

# Client-Centered Project Management: Adapting Tools to Accelerate Adoption

## Situation:

Execute a vital project for our client, while equipping the organization with skills and tools to action future initiatives autonomously.

Our social services client, with a solid 80-year history, asked us to assist with planning and execution of a project that would provide consistent and compelling stewardship across their constituent base. At the time, the client did not utilize project managers, so this was an opportunity to demonstrate how to execute a project, from start to finish, applying the principles of project management. With a tight deadline approaching, we rapidly formed a cross functional team to scope the project.

Understanding from our client that much of the staff was not experienced with the disciplines of project management, we had to thoughtfully craft our approach. We knew our style to managing, communicating, and executing the project would need to fit our client's comfort level and operating environment, while instilling the five essential elements of project management: discovery, definition, development, delivery, and closure.

## Stanton Blackwell's Role:

Execute the appointed project while instilling the basic concepts and tools of project management to the organization.

As we introduced the project life cycle to our client, we opted not to immediately launch with a rigid process, new software program, or extensive documentation. We took a different approach. We defined the work breakdown structure and outlined each project milestone with the cross functional team, utilizing software they were already comfortable using. We implemented commonly used traffic light graphics to visually display within the plan where there were risks and issues, decisions to be made, and timeline delays. We also conducted regular, in-depth cross functional team meetings to openly discuss the components of the project and to hold each other accountable. There were bumps along the road, but the team implemented the new process for consistent stewardship across their constituent base in time to impact the following fiscal year. Taking this simple, low-key approach put the team at ease and helped them to build trust. They remained open to the fundamentals of project management and in fact, asked for more.

## Result:

A newly established Project Management Office.

With a new CEO, the client undertook a strategic transformation and we witnessed a surge of new projects. As expected, resource constraints in the organization became apparent and the need for a dedicated Project Management Office was clear. Budgets were tight but the staffing of the internal PMO received little resistance. Our focused approach with the project management methodologies built both credibility and champions across the organization. When the PMO was announced, project leaders were lining up to benefit from the more structured approach to execution. We took the client from having modest project management capabilities to a full understanding of the discipline. The client was now equipped with a variety of tools to execute according to project complexity. Six months later, over 30 projects were scoped, prioritized and governed by the newly formed team and the leader of the PMO had a vital role at the leadership table.



**Contributor: Catherine Sisley**

Catherine offers Stanton Blackwell's clients extensive experience in product, brand, and project management. She leads with empathy and strives to be innovative, delivering the best solution and user experience based on a client's unique needs.

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## SIB About Stanton Blackwell

Stanton Blackwell is an advisory firm dedicated to the middle market and mission-based sectors. Our professionals provide operational and financial consulting, as well as leadership development, to address issues of business planning, capital adequacy, scalability and efficiency. We work closely with our clients to adapt to an increasingly complex operating environment and to enhance impact and business value.

Please visit our website [www.stantonblackwell.com](http://www.stantonblackwell.com) for more information.

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