, it was important to adopt a method that would support an agile and iterative product development approach and keep the door open to develop the most optimum products for network solutions.

“We found that PRINCE2 Agile enabled critical thinking. For example, making us better at identifying potential risks and encouraging people to think critically, even for simple tasks.”

Hozaifa Elebdelah - Senior EPMO Manager, Salam



SOLUTION

The adoption of this approach was intended to accelerate solution development and respond faster to customer and market needs. Some specific techniques and concepts from the method that the company found useful included:

Fixed constraints with flexible scope

In several projects, Salam applied an approach in which key delivery constraints such as time and cost were fixed, while allowing flexibility in scope and backlog prioritization. This enabled teams to maintain delivery timelines for customer-facing enhancements while adapting features based on evolving business priorities and customer needs.

Stage boundaries with decision points.

These were valuable because they provided structured control over agile delivery. They ensured alignment with business priorities, enabled faster and clearer decision-making, reduced risk and rework, improved vendor coordination and gave executives transparent checkpoints to review progress. This balance of governance and flexibility was essential for Salam's project success.

The agile product backlog

Using a prioritised product backlog to define sprint activities enabled better decision-making and a faster response to changing customer and business requirements. Prioritising features based on business value and feasibility allowed teams to deliver improvements in incremental releases, reduce rework, and make more informed, data-driven decisions about development priorities.

Clear roles, ownership and responsibilities across all stages.

PRINCE2 Agile's clear definition of roles principle, ownership and responsibilities across all project stages helped improve coordination between business teams, vendors and delivery teams. Establishing clear accountability for planning, delivery, risk management and reporting strengthened governance of vendor-led projects and improved decision-making and delivery predictability.

Rich communication (workshops, visualisation, task boards)

To overcome coordination challenges, Salam used:

- visual boards in Jira,
- sprint-based planning workshops,
- structured discussions facilitated by the EPMO.

This supported shared understanding and reduced communication gaps.

Governance

While project management was handled most often by external vendors, Salam's EPMO concentrated on overall governance.

Agile governance was guided through practices such as:

- Risk management (including risk analysis, mitigation plan and frequent updates reviewing).
- Quality (clear definitions of "done")
- Progress (regular checkpoints and dashboards)

This helped Salam maintain strong control during agile delivery. The approach also strengthened governance by providing clear roles, defined stage-boundary control points, improved vendor coordination, structured reporting and better risk and issue management.

Incorporating PRINCE2 Agile concepts, the method's tolerance-based approach ('fix and flex') helped maintain predictable oversight while allowing agile flexibility. This combination of control and adaptability was essential for managing Salam's complex ICT and digital projects.

RESULTS AND METRICS

The adoption of this approach enabled project teams to identify key results from an early stage in the project planning process, with key performance indicators (KPIs) agreed from the beginning and results measured before and after, for example, time to resolve improvements. This resulted in:

A. A more predictable and business-aligned project performance across Salam's ICT portfolio.

A project focused on improving fault management enabled operations teams to reduce mean time to resolution (MTTR) by approximately 15% and improve incident visibility across network operations through more structured monitoring and reporting

B. Deployment of integrated dashboards enabling executives to monitor progress, risks and financial health in real time

Part of the EPMO's function is to enhance transparency to the executive level.

Therefore, the project management and governance approach enabled Salam to deliver a reporting dashboard that updates every 24 hours, provides information in real time and is based on the ability to manage and organise raw data.

This now means the executive can observe and highlight specific risks and issues and, consequently, can communicate in a clearer, more seamless and direct way with the risk owner. Automated emails help to speed up risk and issue resolution which has increased the recognition of risk in projects and improved performance.

C. Improved on-time delivery and budget performance across critical projects and programmes

Before adopting PRINCE2 Agile, on-time project delivery across Salam's portfolio was typically below 50%. Following adoption, this improved to 70%, reflecting a significant increase in delivery predictability and schedule control.

EPMO specialists take responsibility for the governance-related deliverables — such as planning quality, risk and issue escalation, stage-boundary reviews and accurate reporting.

By ensuring these controls are consistently applied, they help remove blockers early, support timely decision-making and increase the likelihood of on-time delivery. And this is supported by a timeline which shows whether any risks or issues will affect a project's delivery date and allows clearer and more transparent communication with key stakeholders.

D. Enhanced stakeholder confidence and decision-making through structured reporting and governance

The governance model for each project and programme now includes weekly and monthly meetings with the project sponsor plus stakeholders to review projects and share reports on a regular basis.

E. Stronger collaboration between business leaders and delivery teams

The previous attitude to projects within the organisation tended to resist a standardised project management approach. Today, and especially when projects are likely to be complex to manage, the organisation defers to the expertise of the EPMO.

This recognition of the EPMO's role has been gained by increasing the confidence of people across the organisation in the benefits of working with a standardised approach to manage projects and to build products that are necessary to deliver value to the business.

F. Salam is now executing major projects and programmes with greater agility, transparency, control – directly supporting its role as a leading digital and connectivity provider in Saudi Arabia.

The EPMO now has an organisational mandate to assess and identify skills gaps to build project management excellence – based on a formal project management method – among teams in each department

Hozaifa Elebdelah – Senior EPMO Manager, Salam – said: “The executive team has seen the difference achieved with the involvement of the EPMO and project management standardisation; tracking and tackling risks and issues, while sharing best practice knowledge to help implement standards across other departments.

For example, the EPMO is now translating human resources (HR) initiatives into properly-managed projects that will deliver change and meet the requirements of the executive team.”.

“PRINCE2 Agile was a very helpful reference in building our project governance framework and strengthening the way projects are structured and managed across the organization.”

Hozaifa Elebdelah - Senior EPMO Manager, Salam

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