Effort to Benefit: A parable on *Purpose*

Eddie Obeng

It's been a while since you've seen each other but it's great to have some time and a few drinks with one of the few people who have known you since before you had the keys to the front door of your parent's house. It's also been a while since they made their transition to the C suite and finally to the top job. So this isn't just a catch up and gossip, "Do you know what happened to ..?" "Guess who I met in a market in Morocco…" and so on but a chance to talk about life and work.

You get to go first. You ramble on about the pressures of delivery and the lack of resource. Moan about a couple of your team members and a particularly troublesome but essential contractor. Now it's your turn to listen.

Your friend begins "They just don't get it. I'll tell you two stories and you tell me if it's me that's mad or them." You nod supportively.

"As you know I've just taken over a new division and it's unbelievable what I've found. The first thing I unearthed was a huge project. They'd called it TeleHealthy. Over the previous 3 years they'd spent a small fortune on a concept. The concept was that with more mobile devices coming online a multi billion pound business could be created. The design was an 'all or nothing' affair, the entire platform had to be developed before we could sell subscriptions. This is not uncommon for this type of application. The project has been hailed as a success, it delivered on time to budget and with the specifications intact. But so far, after spending millions we have seven subscribers paying us £75 per year. How did we get the business case so badly wrong? How did we not notice that we were developing from a hunch not an insight"?

"And another one in this one we were trying to be modern and trendy. Admittedly the brief was a bit unclear but in that market because of the pace of change, it was always going to be. The previous CIO had decided to adopt an agile approach without much understanding. He was absolutely delighted with progress – gone was the old way of doing things where there was no outcome, nothing to see until you discovered that there really was 'nothing to see' now he had updates deliverables. But in their haste they managed to create a package which was un-testable. But they rolled it out anyway – saying that the early adopter customers would help them to identify the bugs and that they had created a large team for rapid bug fixing and applying patches."

"Three months later not only had the customers not had any real benefits from the offer. The problems, complaints negative tweets and so on had so damaged to the reputation of the business that sales in all other products had declined by 10%!"

*You shake your head in empathy. Yes there really is something not-quite-right. It's something to do with remembering **why** we initiated the change in the first place. Something about looking beyond the effort of the project, looking all the way from the reason why the project was begun all the way through the project's lifecycle, to the benefits which would be delivered. That is the **complete** project.*

In a world where every project succeeds we need to redefine projects to not only include the effort but also to include the benefits we are after. We need to extend our projects even earlier to the wisdom in the spark of the ideas which give rise to the initiative behind them and widen them to consider the wider collateral damage they can cause

If learning more about this is of interest to you join us for Conference: ZERO on the 17th of October and look out for the sessions on Purpose

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