



Assistance Needed, Stat: Company Specializing in Hospital Communications Gets a Project Portfolio Prescription

Successful companies are constantly fine-tuning existing products and planning new ones. But even the most ambitious businesses can suffer when critical projects get backed up in the pipeline. Management at Chicago-based Rauland-Borg Corporation realized its good intentions were being subverted by the lack of effective project portfolio management (PPM), and decided to do something about it.

If you've ever been treated in a hospital, you've encountered a Rauland-Borg product. The 70-year-old company is a leader in critical communications, safety, and workflow solutions for hospitals and schools worldwide, most notably Responder® nurse call systems.

Although the company has achieved years of success and exceptional growth, bottlenecks in its project pipeline were holding it back. Several new products languished in development, while others were behind schedule and over budget. Management had trouble determining which projects should have "top priority," which led to ineffective execution and a constant need for project escalation. Worse, the delays and confusion were creating a tense atmosphere among functional departments.

The company turned to Integrated Project Management Company, Inc. (IPM) for help. IPM had worked with Rauland-Borg in the past by spearheading complex development projects.

To tackle the issues, IPM focused on the company's Office of Project Management (OPM) with a four-step approach:

- » **Assessment:** Aligning with company strategy, collecting and analyzing data, and prioritizing recommendations
- » **Customization:** Tailoring tools and processes, customizing framework, and ensuring framework buy-in
- » **Implementation:** Conducting training, introducing change management, and establishing success metrics
- » **Sustainability:** Auditing performance, coaching and mentoring, and measuring performance and progress

DEFINING THE ISSUES

IPM compiled a team of its experts in the life sciences industry, specifically regulatory, quality, and PPM, to assist in the transformation. This team worked closely with Rauland-Borg stakeholders, including Larry Ball, Senior Vice President of Corporate Development, to pinpoint trouble areas through a detailed PPM assessment, including a survey, individual and team interviews, project deep dives, and process reviews.

This information revealed that project managers functioned more like project administrators, and there was a lack of com-



munication and accountability, with little understanding of the dependencies between projects.

Leveraging its previous experience and knowledge of the company's organization and culture, IPM developed a customized approach to implementing operational improvements and identified solutions to the inherent change management challenges.

TEAMING UP FOR A SOLUTION

To improve project prioritization and decision-making, IPM formalized communication with executives and the team about schedule and functional resource constraints within the portfolio of development projects. IPM also introduced formal risk management on several complex product development and manufacturing projects to collaboratively assess probability and impact and develop comprehensive mitigation plans.

But the real challenge involved tackling communication conflicts between the teams. With support from Rauland-Borg management, IPM focused on nurturing open and accessible leadership, both within large teams and through one-on-one relationship building. Leadership and "soft skills" coaching within the project teams encouraged transparency and built trust over time. Through selective hiring and training of the permanent PMO staff, a new director and project managers further fostered positive change.

The result of these collaborative team efforts translated to the following improvements:

- » Improved communication and transparency with directors and executives and integrated project scheduling for predictable project end dates. Monthly project portfolio management reviews with the executive management team on project status, resource strategies, issue escalation, and risk management provided executives with critical information for better project prioritization and improved decision-making.
- » Introduced best practices with 25 tailored tools, including project schedule templates, stage gate reviews, dashboards, portfolio analysis, staff forecasting, change management forms, risk management tools, and a PM Playbook. This resulted in a 50 percent increase in the number of projects—including nine complex medical

"IPM had the difficult task of implementing change in a company culture where change happens very slowly. IPM did a very good job of prioritizing changes and driving implementation of the changes at a pace that the company could absorb.

"I was very pleased with IPM's performance on this project. The IPM consultant did a good job of understanding the deliverables that I had specified and moving us toward the successful completion of the project. All in all, I was very pleased with the experience and I would not hesitate to engage IPM again."

~ Larry Ball, Senior Vice President of Corporate Development, Rauland-Borg Corp.

device development projects—all meeting their established schedules and budgets.

- » Designed and implemented a new production line on time and budget, using the new OPM tools and templates to highlight the benefits of professional project management, resulting in a projected 30 percent increase in manufacturing capacity.
- » Used the new governance structure and formal risk management to recognize a lack of subject matter expertise on an important new FDA regulation. IPM provided supplemental expertise to lead process mapping and develop an action plan to ensure compliance success.

The shift to a more process-oriented system and the elimination of silos led to decreased tension and a more collaborative atmosphere—which ultimately resulted in operational performance improvements and a more positive corporate culture. While these improvements are investments in the future, Rauland-Borg is already seeing an impact. The OPM is leading more projects than a year ago and professional project management techniques are being applied in other areas, including regulatory, manufacturing, HR, and management information systems.

The team learned that true change management was a matter of consistent, repetitive use of project management leadership, communication, processes, and tools—and that the process is often made easier with help from outside the organization. ■