

Practice for Profit

Business change

Norwich Union Life, along with the other parts of Norwich Union – Norwich Union Insurance and the RAC – is part of Aviva, the UK's largest and the world's fifth largest insurance group.

In 2005, Norwich Union Life IT, in partnership with IBM Human Capital management, began a process of transformation with the aim of building customer satisfaction and profitability to new levels of excellence.

Effective use of IT had been recognised as critical to business success, so the IT function in Norwich Union Life needed to make a more significant contribution. The operating environment is large & complex: NU Life's 850 IT professionals, 250 contractors and 600 global sourcing resources support the 10,000 users of 100 mission-critical systems as they deliver service in 10 key product lines (such as mortgage, healthcare, long term savings, pensions) to 5.5 million customers.

Obstacles

To support the business goals, IT needed to resolve some issues. There was a lack of consistency of approach, with no defined standards for "how we do things". A focus on delivery rather than more rounded people meant that opportunities were often taken by outside contractors, leading to low staff satisfaction. With little emphasis on skills, and no career framework, the approach to performance management and reward did not support the high performance culture that was now needed. A major change was required.

The new model

To enable and drive the change a new operating model was conceived, designed to fulfil the requirement to deliver service, whilst making skills management play a full part, ensuring skills were available for the future.

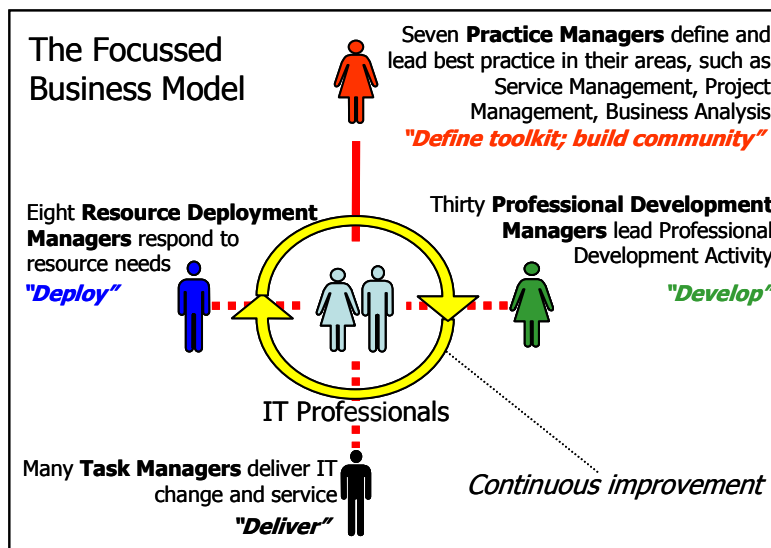
The model was a key driver in the achievement of the vision:

People – motivated, effective, fulfilled; continuously enhancing their capabilities.

Environment – attracting, empowering, and supporting professional development.

Professional Development Team – mature, progressive, professional and trusted, acknowledged as contributing to the success of the business.

To turn the model into a working operation, a programme with several work streams was initiated: Performance Management and Reward, Resourcing, Ways of Working, Development Framework (including Careers and Skills programme), Talent Strategy, Engagement Strategy, Community, Leadership, Professional Development Manager Development, Process Improvement.



Development framework – including Careers & Skills Programme

The Careers & Skills programme is a key part of the whole Development Framework. Its foundation is the definition of professional roles in each Practice. These are documented in Role Profiles.

These definitions, including role purpose, SFIA skills, core behavioural competencies and technical knowledge are embedded in NUL's chosen Skills Management tool, InfoBasis Enterprise Skills Manager (ESM). The IT professionals assess themselves against defined targets. Their assessments are moderated by the Practice in whose virtual community they are located, and confirmed in one-to-one interviews with Professional Development Managers. Their development plans are then updated according to their needs.

In addition to individuals' needs, the organisation's overall priorities for development can be built into the processes. This is achieved by the ESM tool's extensive operational reporting of skills needs and developments. A gap in an individual's profile or a general gap in a community such as Business Analysis can be recognised and acted on. ESM's reporting then tracks progress made towards resolution. The reporting also identifies strengths that can be exploited.

The reporting system is therefore the "handle", providing information that allows management to have control of the development processes.

Summary

This effort is completely transforming the whole IT operation in Norwich Union Life, considerably enhancing its reputation among senior management and staff.

The positive tension established by the Focussed Business Model is regarded as fundamental to the transformation. The successes have already created an environment where delivery and development are seen to be compatible.

The impact on capability and motivation fully justifies the efforts devoted to this change.

"The proof of the pudding is in the eating. We now control our learning and development investment to focus on the right skills; development is business-aligned. Other parts of Norwich Union now want what we've got.

"A proper definition of skills is a vital part of this change.

"My advice to anyone embarking on this kind of change is: get the business model right; establish the change as a formal programme with senior management commitment; include SFIA in your plans; have a dashboard of Critical Success Factors; engage the whole community. And what are you waiting for?"

**Paul Briggs, Head of Practices and Skills
Norwich Union Life**

Achievements

Performance management: all people have objectives and development plans; performance is measured objectively, identifying high and low. Groundbreaking – coverage and quality

Communication: 'Team-talk' is a major force in enabling the leadership to get its message out, breaking down barriers and achieving consistency and timeliness

Talent Management is running well at senior levels, and has started at middle levels; this is a real foundation for the future

Career Progression: there is strong momentum with significant numbers of people promoted over the last several months. Staff reaction is excellent because people can see a way forward in their careers.

Community: Everyone is in one of the seven Practices, all of which are active. There are boards; forums and institutes. Their staff have engaged with this – it is a real success story.

Career paths are defined; competencies and skills are assessed, and the information is being used.

Knowledge: People are sharing – there are always lots of volunteers for initiatives, coaching and mentoring. The silos have gone.

QMS Processes: This was a challenge but people have really risen to it. The breakthrough is that people see benefits

Infrastructure: there is a well developed management system that plans, manages and delivers. Having quality plumbing – enables the right focus