

AstraZeneca Creates a Culture of Agility and Innovation

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A cultural transformation is helping us push the boundaries of science to make a difference for millions of patients across the globe. In 2013, the first foundational step was taken to help AstraZeneca (AZ), a global, science-led biopharmaceutical business employing 59,700 employees worldwide, become a leader in our core disease areas. This transformation is allowing us to respond to new challenges and opportunities, and increase the levels of scientific innovation. In short, we are becoming a more agile organization.

Our journey is a substantial break with traditional corporate culture. To achieve our goal, we defined five key AstraZeneca project management values:

1. Customer Focus
2. Technical Leadership
3. Operational Excellence
4. Collaboration
5. Simplicity



Roadmap to Agility

These key organizational values drove our work and, in 2013, we launched our efforts (see Figure 1). We began by creating a centralized project management organization (PMO) to build project management capabilities; identifying key business process, which includes baselining; and establishing reporting. In 2015, we expanded the scope to include culture of global working, enterprise project management tools, automated portfolio views, capacity management revamp, decision making framework, option planning capabilities, leadership, portfolio management, project and portfolio risk management, and sharpened communication.

The journey brings us to our current state of establishing project management excellence, including:

- Project naming conventions
- Project plan visualization
- Reporting platforms and quality
- Facilitation and collaboration
- Framework prioritization
- Portfolio and information management demand responsiveness

- Capacity management at functional level

IMED OPERATIONS
PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Delivery of industry leading pipeline progression

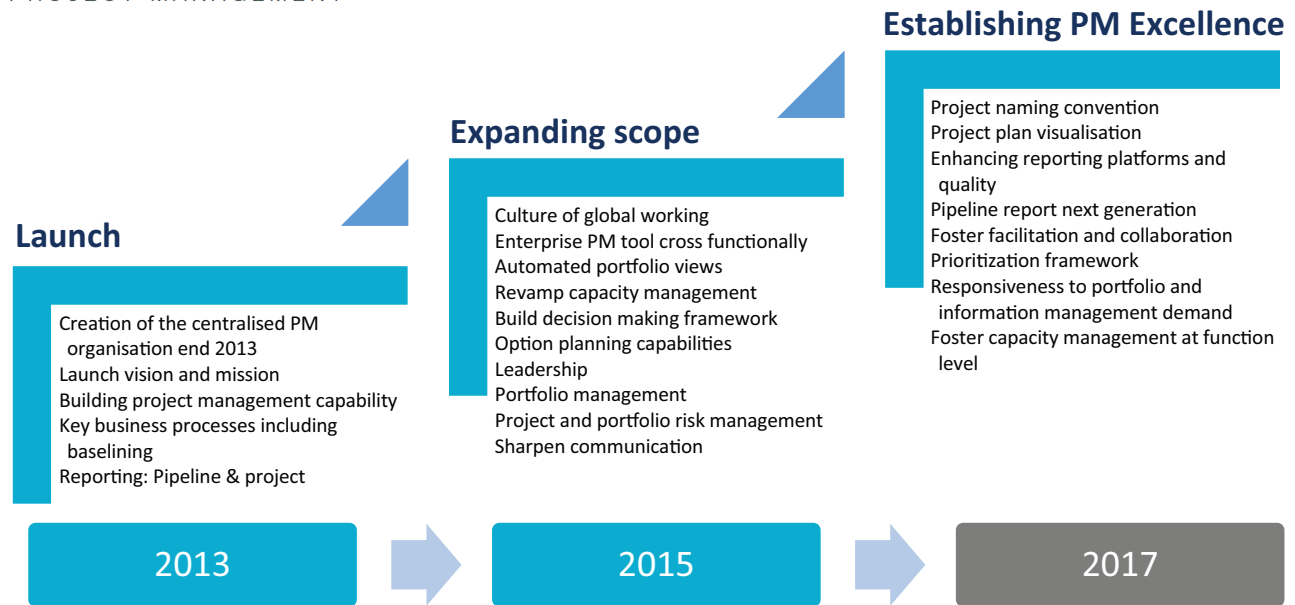


Figure 1: Roadmap to agility

Project Delivery

In AZ, the early stage of drug development—known as Innovative Medicines & Early Development (IMED)—consists of four business units (disease areas) accountable for driving the initial phases of medicines development. The drug project management function leads and drives cross-functional teams to deliver projects to cost, time and quality while fulfilling strict regulatory requirements.

The IMED operations PMO was initiated with the vision that it would serve as a separate, PMO-like support function. The goal was to facilitate and drive drug project delivery and informed decision making on early drug projects and portfolio across the organization. In IMED, the transition to a new, more agile way of working meant we needed to ensure:

- Aligned governance processes
- Effective project management
- Clear principles for decision making
- Consistent approaches to the management of information across teams and between regions

Governance

Due to geographical spread and the various local business processes used by the business units (disease areas), different operating procedures were employed. To increase efficiency and agility, critical business processes were identified and aligned. This included baselining approved project plans to ensure the principles included criteria for tolerances (on time and cost), transparency of critical governance questions/ dimensions (called the 5 R’s framework^{1,2}), status reporting and escalation routes. We also established clear expectations for the governance teams and their communications path.

Capacity planning lacked transparency of project and portfolio information, and caused frustration and misalignment resulting in poor resource utilization both globally and locally. As a result, a project capacity and review team was created. The team was responsible to more efficiently review and manage cross-functional capacity worldwide across IMED projects and business units.

By leveraging transparent project and portfolio information, the global team proactively manages capacity changes to escalate any issues. This model has enabled a global, strategic

capacity planning process across the organization and between supporting functions.

Information Management Capabilities

Traditionally, information management within our drug projects was resource-consuming, slow and strictly controlled. A lot of focus and effort was placed on archiving processes and structures that followed local, traditional principles and understanding. The transparency within the organization of data and information was extremely poor and became even more complicated when external partners were engaged (e.g. during AZ’s many collaborations and alliances).

At a project level, information management translated into extensive and duplicated project team documentation (e.g. meeting minutes, decision logs, minutes log, action log). Knowledge sharing processes were established to give project teams the full history of the science behind the project.

Becoming more agile and responsive meant moving from a long-standing, inefficient approach to a more collaborative and trusting culture driven by opportunities and innovation, where good information management is key. Transparency of information had to be increased internally as well as with our external collaborator and partners. This required improved collaboration platforms that enabled easy sharing of information while still meeting the strict legal requirements surrounding drug development.

In an agile organization, mobility of project team representatives is high, and the need for rapid onboarding is critical. Drug project teams adopted consistent approaches and tools for capturing and sharing project team minutes in near real-time. A pre-set format enabled project team members to quickly consume project information and facilitated active participation. Increased transparency also saved time, especially with our external partners and collaborators.

A defined information management role was created as an integral part of the project team. This further promotes and facilitates the importance of storing, finding, re-using, sharing and protecting project information.

Project Management Capabilities

One of the initial steps in creating an agile and efficient drug PMO was to look into the “ideal profile” of a project manager (see Figure 2). Another important step was to understand what project management tools, processes and principles were essential project manager capabilities, both on an individual and organizational level. When assessing these capabilities, it was clear that a common platform and language were essential to the transformation. PMI’s Project Management Professional (PMP)[®] certification was chosen as one of the key foundational layers for the project management language now embedded in our drug project plans, processes and principles.



Delivery of industry leading pipeline progression



Figure 2: The constitution of project management excellence in the IMED

Demonstrating the value of project management was key to building trust across the organization. This trust translated to quality drug project and portfolio data which, in turn, produced quality information used for informed decision making.

The value of a consistent approach to project management allowed us to support forecasted costs from an organizational and project view. In addition, a common tool set based on the existing enterprise project management tool was employed. Key deliverables, such as aligning the projects within the IMED portfolio and ensuring governance agreed project plans, completed the picture.

The impact of harmonizing the visualization of project plans (content and look and feel), particularly for discussions with governance, was significant. Comparison between projects and fast orientation to key project activities made it easier for governance members to facilitate decision making. In addition, alignment of monthly project reporting across the portfolio and business units (including AZ-wide agreed naming conventions) drove consistent messaging and status reporting on projects, satisfying key stakeholder needs.

Creating an agile organization has established a deeper understanding of the different project environments and the potential challenges that a project manager could face. Adopting a knowledge-sharing culture has been essential. Together, norms and principles could be discussed, negotiated and agreed upon, encouraging a strong sense of belonging within the organization.

Through engagement and inclusion of project managers to identify smart and efficient processes, as well as ways of working work, our project management approach is continuously improving with specifically identified key areas such as risk management, planning and control.

When realistic but high standards are set and met, a sense of pride and robust performance is achievable. This is evidenced by the fact that the drug PMO and project managers are now internally recognized as confident and trusted partners on drug project teams, with a strong value proposition aligned directly to drug development. In addition, the same organization has been recognized for its project management capabilities within the industry and has consistently been able to attract great talent.

Value Delivered

Despite stringent regulatory requirements, innovative approaches and agile ways of working on drug projects have rapidly increased over the years with strong adoption across AZ, including at the project governance and organizational levels. Project teams are applying more agile information management approaches, which has translated to significant time savings. The agile mindset, when project planning and aligning budget principles and visualization across the business, strongly supports the right discussions.

The establishment of the PMO-like drug project management organization has been challenging but has showcased its value by facilitating AZ's decision making. As an example, in a resource-constrained environment, a significant budget challenge was rapidly addressed, leading to efficient management of the drug project portfolio by governance.

The team continues to excel, with more and more agile ways of working replacing high-stress reactive situations. We are still on the agile journey to lead value delivery in new ways, by improving output quality and maximizing time spent on science that delivers value to patients.

Reference:

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2. Morgan P, Brown D, Lennard S, Anderton M, Barrett J, Eriksson U, Fidock M, Hamrén B, Johnson A, March R, Matcham J, Mettetal J, Nicholls D, Platz S, Rees S, Snowden M, & Pangalos M. Impact of a five-dimensional framework on R&D productivity at AstraZeneca: *Nature Reviews Drug Discovery*, 1-15, Jan 2018



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For more information, please visit www.astrazeneca.com and follow us on Twitter [@AstraZeneca](https://twitter.com/AstraZeneca).



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