



CASE STUDY



ULTRA CONTROLS

Ultra Controls (part of Ultra Electronics Ltd) are specialists in supplying high integrity control systems to the aerospace industry.

The business provides electronic components to some of the largest aircraft and engine manufacturers in the world, such as Boeing, Airbus, Bombardier, Eurofighter, Rolls Royce, Gulfstream and Pratt & Whitney. Additionally, Ultra Controls supplies directly to both civil and military aircraft operators, including the United States Air Force.

The business employs over 180 staff and operates across two sites in the UK: an operations and support facility in Greenford, West London and a design and development facility in Cambridge.

Their 50 years of success within the aerospace industry results from their unique ability to deliver a complete product lifecycle. Delivering an initial design, along with sustainable development and support on all products has led to a global customer base, including Mitsubishi, Boeing (787), Lockheed Martin (Joint Strike Fighter), Embraer and Gulfstream.

CPS has been engaged with Ultra since April 2014 to identify issues and opportunities for improvement within the portfolio, programme, project management business system. This took the form of a current state assessment, engineering vision & strategy, practical consultancy services, tools, PMO resource provision and programme/ project management recruitment.

THE ISSUES

The first step towards identifying how CPS could assist Ultra Controls, was for our experts, to visit and conduct a Current State Assessment (CSA). The CSA enabled us to map out and understand how Ultra uniquely worked, in terms of people, processes and technology, whilst providing a comparison against best practice. Our team identified that whilst Ultra Controls had been extremely successful in their client and revenue growth, it had outgrown its programme and project controls.



The CSA concluded that Ultra Controls' growth needed to be managed sustainably, with streamlined processes put in place to ensure maintainable business practice could reach their foreseeable workload.



The capture and playback of current state achieved a number of things. It brought the current plan structure more sharply into focus, and clarified the level of planning that was happening, enabling discussion about what was really required. It reviewed the current capability level, and identified some areas for improvement and highlighted the need for more programme management people. The current process and governance regime was examined, with recommendation to recapture best practice lifecycle and to re-establish a drumbeat for status and control including project performance, resource management, and strategy implementation. It highlighted the issues resulting from having limited project support available. Finally, the revised information set needed for control was agreed, and the reporting requirements extrapolated, which led to the conclusion a common PPM toolset was required.



VISION AND STRATEGY – WHAT IS SUITABLE, ACHIEVABLE AND THE FIRST STEP?

With the business issues now captured and understood, it became essential for us to address the issues together and define a logical sequence of how to achieve a solution.

The CSA had enabled the CPS leadership team to reach consensus on the problems, and prioritise which items to address first. As a result, a simple 'vision' was prepared for Ultra Controls. This illustrated a realistic governance framework, work structure, lifecycle, process-set needed, capability, support roles and toolset required. In essence, the requirement was to change the organisation from being just reliant on the endeavours of very capable people to deliver success, to being one which was organised with the right culture to allow capable people to succeed more effectively.



CPS created a vision that completes a planning scenario serving:

- The Programme Director – with a simple view of the entire portfolio, using a plan driven from selected milestones in programme plans, they can examine programme, project and work package plans at any time: gaining visibility of the resource allocations required to complete this work.
- The Programme Manager – with a simple view of plans related to their own customer programme, driven from engineering plans.
- The ‘Head of PMO’ – with a virtual / consulting service role, that ensures a consistent view across the portfolio of all programme plans from a quality perspective.
- The Engineering Director – with a view of the engineering portfolio, resource constrained and integrated with programme plans.



Road-mapping a strategy of how to deliver the full solution, including people, processes, and technology, was vital. Phase 1 was created to put into place quick and necessary foundations, essential for easy adoption and minimal business disruption. Phase 2 was then to be a more detailed change.

Two phases were proposed: phase one focused on fundamental improvements, with a possible phase two created to address more difficult challenges, for example cost and schedule integration. As well as, long term improvements for staff members.



PHASE 1 – DELIVERY & CHANGE

Process, Governance and Lifecycle:

The CPS team ran workshops with engineering and projects staff to pull together a realistic, up to date project lifecycle. This was a critical first step because they had to make sure the right checks and balances could be planned into every project. A further workshop was then set up to help directors reposition their involvement, transitioning from an everyday intervention-based approach, to a more review-based way of working. A simple planning and control ‘drumbeat’ was setup to re-establish systematic monitoring and control.



Project Organisation and Role Definitions:

It was essential to identify the level of project support appropriate for the portfolio. To achieve this, CPS worked with Ultra Controls to deliver project support roles and responsibilities, whilst also supporting them in finding interim people to initiate the service level, and permanent people to sustain the change.

People:

Adding capacity to the programme delivery team was a key element in sustaining change. By employing CPS' 'Assessment Centre' approach, Ultra Controls were able to recruit two programme managers, based on roles already developed within the roadmap, with the exact skill sets and personality profiles required.



Tools:

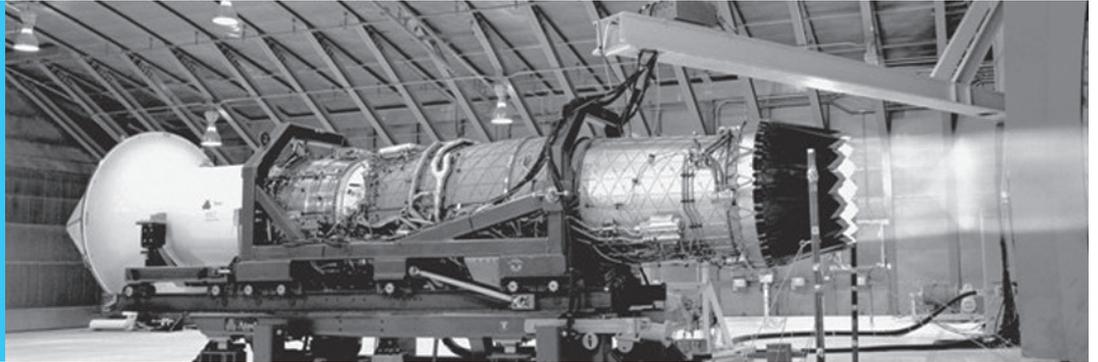
Previously, Ultra's reporting capabilities had been slow, with out-of-date processes producing information which wasn't good enough to influence effective decision making. It became apparent that the best way to deliver performance and resource reporting was going to be a PPM starter, based in Microsoft SharePoint. CPS supplied and configured PS+. PS+, an out-of-the box Microsoft PPM solution, enabled full visibility of Ultra Controls' portfolio from one dashboard, a 360 degree view of resource demand vs. supply and efficient delivery of project information, from issues and risk management through to cost status.

Support and Assurance:

With 20 years of experience, we recognise that business change is not equal to an organisation having transformation 'done to it'. To achieve and benefit from sustainable business change the leadership team should always define and drive improvement.

Our CPS team did not sit at the core of Ultra Controls' working transformation, but instead supported from the sidelines: resourcing the work needed, providing expert advice to their Programmes Director, helping set the right direction, and keeping the change on track and balanced with other day-to-day priorities.

THE BENEFITS



Exactly a year after first talking to David Dunning and his team back in April 2014, Ultra Controls has now completed Phase 1, all of its work into a common environment, and is now able to visualise its overall cost profile and resource demands. The business has reworked and prioritised its portfolio into a resource achievable set of timescales. Ultra Controls also now have a management data model, allowing for close control of its health state without the need of constant oversight or intervention.

A clear governance framework has been designed to support strategic leadership and operational performance management. This is empowered by the use of new and innovative project technology: PS+, an investment in project support, and improved programme management capacity.

Outcomes include:

- Good realisation of current state, and buy-in to the vision and change process.
- Refreshed core lifecycle, processes and standards: seeding a formal control cycle and governance regime.
- Clear roles and responsibilities.
- Realistic, usable processes and standards have been created and implemented: 'wheel reinvention' will no longer be required.
- A PMO to support programme / project managers, an engineering manager, the provision of two planners, and part-time assurance support.
- Fast and reliable recruitment of capable staff.
- A Project Server solution built on best practice, to hold the data model for programmes, projects, resources, costs, issues, risks and changes.
- An automated, up-to-date, reliable delivery method of reporting, used to support the controlling of projects.
- The executive's ability to finally trust delivery estimation and performance within the business.



TALK TO US TODAY!

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