

**“Higher-level process theory motors of
Strategic Information Systems (SIS) alignment:
an exploratory study”**

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Appendix:

**Detailed images of the relevant process motor diagrams
analysed in Chapter 8:**

- **Figure 8.68: Project blueprinting: identified event progression mechanisms.**
- **Figure 8.74: Project Realisation: identified event progression mechanisms.**
- **Figure 8.81: Transition and final preparation: identified event progression mechanisms.**

Research Audit File:

Semi-structured interview transcripts.

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Figure 8.68: Project blueprinting: identified event progression mechanisms.

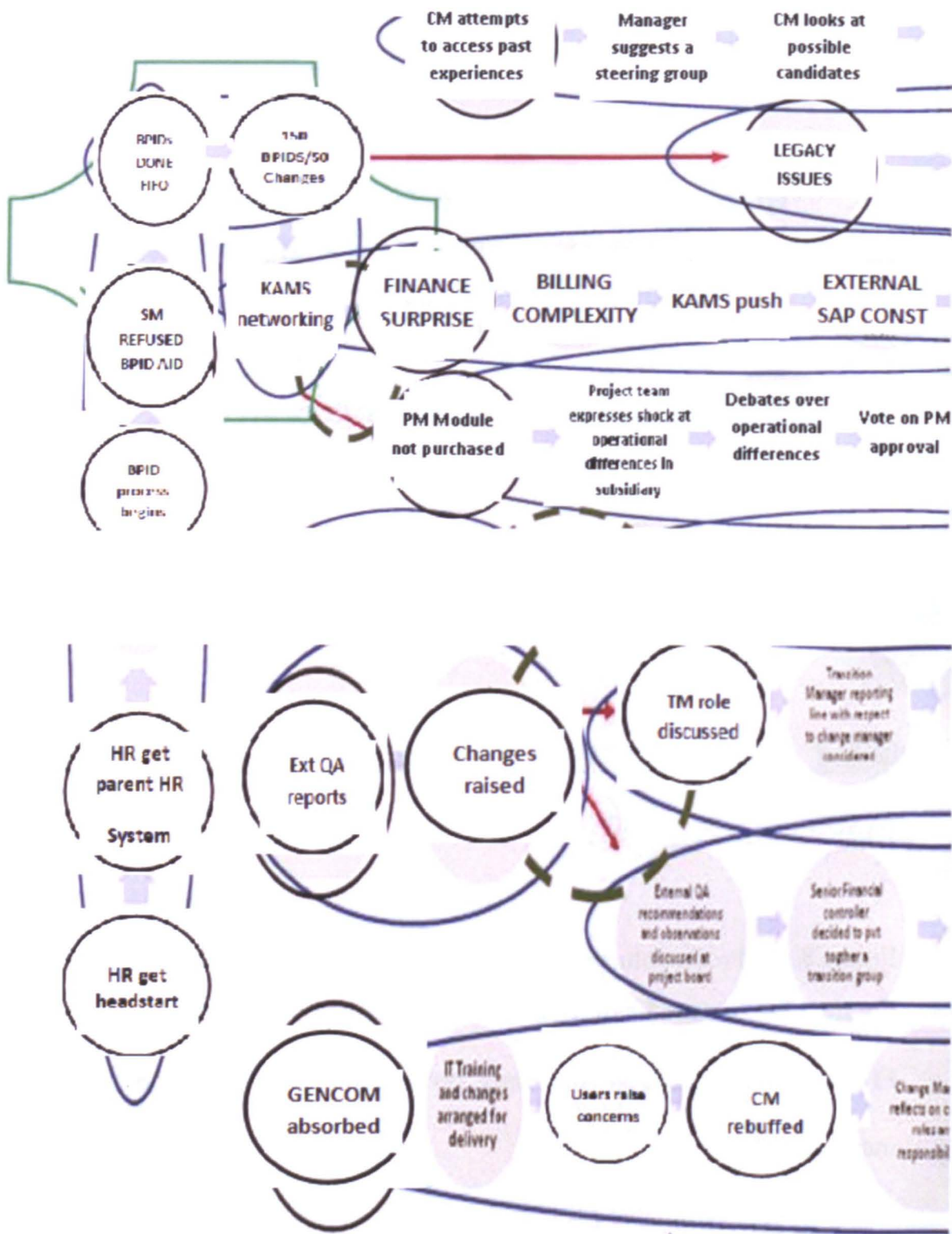
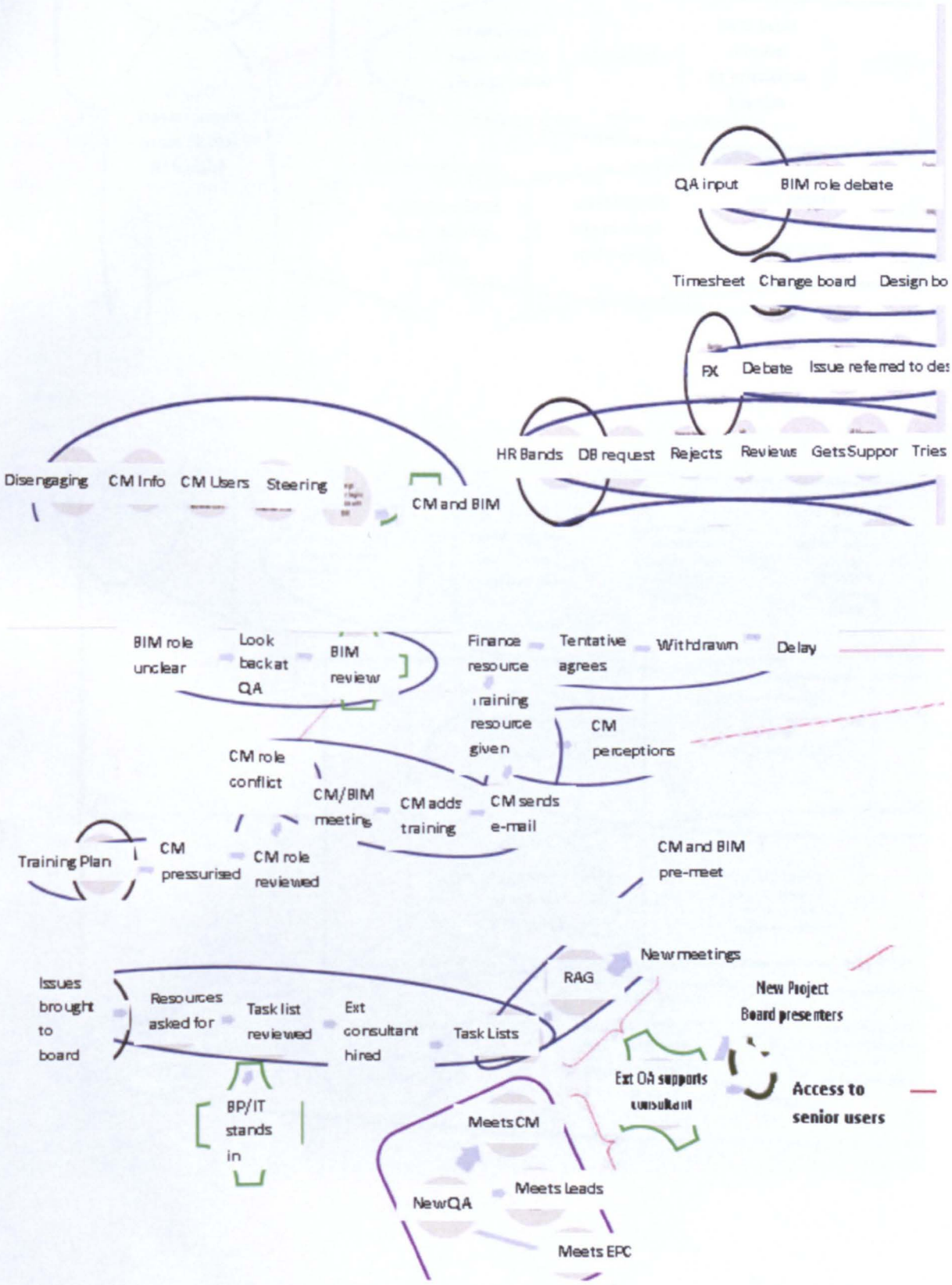
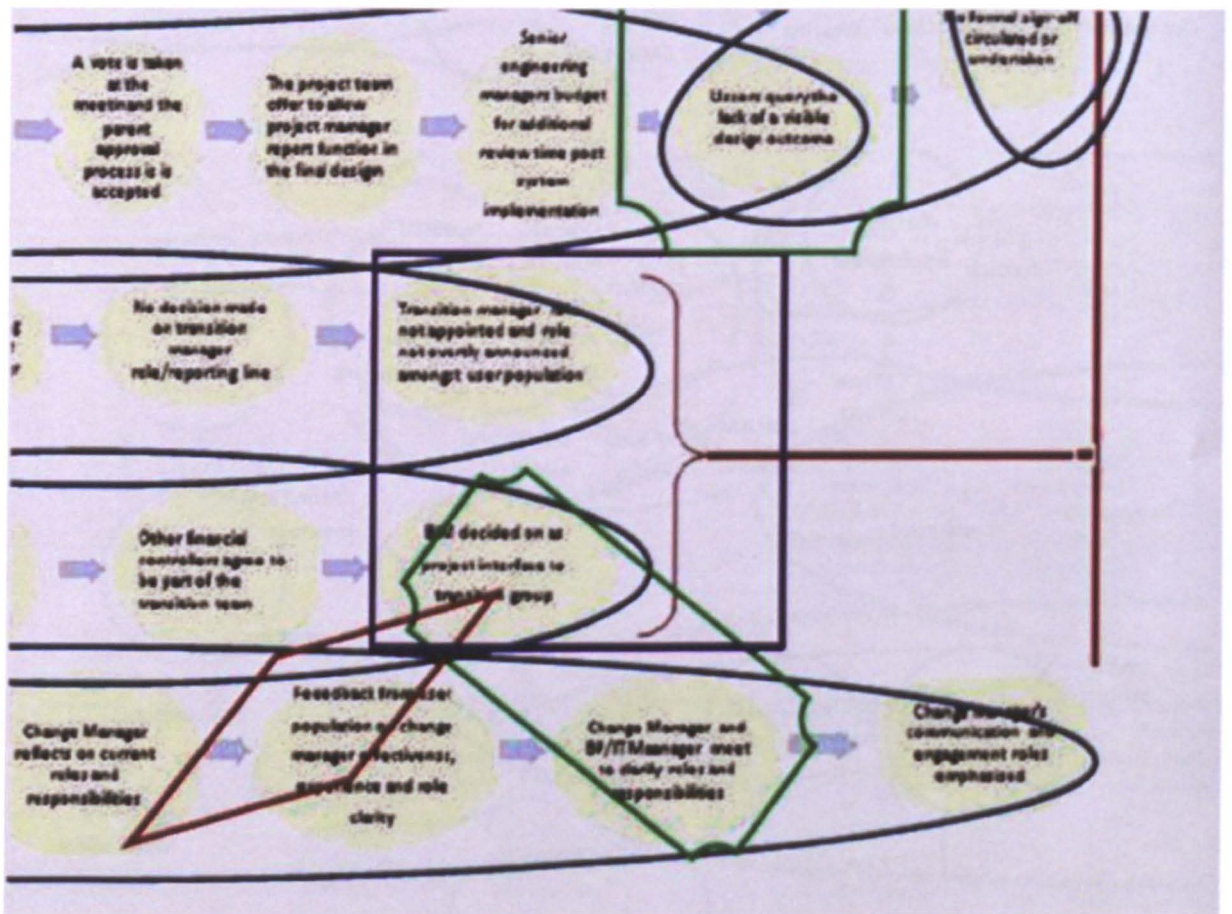
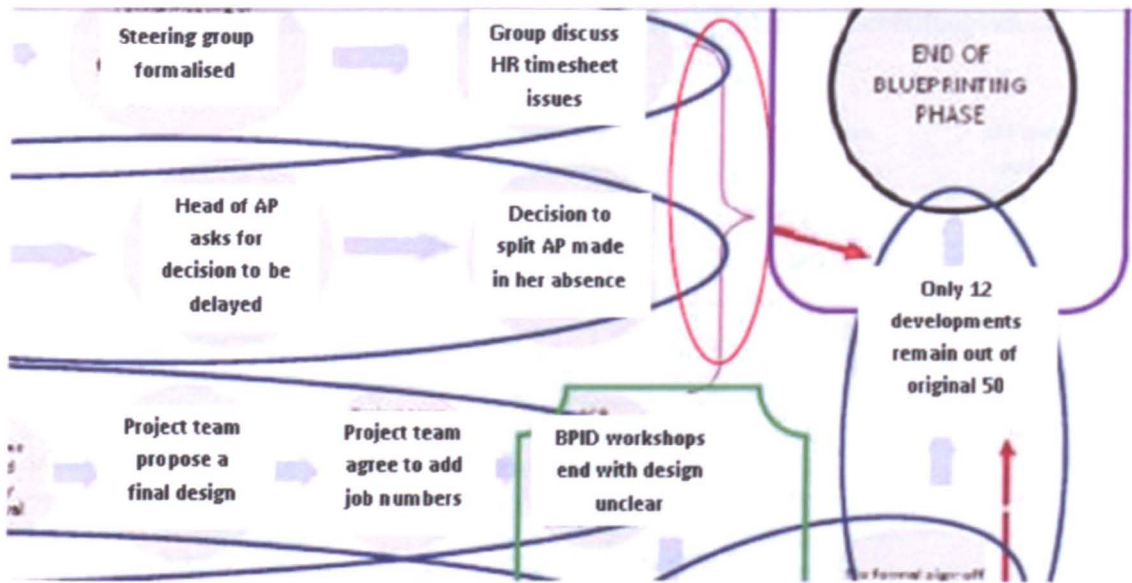


Figure 8.74: Project Realisation: identified event progression mechanisms.





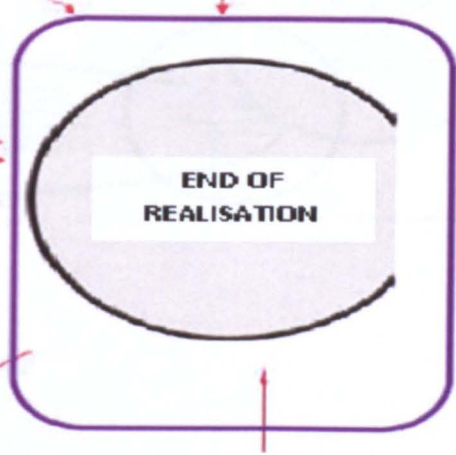
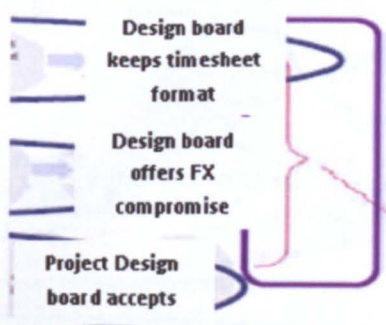
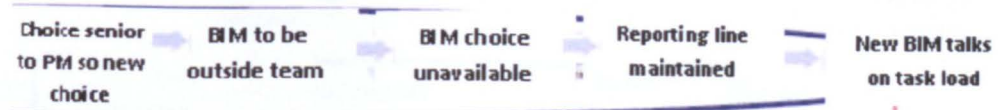
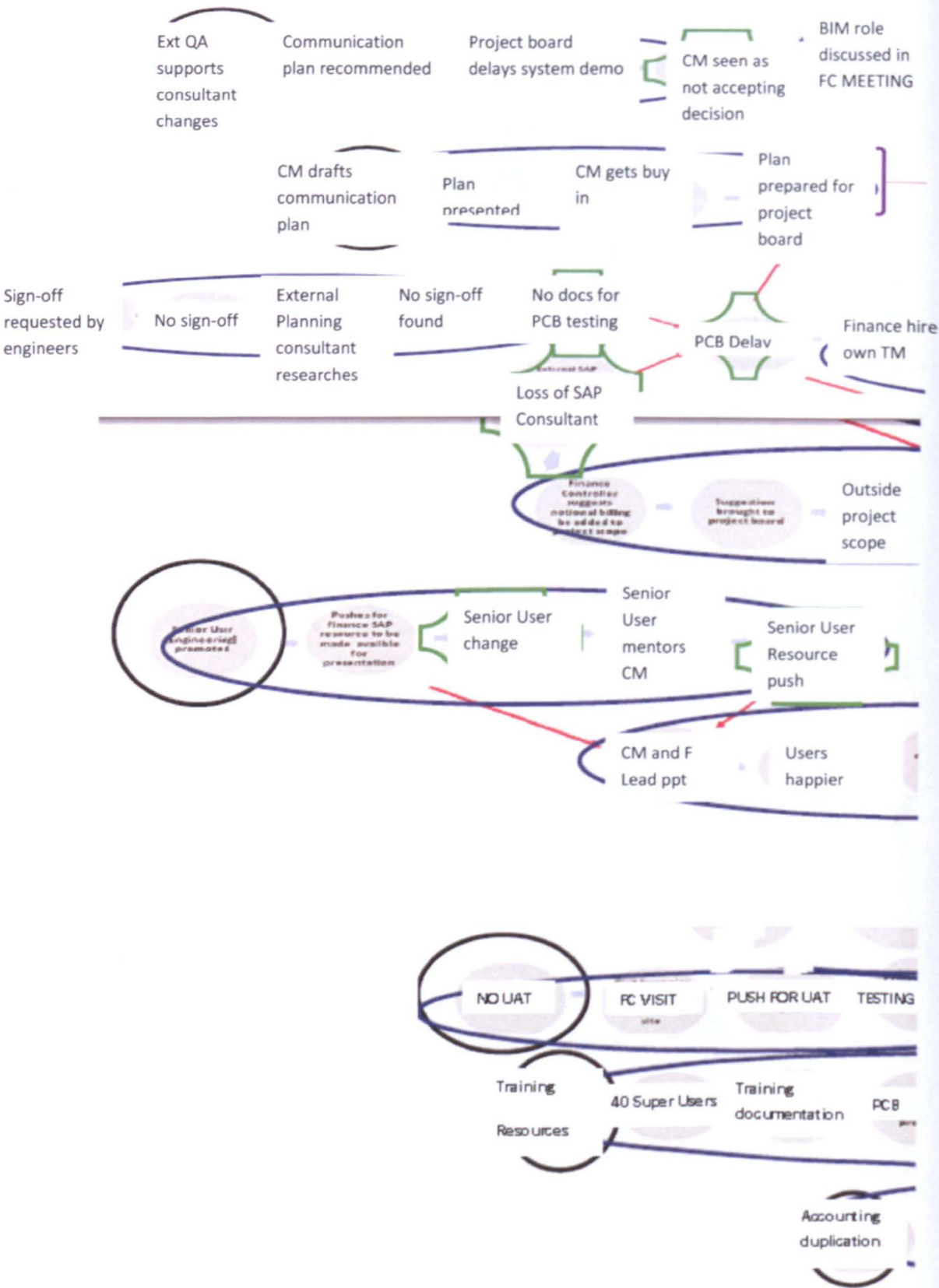
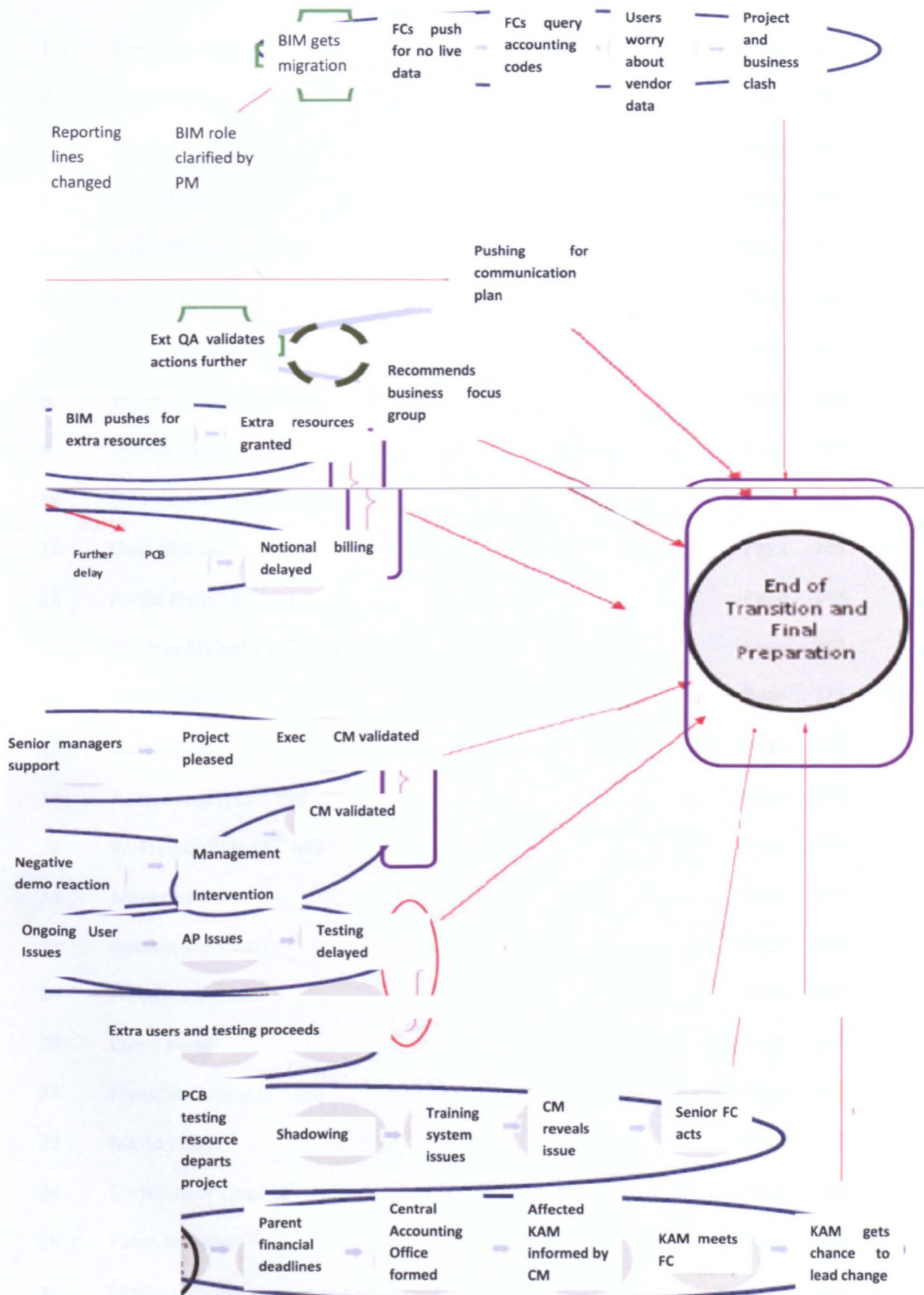


Figure 8.81: Transition and final preparation: identified event progression mechanisms.





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Location: Corporate headquarters/ **Date:** 20th January 2010/ **Duration:** 45 mins.

Interviewee: Tommy Walsh, Chief Financial Controller, NOVOCORP.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

Just as an introduction, I just wanted very briefly to ask you to talk about your roles and responsibilities and what they involve in terms of technology and in terms of the business strategy?

OK.

And how the two fit together?

I'm the financial controller of NOVOCORP and the IT function reports directly to me in AGOCORP. The overall group structure is such that we have one business unit; NOVOCORP one business unit within the AGOCORP group. There is an overall IT function within the group and it provides all IT services, it sets out a broad framework for IT strategy within the group and for all business units that pertain to that group. That function would be quite significant in size; it manages all the hardware and software, all the major projects, all of that functionality and it sets down the standards that we would apply to or comply with.

Here what we have in NOVOCORP some different, from a legacy perspective, we have some separate systems that the group would not have OK, like some accounting systems which are separate but generally we'd be on the same platform, some server configurations, all of that.

It was deemed, maybe five/ten years together that there is value in having an IT manager embedded in each business unit, who would operate in conjunction with the overall group IT function, and in compliance with their standards but would specifically set out IT strategies designed for the specific requirements of the business unit and take those (IT) strategies which would be aligned with the business unit strategies and implement them in conjunction with the corporate IT function.

So, all leading back into this overarching IT Strategy?

Any IT Strategy; the Business strategy for the group is set, if you want to think of it that way, is set periodically OK? That business strategy is set at a group level and all the business units feed into it and it is set. Each business unit gets into specifics

about what its business unit strategy is, and sets out a long-term strategy for itself with maybe 5 or 6 key strategic objectives. Those objectives are business focused, not service focused, business focused (*emphasised*). Out of that business unit strategy, the IT strategy would be developed in conjunction with and iteratively would support or take cognisance of the business unit strategy. So, it's a bit of a chicken and egg (*situation*) because the thing keeps iterating. Your IT strategy is iterating, your business strategy is iterating so they're feeding each other OK, but they are always clearly linked. The group IT strategy is derived from the business strategy and then there is an IT strategy for this unit which the (*NOVOCORP Business Process/IT Manager*) has set up. It would clearly take cognisance of the business unit strategy and the IT strategy was approved by the executive director of this business (*unit*) and all of the line managers so it's inherently linked to and grounded in the actual business strategy and is signed off by the director and myself and the line. So, you have integration of IT and Business strategy.

Now, it is revised from time to time and directions may change but it is inherently linked. Equally, before the IT strategy was signed off, it was agreed with the corporate IT function; before it was signed by our director in the office next door, it would have been signed off by the corporate IT function, saying "Yes, that is consistent with the goals and objectives of the overall IT function; it is consistent with our policies and procedures, it is consistent with what we believe to be the IT direction of the company; Go ahead". And there would be a nod on the document saying "I am happy with that" (*from the group level*), so we're not outside the camp in any way; we're not trying to create our own republic. And, that's the way it works.

That strategy then is iterative and once a quarter, the BP/IT manager reports to the SMT (*Exp: Senior Management Team*) on the performance of the strategy, where she is on the strategy, what needs to be changed about the strategy and specifically, there would be a project dashboard and she would report on specific projects that would be the embodiment of the strategy, OK? So the strategy would be embodied by a number of projects, but also a number of service delivery objectives and standards and effectively she would report on a quarterly basis on all three of those if you like. The focus tends, as you would expect it to be on projects, specific projects that would embody the IT strategy that would enable the IT strategy but also specifically in the last year would have focused on service delivery as well. About, for instance our managers in the construction side (*Exp: construction of zzzzzzz*) or in far flung places cannot get access online immediately to draw down design documents. Were (*Inaudible*) servers where you'd go in over remote working and it was causing massive problems, and that fed up to the table here where the SMT would meet and it became an issue. Now, that always part of the BP/IT strategy but that was pushed forward to say "we're not getting where we'd like to be on this strategy or that objective of the strategy and it needs attention". So, specific attention was given to that and a very senior manager was put on managing that then to bring it back in line to where we'd expect to be..

So, a senior manager was needed to see it through...

Yes, it was always in our strategy but it was interesting, it wasn't getting to where the business needed it to get and was getting undue attention in my view right? It wasn't the biggest issue in the world but loud voices were shouting and it was confusing and colouring our real strategic objectives.

It was becoming a kind of IT "Elephant in the room".

Yes, (people were saying things along the lines of) I'll talk to you about those projects when you talk to me about (this) service delivery issues. And to be clear, the BP/IT manager's Job in that is to facilitate some of the specific end-user issues in terms of specific business unit issues but a lot of the other times, it's really to create the communication between the business and the ICT corporate function. That's her job, to insure those businesses (Exp: activities within AGOCORP) don't do anything stupid in terms of standards or procedures or proper governance and that she's at the cutting edge of what the business is trying to do. She understands it (the business) implicitly, she's on most of the project boards and/or some of her staff is, and it's guiding it (the business unit IT strategy) all the time back to ICT (group IT strategy).

And in a rare occasion, she'll say that's not good enough for ICT or that standard isn't good enough; you need to move away. So, that kind of gives you a back-d rop as to how the IT strategy works here. We're very lucky here as for all things, strategies are fine, but you need people to implement them. We have a very strong IT manager and she drives it. And, we have a director (head of AGOCORP) who is focused on procedure and policy and he's very focused once a quarter they (the quarterly IT updates) are in the diaries a year in advance. Once a quarter, we spend one hour on IT strategy; where are we?; what did you say you'd do?; why are we doing this?; and there's a review. So BP/IT manager has to come in here and sit in front of the SMT and explain where she is (in terms of IT strategy) and the director of this business worked in IT twenty odd years ago, so he's not..

He speaks the language.

Well, twenty years ago, but he's not alien to it and he understands it and what's required at a broad level. So, we are lucky. There's quite a structure put into it (the business unit IT strategy). There was a document issued and it was reviewed and there are ongoing formal reviews...

So, it (business unit IT strategy) stays topical and purposeful?

Yes, it does. We're undergoing quite a bit of business transition at the moment and IT is seen as a clear enabler so that kind of keeps the profile up. People are clear that this is actually important in getting where we need to go and if we drop a ball there...

The knock-on effects will be felt quite clearly.

Yes, but five years time will it be quite as important? I'm not sure it would be blunt now...

Do you mean IT or...

The IT strategy might not be as important. We're in massive transition now, moving into new business areas so a lot of our systems need to be changed so the IT strategy, everybody is aware it's quite an issue.

Why so you feel then that it won't be as important potentially?

Well I think once we're in a stable business, once you've got services operating, why would you get managers who are overrun with issues (involved)

You see IT becoming a "So what" issue?

Well exactly, (managers will be saying) you're doing it well; why do I need a strategy? Right now, we need a strategy because a) things aren't what we'd like and b) this company has serious development objectives and IT is a big enabler in meeting those objectives and the managers know it. We have three or four big IT projects coming; we have service delivery. We're a consultancy business; we can't have service performance not being at the level that it should be with consultants not doing what they should be doing.

So, it's a critical support at the moment?

Yes, but again to be blunt, you can write all you like about (strategy) but at the end of the day, this comes down to people, the commitment of people. BP/IT manager is, we are very lucky, there are strong IT people and AGOCORP apply procedures; it has rules, regulations, standards, policies, documents; a lot of the IT people have grown up through twenty years of that. They've made enough mistakes to have learned from it so you don't find, what you find is like BP/IT manager is a seasoned professional, so we're very lucky to have her and she applies massive energy to the job. Five years on, could I guarantee we'd have another BP/IT manager, then no; if I had someone 20% less, would the IT strategy be 20% less? I'd say it would be 50% less. So, we can tell ourselves we're reasonably happy now. Would I get confident? No.

Is it (the IT strategy) very people dependent than?

No, the business keeps changing. Procedures are procedures are fine, but you need energy to enable a strategy; you need people who can envision things to make a strategy, to make it work. BP/IT manager has that. We're lucky; we have a strong

SMT who believe in it (the IT strategy). Some of the managers around the table have actually managed the corporate IT function and then you have a director who understands the function, so there's a lot of literacy around the table. Some of the IT managers have managed IT projects themselves so she's not coming into a barren wasteland, she's coming into people who are ready.

No real IT "heretics" then?

No, but there would be very strong debate now. Sometimes, they wouldn't agree with some of the (IT) systems, wouldn't want them and would argue very cogently about why that (system) isn't a good idea. It can actually be unhelpful to have informed people actually because. Well, I wouldn't say unhelpful but initially it is (unhelpful) but ultimately it is quite beneficial as they will push you; why exactly do you want that?

Critical then for (system) justification?

Yes, for instance the group was on SAP and the business managers asked to see the business case for that, even though it had been discussed at a strategic level and we'd convinced ourselves. They wanted to see in each individual area, even though it wasn't coming out of their budget. They wanted to see the business case for it and to be signed off on it, and that happened. And the NOVOCORP Director had signed off on it in his own way and I as financial controller had signed off on it as well. But each individual area wanted to know that this was OK. That's the kind of challenges you get as in "That's OK for you, you're the director, but we still want to be happy".

They're coming at it from the ground level perspective then?

Yes, that creates commitment so we're lucky. What I'm trying to convey to you is you can have all the policies and procedures, but if a couple of key people left, then it (the IT strategy) would take a hit. Would it be irreparably damaged? Maybe not, but you'd have to be very careful around people and IT strategy.

So you would think IT is generally perceived as a strong means to a desired end? Once that end is achieved, then it would be less significant and fade a bit into the background?

Yes, well you see the thing is since 1999 the levels of IT spend in AGOCORP has grown exponentially. It's got to the level now that it's at, due to the amount of change within the (utility supply/consultancy) industry. Across the industry, there was virtually no IT spend in 1999 or very little, but we like the industry have grown in this time and we have a lot in front of us again as the market keeps changing. There are a lot of new challenges and industries. I'm not saying to you that the emphasis will fall off IT strategy. What I'm saying is that it takes personal people commitment and people skills to keep it alive. You can write all the documents you

like and have the diligence of doing that but unless someone lives it and brings it to life every day, and is consistent about applying it, it won't happen. We're lucky now to have people in place who a) deliver that and b) support it. Of course, we continue to try to do that but I still believe that you are dependent for an IT strategy on four or five people having the vision and working with others to make it happen.

Could you describe in your own words, what you feel the IS strategy and the business strategy of the business/unit is what the differences is and if there's any difference between them?

Well, the business strategy is really a growth strategy. So we have to optimise our business in our existing market, grow into a new market which is the UK and we have to optimise specific commercial opportunities that come up. It's quite simple really. We have to make as much money as we can out of this market while complying with all the regulatory requirements and competing which doesn't mean scalping the customer; it means actually being competitive. We're at the competitive end of the business now so we complete a lot with (...) we supply power in Ireland here but we don't supply it to you (Exp: domestic consumer) we supply to industry but we're not allowed compete. The industrial utility market in Ireland is extremely competitive and people bid every year for the contract. We bid with them but we're in that industry and we compete in that industry and that's where we make the vast bulk of our money; the existing Irish market (in) the industrial sector. NOVOCORP not in the domestic sector – that's AGOCORP over there (*gestures in the direction of AGOCORP HQ*) and we're separate to that. So we compete in that area and it's hugely competitive; there are a lot of new entrants so our strategy is to effectively optimise our position in the home market (but) the home market is declining. We need to grow in other markets, UK markets and others that we're unfamiliar with. So, if we don't grow there, we're dead effectively or we're not going to grow at the same pace. I suppose we'll decline or there's a risk we'll decline. And so thirdly, I suppose to optimise any commercial opportunities that we would see outside off those two (Exp: UK market and Industry supply). We have a zzzzzz in aaaaaa called a tolling model which we would do again. So we have three opportunities; Ireland, UK and another like that.

What do you mean by a tolling model?

It's where we would build a power plant but we basically are paid to run the engine if you want to think of it in that way. We build the engine, we operate the engine and we maintain and repair the engine. We're paid for keeping it going. We don't buy the fuel to run the plant and we don't sell the utility.

Almost like caretakers?

Well, we pay the A or B million or whatever it is to build the thing (i.e. zzzzzzz) and we're contracted to be available. The toller buys the fuel and sells the utility so

there's a lot of risk there in all the fuel and utility. But, most of the profit is in those areas (not running and maintaining the zzzzzzz). So, it's a low profit business but a very risk-free business for us. If we can get those kinds of opportunities again, we'll take them.

So, it's (the tolling model) a reliable source of revenue...

So our job, so yes, if we can keep it up and the engine running we make money. And, we have done a couple of those up to now and if we see a couple more opportunities like that we would do it. So, they have been very successful for us in the past. So our IT strategy effectively is to enable the business units' strategy. Now growth is across all the business units, except for the domestic market where growth is declining slightly. The nature of the Irish market is such that it is changing significantly. The IT requirements, the way the business interacts has changed significantly. So, a principal element of our IT strategy is to ensure that the major enabling systems are in place to support that business. So, for instance we have an ETRM system; I don't know if you know what an ETRM system is?

No.

An ETRM system is an Energy Trading and Risk Management system so it's buying and selling gas and utility but there's a specific system for this. And because we're going into the UK (Market), this is quite a complex piece of IT. So, one of the key aspects of the IT strategy is ensuring that we have the framework and the enabling tools to effectively operate in the UK and Irish Market. So, that would be BP/IT manager understanding where the market was going and ensuring that we had the necessary (IT) tools to compete in that market. The next thing I suppose that we're very heavily focused in on in terms of our IT strategy is our SAP project. Because the group (Exp: rest of AGOCORP) is on SAP and we're not, it is causing untold difficulties.

So, all the rest of AGOCORP is on SAP except yourselves?

Yes, 85/90% of the entire organisation is on SAP; AGOCORP International business unit is not; it is on AGRESSO. So we're moving to SAP. It (AGRESSO) was causing huge problems from a support point of view, from an integration point of view, from a cost point of view. So one of our key IT strategies was integration; we were going to integrate fully with AGOCORP. We were going to become more consistent with AGOCORP policies, procedures, standards and systems; this was one of our more immediate aspects of our IT strategy.

Was there a lot of downward pressure (from AGOCORP) to implement?

Mmmm (PAUSE TO REFLECT). Being honest, the Chief Executive (of AGOCORP) has said publically that we are going on SAP ever before we (in AGOCORP) developed a business case. There was a clear commitment that it was going to happen, so make it happen. That was the first thing. The second thing I have to say (PAUSE) was that we would have had, we were delighted in one respect that he said that. In other respect, we were saying "well fine, we were doing it anyway". BP/IT manager had her strategy, we had worked very diligently in the business to get all the managers happy that we were doing this. It was difficult now as they have AGRESSO. They see themselves as different (from the rest of AGOCORP). We're in a different building. It's almost an identity badge; we're different, we're not on SAP.

So, was AGRESSO a popular system?

Mmmm (PAUSE TO REFLECT). It's pretty popular, yes. It has grown in mythology as popular. I'm not sure it's as strong as people thought it would be but it has performed well for us.

Is it accepted?

Yes, it's reliable, we've never had an issue with it and it's low cost in some respects. But, it's causing us integration problems. The (AGOCORP) business world is becoming increasingly integrated and it's become a major problem for us now that we're not on SAP. It's become untenable. One of the key aspects of (IT) strategy was to ensure that that (SAP) would be put into place and that has been done (Exp: the strategy, not the system). The other aspect I suppose was a lot of the finance managers currently in NOVOCORP were in AGOCORP and have used SAP including me!

So, there was a strong human driver for it (SAP adoption)?

So, I would be very focused on SAP and would have seen the value of it. So a lot of the key change agents in the finance function certainly would be very strongly of the view that we should be on SAP.

In terms of the Senior Management group (within AGOCORP), who (Interviewee stated earlier) have a high level of IT experience; what was their feeling on SAP?

Varied. We did a lot of change management stuff before the project was ever brought to business case stage. The entire management tier (two levels below the director) was brought into a room about a year ago – the actual project is starting now. I thought the definition of success was at the end of the meeting was one of the most senior managers said to me "Listen, don't brief me on this again; I know we're going on SAP, just go on and do it". I thought 'Great, no more communication required'. A year ago or even previous to that, I would have

thought that much more communication required. Now, maybe he's just beaten down or maybe (LAUGHS) he knows what way the wind is blowing. He just said to me, "Don't waste your time communicating to me anymore". Now, he's a senior guy, a guy I'd respect very much and he said "Look, get on with it and don't be briefing us anymore, tell us when it's going to happen and get on with it". And, that's what we're doing.

Back to your original question, it is the enabling of the strategy as in growing our business around trading (Exp: via the ERTM system) and SAP will be another key project for us. Those are the two main projects and they would have been envisaged in our strategy. The next thing to consider was to ensure proper governance around all our IT projects, big and small. So, there would be a whole governance part of our strategy to say "We will deliver projects to a standard, (OK), all our projects would be to a standard, there would be a project board, there will be benefits realisation, there would be start to finish per item BPIDs (Exp: Blueprint Phase Implementation Directives), there will be all the discipline". BP/IT manager (BP/IT manager) used to be in governance in IT (in AGOCORP) and it's in her background. So, all our projects ranging from maybe 250, 000 (Euros) to 20 well, 2 Million, coming soon, there will be a project board.

I was actually at a project board meeting for the SAP project yesterday and on the project board there were three people from my level, a representative from the centralised IT function BP/IT manager, the group financial controller as it is a group project and a group interface as well and a representative of the project (Project Manager). So, there would be quite a lot of seniority at the table and you've very strong structures. At that meeting then, the project manager who is Thomas was grilled; 'Tell me about the change board', 'Tell me about the overall structure of the project'. So quite structured and the whole project governance was emphasised;

'We have to have that'. Now, that sounds very little but I tell you, BP/IT manager has an "in" on every project here and it has worked really well. She has brought a discipline to success that has been massive and that certainly was not there prior to the strategy. The strategy was clear (TAPS TABLE FOR EMPHASES); "We are going to enable these change projects but we are going to do them in a governance fashion", strong governance in all our projects.

The third part was (Exp: first part the SAP, ERTM systems, second part the greater governance controls) there was going to be service improvement in the quality of services provided outside (by AGOCORP IT department) and this was focused on service delivery and a definition of what those services should be. Because, a question you can continually ask yourself is if we have a corporate IT function that deliver all of the services, it should be IT light in the business unit (AGOCORP). It should really be strategy driven, be enabling projects as close to the coalface. Doing IT stuff should be low or people will begin to drift away and do stuff themselves. So, a question that BP/IT manager is continually asking herself is 'Why are we doing all of this?' Now, we have to have some people here because of

AGRESSO that's specific to us and there are one or two things that we need. The service thing was probably at the back-end of strategy and why? Well, because it *is* (EMPHASIS) and is probably the unsexy side. If it goes wrong though, you'll get people round this table (Exp: interview took place at SMT meeting room) very agitated. Like, if Microsoft Outlook goes down for two hours, the impact on productivity in the business is massive, massive (EMPHASES). The complaints that will come and the derision that will come at BP/IT manager, her strategy and all this other stuff (;) suddenly people are doubting her and saying 'What are we at here, why isn't this working?' So, she had to make sure that service provision was improving. Now, I would say we had a slower start on the implementation of that, but in the last year, BP/IT manager has taken on eight or nine critical sub-projects on service delivery, put a project manager in place, told her she had seven months to resolve the issues. Now the seven priority (*service*) issues, there could be 27 so we had to set priorities. What are the seven things that are causing most agitation at service improvement and we nailed them, OK. And, that is in a much better place now, but it's something you need to keep managing. I think the whole service improvement aspect of the strategy, though probably not emphasised at the time either has stood us in good stead.

The fourth aspect of it was to envisage the future and BP/IT manager has done a lot of the work around envisaging the future and rather than the business telling us (...) how can I put this? I haven't always been in finance, I went to Business in AGOCORP and became a General Manager, managing people kind of thing and then back into finance and when I was a General Manager, I would be involved in implementing IT systems on SAP. One of the things that worried me was, you go to the IT centre or the service centre, to the professionals and say 'Tell me what's best practice?' They'd say 'That's not my job, that's your job'; now, I don't know what SAP can do.

Are you telling me that I have to go plough a furrow here and find out? Go to other companies? But that's exactly what it is, you, the business have to find out and I always found (...). Well, to be fair that's not strictly true as there are three or four, would I would say "visionaries" in AGOCORP group, guys who I think are amazing people and I worked with a couple of them over a period of time who will tell you 'This is the direction, this is where you should be going'. Those people are sought out and they are busy men and they're highly prized, because they can see the vision, they can know and as well as that, they're very close to SAP and go to every conference. They could tell you exactly what's going on and to be honest they're techies, they love it and they will explore it and figure it out for themselves. A lot of them are business back-based (Exp: have a business background) and are business guys going into IT from a business perspective. But, they can know come back and say 'Have you thought of this, will you do this etc', which is brilliant, gold as far as I'm concerned.

So, BP/IT manager has done a lot of that in the last year. She has re-questioned the strategy and 'Well, what could we be envisaging?' not just following the business strategy but to lead and that has been greeted with a lot of enthusiasm. I have to

say, that I was a bit worried for her and worried for me initially. She went to Microsoft and said 'Show me a vision of the future; what do you think is possible'. Now, remember we've people all over the world. OK, not many, most of our staff is in Ireland, although they can be far-flung. You could have a couple of hundred people. So, the question of remote working, the question of end-to-end immediate access, using your mobile phone, like people being able to sit here (..) So what she asked Microsoft to do is to work with her and show her a workplace of the future; 'What could this be like?' and in fairness to her, she brought it back to a number of the business people and said 'Look, here's what's possible, does this look remotely interesting', not to the SMT now, but to serious punters within the business as in 'Does this have any grounding in your kind of world or would it do anything for you?' or 'Help me define; if I showed you something, could you tell me how it could help your business', not on a back-end basis now but more of front-end, nothing to do with servers or any of that kind of stuff...

More like a user-led strategy?

A user-led strategy effectively, so she got a lot of input into that, I must say and was told to get hopping (*as in move forward*) on some of it and then to refine it another levels, and she has come up with this very neat vision which is very demanding now on the IT function in terms of what is possible, like the WEBX application, which is very simple, like we would be able to record our time sheets by our mobile phones, we would be able to have active conferencing where guys could actually have their own whiteboards at a meeting. During the meeting, they're all white-boarding and at the end of the meeting, it's agreed and it's sent to whomever. They're white-boarding as they go, they can record safety incidents on their mobile phones and upload them to safety systems. Its real time elimination of travel effectively, end-to-end conversations and trying to do that. She gave a presentation to all middle and senior managers in NOVOCORP about two months ago, about 80 people and very well received. She said 'This is what's possible'. Now, in fairness, she went back to (*Corporate*) ICT, the manager of the IT function, the head of the IT function in AGOCORP and said 'Here's what where thinking about doing, would you be interested or are you consistent with this?' and their IT architect would have been in the room. And, they're very supportive now, they say 'Yes, we can do this'. 'There's some of what you're asking is too far out for us, it's going to be difficult'. What we would have said to them (I was at the meeting with BP/IT manager) was 'We want you to think within the art of the possible; we don't want to breach your procedures, but we don't want to hear about some punter, 25 levels over there is minding his patch, and isn't doing it. We want you to think, this is where we're going, can we go there?'

I have to say the interaction back was very good and again (*sotto voce*) that's because BP/IT manager works with the ICT function and they trust her. They know she's not going to break any procedures.

Her strong governance role again....

Yeah, she would have spoken to them before we ever showed anything. Before she ever spoke to the NOVOCORP managers, she had spoken to them (*Corporate ICT function*) and agreed with ICT that it was OK to do that presentation. There was nothing inappropriate there and they were OK with it. Now, there was a few wrinkles like 'Why is she doing this?', but she managed that very well. And she's got to the stage now, where she shows 80 managers what's possible now. The next time you stand up in front of them, they're going to say 'Show me the money'. 'You showed me the goodies, you've shown me the sweet shop, I want the sweets!' 'Don't be telling me the sweets are not in the jar, cause I saw them!'. But, she did a fantastic presentation and has done a lot of envisaging there that we didn't originally see in the IT strategy. So, the last aspect of the IT strategy was compliance, compliance with standards, compliance with governance, not just with governance of projects, but the AGOCORP standards. So, we have had a server consolidation project. We're not even thinking about non-compliance with that. The situation is: we are complying (EMPHASIS). We are complying with everything (EMPHASIS). So, standards and procedures are to be complied with. That was not always the case in AGOCORP; we were different. What we have done in our IT strategy is to have brought ourselves aligned with all IT policies, and ensure we will have best of breed as defined by corporate IT. If there are exceptions (*in AGOCORP*), we will go and talk to IT about them, we agree them with them. We don't go off and run off on our own and one of BP/IT manager's jobs is that she is a policeman, she has to make sure there's no 'We'll just put in that little server for that application, don't mind that now, it's grand'. That just ends up in a calamity.

Start getting variations from standards...

Yeah, next thing it's not backed up and it's not a proper (*system*) and you get into all sorts of messes. BP/IT manager's job is to, and this is not an inconsequential part of a job is to ensure ongoing compliance with AGOCORP standards and procedures and that we apply those standards and procedures consistently, and we feed into them. Once a quarter, they have a, I'm not sure what you call it, I'm on a (*different*) corporate IT strategy, and well it's not a strategy...

Like an IT steering group almost?

Yeah, I'm on it, BP/IT manager's on a (*different*) IT one and in that the IT architect brings all the IT managers together once a quarter to talk about IT issues, the implementation of their IT strategy, the implementation of projects. Their managers' then meet once a quarter, where the head of the corporate (*AGOCORP*) IT function and people like me from each business unit are there and it works very well. And (PAUSE), you have diverging views and you're hearing stuff from other business units. I wouldn't have a clue about it, I'm not particularly interested in it but the ICT function are convening it and what they're trying to do is apply standards. They want to make sure everybody is doing the same thing (*from a governance perspective*) and there are templates. You have to report on your

project performance to a required standard. So, all your projects are listed, what you spend, there's colour coding (*red for danger etc*), a project dashboard. If you've to explain that in front of others, and there's ten columns and whether you're green, red or amber for every project. So, there's a discipline and you know how every project is going. That was really the last piece of the strategy, which we would comply more with governance and I have no problem with that.

In terms of the history of technology, and how it's linked to the business strategy, how would you feel when you look back over time, do you feel it's been generally successful or if things haven't gone well, what would you feel would be the main reasons why in terms of the alignment of strategy?

When you say the alignment of strategy, do you mean, what's your question I suppose?

Just in terms of the organisational history of IT, would you feel the IS strategy has always been aligned with the business strategy and reflected the needs of the business?

Well, the IT strategy has to be signed off by the business line managers, so inherently it's linked. It cannot exist without the business line manager signing it off and the director here (*of AGOCORP*) signing off. So, that's the first thing. The second thing is the (IT) strategy can change, it can be delayed. Take SAP, one of our key enabling projects; it got delayed because other projects got delayed, not of our making. We need corporate IT to help us with SAP; so their work program changed so our program had to change. So (*the IT strategy*) is a living breathing document. SAP had to go live for us at year-end (*31st December 2010*) so if we miss that slot, it's a year delay. That was taken very seriously here. The head of (*corporate*) ICT came into this room and explained to our director, why the schedule was missed. Now, we hadn't spent any money...

Threw your scheduling back...

It was way ahead (*of start date*), well before we were due to mobilise but he was able to see far enough ahead to be able to say 'You're not going to be able to go on the schedule that you want, you will have to push it back'. But, he gave a commitment that our project would be prioritised in a new timeline and that's what happened. I accept we can have delays and I can understand that. They had a big project in IT that had to be done in a different way and we just had to take account of that. Now, it didn't cost us anything but it just delayed the strategy and it was frustrating. But, I haven't seen any indication of non-compliance in the strategy yet.

Now, I would say that some things in the strategy are more important than others and to be honest the performance stuff people get stuck in...To be honest, what you find in IT is a lot of whinging. There's a lot of business managers will focus on

the day-to-day and they'll give that (*their attention*) and rightly so if you can't work for three hours, that could affect thousands of staff in this building and the productivity element of that would be massive and would cost the company a fortune. But strategically, is that as important as making sure our major projects get all our effort and the business can actually exist? Obviously, no. But (*the service side of IT*) can be given an undue weight. Now, we have been lucky in having addressed those (*IT service*) issues out of the strategy. They're the same level of frustration now around service delivery, it has improved significantly. Some of that is by luck and to be blunt, some of that is BP/IT manager and her team coming in and sitting by "Nellie". Sitting specifically with the managers, the SMT managers and sitting with them, as in 'What is your issue?' and those change or service improvement projects we talked about, they were born out of BP/IT manager and her team sitting with and work-shopping with people; 'Hand me your list of your top twelve (*IT service*) issues and we'll solve the top six or seven and will handle/gain cognisance of the rest'. That was listening. Did we envisage that we would have to do that much work on service improvement when we started the process? Probably not; we did realise that it was an issue but probably not that we had to be there (*involved*) as quickly. So BP/IT manager had to be quick on her feet in getting that done and she did it. So it's (*the IT strategy*) not a straight line. Has anything come up in our strategy that I'd say we haven't implemented or that has surprised us that we need to change? Not Yet.

So, you don't have any real IT horror stories over the last couple of years?

No, genuinely no.

Do you put that down to your strong governance and procedures and there are strong links (documentation, informal and formal lines (*of communication*))?

Yeah, I think there's always going to be issues with (*IT*) systems; anyone who tells you every system they're going to implement would be perfect is lying. Because, there are always a number of factors that go wrong. To date, in my time here for the last three years, and before that there have been no major problems of an IT nature on any project or on service delivery. We have been lucky, but you make your own luck to some extent. We have strong IT people and the business has bought into standards. To be honest this is an engineering business, and if you've ever worked with engineers, they'd kill you with standards, there's a procedure for everything. There's a procedure for turning on the light like, there's a method statement for everything. Method statements, structures, who's responsible. Actually, the finance function would be a lot worse than that now. In dealing with the finance function, they just want to do it. The engineering function must more understanding of rigour and structure and planning and all that. Where the greater risk with an engineering function is they'll want the functionality. They'll see 'Gee, this could really be important for us, or if we got that'. The risk is often scope creep and that's something we've been lucky to avoid but we haven't had major

problems to date. Nothing I ever been overly worried or concerned about, to be honest.

Just to conclude, could you talk a little about your overall involvement in strategy, how strategy comes out and how it's put together, just to sum up?

OK, we've talked about (how) I'm one of the senior management in NOVOCORP so I would be involved in signing off the IT strategy at a very basic level. When BP/IT manager was developing her IT strategy, she would have talked to me maybe three of four times, for a couple of hours each time as to what would be involved in the IT strategy. I meet BP/IT manager every week for one hour and BP/IT manager is a disciplined lady, far more disciplined than I am in many respects. In that hour, issues are iterative, she has an agenda and brings up issues at every single meeting we go through it (*the agenda*). So, I would have had a strong input into the original IT strategy. Before we would have gone to the SM (*Senior Management*) team, we would have gone to the director and ask him 'Are you broadly comfortable with this? We're not going to bring it into a room where you're not happy, are you going to be happy with this?' And he was happy with that. So, I would have spent on a lot of time on the IS strategy when it was being developed. Sitting with BP/IT manager and agreeing to it. Just the backdrop, where I came from was that I was maybe five years as a business manager and would have implemented a number of systems. And, I had a strong understanding of SAP which was a key part of our strategy. So, I was in the middle of that anyway.

Also as you're the financial controller...?

Yeah, I'm financial controller now, so I'm responsible for SAP in my business environment. So, even if I was never involved in an IT project, I am now as the sponsor of the project. So that would have brought me to the table anyway. Now, I would be very supportive of one best way. I was in shared services with the mined using of SAP. You kill things first time up; IT is a massive strategic enabler of the business so I would be very supportive of where BP/IT manager was coming up and to be honest she did all the work like. Any of it, the documentation. The strategy is effectively BP/IT manager's strategy. She came up with it; all I would ever have been doing would be advising her. Like, to be far, I would have been clear in everything she was trying to do. I wouldn't have been convinced of the importance of some of it but BP/IT manager would have steered me right on that (LAUGHS). So, it would have been quite involved. Again, quality of people (WHISPERING); she has twenty years (*experience*), some of the people reporting to her are very disciplined, they are good people, good with other people. They have strong...It has got to the stage now at the SMT; managers will say 'Get BP/IT manager involved with that project', even if it's not an IT project.

Very strong on project delivery...

Yeah, now she wouldn't be responsible for project delivery but she'll bring rigour to it. She'll ask the questions, she has that standard and we're lucky to have her. And her job is to train someone to be behind her because we won't have BP/IT manager forever. We need to make sure that we replicate BP/IT manager. Because everyone else knows she's good too and there are fishermen out there. So, the reality of it is that there is a people aspect to it (*IT strategy*) and that's as much as 50% of it.

Thanks very much, Tommy.

OK.

Location: Corporate headquarters/ **Date:** 20th January 2010/ **Duration:** 34 mins.

Interviewee: Lorna Doone, Business and IT Process Manager, NOVOCORP.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

So Lorna, if we could talk first about the creation of your (Business Process and IT Manager) role?

My role?

Yes, just how you came to be here in the role you currently occupy?

The (then current, now former) managing director of NOVOCORP and the SMT say a need for that role in the first place (I suppose) and it was about really putting a shape on IT across the organisation; defining an IT strategy for the company and directing that strategy and putting IT governance in place also.

Was it or had it become the norm for the business units within AGOCORP to have a BPIT manager?

Yes, at the point every business unit in AGOCORP had a BPIT manager role with the exception of NOVOCORP. But in general, it had been more of an IT role than a BP role.

Was there a pressure then to follow that template?

No; there would always be a pressure to adhere to the AGOCORP IT strategy and there would always have been the perception that NOVOCORP didn't. But, when I first came over here (from AGOCORP) and began to look through things, I began to realise that it wasn't a case of that they didn't adhere to the IT strategy; it was just that the investment in IT had been so little... It wasn't that there were a lot of IT projects that did not adhere to the (AGOCORP) IT strategy; it was more that the investment in IT had been so little. So, I wouldn't really say that there was pressure (with regards to) establishing the role; I'd say that there was a feeling was there a need for the role.

Why do you think spend on IT had been so relatively little (in AGOCORP)?

It was always the objective of NOVOCORP to be extremely commercially aware and as such to really focus on costs. IT was seen as a huge cost, a massive cost and wasn't really seen as an enabler and also there was no link between the drivers of

IT cost and the business nor was there an awareness of what those drivers might be. So, part of our IT strategy was to identify those costs and manage them down. Yes, that's the way it was.

In terms of your own role, how would you actually describe it as it is currently?

My role...my role is the Business Process (BP) and IT manager for NOVOCORP spanning all business lines within NOVOCORP and I suppose there are three aspects to it (*the role*). One is the whole strategic role, defining the IT and BP strategy and overseeing their implementation of (those) strategies. The second role is governance, IT governance, really making sure that we're spending money on the right things and that those investments are directly linked to business strategies. And, when the money is being spent, that the (IT) projects, stay on the rails and don't become failures. Third, probably the most visible and what people think my role consists of normally is the operational IT role, overseeing the IT service provision from the central IT department (*in AGOCORP*) to NOVOCORP; making sure the service provision is sufficient and working with the central IT department to solve any issues arising therein.

When you say IT services, do you mean things like E-Mail, Internet?

Yes, nearly all our IT services are provided centrally. Very few of our IT services are directly provided here by my team.

And you have a role to play when issues arise?

I have a service management role here around escalation. When a user here has a problem, if that problem is not rectified quickly enough or well enough, or if they don't get the right kind of attitude when they're having their service call dealt with, we have an escalation process and an escalation point. We also monitor service-level agreements and we have monthly service meetings with the (*corporate*) IT department.

So, there is a defined point around service issues where you get involved?

Yes.

Is there a certain trigger for your involvement like the number of users affected by the issue?

No, basically if anyone thinks they're not happy!

You don't get a situation where 4 or 5 users come to you with an issue...?

No, No; it's often where some body feels their call has not been dealt with quickly enough, not brought to conclusion or dealt with professionally enough or whatever. When big incidents happen as such, like an outage, we use the Internet

or something, then it becomes very obvious very quickly anyway. We'd monitor the issue resolution but we wouldn't necessarily have to take action because it's obvious already. Depending on the priority of the service and because they're a provided service, they're already getting service calls anyway.

In terms of your role in crafting IT strategy, how would you describe that?

It is separate from the definition of the business strategy but I try to stitch it anyway. When we first put together the business process and IT strategy, it was on the back of the business strategy and it was really about how IT was or was not enabling the business strategy. That was really our starting point.

Was it more than a case of creating a business strategy first and then wedding an IT strategy to it?

Well, we weren't party to creating it but there was a clear business strategy. The first part was to talk to the business about where they were well and not so-well enabled (*in terms of IT*) and then deliver the business strategy.

Has it got to the stage now where it's more of a cyclical evolutionary process with business strategy driving the IT strategy and then back to the business strategy?

Yes; now, it's probably not (*the IT strategy*) where it should be. Where I would like to see it is as an integral part of the business strategy (*formulation*) process. But, it's definitely not there yet.

So, if you have some kind of IT strategic change in mind that you feel would be important or necessary, and it comes to the point where it would be feeding back to the business strategy. Are you part of this change process or involved closely or is it a separate process?

Still separate...

Ideally you'd like to be more involved?

Ideally, I would see Business Process and IT strategy as part of the business strategy process; that one comes after another. Whereas, as business drivers are identified and business directions identified, so should the enablers be identified. And out of that should fall the IT strategy. I would think, anyway.

Have there been times where that decoupling if you like between Business and IT strategy has caused damage to the organisation?

No, it can cause a delay.

A delay in terms of accessing the technology?

No, more in terms of a loss of opportunity. IT and technology can provide a lot more and enable a lot more than people realise. Very often, that conversation is not had in terms of how IT can be enabling. They define their business strategies and their work plans out of it and whatever else but it's back at an earlier point where that conversation should be had. How can that be enabled more? How could people be enabled to work more effectively, more efficiently? How can we drive out efficiencies there from a business process point of view, from an IT point of view? That conversation is happening as (*more*) enlightened business managers think; 'Oh Gosh, I'll go talk to Lorna or John and see (*what's possible*)'. Some managers will not be thinking of that whereas if it was part of the Business strategy (*formulation*) process, (*to ask questions like*) How can we drive out efficiencies here? ; How can we make this (*business*) process more effective and efficient? ; How could we enable ourselves better? And maybe it's not possible (*to do these things*) but at least if the conversation was had, we could identify opportunities where we could do it.

Do business managers feel sometimes that they don't understand all the technologies or haven't been exposed to them?

Well they can. But, they don't have to be very IT savvy; they just have to think what can we drive out efficiencies here; can we make things more effective? Even if they thought about it in a business process way and let us do the (*IT strategy*) bit after that. If it was stitched into the process, it would mean every business manager would be led to think in that way.

Do you see big differences in IT outcomes between business managers who have different attitudes?

Yes (EMPHASIS).

How is that difference expressed?

I would be fairly sure that there are certain parts of the business that aren't as much (IT) enabled as they could be. And in some ways it's still a case of who shouts the loudest or what the top priorities are. So, I simply don't have the time or get the opportunity to go to each area and say 'OK, how will we (*use IT*) to drive out efficiencies or make things more effective and efficient?' I simply haven't got the time to go talk to the business managers, they have to come and talk to me, and I have enough of them coming to me already as well as being very busy doing other things. There are... It's not necessarily the best way of doing it (*IT strategy*) in my view.

Would you think (in an ideal world) if you were to look back at your role in a few years time, you would like to look on (changing) that as one of your key successes?

Yes, I'd like to. I suppose that's where this role should evolve to...

What do you see as being necessary to get it (the role) to that stage or is it very much a work in progress?

I'd think it's a work in progress. First of all, you have to establish the role, and then you have to show the role has value and it's all about then that the role has clout and can really begin to have the ability to get in and make suggestions at that level. So, I'd say the role is closer to that point but I wouldn't say it's there yet. I have some influencing to do yet.

You see substantial progress from the original point of taking over the role?

Oh Yes, because when it was first established (*the role*), they (*NOVOCORP*) probably weren't sure if they needed it and I'd say now they can see the value of it. However, each role has to be looked at in terms of the individual activities and needs to be looked at with regards to whether what's right to have here, what's right to have centrally. Do we have too much of some (IT) or too little of others here? We are still doing a lot of support locally around Meridian and 200 plus engineering IT applications and around Agresso (which will be going anyway).

When you say too much support locally, where do you see that support going?

Well, back to the centre and outsource if possible. The centre looks after services so it should really be taking care of the local specific services and any outsourcing. What we should really have here is more (*IT*) strategy and governance only.

So, really focus on the value-add things in IT and if others can do it cheaper, make the service side their problem?

Yes, Yes (EMPHASIS) and also get people to think differently. Not just a case of 'The printer's not working, can you fix it?' kind of approach but more 'How can you help me to (*IT*) enable my business processes and 'How can we make them more efficient, how can we cut costs and how can we drive out savings through the use of technology?'

See it moving from service concentration to more strategic concentration?

Yes.

In terms of outsourcing, can you make a decision locally to outsource or does it have to be routed through corporate IT? Do you have a lot of autonomy in making decisions like that?

Well (PAUSES TO REFLECT), historically NOVOCORP would have always wanted to do their own thing and would have considered external providers to be far more efficient and far-reaching than the internal (*corporate*) provider. I wouldn't really see it that way. I would see that the internal provider only has NOVOCORP's interests at heart if you know what I mean. Now, it might not be the most efficient

and there are always improvements that can be brought to bear, if you know what I mean. The internal service provider should outsource appropriately. That is now part of the corporate IT strategy and I was part of the working group that helped formulate the strategy that their outsourcing is done as effectively as possible. The thinking has moved now, if we're thinking of a new business capability, they would be thinking more along the lines of managed services and whatever else. The thinking is definitely moving but not fast enough.

So, you would feel that they're holding on to more traditional (IT) practices?

Yes, I wouldn't see the IT and BP function in the business as managing that outsourcing. I would expect and hope that they (the corporate IT function) would manage the outsourcing.

So, you might suggest certain capabilities or services for outsourcing?

No, they should advise me (EMPHASIS). Like really, they're the technical gurus. Whereas certainly, some level of technical expertise is required here. In the long run, they'll be to some degree required here. But the everyday skills, expertise, know-how is central (to the corporate IT function) and should stay central. They should come to me and suggest potentials for outsourcing as in 'We could provide this cheaper or whatever'.

So, they're the ones making the economic calls?

Yes, like 'We could provide or outsource this, but not that as it is too risky or whatever'.

So, you could decide what you can afford to hold onto or let go...

Again, they should recommend what to outsource, what's best value. They should look after all that for the business, you know. That's what I feel.

Maybe, come back with some options?

Yes, maybe they could present a set of options; 'You could outsource this, the cost would be this, the risk to the business would be this' or an alternative approach in recommending one option "a" as opposed to others. That's the kind of discussion but we're not there yet.

Do you feel such an approach would be welcomed by the other business units?

Yes, I would imagine so. Again, there is another council or group across AGOCORP, a governance council called the IT technical council, which I represent NOVOCORP on. And Tommy (*Walsh, NOVOCORP Financial Controller*) represents NOVOCORP at an IT leadership council which is at a much more senior level. But the IT technical council would definitely feel that, I would think.

Do you hear your peers discussing (these issues)?

Well, all business managers or leaders want the most cost effective solution that is most appropriate.

In terms of implementing a new system, I realise we're talking about a complicated process but you might just describe the process as it currently works in NOVOCORP? As in, who and what's involved, what committees etc in the case of say implementing a new system like the SAP project that Tommy Walsh mentioned to me earlier? He discussed in detail how this project decision was arrived at, how it originated from the parent (AGOCORP) and the integration pressures taking Tommy's view from a financial perspective...

Mmm (REFLECTING).

And that there was a strong business case made for it as well... Just in terms of how it would play out in terms of the organisational processes...

Well, it's definitely different for a specific project than just considering a service for example. That particular (AGRESSO to SAP Implementation) project came on foot of a business case that was approved both in the business and the CIO (Chief Information Officer). Not all business lines (AGOCORP subsidiaries) have their business cases approved by the CIO but I always do...

Is that not usually the case?

Well, he (*the CIO*) wants us to and I believe that's the way good governance should work so I'd adhere to it. Then, the business case is established or approved and is done so on the basis that the project will be managed to best principles using PRINCE2 (*a project management methodology*). So that requires a project board with the normal roles...

When you say normal roles, who or what do you mean?

A project executive or sponsor, a senior user and a senior supplier (*of IT services*) and adheres to IT governance processes. Other than that there are no other defined forums, just the project board and the project team itself.

Are the project board and team typically composed of the same members on an ongoing basis or does it typically vary project by project?

No, no (EMPHASIS); definitely varies project to project. Usually member composition depends on the person compiling it (*the group or team*). This is an important part of my role that relates to governance in that I aim to insure that project boards are constituted properly as in that the right people are on them. Quite often, what used to happen and may still happen in some parts of AGOCORP

is that people are asked to go on project boards because there is a feeling that they would have some interest in the project. It can happen that their roles and responsibilities are unclear. Now, in a project board the responsibilities attached to the roles is very explicit and much understood. So, taking the example of the SAP project again, I have briefed and trained all the project board members on their responsibilities and they are fully aware of them (*their responsibilities*).

Are they interested in SAP and enthusiastic?

Oh Yes, they're very keen to fulfil their project board role and be effective. So it's great; we definitely have them where we want them right now... which is good. While it's (*project board preparation and training*) something I would like to do with every project in NOVOCORP, it is definitely something that did not happen in the past...

In what way?

Getting the composition right and getting everyone clear as to what their roles are. People don't always realise that they have to do certain things and insure certain things and that's why they're on the project board...If you take the role of the senior user on a project board, they often think 'I'm here to represent the interests of the users and to get the system to be the way that they (and I) want and I'm here to make demands'. Now, this is right in that they're representing the users and making sure that the users' specifications are brought to the board, that the specifications are brought and detailed appropriately and that the users are motivated for involvement in testing.

But, one key thing is that are responsible for putting up user resources for the project; they are responsible for providing people to test and being involved in user acceptance testing and design, for all phases. People (*Senior Users*) often don't realise that they're responsible for that...

They're not just an advocate for the user population...

Yes, instead of just mouthing off about what the user wants, they have to produce the goods too. So that (*misunderstanding*) is often a problem we have on project boards, it's something we're very aware of and it's (*management*) is something that can protect the project. It's not just the senior user, senior suppliers, the executive all have specific responsibilities.

Could you clarify what you mean by senior supplier?

The senior supplier represents the company or the group that is providing the (*IT*) products or raw materials for the project. So again, if we're talking about the SAP project, then the senior supplier is the ICT function within AGOCORP, represented by Eoghan Barrett. He is the person in the position to have authority over the

resources that would be required to deliver the IT component of the project, like the SAP experts, the testing manager, the bases people...

Are they all totally within the corporate IT function?

Nearly all, they've had to recruit two or three people, people expert in areas of SAP where we haven't configured before.

Once, the project board is formed, does the project simply begin?

The project board initiates the project on the basis of a project initiation document (PID) which is again standard PRINCE. That document defines the scope of the project, the roles and responsibilities and the controls. The project operates on the basis of that PID and the project board is regularly briefed on progress by the project manager (*who heads up the project team*). The project board critically approves movement between the different stages of the project, so the board approves the initiation of the project, it approves the design that is developed, approves the move from design to build, approves the build and approves the move into Go-Live; 'I'm happy to approve the Go-Live on this project given the information you've presented to me on the progress of the project; this board and I the executive are happy that this project can go-live'.

Assuming no problems post Go-Live is the project board then de-constituted or does it stay together a little longer?

Well typically, a project will last for a few months post Go-Live and would be in a post Go-Live support phase. The project board would still meet at that stage. Then there is a handover to regular support normally once all is well. Now regular support is usually central but sometimes third-party (*external*) support may be used if the project needs to be, due to lack of internal expertise or development has been done by a third party. The project board can pull the plug on a project at any time if the board deems it to be the best thing for the organisation...

Does that happen often, where the plug is pulled?

I've seen it happen once...

What were the circumstances, if you can discuss them?

(LAUGHS QUIETLY). That was a few years ago; it was about six years ago. It was a SAP project for AGOCORP. I was appointed project manager for the project and the first thing I did was a risk analyses. This was a very high risk project and I recommended to the project board that it would be stopped...

Was the risk in terms of customer impact on the ground?

No, it was more the project risk itself; standard PRINCE again; carrying out a standard risk analyses of a project would be done early on and you monitor the risks as well as identifying any additional risks as the project moves on.

Is Risk Analyses a project manager's responsibility?

Yes, the project manager is responsible for logging the risks and that the risks are followed around the project. Depending on the type of risk, its probability (of occurrence) its impact, it will be monitored at different levels. Some risks would be monitored by the board, some by the project manager, some risks by subject matter experts depending on the nature of risks.

So design issues, user testing problems...

No, they'd be considered more bugs or defects, project issues rather than risks. A risk may never happen but a project issue or set of issues are highly likely to occur. They can still damage the project, issues like unavailability of certain important users for testing or inability to get them to a testing location. It could be anything whereas a risk could never happen but if it did happen, would likely to have substantial impact on the project, but that's project management for you! These are all standard processes but it's actually a very slow process to get an organisation the size of NOVOCORP to follow and adhere to all these standards. But there's a need for it (*the PRINCE2 project management processes*) in big IT investments and we're getting there, albeit slowly.

Is PRINCE2 standard across all of AGOCORP?

It is, but the extent to which it is used properly varies, varies a lot. You can go to the 'nth' level (*extreme level of project methodology*). Now, I've never seen a project go to the 'nth' level. I wouldn't be too worried about that but what can go wrong and what can matter is that project managers and project boards believe that if they have project teams and boards, then the project is being managed to PRINCE2 methodology standards. They might have an issue log and they often call it a risk/issue log which tells you they just don't know the difference between them. That's about the extent of what I often see; they're not really using PRINCE2 appropriately...

They have all the trappings of PRINCE2...

Yes, what you see the whole time (EMPHASIS) is that project managers themselves don't see the value of PRINCE2 even though they've had all the training. They look on PRINCE2 as paperwork; they look on it like 'Oh, I must update my issue log'. They don't really apply the tools and principles of PRINCE2 to manage the project.

So, just to confirm project boards typically outlive a project but do get broken up eventually?

Yes, in most cases. Sometimes, a project may have certain components and be more like a program board and a program team...

None of these PRINCE2 processes apply to service provision in any way?

No, services are completely different...You might have a service like Microsoft Office 2007 and it would work like this. The IT governance council would decide how this service provision would work, the same with anything like roll-out of encrypted lap-tops for example. It is absolutely error prone, messy, difficult and terrible (EMPHASIS). I could get on a complete hobby horse about this and of course this is completely confidential with respect to your research... Quite often, it's (*the problems*) because of a lack of project management experience in the central IT function. Second, the concept of a pilot approach is to get a 100 or 200 lads in the central IT department to try it out for a while and see if it's OK whereas actually releasing it out to the target business users in a controlled way with proper piloting and support is not done. I could give you numerous examples where this has happened like laptop encryption, Citrix for example. Anything that's been rolled out in the last number of years was very difficult from a user point of view...

Has there been any improvement or attempt to formalise rollouts?

Yes, the IT department is trying to implement change in how it does its own business, particularly around work management and performance management and its business relationship management. That might help but one key thing is that the central IT department does not have a project management office, which is amazing for a company of the size of AGOCORP. So there's no project management function or experience acquisition...

Do they have on call on some IT expertise in project management experience on an ad-hoc level?

Some people are appointed project managers. Now, they be very good technical people but are they good project managers? Some people are good project managers, some are not. It's a very specific skill and some people have it, some don't. Some people can be trained and some people will never have it. But, you can't assume people have it (*project management expertise*); you have to show them how it's down, support and mentor them etc, and this is easier in a PMO (*Project Management Office*) environment. Now that's what I think, if you talk to other people you might get a different view...

So that (*PMO*) structure doesn't exist, so if you're rolling out something specific for all of AGOCORP and NOVOCORP you appoint a good strong technical person to lead it. They might be good technically but they might be a poor project manager, they might be poor on issue resolution or even issue identification. They would probably be not good either on risk identification and mitigation. Stakeholder

management they'd probably be very weak on but they could be good with the particular technology...

Better at the hard than the softer skills?

Yes, so it runs into all sorts of problems and not testing enough, not taking an ordinary difficult user like an engineering user (who's quite a complicated user with past exposure to multiple packages) but rather an office-based user with simpler needs who passes testing more easily. This (*the latter*) is usually how it's done. This is typically where problems arise and we (*NOVOCORP*) have the highest concentration of problem users if you like because we have 700 engineers (*out of 1300 people*).

It's coming towards ten-to the hour so we can finish up there. Thanks so much for your time.

No problem.

Location: Corporate headquarters/ **Date:** 20th January 2010/ **Duration:** 29 mins, 25 secs.

Interviewee: Thomas Mulcahy, Project Manager (SAP HR and Financials), NOVOCORP.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

OK, Thomas, if you have a few minutes you might talk about what your general roles and responsibilities are?

OK, for a number of years I worked in IT Governance in AGOCORP Head Office, which looked at IT Investment, Business Investment and the alignment of IT with Business Strategy for the whole company (Exp: AGOCORP Corporate and sub-divisions). In the last month or so (December 2009), I was asked to be project manager on this SAP implementation, SAP HR and Financials project here in AGOCORP. I guess we're getting going on that now. We launched our project formally yesterday (Tuesday, the 19th of January 2010) and we're now beginning the blueprinting phase, which will be officially kicking off Monday week the 1st of February. This (the project) will take the full year with a Go-Live date at end-of-year, December 2010.

At the end of the business year?

Well, it has to coincide with the business year-end because it is a financial implementation. It is a lot cleaner that way. It doesn't make sense to do it any other way so we have no choice to do it at any other time, OK?

OK, that's great. In terms of your own words, maybe you might talk about what you feel the business and IS Strategy of the unit (Exp: NOVOCORP) is, how they connect together, how they align?

I would feel it's quite strong in NOVOCORP to be honest. Having seen other business units (within NOVOCORP), I would feel this would be one of the stronger ones. Over here, there is the view, and in my view, it's the correct view that first of all Business strategy has to come first. We're not an IT house, IT should not decide the strategies we should take; it's the other way around. IT strategy only really supports the business decisions we may have. It's an enabler rather than a driver. OK? I know here in NOVOCORP the unit that they have in IT and business process, the IT/BP and the set-up that they have and the way that they've structured it is very much around first of all what is the business strategy and then what do we need to put into place, IT-wise to support it. So I think it's, they (NOVOCORP) had a

very good exercise to look at the (IT) strategy, I think it was in 2007 and that outlined really the direction that they wanted to take in terms of how IT strategy would support the business.

Was that externally facilitated?

Well, that depends on who you talk to. Certainly, a lot of it was done internally by them but some of it was facilitated externally by CCC. OK?

That's fine. So would it be your belief that for the IT and Business strategies in this unit, that their alignment would be pretty strong, because of the strong processes, governance and the way in which the strategies link to one another?

Yeah, if you look at the decision making processes here (NOVOCORP), once a quarter, there is an IT council here. Only one IT person is on that council, the rest of the people are business people and they drive the meeting.

They're making the decisions about where IT investment is going to go. In my previous experience, I would have been looking at IT planning in here (NOVOCORP), what they're planning to invest in, in IT and it is really is the case of supporting the business.

One of the things about the IT strategy, one of the areas where it needs to be strong and perhaps even stronger over here (NOVOCORP), and it certainly was a weakness in the past, the odd time, is individual businesses processes here or business units here tending to go it alone when it came to IT decision making. They needed to be reined back in and (told) 'We need to do this together; we need to do this collaboratively'. For instance, there could be a specific function related to some business process that is required. There could be a third-party supplier that they could have talked to in order to supply them with a solution in that particular area OK?

You mean, outside the formal organisational procedures (in NOVOCORP)?

(Yes) Outside the formal procedures, I mean we have very strict (IT) guidelines in: We buy, not build; we have rules on procurement and purchasing that are strict and proper. We have a "SAP, Unless" strategy which means SAP is our first port of call (as an organisation) and there needs to be a good reason why you don't go through SAP. Now, SAP does not provide every solution and (we may need other systems), but you must go through a series of steps before you can arrive at (selecting) your third-party supplier who may be quite local or small.

So, there would be strong emphases on guidelines and procedures to make sure that there are no "solo runs" as such?

Exactly, Exactly (EMPHATIC), now when we look at the (SAP) project that I'm currently involved in, you'd have to say that the IT strategy hasn't always

supported the business. The solution that we're building in, what it's replacing. If you look at the system we're replacing, the IT support is weak, it's really weak (EMPHASIS).

Is this the AGRESSO system you're talking about?

I'm not casting dispersions on AGRESSO itself, OK? When you look at AGRESSO, when you look at the process of getting data into AGRESSO, sometimes, it's quite manual, sometimes it's not as it should be. Then, to extract the data in the way that they want it, present the data in the way that they want it and use the data in the way that they want to, they often have to go to (Microsoft) Excel or Access. There's a lot of external non-integrated use put to that data OK which brings its own risks and problems. We have had problems in the past where we've had misrepresentations because of mistakes being made. What we'd like to see and what we see in the rest of the company is the fully integrated SAP solution, which means you don't have to extract to external, the manual intervention is almost gone. The risk of mistakes and errors is greatly reduced, greatly reduced (EMPHASIS). OK?

So is there a strong customer focus, governance focus and a very strong business case for replacing AGRESSO with SAP?

There is. The business case is, the trouble with the current solution is the huge amount of manual intervention required. That almost makes the business case stand up by itself. In fact, it does.

The labour savings alone would probably be quite dramatic?

Exactly, exactly (SPEAKER'S OWN REPETITION). In addition to that, the speed at which we'll be able to get the data we require, the confidence that we'll have in the quality and accuracy of the data, the stability of the system and the low risk nature of having a company-wide system hosted and managed by our (corporate) IT department rather than a couple of people in here (Exp: as per the current state of AGRESSO in NOVOCORP).

The fact that your parent company uses it as well implies they'll be some additional (integration) value as well.

There is, there is (SPEAKER'S OWN REPETITION). There are an awful lot of intangible benefits (resulting) there as well as the tangible efficiency benefits we hope to gain as well.

Given that AGRESSO is a system that has been here quite a while and people are used to it, are comfortable with it, right or wrong. How did you feel (so far) the selling of the new system has gone?

Well, you're using the past tense there John; that's probably not what we should be using yet unfortunately (LAUGHS). That's a key thing about this project though. The most difficult part of this project is going to be the change management, the "sell" to the stakeholder, end-user buy-in. OK. Now, here, right up to the very top to the Managing Director of NOVOCORP and his senior management team, they're a hundred percent behind this (SAP project), they've made this decision, they're fully supportive of it and this is the best thing for NOVOCORP. Now, when we filter that (support) down, that's going to be a massive support for us in having that enthusiasm and that support from senior management. OK? But, when we filter it down, we're going to need various forms of support and buy-in and it's up to us to manage that. We've got a dedicated change manager working on the team with me now, but it's the most difficult challenge of this project.

Naturally enough, you'll probably have some levels of resistance along the way?

Yes

And they'll have to be overcome...

Exactly, but it will be about communication, it will be about end-user engagement; it will be about pointing out the benefits OK? It will be about like, it won't always be the case that everything will be better than what it was in the past (when SAP is introduced). It won't always be the case that we'll have the flexibility that we currently have. It won't always be the case in (terms of) ease of use. As you say, people have gotten used to using a certain system in a certain way and as I said to you, there's an awful amount of use of Excel. Now, no system like SAP could ever provide the flexibility and power in terms of (data) reporting that Excel could do...

Lack of modularity...

Exactly, the danger is that people because they haven't been able to get the data out of AGRESSO in the way they need to, they have then gone off and build their own requirements but we have to bring all that back into one unified way of doing things. So there will be resistance to that, I'm sure there will be but we have to work through (that).

There might also be the case of some emotional attachment to these (add-on) systems that people have created...

Yes, when you think of the guy who's talking to me recently about the Access database he had built (as an add-on to AGRESSO) (Ref: who is interviewed at a later stage). There's definitely emotional attachment to that. And, it will be difficult to replace that fully as in the look and feel, flexibility etc. It's something that over the course of the year, we have to obtain that buy-in, we have no chance.

And that year ends in December with Go-Live...

Yes.

Is it the case in December (with the Go-Live) that AGRESSO will be switched off and SAP will go live or will there be a phased introduction (of SAP)?

No, there's no phased introduction. From next January on (2011), SAP is *the* (SPEAKER'S EMPHASIS) system. Now we won't switch AGRESSO off immediately. I don't intend to migrate historic data, but for a period of time, we will need AGRESSO in the background in case anybody needs to access the historic data (Ref: example of purchase orders outstanding identified by Accounts Payable manager interviewed later).

Will there be some parallel processing?

Certainly not, no (EMPHASIS). In my experience, parallel runs cause their own difficulties, particularly in this case where we need people to fundamentally change the way they do things, OK? I mean there will be a change of the (business) process by which people do things every day. So from that sense, it doesn't make sense.

You don't want people to feel that they can go back to the old (AGRESSO) system.

But how do you get the buy-in when they (the users) know that safety net is still here? You have to bite the bullet. Also the business case stacks up and parallel processing by its nature uses double the resources so (LAUGHS) or one and a half times at least. Over many different projects in many different countries, we've (AGOCORP/NOVOCORP) have come to the conclusion that parallel processing isn't really ideal.

So, just to talk generally about parallel processing in the organisation (AGOCORP/NOVOCORP) in general, is it the case that so much effort is expended on design and testing, that parallel processing is not considered necessary?

Well, the reason you'd have parallel processing is to build confidence, acts as a safety net. If something goes wrong with the new system, we can switch back to the old. It should never be about that a case where if somebody doesn't like it (the system) or buy into it, that you can just bring back the old system, because you never get it (the new system accepted) then. So, what we tend to do in AGOCORP and NOVOCORP is that we need to ensure and make certain that we have a huge level of confidence in the testing we carry out at many levels throughout the project. So, we've a very strong testing strategy, I believe in our IT projects and it's got us into difficulties in the past with some of our implementation partners. I recall being on the PHR system implementation, we were implementing a Payroll and SAP HR system across the organisation. I remember specifically when we were looking at (testing) the Payroll component of the system, it was just after the

PPARS debacle that hadn't gone so well (Exp: the infamous Personal, Payroll And Related Services SAP system rolled out in the Irish Health Services in 2003 and 2004 which was a hugely expensive functional failure). We had SAP in here with us (as implementation partner) and their attitude was to 'Put it live, find the problems and then we'll fix them'. Now, there was (implementation partner) suggested testing but it was nowhere near broad or detailed enough for the kind of testing we would need to do for a live Payroll system. Such a system is very critical for us, if people do not get paid, if their money isn't in their bank account on a Friday morning, then they may not go to work that day. For example, some of our divisions would not be able to function...

All those safety implications as well...

You know (NODS AGREEMENT). We have continuously found in our dealings with external partners that our (required) levels of testing are far greater and higher than that advised or provided. So, as we proceed towards Go-live, the testing approach taken provides us a high level of confidence, which then reduces the need for a parallel approach (to AGRESSO/SAP changeover).

So the golden rule (in dealing with implementation partners) is that they accede to your level of testing requirements?

Oh Yes (EMPHASIS & LAUGHS), absolutely. I mean if you like, he that pays the piper, picks the tune. I mean the implementation partner is here to help you implement the project which you as project manager oversee and you (as project manager), the project board and project team are answerable to the project executive or sponsor. So, you have to be confident yourself with what you're going to go live with.

Generally, when you look back, now I know you haven't been in NOVOCORP for a very long period of time, but from your experience, would you say the history of IS overall is positive in NOVOCORP or have there been some issues/mistakes?

In the last couple of years, from what I've seen and been involved in and usually my involvement as been in terms of IT governance, in (IT) project monitoring for example, what I've been involved in, tends to be successful. (NOVOCORP IT Projects that are) successful tend to put rigour and be strong in project governance, they (project team and affiliated members) tend to be strong on the support that they give to projects more so than other business units (within AGOCORP) I believe. They tend to spot the problems, spot the issues, and get actions to resolve them.

Would their (NOVOCORP's) ability to put business strategy first and align IT strategy successfully be part of their (IT project) success?

Yes, exactly.

Generally, when you think about the strategies of the unit, what in your own words do you feel are the business and IT strategies of the unit (NOVOCORP)?

Well, the business strategy of NOVOCORP is markedly different from the rest of the company; it's markedly different in the culture of the place, the people in the place. This is our (AGOCORP's) hope... Any growth we (AGOCORP) will have as a company will come out of NOVOCORP. And the energy and the drive you see around here is clear and is markedly different to maybe back at base, back in the parent company. The business strategy is trying I guess, in my own words, what I can see is to achieve business growth, sustainable profitable growth, so to look at opportunities, to make the most of them and to create sustainable and profitable business lines at home and abroad.

Just to come back to the IS strategy, I know you said earlier that the business strategy comes first and that the IS strategy is just an enabler in NOVOCORP. Do you feel that is the case generally across the organisation (as in the whole of AGOCORP) or is NOVOCORP particularly effective or strong strategically?

No, I would feel that across the company, that that's generally the case across the company. First things first, the business strategy has to be first. I would have had senior managers say to me in Networks; 'Look, this is an IT project and you need to do x, y, z and you need to put this and that in place'. I'd be saying to them like in Networks or in Generation, 'This is a Networks project or a Generation project, there is a role for IS and it's supporting us'. I guess that's the right approach, what we're trying to say (as project managers) is that 'You can order the IT piece up front but in order for it to be as successful as it can be, you need to have all the governance, checks and balances in place'. But the general feeling in NOVOCORP and across the board in the organisation is that 'Look, we make the decisions we make for a business reason; if we need IT to support or enable us, then that's when IT can get involved'. That's as it should be. For an IT department, it can be difficult for them to distinguish between a business strategy and an IT strategy because that's (IT) their business. But again, our overarching reason for being in IT is to support the business not to be our own independent entity.

Just to come back to the SAP system just starting, could you talk a little bit about how the project came about, the implementation process as you see it, how it will be rolled out, the key milestones etc?

This implementation has been spoken about for a number of years and would have been recommended as far back as 2007. The reasons would be some of the business case issues we talked about earlier we talked about earlier; the inefficiencies associated with it (AGRESSO) and the non-integrated nature of it. The rest of the business, 5 out of the 6 business units in AGOCORP have SAP; we need to get the sixth one (i.e. NOVOCORP) up for consistency. If AGOCORP is going to reorganise and different business lines end-up moving across to different business units, then we all have to be on the same line. If not, that would be an obstacle to that reorganisation happening. So, for a variety of reasons that stood up, back in

2007 the business decision was made to go with SAP. There is one instance of SAP already in the company (NOVOCORP) in Financials and HR and we have another one for billing but that would be separate. Because we have one SAP solution in AGOCORP, there are advantages and disadvantages to it. The big advantage is the integrated nature, now the disadvantage is that we all need to wait our turn in the queue to get at the (corporate SAP) system and make our own customised changes to it, which may have some knock-on effects on the other business units we interact with. So, the reason for the gap in time between making the business decision to go with SAP in 2007 and the actual execution decision here now in 2010 is because we've had to turn to get at the SAP R/3 environment.

So there's a natural progression of events to this point?

Yes, as I said to two other people the other day, I compared it to a runway and we have to wait for our take-off slot. Now, originally the project was supposed to start last year (i.e. 2009) but there was a significant project (Exp: XYZ project implemented for AGOCORP Networks, another AGOCORP business unit) in AGOCORP Networks which was delayed for six months. Now, we could have pushed forward at that point but our Go-Live has to coincide with the end of the business year so we decided to wait. The advantage of waiting those few months is that they (the Corporate IT Department) have updated to the latest version of the SAP environment, which is an advantage to us in NOVOCORP because we're going to moving directly to the upgraded newest version. So, even if we had moved over to SAP earlier, the upgrade would have happened anyway which would have additional work, time and testing for NOVOCORP. So, NOVOCORP are in a nice position where they can let the rest of AGOCORP work on the upgrade and once that's happened then we come on board. That said though, it's an awful pity from a business strategy point of view with the reorganisation and other things that we've been looking at, we could have done with being on SAP now.

With the delays, it's been said that they were well-justified at senior management level. But, did you feel that people on the ground bought into the fact that it was going to be delayed? As you were saying, it was 2007 when it first decided; would the users of AGRESSO, how do they feel and would you think their acceptance of the (SAP) system would be affected by the delay or were they aware of it?

I think people would have been aware of it all right, aware of the delay and it was something we had to live with.

You don't think that it has added to the difficulty of implementing the system?

Not necessarily, I don't think so, I don't think so (SPEAKER'S OWN REPETITION). As the company grows, and the company does continue to grow, OK? If the company continues to grow and accelerates that growth, please God, it only proves to people more and more and makes it more obvious to people that AGRESSO and Excel/Access and other tied-on solutions are not suitable for our business and our

level of business activity. As we have grown over the last year and continue to grow, it has increased the acceptance of SAP in one way.

So, the business case is so strong and people will be (saying/thinking) if it (SAP implementation) happens, it happens. They're willing to understand that they have to wait...

And as another year goes by, it only strengthens the business case, you know? Because of the business lines, the level of business activity out there and the reorganisation. I mean Business strategy doesn't stand still. Just because we haven't implemented SAP, business growth doesn't stand still. So, it only strengthens the business requirement for this (SAP implementation).

So as time goes on also, and the problems with AGRESSO become more obvious, would you look on that as a factor as well, do you think?

You certainly could, you certainly could (SPEAKER'S OWN REPETITION). Any of the business processes within the Financial area, OK are very labour intensive, very labour intensive (SPEAKER'S OWN REPETITION) OK? I'm talking about the purchasing system, the invoicing system OK? The accounting administration processes behind our (general business) projects are very labour intensive. The more business we have, the greater the volume of financial transactions we have, the more exacerbated that problem becomes, the more it's highlighted, the easier it should be to implement a solution.

So over the next 10-12 months, how do you see the (implementation) process unfolding?

OK, well as I said to you (earlier) we're at the final stages of mobilisation phase. Our blueprint phase...We're adopting the standard SAP implementation phases. So in other words (after mobilisation) the phases are the blueprinting phase, followed by realisation, and followed by preparation, then Go-Live and support. Blueprint is from Feb 1st to the end of May followed by Realisation is from 1st of June to the end of September, followed by Final Preparation from the start of October onto November and December (ending with Go-Live).

So mobilisation is where you're at now?

Yes, mobilisation is about getting the (SAP project) team together, getting them the access, the background, the training they need. Understanding the scope (of the implementation), getting the project initiation document signed off by the project board, getting the pieces in place.

Is appointing the Change Manager part of this phase usually? I know you've decided to appoint someone internally (Exp: Fergal Flynn).

Yes, well it's a decision NOVOCORP have made. It wouldn't always be the case (to appoint a change manager in AGOCORP IT projects) and they should be applauded for that. It's already shown itself (the change management role) to be useful. We've already started to meet some of the key stakeholders here, some of the key end-users here, some of the key people affected by this change and starting and working to get their buy-in and I can already see that. Sometimes you wouldn't get involved, say in our (SAP) project with a change manager or a transition manager (Exp: Business Implementation Manager Role appointed officially in July 2010 although the role was intended to be filled in April 2010) maybe until August or September, say probably August. Training and User Acceptance Testing (Note: UAT not utilised at testing time at all as an operational term which may be important) won't happen until around October and that might be usually the timeframe you'd be looking at (for the appointment of change and transition managers). I think that's there's a huge advantage in this case in terms of the level of change involved in the company (NOVOCORP) to get that the change manager here now.

I suppose you may get some purchase around the (SAP) system early on if you can get end-user involvement and buy-in...

Exactly, exactly (SPEAKER'S OWN REPETITION).

Should then be easier to get involvement in testing etc later on in the implementation?

Exactly, exactly (SPEAKER'S OWN REPETITION). As part of mobilisation, I was going through the project team; you know what we plan to do, when we plan to do it, why we plan to do it and some of the things we should look for. There's an American Group, I can't remember the name of the group but the number one reason they give for lack of success in an IT project is lack of end-user buy-in and they recommend nine steps for doing it...

The Gartner group...

That's the one, it's an interesting read and they give 8 or 9 steps to implement (to manage end-user buy-in). We looked at the steps and we think we have all of them covered with the exception maybe of the evangelist (Exp: a promoter of the SAP implementation who builds a strong coalition of support for the new technology); who we have to find still. The culture in NOVOCORP is maybe different to a US culture (as in the use of an evangelist) and that said the change manager has been appointed from within that (future SAP end-user) constituency and is a guy that people have a lot of time for.

He is an internal person...

Oh Yes...

An internal AGOCORP (corporate) person?

Oh No, he is an internal NOVOCORP person (EMPHASIS), part of the engineering community (within NOVOCORP) and as such representative of one of the key groups of users to be affected by this change.

So, a real end-user so to speak...

He is, he is (SPEAKER'S OWN REPETITION).

We can finish there, Thomas; that was great.

No problem at all.

Location: Corporate headquarters/ **Date:** 17th February 2010/ **Duration:** 49 mins.

Interviewee: Christy Ryan, Head of Engineering, NOVOCORP Engineering Solutions.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

So Christy, you might describe your role a little bit, your job title, responsibilities...

For the purposes of this, I suppose I'm in a new role for the last month, so my earlier roles might be more relevant as that's where I would have gained the experience of working with IT. I was head of engineering operations, looking after all the service delivery to AGOCORP Group from NOVOCORP. We're the biggest engineering entity within the NOVOCORP group, about 600 professional engineers and technicians from right across NOVOCORP providing engineering services and expertise to AGOCORP Group essentially. So, I suppose we're different from the rest of NOVOCORP in that they tend to be focused on managing the (utility) assets and providing the supply (to commercial consumers); that's their bread and butter. We're more (along the lines of) bread and butter in selling engineering services.

In terms of your involvement with past IT projects, what has been your involvement? Has it been more of a tangential role?

I suppose there's different involvement depending on the kind of IT systems...We'd have SAP ourselves here within the NOVOCORP group and there are others (systems) where we're part of the AGOCORP group and others part of the NOVOCORP organisation. In terms of the systems themselves, the IT here (in NOVOCORP) is different to what it was in years past, in terms of being managed. Definitely, better managed although there are still certain issues around it. There was a certain amount of adhocism about it in the past, there was a complete lack of standardisation in terms of how IT was presented; engineering would have done its thing, other parts would have done something completely different with no real move towards standardising it as such.

I'd say in recent times, over the last five or six years in getting systems in place that support the business rather than getting systems in and seeing where we can support the business.

So, business becoming more of a driver?

Yes.

Rather than IT being the driver?

Yes, and much more involvement from the staff themselves in how to present that. Now, certain systems would have been used and be quite successfully internally (within NOVOCORP). For example, the NOVOCORP Intranet is used quite well, sometimes by some more than others and sometimes in certain places (within NOVOCORP) and not at all in others; but that's more of a cultural thing. It can be used a lot more and we can pursue that later (in the interview). What are being focused on more now are more the managements and documents through the SharePoint initiative. Going back (in time), everything was in paper form but at least you could find it. When we went to e-mail, we went a bit scatty but we do manage it a lot better through SharePoint files and (although) I think it could be improved as access to SharePoint is cumbersome and people don't always know how to access files and don't know where they are so it's not perfect.

In terms of what you've said there in terms of technology and what a lot of people have said to me as well is that people were often left to their own devices and had a lot of freedom to go away and create their own systems if they saw a need for it. How do people feel about maybe losing their autonomy?

It's pretty mixed and often pretends on where people are working. There are some parts of the organisation where because of the nature of the work, tends to encourage people to be innovative. Innovation is fine, but it can be a bit of a free-for-all and it can be hard to know where one (system) stops and the other starts. In some of those areas, they need it (freedom to create own systems). You can get guys like commissioning plants who are using very specific systems; so the ideas that you can force them into a (IT Governance) structure; it would eventually mean that their business will get more difficult, no matter what way you intend to approach it. So, you have to compromise it (IT Governance Vs Autonomy) at the same time. One of the disadvantages we suffer from in NOVOCORP; now it's also an advantage but it's definitely a disadvantage in some respects is being part of an IT system that is part of an utility utilities system, with all the risk management that has to go into that. AGOCORP's SCADA (*Note: SCADA stands for supervisory control and data acquisition. It generally refers to industrial control systems such as those that monitor transmission in utility systems*) and IT systems are all on the same platform...

Oh, OK...

So, a lot of our security systems, we actually don't need (them) for our own business but AGOCORP definitely need them.

So, you've inherited a lot of extra levels that you ideally wouldn't (want)...

Exactly, exactly (SPEAKERS OWN REPETITION). It can make a bit of difference (SCADA) but it's managed. On the other hand, a lot of people would prefer the standardised approach but as long as we get the support with it. What was felt as a disadvantage in NOVOCORP, rightly or wrongly and it a lot of it is issue (driven) in fairness was that the (Corporate) IT Group in AGOCORP Head Office was focused on (their own systems) and that our interests which were different we're not being addressed. Now that has changed; having someone like Lorna come aboard to manage it and has refocused things (for Corporate IT) and that we have needs as well. That's being addressed and that helps. If they see that their concerns are being addressed, that goes a long way towards improving their confidence so that has happened.

I suppose that ad-hoc element has moved a little to be more governed more conformed but there's still a little informality in the background?

There's some, I think now that's manageable and being addressed. I guess we'll have to accept a level of individuality here that you don't have in the AGOCORP and manage it. There a much bigger much more singularly focused organisation...

So, have the (governance) frameworks but also have a little bit of informality here?

Well, the big difference is that we're international and they're not. So, you know, how does someone in Bahrain have access to files of documents? Will have to be through the internet or some other intermediary system which can't be owned by the AGOCORP...

So, would you feel, if you were to try and sum-up the degree of relationship between the corporate offices and here, you would feel that it is becoming more interconnected (in terms of IT)?

Oh, definitely; but not just in terms of IT. The business itself (NOVOCORP) is becoming much more integrated, is one way of putting it AGOCORP and would be much less stand-alone than it was say 10, 15 years ago.

In terms of the IS, do you see IS as supporting the IS strategy or do you see Business as still driving the IS strategy to some degree and it (the IS) has become more of a secondary consideration?

(I think that) Depends on the project. Now, you mentioned the SAP project earlier; that hasn't been introduced yet here into NOVOCORP, but it's in AGOCORP Networks which we do a lot of business with and so we've been pulled into their implementation of SAP (Note: interviewee referring to XYZ Implementation) and if

you just look at it in terms of impact that it has on us and the way we do business. It makes us very inefficient, it makes us do work that previously we wouldn't have had reason to do and there's no added value if you look at it in a very narrow sense. However, if you look at it from an AGOCORP Group perspective, they would feel it's very beneficial as they have an overall view or look at things. It has imposed a discipline on them and that has enabled them to get access to data that they not have had access to before, which is highly useful in a regulated environment (Note: interviewee referring to deregulating utility market). Costs can be much more readily tracked and they can track at a given time where the costs are coming from in a project, so they get great service from the package. Now, we don't get a whole lot out of this as we were doing this manually anyway which was more simple. We will have to train people specifically to use this system which is quite cumbersome. So if we were to look at this from an NOVOCORP perspective, we'd say 'Get rid of this, this is of no benefit to us', but it us to AGOCORP...

When you say 'us' now, you are referring to the engineers?

Yes, the effort that NOVOCORP engineering puts into the XYZ system is just cost. There's nothing there we weren't doing manually already, but it's being integrated into a bigger AGOCORP (SAP) system that brings an overall AGOCORP benefit.

OK, so would you feel perhaps that the same views apply to the current SAP system about to be implemented to replace AGRESSO?

Well, we don't really know as we have yet to see the version of SAP that will replace AGRESSO. Now, AGRESSO is not the most user-friendly system anyway so that's one thing that SAP will have in its favour. I suppose (LAUGHS) it was replacing a more user-friendly system, then that would have been more difficult. I don't know really. It will probably be, if the new (SAP) system turns out to be at least as user or as non-user friendly as AGRESSO, then it will probably be accepted fine.

I suppose coming back a little to the (system) adhocracy of the past. I suppose AGRESSO allows them (the users) to do certain things and they have adapted it by adding a bit of EXCEL or ACCESS to it...

Yes, Yes (SPEAKERS OWN REPITITION)...

And that's all going to be put to one side because of the system being rolled out will lead to a lot of their own input and innovation being sidelined. Do you think that's going to be an issue in terms of resistance to change?

No, I don't think that will be an issue as people here are used to change.

In terms of people's attachment to their own workarounds, so to speak?

Well, it's been in existence here since around 2002 or something like that; I'm not quite sure about 7/8 years. For people here, systems change, SAP is standardised across AGOCORP, they'll just accept it. There's also one other important point I think to bear in mind about the nature; you mentioned earlier about the thought of IT driving the business strategy. Now, the business strategy of NOVOCORP engineering has changed anyway. When AGRESSO came in, the business strategy was really about commercial business. That's no longer the driver for it; the core strategy is now about driving the engineering expertise back into AGOCORP (corporate) but at a commercial rate. It's not to make money. If we make A million or B million [Euros] profit, that's not why we're here...it would have been 10 years ago. For us, AGRESSO does not have the same overheads as SAP, so there will be huge resistance to something like SAP from the business point of view; (that is) viewed from the engineering business perspective. Now, viewed from the AGOCORP group perspective, there's a completely different rationale.

What about the change in terms of becoming more internally focused for want of a better word?

I think there was a view that...I suppose it depends on how you view internal trading. If you operate all your businesses as if they were completely separate, then you'd generate a huge amount of overheads where you'd have a situation where you'd two parts of the same business with their own consultants, own lawyers, all of which goes to the same bottom line at the end of the day so why would you do it? That's one reason (for the internal focus increase). Another reason within all of this there's a lot of wasted effort so in 2005 when things were reorganised, that was the rationality for engineering (i.e. to minimise wasted effort) and it was changed in that way.

Other parts of NOVOCORP, the way it was developing and it was developing very quickly. It was mirroring what was already in AGOCORP. You had separate generation companies in AGOCORP and NOVOCORP, you had separate operation and maintenance companies in AGOCORP and NOVOCORP; why would you do that, like? Now, you may have to keep some separation as in these cases for regulatory reasons but that too will change (i.e. as in them being separated).

OK.

From the point of view of managing staff and overheads, it makes no sense to have all these extra staff. And in terms of contracts, having these 80 page contracts...All these invoicing and checking...Now, it (the checking) has to be done to some level in order to maintain cost control but it had reached the stage that the company as a group, people could see no benefit in continuing with this (i.e. the separate

business unit structure). Now, in terms of the work we were doing as engineers, now I mean what we do if something changes in the project we're working on and we have to renegotiate the contract? What happens in practice is that you go away and do it.

And retrospectively resolve it (in terms of the different processes that would need to be followed)...

So, in that sense the rationale for changing AGRESSO is changing also. The fact that it had been seen as having a bigger overhead is not that important anymore. Because (of the reorganisation/ move towards the centre), it's now seen as part of the overall group.

OK, so in terms of SAP and the attitude of the business case for SAP. The support would definitely be stronger in other business units?

Oh, definitely yes. Oh, I mean in AGOCORP Networks it would have been overwhelming I would say in terms of having some system, not necessarily SAP that would integrate all of their inputs so that they have a life-cycle tracking of the costs of their (electrical infrastructure) systems as in cost of putting it in, cost of maintaining and updating it. All of this is essential as it has to feed back to the regulator in order to get their cost increases improved.

Oh, OK...

Have to have this information on hand. Before regulation they wouldn't have had to do it but there would have been supervisors all round the country who would know the status of the plant and the costs involved, the condition of the plant. They have all to get that information to get their price increases through. For them, it's essential to have a system (like XYZ).

Would you feel that other parts of NOVOCORP, like the Financials and HR side, would they feel differently about the business case as well?

Ummm (REFLECTIVELY). My impression would be that HR would be happy enough with the new system as they're dealing directly anyway with HR in AGOCORP (Corporate) so to be all on the same system makes sense.

OK...

That's my impression, now you'd have to ask them yourself...

OK...

Well, I would have felt resistance would have been a lot higher but that was more of a reflection of the system cost rather than anything else. They were seeing no benefit for a lot of extra cost. A lot of the systems they're (AGOCORP Corporate) giving us, we have already, like in HR an on-line system for job applications. Like another system for managing new (project) leads, a lot of the stuff was already computerised on non-AGRESSO systems as well and now will all have to be incorporated into SAP.

As part of the integration.

They'll be other things like expenses for instance that will be done on SAP.

That's been mentioned before as a change from what has been done before in terms of users and how they input expenses?

Now, that's all ready there as SAP system in terms of the payroll is already on SAP and all done centrally. The cost of having a separate one is just... (unpalatable).

I suppose looking back over your time in AGOCORP, since 1973 when you first joined, how would you in your own words describe IT; how has it evolved, has it been a success or has it been more patchy?

I suppose... (REFLECTING) more patchy but it's been patchy everywhere, not just AGOCORP. I think sometimes we lag other companies, looking at other engineering consultancy companies now. Take being out there in the field. You could be out there with GE a few years back and they'd be streets ahead of us (in IT). I would imagine it's still the same now as the (IT) focus is internal within AGOCORP; the main focus is internal rather than trying to optimise the (NOVOCORP) guys working in DDDDDD.

GE etc would be different...

They're totally focused on that, like using satellite communication directly which we do not. Whether we'd need to go that far, I don't know. But we are trying to address it now, more than ever before I would feel. In a recent initiative to address the needs of our externally based, international...I suppose transient staff for want of a better word.

Do you think there was a realisation in practical terms going out there against your competitors that you didn't have...You have a different structure and are part of a bigger organisation so it...

Yeah, in the 90s, I operated in Indonesia for a few years and these guys (competitors) had e-mail which we didn't have. We had kind-of crude systems...We had a type of e-mail but that was internal and they had all of this...

Was it a gradual realisation that your competitors were moving away or was it more sudden and was the message brought back to AGOCORP HQ or was there an embracing of the difficulties?

No (EMPHATIC). Raising or facing the problems of NOVOCORP in head office didn't really count. They were more worried about a strike down in a division somewhere (LAUGHS)...

Do you mean then or topically?

Well, no; because NOVOCORP would have a much higher profile now. Back then NOVOCORP was a purely consulting business with no generation and didn't contribute much to the overall profits of the group. It was away of developing expertise and building experience within the group. In the interim period, NOVOCORP has gone on to build and manage their own divisions and contribute a lot more to AGOCORP profits and so has a much bigger profile...

I suppose the whole deregulation (of the utility supply market) has given you a bit more (influence)...

Yes, that's true yes.

Has that given you more leverage technically speaking or would you have more power or autonomy to push things through?

Well, definitely we'd be taken more seriously. I do yes.

You have an ICT centre (Corporate); would you feel they're taking your requests a bit more seriously?

I would yes.

Do you see in the future developing systems more along your own (lines)?

I do. What I would like to see develop is that we will have less people keeping hordes of e-mails and having more in shared directories, like putting out documents on SHAREPOINT. Developments like that; I mean we brought in a new project management methodology last year and that's been helpful in terms of rolling out (projects) and managing costs. All that documentation is there on

SHAREPOINT and we've seen developments out of that which we didn't expect so...

If you were to look back over your 37 years here; if there was one IT system you could characterise as a failure that is if there have been any (major) failures. What would it be?

Ummm, a failure?

Well a system that might have not really met expectations...

I'm not sure if it was a failure or not but certainly linking everything into the central AGOCORP system was not the wisest thing to do as it has certainly created problems for us. Now, that has since become DDDDDD, they opted out of it at the time and they seem to have had a seamless connection with us regardless even being outside the AGOCORP network. I often wondered if NOVOCORP would have been better off doing the same.

Why do you say it would be better to be separate?

Well as I was saying earlier maybe a lot of the security restrictions wouldn't apply to us...

Was it a conscious strategic decision for AGOCORP national grid to opt out?

I think so yes, it was a political decision as well... I would imagine the powers that be there saw that eventually they would become DDDDDD sometime in the future and in the long term it made sense to be independent.

So no real failure per se more a case of not strategically...

Another thing as well, you know an IT system, Chinese walls notwithstanding between regulated and non-regulated businesses. AGOCORP Networks will always be regulated and others may or may not be. It can be difficult having all these on the same system. I mean we could be doing some work for AGOCORP Networks, maybe working on a wind farm maybe connecting up to the network and then we're all on a common system (even though one is regulated, the other might be). Now the regulator has never made an issue of it but it may or may not be important.

Would you feel just in terms of regulation, SAP and other systems, would you think that a lot of it is compliance driven?

Absolutely; there are certain benefits. If you look at AGOCORP, they've downsized significantly and they don't have the same numbers nationally but they still need to track what they're doing. Most of their assets operate on a 25-30 year life cycle and you do need good information...

Is some of that done automatically through sensors and smart technologies located at the plants themselves remotely measuring temperatures say and feeding it back?

Some of it yes; but a lot of them (assets), they're steel, copper, wires, aluminium, like sticking up out of the ground around the country. They had something like 5 billion Euros in assets around the country. Now, some of them have a watchdog facility where they can monitor themselves to some degree but a lot of it has been done manually, routinely maintained. There are maintenance plans for all the different assets laid out at the end of the year so you can regularly collect the data, which has to go back to the regulator. Otherwise, you don't get paid. So to track all that you need a system to gather this data and for people to be able to record that they actually did the maintenance. Otherwise you'd need another system for that. So that's where SAP would come in (in terms of AGOCORP Networks). Also, it may sound simple but you do need a record of where everything (i.e. the physical assets) is. When you think of all the components, there must be literally millions of them around the country. There must be some way of tracking them.

Sure. Even retrospectively taking the failure to opt out of the (AGOCORP Group) systems which added a security onus on your own systems as well as additional layers, do you think when you look back, do you see a system that's been successful or added value?

Yes...

Well-thought through?

Ummm (THINKING).

I suppose people have sent that generally spend on technology in NOVOCORP would have been quite low but that in the last few years, that spending has accelerated. Can you think of anything recent which has been worthwhile?

Well, there has been. Where I would have seen more the ICT coming in would be less laptop stuff but more so in control. There has been a massive explosion in the level and range of technologies available to monitor resources. If I was to have seen value in anything, it would have been that really. From 1990 to 2005 just in that period, the type of equipment being put in to the Networks side in terms of control, safety is just completely different. Huge difference there, but I would say

we did lag in IT spending around business processes. Maybe, that might have been a good thing as we could have been getting rid of systems now that we could have spent a lot on. The whole of AGOCORP could have been putting in something like AGRESSO and now having to take it out so people say you could put in a new best system every week... There's certain things that you could have been updating all the time and maybe it was better we didn't go down that route. Now, AGRESSO even though it's a system we're getting rid of was definitely beneficial. For us, working without it would have been very difficult...

I suppose there's always a faddish element around technology where you have systems like KM and CRM systems which sometimes aren't the silver bullet solutions you'd think...

Now, we did have a CRM system here and we still use it. It's I'd say...I was actually responsible for bringing it in...Now, it was a success in so far as we had to have something. Well, what we'd liked to have used was coming out a little bit later which would have been integrated with OUTLOOK, more WINDOWS based. Now our one didn't, well it kind of semi-integrated so you had to be going back and forward all the time which was quite cumbersome...

Not too compatible...

No; it's still used as far as I know, now they could have made changes to it. I'm out of that area now, so I don't know.

When you look back on it, were there any issues, negatives that arose...I know it's still used so it has some longevity but what were the factors behind the success?

Yes; the success of it was that it was a way of tracking all the bits you were sending out to people in a logical fashion. The fact that everyone was inputting into it was also helpful as everyone was aware of what other parts of the organisation were doing (with the same customer). I suppose around that we had a meeting to update it so that was good for control. I suppose for CRM systems the more clients you have, the more valuable it becomes. Now, engineering wouldn't have that many clients, maybe at any one time, AGOCORP would have at most 25 clients would be as much...We don't need a hugely sophisticated system; if you were selling widgets into a huge international market, then it would be likely to be more valuable.

High volume markets...

We didn't go for the most expensive or the cheapest option either. We went for something that we felt would suit our needs.

I suppose at the time were you conscious in terms of buying the CRM system, that the system itself would not necessarily solve your CRM problems but would at least help organise your customer data? Would you be conscious of the limitations?

Yes, I mean there were a lot of other things with it like project management for example. We were never interested in using that and we wanted to just utilise the functions we needed...

So, kind of knew the scale and volume of data required?

Yes...

And it's still considered successful?

Considered moderately so, yes. The expectations were low enough anyway so given that it was probably successful.

With the exception of link to OUTLOOK?

Yes, but even other companies were using it as their front screen...there's a few e-mails off it all-right.

Could you talk a little maybe about AGRESSO, where it came from and what were the drivers for bringing it in, if you were involved?

Well, as I remember it, the key driver was that we were an engineering consultancy firm (mostly at the time) and it was key for people to be able to record time, submit timesheets. It seemed an obvious thing to computerise time-entry which could then be transferred into invoices which could be produced and could be charged, linking everything together. It was really for cost control, billing and invoicing...

So people would enter time against a particular job code?

Absolutely, yes.

And there would space to describe what you had done in that particular time, like a typical timesheet?

It was a (typical) timesheet, yes. It was essentially recording your time and was flexible enough to record, I'm not sure how much detail about the job you could put in but you could definitely record your hours against a particular job code.

How was it perceived when it first came in? Was it looked as an efficiency gain or more as a control tool?

Ahh (THINKING)...People were already feeling in timesheets manually anyway so they weren't doing more on AGRESSO that they would be doing anyway. In fact you might be doing less because I think manually there was much more space for putting in job details.

Was there much (management) interest in seeing what work was done?

No, not really.

More a case of hours worked per Job?

Yes, it was just automating what was being done manually anyway. Also, there was an issue sometimes with people actually submitting timesheets on time manually. It was felt that people would be more inclined to put them in on a Monday morning or whatever more regularly via a system.

Was there a closing facility, in that you had to so it (submit a timesheet) by a certain time?

Not at first now, but that was done later. That's a double-edged sword to be honest because you're forcing people to go back and submit them and it just leads to confusion.

Limited value of compulsion...

Yes, as far as I can remember they were the main drivers at the time. Get all the timesheets in on time so we can tie them to the invoices for cost control and billing...

Was it in any other part of AGOCORP?

Oh No...

Due to the fact that they weren't really invoicing as such bar the customer public supply side?

Correct Yes...

Did it's (AGRESSO) use then just grow and mushroom afterwards?

Well for us (engineering staff), the timesheets was the main thing. They did add more features to it... A lot of what was added to it was for the benefit of the finance people...They did add a lot of interfaces to spreadsheets and things like that and made it more useful for the engineering group. We did I think, a few years back think about making a few changes to it and we did talk to a few people about that...

The corporate ICT group?

Oh No (EMPHATIC), someone external. Internal ICT would have nothing to do with it. That (going external) proved difficult...

Did it begin to down on people than internally (with regards to AGRESSO limitations)?

Not really to be honest; I think if we were left to our own devices, we won't be adopting SAP.

Even though people talk about the business case, that it exists and is made for SAP, there is no obvious driver or key advantage/efficiency gain for yourselves as you were saying earlier?

Well, there may be that I'm not aware of. But if you look at us as an engineering business, whatever we're going to get out of it, will it justify the additional cost on us, which I presume will be the case, I think there is (additional cost). Maybe, we could be incurring this overhead anyway so (it may not matter).

People have been aware that this (SAP) is coming?

Oh, Yes (EMPHATIC). People have been aware for quite a while that this was coming, a year or two or longer that SAP was coming.

Do you see it leading to an efficiency loss in terms of adding to the workload of staff?

It may actually lead to increased efficiencies for HR in terms of being on AGOCORP systems...

What about the engineering staff, the core user (in terms of numbers)?

They'll use it only as a replacement for AGRESSO so they'll be entering their time anyway and Key Account Managers will download costs back out of the system. If they're able to do that, they'll be satisfied. They'll be at the same as they were with AGRESSO. The only way we do use it is in the support of

(AGOCORP) Networks and that is a lot less efficient now then it was when we were doing it manually. Because of the way we have to give them the information, it's much more labour intensive.

Would you feel that the change management aspect of the project that people talk about, in terms of getting people moving from AGRESSO to SAP, do you see that as an issue for managers?

I don't think so no...

Do you think a change manager role is necessary?

Well, my experience is with AGOCORP is that the change happens anyway so...

You don't see a need for change management as such?

Well, there will be some aspect of change management involved, in terms of going around and explaining it to people and showing it...

You don't see I suppose the classic aspect of change management with overcoming resistance to change, more about getting people used to the process...

I don't think so...there may be some resistance in some areas but my general impression would be that everyone knows SAP is coming so let's get on with it and do it.

You don't see an issue in terms of engaging with the change, change manager?

Well, no...

He might become more of an intermediary, an explanatory agent then?

Well, one of the issues we might have is that the people have affected by the change, if the guys on the ground have issues; that these issues are taken seriously. One of the issues we have had, an ongoing issues with the Networks SAP project (XYZ), and it's not an insurmountable issue. Now, in my opinion, it needn't have happened is that the guys on the ground who were describing the difficulties at the time just weren't listened to so issues arose.

Was there the same (SAP) project structure there?

On yes, they were all there, but these difficulties weren't picked up...

Was it a case of the difficulties not being communicated up in time or?

In one particular case, around the transmission projects, the primary responsibility around that would be Networks and we'd have some input into that. The level of engagement from the Networks staff never happened so the issues and difficulties then were not taken that seriously and now (Corporate) ICT have to listen to them because it's created a blockage. So I suppose it's important to listen to the guys on the ground. They're not being awkward for the sake of it; not here anyway, maybe in parts of the organisation (AGOCORP Group)...

So, the level of resistance will be practically driven?

It will definitely increase yes.

Could you talk a little bit about your involvement in project boards; you've been a senior user a few times, but not the current SAP implementation?

No, not this. I was on a few project boards, appointed onto them by Networks, not really NOVOCORP as Networks were a customer...

Could you talk about the role?

Well, being on the project board is fairly high level; it's not about getting involved in the detail. My first involvement was in the AR (Asset Management Recording) project which was about recording all the different (utility) assets on the record. That went to go reasonably well; there may have a few difficulties downstream but we didn't see anything major at senior level. Now, there might be a few issues but they worked out well.

As a senior user, did you see yourself as putting the user case forward as such?

Not really...

Did you see yourself as reflective of the user?

Well, as part of the project improvement project I saw myself as a representative user not just of engineering but of the whole of NOVOCORP. What was good about that project was that one of the successes of that not due to me or the board but the fact that both (NOVOCORP/AGOCORP) organisations on the ground engaged so much with the process. That made it easy to be honest. Now on another SAP project, not the AR one, the XYZ one, that (engagement) didn't happen on the ground.

So there have been quite a few SAP projects in AGOCORP...

I think ours is the fourth...

There must be a fair amount of SAP experience now across the organisation...

I suspect that they (the projects) were quite different; rolling out the AR or the XYZ project particularly throws up very different issues on the ground than what you'd have on the corporate level. Dealing with corporate centre, information management where you're dealing with a few senior people. Unlike XYZ when you go down to the project, you're often depending on more, often more junior people to support it.

So, you feel its more context dependent. Just because you've worked on a few SAP projects doesn't mean...

No, it's very different. It might look the same in (Corporate ICT) when you draw it out on a diagram but it's different on the ground...

Social side of implementation...

Yes...

Would you feel that there may be a slight comfort zone around SAP that it may be felt that we have the SAP expertise here and so on. SAP as you say is context dependent and that might not be (fully understood).

I think from what I've seen, there is a greater need to sell it to the people who are going to be using it. There has to be communication around why we're doing this, what you need to do and that you need to start doing it now. Not implementing the system but getting people ready for the system tomorrow. Certainly from the XYZ project, that didn't happen. It should have happened but it didn't as local management didn't engage with it.

In terms of the business case within NOVOCORP, do you think it's been made strongly enough?

Once the changes that are going to be involved from getting from AGRESSO to SAP are clearly understood, then they should be communicated directly to the people affected. In a non-directive way, like SAP is part of AGOCORP as we are and is part of what we do and this is the benefits it will bring. I think if you do that with our staff, then they'll respond positively to it.

Generally so far, do you think the business case is accepted?

I would feel so; people seem to be happy that this is what AGOCORP needs so it will happen

In terms of acceptance, I suppose there is a perspective on a business case as fact rather than maybe a business case that means improvement?

Well, we'll see no immediate benefit to it. They'll be (engineers) doing what they're always doing. I've seen no figures to say it will reduce our costs to be honest...

That will be interesting to see...

But I don't think it will (LAUGHS). That's not the driver here...

That's lovely Micheal. Thanks

OK, Thanks.

Location: Corporate headquarters/ **Date:** 17th February 2010/ **Duration:** 39 mins.

Interviewee: Aoife Burgess, Financial Controller, NOVOCORP Solutions.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

So Aoife, just for the sake of context, you might describe your role a little bit, your job title, responsibilities...

OK, I suppose I'm the financial controller for (NOVOCORP) Engineering and Management or as we have now been rebranded as solutions. There are three main business lines in Engineering Solutions; there is NOVOCORP engineering which is mainly AGOCORP engineering, so the engineering for AGOCORP. Then, there are the NOVOCORP consultants, which is generally overseas work and at the moment we have projects going on overseas. We have projects abroad, in DDDDDD and two in FFFFFFFF and four at home (Europe). That's the three lines and I'm the financial controller for the three lines. There's about 1060 staff numbers, 450 of them overseas with roughly 180 in DDDDDD and another 180 in FFFFFFFF. That mightn't be exactly right but roughly.

So what does a Financial Controller actually do? Actually, I suppose lots of things but if you were really to try to bring it down you could to two different things. Firstly, there is a financial reporting, forecasting and budgeting element to our business and particularly there is a controls and governance element to our business. So, ultimately we're the last point where you see money leaving the business whether it be payroll, patents, stuff like that so there is an important controls and governance element. So on a day-to-day routine of monthly reporting and payroll and other things like before you come in, I was looking at the bid for a contract in Abu Dhabi. It's an X (euro) bid, so I was going through the financials on that, going through the liabilities, terms and conditions etc. So you could be going from stuff like that back to the monthly reporting, the financials governance and control as in are the numbers right; are we happy we're not going to be double paying anyone...

So, a fairly wide-ranging and complex portfolio?

A lot of responsibilities, but not complex in that the other side of the house, for example they have other things like trading etc which we don't have. So, it's probably a fairly simple business model we have over here but it's very broad.

OK, that's great. You've been with NOVOCORP for how long?

I've been with NOVOCORP for the last two years...

And before that with AGOCORP?

I was with AGOCORP for 12 years...

In terms of coming into NOVOCORP from AGOCORP, now I know your principal responsibilities are financial, but what would have been your view of (NOVOCORP) IT systems?

I suppose from a financial perspective, there's the basic... *(Phone Call Interruption)*.

(Interview resumed approx 10 minutes later)

We were just taking about your views on IS/IT within NOVOCORP...

Oh Yeah, well I suppose on a basic level, turn on the PC in the morning, the infrastructure, that's possibly the wrong word for it...I mean the hardware side of things, that's all managed by ITS (Exp: AGOCORP Corporate IT services) can you log on etc that's all managed by AGOCORP (Corporate). If I have a problem, if I can't turn it on in the morning I ring the ITS helpdesk and they sort it out. That bit seems to work quite well; same, no difference in working in AGOCORP in my experience. Then, the next most important thing for me is the applications you use. The one I use the most of all, and use to do 90% almost 100% of what I do is e-mail. And again, does e-mail work and it is managed centrally on central services and that works fine. So the two things I use most, e-mail and the p drive (Exp: local back-up network) from a personal perspective work fine on a day-to-day basis, and they have to work on a day-to-day basis and they do, they're fine blah, blah, blah. The next thing I would use would be from a communication perspective, so the Intranet front-end and I have to say it's a super application that we use, and I suppose better than the AGOCORP (Equivalent) application. Very simple to do but useful; basic stuff like expenses which you can get there; I think ITS did a survey once and I think something like 99% of (INTRANET) users used it to look up phone numbers, you know and that kind of stuff, forms, procedures and it works very well. So these three applications that I would use, I know we'd probably have up to 200/300 applications but I obviously don't use those. For example, I don't use AGRESSO; actually that's not true, I do use AGRESSO to approve the odd (as in rare) invoice, but I'm not a heavy AGRESSO user. I don't but WORD and EXCEL are other packages or applications that I would also use quite heavily.

I know you're not a heavy or regular user of AGRESSO (Yes), but what's your perspective on it?

The problem with, not the problem, I suppose the problem is really that I'm comparing it to SAP (Exp: Aoife would have used SAP Financials when working for AGOCORP corporate) and the analogy and I think I've used this analogy with Lorna) is I hear the problems with it (AGRESSO), like someone coming to me and saying

'We weren't able to do this today because...' and the way that I compare them is like AGRESSO is like a little speedboat out in Dun Laoghaire harbour, you know. The users love it, you can up and running and into it quickly, you can zip around the harbour but as soon as you go out a bit further...

SAP is like the big tanker out in the sea which can't come that close to the shore and is huge, ginormous but can take you anywhere in the world. The minute AGRESSO gets outside the harbour walls and is hit by a big wave it flips over. That analogy I suppose is trying to say once you come against high volumes of data, different processing requirements, the "big waves", AGRESSO will just flip over. It's just not robust enough. It has its limitations, I've (even) heard of timesheets disappearing. SAP has two things: its functionality and integration across modules, its robustness, its integrity. AGRESSO doesn't have either of those (characteristics) but lads (Users) using AGRESSO and go in and get their own reports, make up their own reports, their own database. You can't do that with SAP. SAP's biggest flaw from a financial perspective, my view not an educated view by any means is the lack of a user-friendly interface and the lack of reporting; the reporting is just appalling. Just like the tanker, it will carry anything for you, bring you anywhere in the world, but a) if you want to change it, Lord almighty, you'd need about three weeks' notice and an entire team to do it; like "Everybody Move!!" unlike AGRESSO which is zipping around. Then you'd go look at AGRESSO where you'd be thinking '2 and 2 does not equal 4 here', you'd have worries about the data integrity, like staff saying timesheets go missing. How do timesheets go missing? Not in SAP, never heard that happen in SAP. But I'm not in deep enough in the bowels of AGRESSO to really know or understand.

Your general view though would be that the users find it useful but it lacks capacity and robustness?

Yes, it's just that it has limitations...

Would you find people are wedded to AGRESSO or are they very conscious of its limitations?

Yes, one of the key things is the speed of it, the processing. Someone was just telling me this morning that it takes 20 minutes to post an invoice. That's mad, like where is the slowness? It seems to come from scanning in files; now, I don't know much about the processing of it, whether it's an issue with PCs, the processor speed, server memory or where the problem is but there's a slowness issue with it. You have to remember that AGRESSO came in ten years ago, I think; I'm not 100% sure when the company was a lot smaller and obviously the volume of transactions has grown since then.

Maybe, the company has simply outgrown AGRESSO?

Yes, that would be my uneducated opinion. I'm not in a position to validate that view but that's the feeling I get talking to people, yeah.

There seems to be an element of adhocracy about AGRESSO when you talk to people too...

Yes and (In terms of how people use it) and a big issue is that maintenance is poor. Like, you know we're using a company who...you'd worry about the product life cycle (in terms of support)...

And the fact that it's not supported by the central (corporate) ICT group...

Yeah, you'd wonder what the life cycle plans for the product are. I think a Swedish company owns it (Exp: currently owned by the Dutch Company Unit4) and you'd wonder what their plans are in terms of putting money into it etc. I just think NOVOCORP have outgrown it.

You also have the individual issue of people who have tailor-fitted the system (AGRESSO) by to their own needs...

Yes absolutely... Yeah, but to be allowed to do that (EXPRESSED QUIZICALLY),

I suppose clever engineers will create their own little ad-hoc versions...

Yeah, and there's stuff going on in one particular aspect of business where they're going at it in a very ad-hoc way; I don't even want to think about it.

Maybe issues there with governance...

I suppose when we have SAP, they won't be able to do that anymore. Like, not only do they have AGRESSO but they also bought this other system to sit on top of it and do other specific things; Oh holy Mother of God (VEHEMENCE).

And that's just specific to them?

Yeah Yeah (SPEAKER'S OWN REPETITION)...

OK...

The problem is the whole corporate governance and control issues (that can arise); like who is evaluating which is right and which is wrong?

So, of all the people that will be most affected by SAP, while not being unfair to them, they're likely to be the ones who feel impacted most?

You mean those people (who use the add-on system for AGRESSO)?

Yes...

I think...Well you may have heard of the P and HR system (Exp: Payroll and HR SAP Module)?

No...

Well, when AGOCORP (Corporate) brought in SAP 98, they put in mainly financials and materials and they didn't... Well, only recently in the last three or so years, they brought in the Payroll and Human Resources or P and HR SAP module which replaced an AGOCORP bespoke payroll system and it was a long tortuous (process)...

Christy Ryan mentioned it...

Well, it was a long tortuous project..it was like an iceberg, all the problems were under the surface and despite the big effort, when they went live, the problems with the front-end were let's just say unfriendly, (SIGHS) very clunky and on that issue alone, it didn't find favour.

My one fear for the (current SAP implementation)...Now, the financial staff are very adaptable and will use a system they are asked or told to do. I still feel though in terms of change we will have a difficult 3-4 months where users may find it clunky. SAP is complicated, there's no two ways about it but in a year or two years from now, after the implementation, people will forget what AGRESSO ever was.

For me, the biggest win is that we can get reports. Often with projects, you're so focused on the process and design that you often forget about the end-user. The key for the end-user is the output; if the output is poor you might as well forget about all that you're doing. You know, cause...or you do it and you manage it and get the reports out. Also if the implementation (of the given project) is behind time, then the reports will be done last and we need to do the reporting early...

So, I guess you can really see the value of it (SAP)?

Yeah, the guys there might see all the figures, but may go to run an income statement and they can't.

OK. In terms of the actual usability, you would see change management as a big issue?

Yes, with respect to the engineers the big issue for them is the timesheets. Cause that will affect...Well there's 70 financial staff and maybe 500 engineers... The joke going round at the time of the P and HR system was how difficult it was to put in your expenses... (LAUGHS). Expenses inputted were down for the first three months (of the system) until people got down to using the system. The joke was that it was a cost reduction thing in that they (AGOCORP/NOVOCORP) were getting back the money by making it so difficult for people to claim expenses. You know... So the front-end...

So, the Financial staff are going to be using the (new SAP) system more than the engineers but the numbers impacted in engineering will be higher?

Well, now you've changed the tool and it's not as nice a tool...Now, the only thing I'd say, a caveat on this is that the version of HR we're putting in has made leaps and bounds on the timesheet front-end. I'm only really talking about the (SAP) timesheet system in the AGOCORP; they may have improved it since. So a lot of this...I haven't seen SAP in a number of years so I don't know. You might talk to someone else and they might say 'No, actually, the front-end is a lot better now; it's really user-friendly and it's fine'. Actually they're (AGOCORP corporate IT) actually upgrading from SAP R3 to SAP R6, so they'll have to be making updates and changes...

Lorna has talked to me about the importance of the updates all-right...

We (AGOCORP) use SAP for a lot of different things with for example AGOCORP Networks using SAP IU (Module) in their XYZ (Integrated Work Management) SAP system. All the SAP financials is on SAP R3, which is being upgraded to SAP R6 and so I'll presume they'll make front-end changes then...

OK.

But I haven't seen that, so I don't know...

Because engineers will be doing something that they're doing anyway (i.e. Timesheets/Expenses) and they're doing it in AGRESSO. It may not be a preferred task or something they particularly enjoy doing, as in its part of their admin role if you like, would you reckon the level of resistance would be high or what's your gut feeling on it?

Well, the professional ones will just get on with it. The ones who'll want to complain about it, well it will be something else to complain about (LAUGHS). But it's like everything, in 6 months they'll all be using it...

I suppose that'll be a function of the change management?

Yeah, the problem here is not that...It's not the process that is changing. If you're bringing in a broad new process than that would be (different). You're only changing the system to do something else. It's not a case of bringing in a new system and a new process and its unsuccessful; spending 2 million (Euros) on a system and then people refusing to use it and it ends up on a shelf. It won't be like that with this system because everybody will have to use it. So, they might complain about it but they'll have to use it.

Is it the case that AGOCORP having decided also that you're the anomaly, in that you're the only business unit without SAP. Would there be a feeling that it was being forced upon you (as an organisation)?

(SIGHS REFLECTIVELY) I'm not the best person to answer that question as I'm one of those people; I came from head office...

But do you detect any feeling (like that) from individuals on the ground. They're being compelled to do things anyway. Is there an acceptance there (because of this compulsion)?

MMM (REFLECTING). Personally no, but I wouldn't be talking to the engineers about SAP. Maybe there is (that feeling) but I just haven't been talking enough (to the engineers) to be heard it. Maybe, there is that feeling out there. Talking to my own finance team, I think that there is an acceptance that the whole group should be on the one system but have we properly explained the reasons for change? Probably not...

You mean to Finance or (everybody)?

Really everybody, but that will be part of the change management process. I said to my guys: 'we're going on SAP because AGRESSO is out of maintenance, the SAP product is superior, and there will be overall synergies there as we'll all be on all the same system and there will be no issue there in terms of (SAP Software User) licenses'. There may be issues there in terms of volume but they would be small in comparison (with AGOCORP). Governance will be there and the only real cost is the implementation costs. Even, when you look at the implementation costs, you're (currently) paying a good lot of people anyway so sometimes you would truly (EMPHASIS) wonder what the implementation costs are.

A lot of it (implementation costs) is driven internally as you have a lot of (internal) people involved in the project internally?

Yes, there are very few external people.

In terms of change management and overcoming (any) resistance levels, Finance will be at the coalface and maybe might see the advantages a bit quicker. Do you think the business case (for the SAP implementation) has been made clear to people on the ground or is it a case of having to do it?

I think it's more of a case that we have to do it.

OK...

Now, why do we have to do it? I think the general feeling is 'we are part of AGOCORP Group; AGOCORP Group is on SAP and therefore we have to move (onto SAP)'. I would say that's as far as most (typical user) thinking has got...

A sensible logic?

Yeah. I wouldn't say now... I don't really know actually. Is the thinking behind it more a case of 'Bah Humbug, why should we move?' or 'Sure, that's grand'. I don't know which side people would be on if you polled them. If you polled Finance people, it would be 'Sure, we'll do it'. Our biggest issue is OK, there is an overall acceptance that we will do it; I mean overall in Finance now; there is an acceptance that we have to do it. Where we will lose it or where it will go wrong is if we don't give adequate time to training and the change management element. At the current moment, they (the users) are on the right side of the fence. We'll have finance people going on the project and that'll be good, rather than bringing people in at the 11th hour and then say 'here you go'. We need to train them, give plenty of time to training, let them get used to the system and give them plenty of support afterwards and how we implement it. We will have Go-live, a Big-Bang approach. We'll be doing month end (December 2010) on AGRESSO and current month (January 2011) on SAP. We'll have two systems running at the same time so there are a lot of issues there that we have to think through.

When AGOCORP went live in SAP in 1999, I think it was, they took a Big-Bang approach but there were no accounts done for three months. We don't have that kind of luxury. There are a few issues there.

In terms of the business case, it can be made...

Oh, it has, it's been signed off.

I mean more in terms of the informal business case...

Oh right, sorry. Well for finance it has, I can't speak for the rest (of the user groups). I wouldn't say the engineers care too much. (They might say) 'SAP, what's that?' They just be thinking about putting in their timesheets and put it into whatever system. The impact on Finance will be more complex in terms of tasks.

Actually, I'm wrong there...there will be an impact (for engineers and others) in terms of making purchase orders. There's a group of about 60...Well firstly, you'd have 400 engineers doing their timesheets, and engineers working on timesheets don't do timesheets. Then you have the purchase order, people who can raise and input purchase orders, which is how many...I suppose 30 or 40 people. And then, you have finance. Also, you have HR who may process expenses (through SAP) for the whole organisation. So, there may be or two processes that the whole company would have to use...Timesheets and the expenses, I'm not really sure about that.

I suppose the timesheets would be the standout one for everybody?

Yeah, but the expenses would be important and can involve others who have to verify expenses...

So, you could have a domino effect in terms of an expense (validation)?

Yes, take this expense here (HOLDS UP AN EXPENSE CLAIM FORM). It's all manual on a sheet, I'm not sure if all that is going to be automated...

So, going up to your superior and going through the different levels of approval...

Yes, Yes (OWN EMPHASIS).

So, in your past experience in SAP projects (implementation)...You were involved?

Yes...

Tangential?

No, I was.

Was there a formal change management aspect to those projects also?

Yes, there was. The regional stock (part of the AGOCORP SAP)_ project which I came very late into. A big huge project (i.e. SAP Corporate Project) now in 1998 that went on for three years. I came in at the end of that (working on the regional stock part of it), two months before the end and worked on it after Go-Live and there was a huge change management aspect to that as it involved change across the whole of the organisation (i.e. AGOCORP corporate) which had about 10, 000 people at that stage, a massive change. There was a huge whole change with Mick Leahy in charge (as project manager)...

Is he still here?

No, he's retired now. But there was a number of change managers utilised and that was taken very seriously. There even is a change manager for the new SAP implementation...

Oh Yes, Fergal Flynn.

Right and I was involved also in a financial consolidation project about two years ago and I was the project manager and I'm trying to remember about the change management! I'm sure we did it (LAUGHS) as it was very successful!

Looking back on those implementations, do you think that there were some big lessons learnt, considering they were successful that people could utilise on the current (SAP implementation) project? I realise that they were (Corporate) AGOCORP projects...

Back in 1998, when AGOCORP (Corporate) did their big implementation, Glanbia (an Irish Food conglomerate) implemented SAP at the same time. Now, I don't know if you know anyone in GLANBIA so I will hasten to say that their implementation didn't go as well and I was down with them a few years ago and they are still living with some of those mistakes. Our implementation succeeded because the man who ran it brought the company to a halt to do this. He had everyone involved; there wasn't a single person that he did not involve. It was THE (SPEAKERS EMPHASIS) SAP project. It got huge publicity, huge buy-in, huge senior buy-in and management buy-in...All those textbooky things that are so important. Now, he had huge resources and he spent them. The project came in on time and just about under budget. He had a huge amount of support after Go-Live and he kept that in place. He is a very clever man. So, his aim was to deliver and he had the budget and resources to deliver. He brought in a load of external people... I came into AGOCORP on that SAP project. Probably the big issue for this project could be that they're over in Project HQ. They're not here; you can't see them every day, now they're in and out but the fact that you don't see them, that's unfortunate.

When I worked on the financial consolidation project, we were down in Project HQ too and we made a conscious effort to do certain things or tricks I suppose you could call them. I was dealing with a lot of lower level accountants across the business units who never interacted with one another. So once a month, I got them all together and they loved it. It got them out of their desks which they loved, they'd come down to Project HQ, have a cup of tea and would maybe meet Johny who they may not have seen for a couple of months. It was almost a social occasion for them. They'd do (then) what you were looking for. It's those kinds of things that the (current SAP) project will have to do.

Is it unrealistic though do you think, comparing the size of the original SAP implementation from the late 90s to the current SAP implementation to say that the successful original SAP implementation should act as a template (of what they do) given the differences in project size, time, resources etc; that you could apply lessons learnt from the original SAP implementation to today?

I think you could, but are they (the lessons) written down anywhere?

Organisational memory is gone through retirements etc?

Yes...

Would Eoghan Barrett (AGOCORP Corporate IT Senior Figure) have been there?

He would have and also Dave Coleman, who's like Mr. SAP and over a lot of SAP functionality...

Would it be fair to say, without being overly critical that maybe the lessons learnt (from previous SAP implementations) aren't distilled clearly for circulation?

You see, the problem with that is; OK you might write the key things down but you do it in such a generic way that it probably reflects how you do things anyway in a project so there'd be no what's the word? You couldn't probably say that no other project had done the same things, it's the little ways in which things are done that's hard to capture, like how could you write it down...

The context...

Yeah, you might see (in Lessons Learnt), 'Hold more meetings'. Like, everybody will do that, it's how the meetings are run, who did you invite, did you have tea and scones? These are the small things, but people will come to a meeting if you've tea and scones! I've learnt that (LAUGHS), the twenty Euros you spend on Tea and Coffee can make a big difference. I suppose you could say that the successful projects at least in an AGOCORP context are those that...I suppose this is such a generalisation and this could not even sound right. All of the things being equal, if you have enough resources, enough and the right people, often the icing on the cake is if that person in charge of the project is politically aware. And being very politically aware means having the right people, access to the right people, you know for...

Things like project boards?

Project Boards etc. I don't know if that's (morally) right or wrong. It's probably wrong. People always say that one of the most important things for a successful project is senior management Buy-in, yeah, yeah, and you know what it's really really (SPEAKER'S OWN REPETITION) important. Tommy Walsh (NOVOCORP Financial Controller) pushes everyone to attend (meetings) and he's really rowing in behind the SAP project and that's really helping. One of the big things is that he comes from a (IT) systems management background and I think that will make this project successful. He understands how important it is that this happens. Take another financial controller without that background and I'm not sure that would happen. We had a particular financial controller from a non-systems background, couldn't understand the value of systems and couldn't get it at all. Managing a project in circumstances like that would be very difficult.

(Is it a case of him/her saying that) Everything is a cost?

No, more along (the lines of him/her asking) 'How hard can it be?', just put in the system and so... Having a champion of it (the new SAP system) who understands it, the importance of it to the organisation is... Like every organisation has differing priorities. Important things get most of the time. So, the original implementation

(of SAP in AGOCORP Corporate) got the time, P and HR implementation on the other hand wasn't that successful or at least the perception was that it wasn't successful....

Sorry there, you said the perception of it, what do you mean by that?

Well, the scope expanded the classic things that go wrong...

Scope Creep...

Scope Creep, it didn't come in on time, cost T million Euros and didn't seem to go well. Did the whole organisation buy into it at the start? Did it have the profile? I don't know...wait, it did have the profile in fairness to it...

Was there a change manager appointed to it?

Lorna Doone would be the best person to ask that of now; what I know about it is through the electronic mail and people talking about in, the gossip etc. It (my view) mightn't be fair or a rounded and balanced view but generally the perception would have been that it was not that successful. I could be now that perception has changed. History might have changed, the more we move away from the time, the more successful it might be. It was a tough project. Now the question might be (for this project) might be, how do we not become P and HR. Now, if the HR manager was here, they might take umbrage at that statement. We have got to make sure that...you know the SAP project, we're taking the vanilla flavour as in over the road (as per corporate SAP) and there are a few little extras that might trip us up but...

It will be interesting to see how things go but one last question in terms of how things will be going forward, it might be an unfair question to ask but would you be confident (that the project will go well)? It might not be a fair question to ask...

If you can turn that off (LAUGHS AND POINTS AT RECORDER), I can give you a straight answer...

I suppose would you be confident that any of the lessons from previous projects have been absorbed?

MMMM (Reflecting)...

By people from AGOCORP who will be part of this process and hopefully making it successful?

There are two questions there now.

There's a lot of SAP implementation expertise, there are good structures, the classic textbooks things are done, the change is selected...

Yes, early (on).

And all the (project) processes are followed?

MMMM (AGREEING).

But do you feel that in terms of where people are coming from, if the experience is there, that it will come through in implementation?

Yes, I think it will. My experience in AGOCORP in IT projects is that we tend to implement IT well. Well, the ones I've been involved in. XYZ, umm (AMBIVALENT FACIAL EXPRESSION), there's stuff going on in Networks that I'm far away... My own experience of the BCS implementation is that it went well and I carried a lot of what I had learned there forward onto the SAP implementation. Having worked in SAP a couple of years, then in finance, then brought back to do this. Now, I was kind of made brought back to do this (BCS implementation) because they knew (and were saying), 'She worked on the old system and she knows a bit about SAP and systems'. Now, it went fine, it worked and is done. Now, P and HR I don't know (how successful it has been). We have some very good people on this project. I think Lorna is very good. I think Tommy is a good champion, a key piece of this. We have a project board and we have the AGOCORP Corporate Financial Controller on board who's very important person. He worked on the previous (large-scale corporate) SAP implementation and he's now group financial controller and was my boss. You've got Tommy who's got quite a strong systems background, like he worked in AP (Exp: Accounts Payable) and in a systems environment. So we have senior people like Lorna and Tommy involved in the project, all (of whom) have worked with SAP and have SAP knowledge.

OK, they are up there (GESTURES IN TERMS OF THEM BEING AT A HIGH LEVEL). In my experience, with systems, it's often the small stuff that trips you up that they (those operating at a higher level) don't get to see or they don't ask the questions..

Or doesn't get back up to them...

Yes, or people don't think of it or don't ask the right questions and then fundamentally people go Aargh! (ACTING OUT SHOCK/SURPRISE). But then, the people who are the project are very good. So, if I was asked how I feel about this project, I would feel it's going to be a good project. It's going to be very hard but we will make it happen. We're just after completing the NIB (National Irish Bank) project which was a big success and the project manager off that has been rolled onto this project (Thomas) which I think is good...

Keeps the momentum going...

Yes, but it's a good question, (Exp: she's coming back to the earlier lessons learnt question here) maybe there is or maybe there isn't, or maybe I'm just not aware of is that in ITS (AGOCORP Corporate IT) is there a document that says this is what we learned from the SAP 98 implementation, this is what we learned from XYZ, this is what we learned from the P and HR project...Are they all in some knowledge warehouse somewhere or...

Are (all the knowledge) gone out the door in Mick Leahy's mind...

Yeah, has it all gone off to retirement (LAUGHS). I don't know the answer to that question but Lorna would maybe know 'Did we do that?' We probably should have. So the answer to that is when I've finished my little project, did any of my kids (Exp: Her staff) come to me and say...Did we do a project report? We probably did but there was no kind of project implementation lessons learnt so nobody can ask 'What did you learn off that and put it away (somewhere for others)?' Maybe, that's the nirvana of knowledge management... I don't know...Great in theory but doesn't happen in practice. But we implement a lot of systems, we do a lot of projects, we should probably have something like that but that's somebody else's job...

Great Aoife, that's fine. Thanks very much.

No problem

Location: Corporate headquarters/ **Date:** 17th February 2010/ **Duration:** 44 mins.

Interviewee: Ryan English, Manager, NOVOCORP Engineering Solutions.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

So Ryan, just for the sake of context, you might describe your role a little bit, your job title, responsibilities...

The part of the business that I'm responsible for is the looking after and maintaining of the divisions that NOVOCORP own that is separate to AGOCORP and NOVOCORP. We operate and run and are fully responsible for maintaining and updating those facilities; sometimes we run facilities on behalf of third parties for example in countries like DDDDDD and YYYYYY. This is something separate from AGOCORP and this requires or needs about 420 staff. We actually manage more in Ireland than AGOCORP does and that's what we do and what I'm responsible for and there's a small team here and most of that staff are out working in the facilities working with a staff of about 15 at home.

So must of your staff will be based outside at a given moment?

Yes, working in the actual places. We have about 40 on average in each European facility and another 70 or so in DDDDDD etc but that's just more for cultural reasons.

When you say cultural reasons, what do you mean? Is it a case of getting numbers in there on the ground to run the facilities or?

Well, it's more about the processes and procedures might be different, some of it to do with IT actually. You also have security staff which you would not have here and so on and so forth so with people leaving in compounds etc. It's a totally different arrangement.

Is this (the operation and maintaining of facilities) the same as the Tolling model other interviewees have talked about?

No, the tolling model is something different. It's the business around the facilities where they are owned; it's a separate part of the business where the ownership and running of them are in separate parts of the business. One part of the business has the contracts for buying the raw materials and producing so much on behalf of the owner. Our part of the business would involve operating and maintaining the

facility on behalf of the owner which could be ourselves but the businesses are separate and in separate sections.

So almost like an owner-occupier rental agreement?

Exactly, yes.

So, in terms of IT what role does it play for your part of the business? With so many of your staff out of the office at a given time, does it help manage the distance barrier?

The distance barrier...

The distance barrier between your staff working in the facilities and those back in the office...

Yes, well there are different technological requirements. Obviously, in the facilities themselves there are specific operational and maintenance systems as such whereas back in the office, there are other business systems as part of the overall company and the communication between and trying to keep contact between office and employees working.

What kind of role do you think IT plays in the organisation from your experience? Do you feel it's strategically valuable? Does it play an important part or less of an important part than it should? Could you sum up in your own words the role of IS?

The answer to both those questions is definitely yes. IT is strategically important. I would say it's critically essential not just from my part of the business but for the whole of the business. It's absolutely critical to building the service, to providing services efficiently, in meeting the needs of the customer. In all those things, IT strategy is essential to support the business strategy, to grow the business, support the business, sustain and grow revenue and meet customer expectations in a way that's as cost effective as possible. The IS strategy must align with that and must support that.

In your opinion, is Business strategy in the leading seat in the organisation, is governing the IS/IT strategy, that there is alignment between the two and that the business strategy comes first?

Well, there may be misalignment between the two, but business strategy definitely comes first. If we have a management meeting about the business strategy, it's all about growing the business, increasing revenue and meeting customer requirements. IS and others like HR just support that. Maybe that's not right. Maybe IS is seen more as a support service and less of an integral part of delivering the business strategy.

So in terms of IS being support, would you feel that there is misalignment between the two (IS and Business Strategy)?

Well, it's difficult to say everything is the same or put all the businesses into one basket. It may be different in different parts of the business. When you talk about something like SAP, coming from the AGOCORP side, that's a process and probably very lined up (as a system) with the business side. Now, AGOCORP is a very large business as is NOVOCORP which has more than a thousand staff so both are complicated businesses as is NOVOCORP in its own right. So when we talk about business and IS strategy being aligned, there are certain parts of the business where they are very closely aligned and parts where they're not.

Could you elaborate on maybe some of the (IT) success stories and some maybe of the failures?

(SIGHS). Certainly, I think and this is probably true of most other companies when it comes to the office applications and systems, we're pretty good at getting access to what we need in terms of facilities in terms of say Blackberries, remote working, home working, access to laptops etc. There is a very strong view in the company that these tools and I know that's different to IT strategy, are there and are necessary in order to deliver (the business strategy). So, in that sense there's a close alignment between people recognising the benefits of IT and all elements of it and bringing it to the business successfully. They are some applications within the business where the implementation of IT systems is done successfully and often across the business. There are other systems and I'm not sure how this has happened where IS strategy and architecture is driven by AGOCORP and it has particular standards and policies. That's probably appropriate but there have been times when we've become deliberately more separate from AGOCORP as we're a separate business. I suppose if you're becoming separate that other things like IT or HR will become more separate to reflect process differences anyway..

Like a natural decoupling...

Yes, and some of that decoupling....I suppose there have been plusses and minuses with it. Where I see the plusses which I'd like to look at a bit more maybe would be the fact that... I see a big difficulty, particularly in big organisations to try and get systems delivered to people on the ground that they actually need in HR and IT however. If you're thinking of a super system like SAP; for each person or process in the organisation, they may have to wait a while in order to get what they want out of the system. I suppose that's common in other big organisations, I know that it is in maybe other organisations that are structured in different ways, have more resources and centrally allocate resources that can be thrown at the system. They can have multiple versions of the system in different locations and I've seen this in other organisations, 10 different locations around the world. But maybe AGOCORP hasn't done it that way, maybe they should or shouldn't, I don't know. But the time that NOVOCORP was more separate, there was more on a more simple level, the local development of systems and probably a better alignment of systems.

What I think is that once systems get back to AGOCORP and the centre, the emphasis is on SAP and these bigger systems and so on where there is less alignment. AGOCORP as a business, which is changing at the moment, is different to that of an international consultancy and they have to consider customer billing, metering...

Health and Safety, Risk regulatory...

Well, more so the Z or so customers and all the systems needed to support that, the call-centres. Thinking about the network system which has millions of assets around the country that must be monitored, every pole for instance and have asset management systems that must be capable of managing all these. It's not surprising that the driver of IT in organisations tend to be those big systems; now we need and use big systems ourselves, particularly in the last few years. You tend to find that we need a lot of applications. I mean when we travel overseas; the ability to be able to get communications and link in to our places overseas, that has never been a big priority as such in the business as you tend to get a focus on the bigger systems like SAP. I mean AGOCORP went through a period of developing systems in house; you might have heard about DWMS (i.e. Distribution Work Management System) and DFIS (Distribution Facility Information System), two huge systems that a huge amount of work went into and their whole focus was to drive down into and help manage work and consultants. The work that's going on, getting that down in a more efficient way as a support system. That's fine but that's a very different business to what NOVOCORP has been doing over the last few years. For relatively small applications, for example, an engineer going out to RRRRRR wants and needs to be able to get access to systems back here; what you often find is that not's as easy to do. There's some technical reasons why that's the case; I mean AGOCORP systems as you're probably aware for security reasons is hard to access as all the software systems are on the same server cluster as the SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition systems which automate some key operations) so there's concerns there regarding access and data control. These issues probably wouldn't apply to another company or they'd have a different way of dealing with them. A large semi-state company or not even a semi-state company cannot really address all the system needs of its component businesses. We had that more for a while as I said earlier when we were separate but over time we have got more integrated back into the parent again and we tend to be under the control of the central IT function. Now I think that has huge positives too by the way but you need huge resources.

Do you feel there is a case for NOVOCORP having almost two separate strategies with one IS strategy (reflecting NOVOCORP IS Strategy) linked to the parent IS Strategy? You'd have a top-level say corporate IS strategy linked to your own specific IS needs?

Yes, Yes.

I know something like that happens informally...

It does, but I suppose the issue that arises then is the implementation of the strategies and what would be the steps for implementing a system. How centralised would the controls be and how would it feed into a strategy and the resources...

You do borrow IT resources from the corporate IT function so there might be a logistical issue also...

Yes, yes.

In terms of AGOCORP's perspective, would you feel that would have been a feeling that perhaps NOVOCORP had become too independent from an IT perspective?

Yes, that feeling could have been there but how big an issue it was, I don't know. If there was that feeling, I could understand it. If you're responsible for IT and all the governance and security issues that exist, you'd need to make sure that you have as much control as possible over all issues that could arise. I wouldn't say...maybe another problem, maybe I would think myself, when I look back myself say over the last ten years or so, when we've had separate systems and applications implemented. I'm not really talking about big systems now. They've been done on a very local small scale usually. In my view, I don't really think that senior management in the company (NOVOCORP) have put enough emphasis or here have had enough belief in IT; they have paid lip service to it. I think everyone knows and accepts that IT is important and everyone has a mobile phone or laptop. Nobody is going to say IT isn't important unless they want to go back to the slide rule kind of thing. There's a difference between saying IT is important and putting effect to that in terms of how you approach strategy meetings, when you go to the actual meetings at corporate level and get buy-in and resources for those things like the two strategies mentioned earlier. Maybe senior management didn't believe in it strongly enough or didn't feel that they needed to push the need for systems too much.

Would you feel that's one of the reasons why other people in the organisation feel that the core IT spend was so low?

I wouldn't really know high or low core spend was. An issue I feel, and as a manager I take responsibility for this as well, is that we often in this organisation talk about how important communication is and when our engineers go abroad, even taking account of the fact that the IT infrastructure in some of these countries such as DDDDDD would be poor. Actually, this was an issue up to very recently in the UK, a country with obviously good IT infrastructure. But I could never understand why we couldn't have a simple system that could with all the security factors considered give someone access to whatever data they needed just like I can here in the office. Many other organisations are able to do it; I'm sure that the Intels and banks of this world are able to do it and I've seen companies like Siemens who are able to do it and they were able to overcome these (security)

issues and so on. The reason that hasn't happened and I've said this before is that for AGOCORP it's not their core business; I don't blame the people in AGOCORP or Corporate IT. I mean they're not going to be waking up in the morning wondering what can be done to make our IT more effective and if they are they're focusing on the (service) issues we'd be expecting them to focus on. But for us here in NOVOCORP, close to the centre stage albeit not on it; we need to have certain systems and we need to do certain things in a specific way. Now, that's beginning to happen a little more, recently but senior levels in the organisation (NOVOCORP) never really saw the value of IT for the business.

Do you feel you lacked a champion at senior management level?

Yes.

Do you feel AGOCORP have become more attuned or sensitive to your needs over the last while, thinking specifically in terms of the central ICT group?

I think it has in recent teams. I suppose that bring people over from the corporate ICT function to work here has helped and that was an argument made (for their moving over) at the time. The relationship that they have (with former colleagues) and so on has helped and it has certainly improved (the relationship).

So, the social capital they have brought has been important?

Yes.

So you can see a little more buy-in from AGOCORP Corporate in terms of ICT support, I'm thinking specifically of the (current) SAP project?

Yes, it has definitely improved.

So, if the SAP implementation was something that would have gone through maybe 5 or 6 years ago, then the resistance might have been higher?

I would have thought so, yes.

When you look over your time here and think about the history of IT in the organisation, I suppose it's never really uniformly positive, but on balance has it been more positive or negative?

Oh, more positive than negative. I think there are areas where we could have done, obviously there are individual applications that mightn't have gone through exactly as one would have liked but... Again, looking at the bigger systems in AGOCORP, there's usually a change management component because some of the systems require people to change the way they do things as well. We've often put in the systems and assumed people will just change with them. Often, those driven from the bottom don't often get visible support from people at the top, not just

signing off cheques and they don't work. Now, Lorna knows this because I've talked to her about it. Just taking the recent SHAREPOINT application across the organisation, I don't think that they're doing that the right way. It might not be the most astronomical system or involve a big change in what people are doing but these things only work if there is some communication of the change to the users. What we tend to rollout the system and expect the benefits to happen.

Is there a change management process (around SHAREPOINT)?

No, I've argued for one. Now, we're coming to a meeting in the next few days to talk about that...

Is there any reason why there was no change manager role? Looking at other projects, it seems to be standard practice...

I don't know. The way they seem to have done it as I understand it is that they have appointed administrators in each section to kind of manage it. As far as I am concerned, administrators are just administrators, they're not change managers and so something else is needed. I don't know whether it was a resource issue (to have a change manager or not) or something else.

Would you be a big believer generally in having a formal change manager role?

Well, it's something...I don't think you can or should spoon-feed everyone either but it's like your video player at home or your DVD, you only use the 20% of the features, like play, pause, record, the rest you don't worry about so you need to know what 20% is relevant to you and how to do it. OK, I mean I'm amazed when I look at a tool like OUTLOOK, I'd say 75% of the people who use it, don't use it in the way intended. That's a very simple tool and there are people going on courses externally to see or learn tricks as to how use it better, like the Tasks (feature). It surprise me that in a company of this size, not a change manager as such, but something that maximises the benefits of the system for people as much as possible. Like, what probably will happen for SHAREPOINT, is that different departments will use it for what they need it for and so not make the most of it. Looking at the administrators, I mean they'll focus on the relevant bits.

So, you'll have a bit of a cherry-picking exercise?

Exactly; and when you think about it, if I moved from here today and in six months to some other position in the organisation and they use SHAREPOINT too, they shouldn't be using it in a way very different to me. Not 100% the same of course but that's the way we do things; we let people work away themselves on the system not thinking about the change management aspect and not giving enough resources to it. SHAREPOINT requires people to change; the natural tendency for people is not to change unless they see a benefit. There needs to be someone out there selling the change. I'll see it differently to someone else who'll see it differently to me. That's happened in the past and systems have failed as a result.

So, lack of thought (as to change management) has led to a lack of system usage?

Oh, yes definitely. I mean take for example the iPhone and say NOVOCORP made a decision to bring in the iPhone as the mobile on this floor for say 20 people. Someone has gone out and researched this phone and the benefits are clear and this is the phone you must have. Two ways you could do that; you could bring in the 20 mobiles in their boxes, leave them on people's desks and say away you go or you could bring the 20 people into a room, do a demo, get them to bring it back to their desks, show them certain features, work with them for a week or so, get them to do certain things and come back in a month or so and give them help. Give the resources that are necessary and the chances are that it will be successful. Now, it's probably a little extreme but we tend to do it (implement systems) the first way. Now, as I said it's a bit extreme to say it's exactly like that but certainly that's how I see it. I feel the first way is much more beneficial; I mean you'd have people taking to and learning off their neighbours and such.

Would you feel that some of the reasons why systems are implemented this way is done to the users being engineers, people who might be expected to be used to and be able to figure out how things work and learn by themselves?

Definitely, yes, there's a lot of that yet.

More able to figure out than say other users like HR...

It's not so much the being able to figure it out. It's like you don't expect people to be spoon-fed. As a company if you want to maximise the return from what are expensive systems you need to be thinking of having the resources to support it not just providing the system which is what we tend to do at the moment.

So, you would see the role of change manager as being very critical going forward in trying to implement projects successfully, getting the buy-in?

Yes.

So, in terms of getting the buy-in, whether you have SAP or something like it and then systems like SHAREPOINT which are smaller or less extreme or something like that, that you should have the formal change manager role and project structures, maybe not to the most formal level?

Yes, but I'm not familiar with projects or products like SAP which are so big that you'd have no choice really. They just go in and you finance it. Obviously if you've got a change manager or someone like that coming in and selling it that's helpful but you're going to have to use it anyway. When certain things go on-line, like expenses which are off-line here but done online in AGOCORP, like when SAP is implemented and all expenses here are on-line, I'm not going to be taking paper expense (claims); you'll have to do it on-line for example. Whether that's the right

way to do it (i.e. having to do it) is another thing but in terms of other systems, you could get twice or three times the benefit if you supported the people (when you implemented) and if you did it in a uniform way with everyone benefitting and it's the same when you move around etc when you wouldn't have these different approaches and so on. There are some systems where people might use only 5% in comparison with someone else who uses 75%. Now, that 5% might be fine, they might not need 75% but maybe they could see benefits at 10% or if they were brought along to that for example. More than (the minimum), even for standard office applications.

Do you think that's partially due to the classic (IT project) mindset that once the system is delivered, that the job is over?

I think there's a bit of that yeah but in fairness to the (NOVOCORP) IT and Business Process people, they have a pretty small resource for an organisation of over a thousand people.

They probably have to strategically prioritise where the resources go?

Yes, they do. I suppose we're coming back to this issue of whether or not senior management really see IT as something really strategic. I mean look at the trading system (the ongoing Energy Trading and Risk Management (ETRM) system for buying and selling) that we need for here and the UK. I mean you could argue about the cost of it from the point of view of spending C, F million (Euros) on it but there's no argument about having it; it's so fundamentally key to the strategic nature of the business. The bigger systems tend to get priority. I mean they're fundamental and absolutely essential but if you're looking for efficiency gains or ways to help people work more efficiently than you're going to get them through less sexy or sophisticated systems whether it be a document management system or so on.

The long-term gains there would really add up...

Absolutely. We're an organisation with over a thousand people in this building. There's not many of them handling the trading system, only very few of them and four of five hundred engineers. The vast bulk of the engineers need to use often some basic office systems.

Taking the fact that some of the say smaller systems are critical, and leaving strong supportive (senior) management to one side for a minute, do you think that maybe stronger business cases need to be made for this smaller systems sometimes rather than having the senior management buy-in being more important?

Oh, I think the buy-in...

Not just in terms of senior management supporting the system, signing the cheques etc, do the business cases have to be made stronger or are they less of a factor do you think?

Well, I don't know how the company do it. I could mention or one or two other (systems)...OK, looking at one of the previous systems like the CRM system that was brought in a few years ago. Now, I'm not really clear about all the reasons for it as I was working abroad and came in more at the tail-end of it. I'm not sure what the driver of it was, I mean we have customers and we need to support them and all that so a system was needed for that. So people went out and did a reasonable level of investigation and talked to them about it about the needs (of them as customers) so the system could be geared and designed towards that. So, it was a sophisticated CRM system and six months after it went in, it stopped being used. I mean three years after it went in, it's only being used very partially so something like that is interesting. I mean, why did it fail? Something like that, an expensive system and second of all, it's not used to the potential for which it was designed initially. It would be an interesting exercise to look at it; I mean I have my personal views as to why it failed as to why it failing and what would you do differently tomorrow to do it better.

What in your own personal view were the reasons why it failed?

Well, from what I saw, my own personal view is that people had different expectations of what they wanted it for; I mean Individuals who were going to be users had different views of what they were going to use the system for. It had one or two strong champions but not enough champions around the place. Also, it was a little cumbersome to use as well. In reality, I think people found that maybe if you have to put in customer data and so on, I could maybe do it in a different way and what's the benefit to me? It was also being used very locally so the company wasn't seeing this like SAP or the trading system; it wasn't mission critical and it wasn't lined up with the business strategy as such. It wasn't really beneficial to the organisation as a whole but more locally for individuals that it had benefits for. Now, it turned out to be an expensive system since and it's not really delivered. Maybe, it's a case of finding out who are the potential users and having the buy-in and maybe having a change manager. I don't want to keep using the words change manager but some process to make sure before you invest in a system that people are going to see the benefits out of it.

Mmmm...

I mean the only way people will enter information and use a system is if they see a benefit for themselves. I mean the only reason I use my calendar (i.e. OUTLOOK calendar) is to make sure I don't miss meetings. I wouldn't bother using the calendar (function) otherwise. I can even use a 15 minute reminder so if I don't want or need to go to meetings, I wouldn't be using it. There's a clear benefit to me in using my calendar in OUTLOOK. Unless people can see a clear benefit (in a system) they're not going to use it unless it's a system something like SAP where

you use it because you've no or choice or whatever, I mean like a payroll system is something you have to use...

Enforced systems...

Sure and that happens in plenty of cases too. I mean, I think it's a question of trying to get people to... Maybe though people look at senior management, take the SHAREPOINT system. Now, I'm not an expert on the best way to put in a system and get buy-in and so on, but you know we're putting in SHAREPOINT across the organisation and will be used by different parts of the business in different ways. Now, senior management in the organisation don't use SHAREPOINT. It's used occasionally and you can get invited into at a very basic level. Now, I'm talking about the senior management team that I'm on (i.e. engineering group). Now, the senior management in NOVOCORP don't use it either. The group that I'm on, I'm not sure if you know about how the company is organised but the engineering group is headed by Liam McHale and his senior management group and we don't use it. Now, I raised this actually just at a senior management meeting last Monday; we should have all our agendas and presentations from our meetings up on that (SHAREPOINT). If that was somehow visible to the organisation, then you might get more buy-in from the rest of the organisation. If the senior management group aren't using tools like this (SHAREPOINT), then it mitigates against (wider) buy-in, in my view.

Not leading by example...

Yeah, leading by example. Now I'm pretty sure, actually I'm a 100% sure that it's the same with the EDT that they don't use it at their meetings. Now, I'm not sure what it's like in other organisations but if you don't see senior management using a tool, if you don't have people who fundamentally believe in the importance of systems. OK, they accept it (i.e. importance of systems) but they don't give visibility to it, then is IT seen as really a critical part (of the strategy/organisation).

Do you think that its (IT) perceived more as a cost than an advantage?

No, I wouldn't say that, it's a question of giving visibility to your beliefs. I mean there's no point in saying to someone Blackberries are great because you can get immediate access to e-mail and so on (if you don't carry one yourself). You don't carry one yourself?

No, I use an I-phone (for similar functionality).

They're the same; I mean that wouldn't make much sense (to encourage people to have one but not use one yourself). There was a senior manager here not so long ago and he always had his mobile phone switched off except when he wanted to make a call. Now, I'm not saying that the whole company knew that... What I mean is that you have to (as senior management) give signs that you think IT is

important. Some of that can be quite simple and can be done in direct ways but I don't think we do it adequately.

Signposting and your own attitude feeding into (the users)...

Yes.

In terms of the new SAP implementation, what are your initial gut feelings about it?

To be perfectly honest, I have very little knowledge of or involvement in it to be honest so I'm not that au fait with it. I suppose my only gut feeling was the fact that it was delayed by a year...I don't know to be honest how well NOVOCORP is going to integrate into it and how well it's going to go. I'm not that involved in it.

Would you have used the old AGRESSO system at all?

Yes, but only on a...From a financial reporting perspective, it's been used for many years. I certainly hope within the organisation that nobody is arguing that it be retained as it's a cumbersome system, pretty user hostile system but over the years and I've worked abroad for a good number of years so I've been away from it. But anytime I've wanted information from AGRESSO, I've got it manually in terms of sitting with someone from the financial side and talking about getting the kind of information required. AGRESSO for financial reporting? I don't get any of my financial reporting (from AGRESSO) online, which probably says a lot. I sit down with the finance person and I ask for the account information that I want. Where they get it, I don't query them.

Do you think therefore that the business case, you say it's cumbersome and not user friendly, do you think the business case for replacing AGRESSO is pretty strong?

For SAP to be introduced?

Yes, at a high level at least? It's coming strongly from the (AGOCORP Corporate) centre, I know but do you think people see a strong business case. See the benefit from switching from AGRESSO over to SAP? I'm not making a judgement on AGRESSO's usability, SAP is quite complicated (to use) too. But do you feel that it's easy to make the case to move from AGRESSO to SAP and easy to make it for the main body of users?

I don't think that it's easy to make it on a pure cost basis, a business case. I think people will say our systems are efficient and won't see it as a business case. They'll look at it as an AGOCORP corporate base. It's been decided that we're going to be a SAP organisation; it's not like we have a choice of going with SAP or something else. There are costings done and so on but the reality is that the decision has been made on the basis that AGOCORP had gone SAP. It's not the case where there's a

business case that says the cost savings are going to be greater than what was there in the current regime. I don't know if that view (as regards savings) has been made clearly enough to people. I think the majority view will be that we are moving to SAP because AGOCORP has decided to move to SAP. I'm not saying it's a bad thing but I don't know if there are many people out there who know that there is a separate business case that shows that moving from AGRESSO to SAP makes financial sense from NOVOCORP's point of view.

So, your view would be if there is a business case for SAP, that it's not out there or not clear?

It's not clear.

OK, how would you feel... I mean people are accepting that it's (the decision to move to SAP) not coming from within but rather without and that SAP is in all the other parts (i.e. group businesses) of AGOCORP. Do you think that people will buy into the new system? In the past, systems have been put in and people have accepted them. Do you think that it will be a similar case for SAP? Do you think people will just go with it or do you see resistance?

No, well to some extent...It's at the stage now (i.e. mobilisation) where all the background work is being done in terms of getting the resources and so on. Again the issue of trying to get buy-in. SAP is going to be obligatory as well so it's not so much a case of you really need buy-in for use. OK, you want people to use the system as efficiently as possible so from that sense you need buy-in for it. I think a lot will depend on how it's rolled out. If it's just put in and plonked on people's desks, if there isn't a process of selling into people, then it won't be accepted.

Is there a danger that it might fall into the I-phone trap that you used, the analogy earlier?

I hope it doesn't as it's such a fundamental system. It requires people to change the way to do things quite fundamentally so...

So, as you said earlier (re. SHAREPOINT) maybe people might use it for that 5, 10% you talked about?

Oh yes, absolutely and that's the risk. Now, I've never used SAP and I hear different things about it from different people, as you say it's not that easy to use but again if people build up a resistance to systems like this early on, then it's very difficult to get them back. The way the company starts going about this, the way they sell the benefits of the system, the way they go about selling it as in how the system makes their (i.e. the users) lives easier, that you could get information whereas before, you had to ring someone up, that sort of thing. If they (the users) understand that, then it's more likely to go well.

Do you think people at senior level here trying to push through the SAP system; do you think they understand the difference in scales of use at the end, as in the 5 or 10%? Do they associate success of a system with just the use of a system or more of a higher scale of use?

Oh, I hope they do (associate success with a higher scale of use)...I think a system like SAP is more a system for the finance and HR functions. That's where the main users are going to be in terms of managing the finances and HR side of it. Other Individuals (outside of HR/Finance) will be users of it but really in a sense it seems to me now speaking for myself, I get my information from AGRESSO through a finance person. Presumably, one would hope that in the SAP system, if I wanted to look at the overheads from a particular Job Number from six/seven months ago, I'd be able to find it and do some analyses on it. Now, that's presuming, I don't know if I'll be able to do that or will I still have to (use someone from finance). Hopefully I'll be able to do that (as in use SAP) rather than ring up someone from finance and occupy their time. Be one of ten or more people asking her the same question. If I can answer the same question going into the system and not call her or spend a half an hour going through it in a meeting, then clearly it's much more efficient. So, to the extent I hope that people don't just see it as a big tool that manages the finance and HR function better than what we did. I mean that's a big part of it that we do things from a finance and HR perspective better than what we did in the past. But I hope for the business users...I mean the same thing should apply for HR queries; if I wanted to check say the absentee rate for someone, then I could but I've haven't seen that I will be able to because it hasn't been sold or promoted or whatever.

Do you think that should (the efficiency gains) should be clearer?

Yes, absolutely. This is a big organization with a huge amount of job numbers and processing which line managers do and so they should be able to get the information they need (from the new system).

Would you feel that there's a general feeling that they don't know if they'll be able to do that?

I would certainly feel that; I would imagine that hasn't been sold. I mean, any of the presentations, of which there have been few, that I have been to on SAP have not been focused on that (i.e. beneficial uses).

They've (the presentations) been more of a high-level...

That's my impression. This comes back to, I suppose to how you implement these processes. I don't know if there is a plan to do that (i.e. tell people the benefits). I don't know how to get the 10% of usage rather than that 80%. I don't know if there is a plan for that or how it would look for SAP. To come back to the earlier (I-phone) analogy, I hope they're not just going to drop it (the SAP system) on people's desks. I hope not and that we extract the maximum benefit from it.

That's great Ryan; we can stop there. Thanks for your time.

OK.

Location: Project HQ / **Date:** 26th February 2010/ **Duration:** 54 mins.

Interviewee: Fergal Flynn, Project Manager, NOVOCORP Engineering Solutions; *appointed as Change Manager and business lead on the SAP project.*

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

So Fergal, just for the sake of context, you might describe your role a little bit, your current job title, responsibilities...

Purely in terms of the project, I was formerly asked to take the role of change manager and business lead for the (SAP Financials and HR) project in November (2009). It took a little bit of time to get agreement on that because of business transition from the previous project that I was on and trying to see if I would be available. That's why I'm in the situation that I'm currently in; double-jobbing (i.e. change manager role overlapped with project manager role overseeing the construction of a facility many km away) and there are not enough hours in the day. So, I was asked by a senior manager in NOVOCORP, Liam McHale to undertake the role; it was sold to me as an opportunity, which it was, to get a bit more experience, to get a bit more exposure and to see the company from a different perspective, so no problem (for me) getting involved in the role. One thing I would say though is that in terms of the (change manager) role, although I had some idea myself as to what the role entailed, if you talked to say five different people, they'd all have different opinions (as to what the role entailed).

People on the project or people in general?

I suppose if I went to talk to someone in HR, they had one perspective, if I talked to someone in finance, then they had a different perspective; the project manager had another idea. I thought it was a bit strange (that everyone had slightly different ideas) and I was figuring out myself what I was trying to do. I think at this stage (beginning of blueprinting), people on and external to the team are trying to figure that out as well; what's he going to do? Is he going to help me or cause me trouble? So, I'm just in the process of feeling my way through that at the moment and really trying to find my own scope. Especially as in my case, I don't have a finance background, a HR background, an IT background. So, if I'm meant to be the front or the face in terms of going back to NOVOCORP and saying this is what we're doing, then coming back here (project) and trying to balance expectations here in terms of their profile versus the profile I might get back there versus me being able to ask the difficult questions back there whereas maybe I should have brought Rena (Carmody) the process lead for finance to ask the questions. So, I'm

trying to figure that out at the moment, so I'm probably drifting from the question....

No, no, not at all; have you ever worked in a change management role per se at all then?

No...one thing I have found in looking at it and I've done a lot of research into it, part of my role previously as project manager does involve change management as part of it. The client's operation team are going to take over the facility and the contractor so I found the roles from that perspective quite similar but I didn't realise it until I looked at what I was doing. (I'm) Not necessarily managing the project in terms of technical delivery but I'm trying to manage the clients' expectations, the end-users' expectations and the contractor who we're paying to deliver it (the project). I've looked at it and aligned the two (projects as in SAP implementation and construction) and looked at my background and realised that I can do it. It will be more challenging this time then in my previous role I had the technical capability to understand an issue and take it forward at least to a large degree, 50% of the issues I'd know, the other 50% I could rely on someone whereas this project at the moment, 95% of the issues, I'm relying on someone else's knowledge where I have to take a decision on it or deal with it by passing it on to someone which is quite different.

So, did you get any formal training on change or change management or what would be involved?

The only direct training I actually have had is the (Leadership) course I attended at the University of FFFFFFFF where we did a Change module. I actually went back and had a look at my course assignment and applied that. One thing that jumped at me was the John Kotter change model which I read in a book someone loaned me. I never mentioned him in my assignment which is strange now looking back! What I have started is some change coaching from a guy with whom I've had a few sessions.

Is he an internal person?

No, he's an external guy; the first session I don't think I was quite ready for it so didn't get too much out of it whereas the second session, I went in with my own plan, my own views on it and someone to bounce ideas off and he challenged me and it seem to have worked better. He's independent and has no agenda so it's nice to be able to bounce things off him as well.

In terms of getting appointed, did some senior person outline any of the criteria for why you were appointed at that time?

Mmmm (REFLECTING); I suppose they needed someone from the (engineering side of the) business. Leaving aside finance and HR, people (i.e. engineers) will be doing expenses and timesheets differently, will be doing performance management

differently, so having someone that comes from the business, to help with that transition (is better). That's how it was sold to me; basically we needed that representation there (on the project). Liam McHale said to me as well that we needed someone from the business on the inside of the project dealing with the key account managers (from NOVOCORP Engineering) to minimise their complaining and to deal with any issues. So, if there is an issue there, I can get involved, understand it and feed it back from there. That was the main reason...

Part of the user population so you're representative...

Yes.

I know it's very early days and you're undertaking coaching, but how do you see the (change management) process working? I know you'll be here with the project team but how do you see working as a process; it might be difficult to answer that right now...

You mean in terms of managing the process?

Yes, managing people and the process...

Ultimately, I suppose I've come to the conclusion that I don't need to understand everything; I don't need to know what the finance, ICT and HR groups are doing, but ultimately that I am aware of the impact that's going to have on each group within NOVOCORP. One of the main aims is to communicate the change as per the effect for each group and reassure them in terms of issues like job security or dealing with things like 'well, this is the way I've always done things, I don't want to change, because I'm set in the ways'. So, every time I look at it in comes back to communication, whether that means online on the intranet, or through e-mail or putting something into our bimonthly internal newspaper. Try and target a lot of the team leaders and department heads and provide them with a base of knowledge so they can communicate down to their teams. What I'm thinking of doing is to try at the end of the process to circulate a one page questionnaire and get their feedback (as to how the communication worked) so I can take something from that and improve.

Feedback on your own role or on the project?

The project, if I'm coming to you and saying to you; 'Listen John, as of next January (2011), you'll be doing your timesheets and expenses in a different way, don't worry about performance management as that stays the same, it won't affect your bonus or anything but it will mean changing training and moving from submitting timesheets/expenses on paper; this will all be done through SAP. Let me explain to you what's going to happen and what this means'. Now, I also intend getting feedback on the existing system (for submitting timesheets/expenses) and seeing if there's something there in that process that could be improved. If I can or can't, at least I've asked the question.

So, a bit of reflection more towards the end?

Yes, and maybe get more buy-in.

Would you consider yourself a user of AGRESSO?

Well, as project manager of the construction, I would have relied on it for timesheets but would have got everything I need from finance. The system is viewed as an unfriendly system to (by) the business community. Now, the finance might like it (AGRESSO) or hate it, but most seem to like it at least when they compare it to SAP, it's quite flexible whereas SAP would not. I understand SAP is considered to be more robust etc. From the business perspective, the system (AGRESSO) does not provide them with what they need. So, at the moment I'm trying to manage user expectations around what SAP will or can provide. Getting an understanding of what we can or can't deliver at this stage.

Do you feel then that the business case (for SAP) is yet to be made?

To the business (i.e. user) community, definitely yes (it has not been made); one thing that struck me when I went to talk to a couple of people when I was asked to take on the role was...Now, a feasibility study had been done previously to determine the extent of the project, are we going to go with SAP or something else or what's the scope of the project... Now, I went to talk to some of the key managers in the business, the key account managers who have to deal with clients and who would actually outside of HR and finance, use AGRESSO themselves to source financial information...

Would they do it themselves or go through HR or finance?

Depends on their knowledge of AGRESSO; they would be able to go in and pull information out of AGRESSO and into EXCEL where it can be manipulated using a pivot table. Financial information is all we seem to use AGRESSO for; we don't seem to use AGRESSO to do a lot of reporting as it doesn't have that capability. That's my opinion from the people I've talked to; there may be other opinions. One thing that did strike me in terms of the people I talked to, is that there was a general view that 'we don't know anything about this project, we heard about it two years ago when it was first discussed and we were told people would come back to us and give us feedback but that never happened..'. Senior management signed off on it (the project) but they didn't get any buy-in, there was no consultation with the next level down. That left a gap there that I decided to jump into and that was the only thing I did before Christmas. Because I did that, because of me coming from the business, they kind of rallied around me, 'if you want something, resources, let us know and we'll give it to you'. And, it helped because from my point of view if I needed someone to come down here (Project HQ) from the business, I feel I can go and get it. Whereas without that, I would find it difficult to do so.

So, definitely on the business issues there was a lack of information (with respect to the project)?

There was (EMPHATIC); which surprised me. On the finance, HR and IT side it (SAP project) seemed to be very clearly understood, whereas on the engineering business side, the coalface side, there was definitely a gap.

So, they wouldn't have any appreciation of the business case or system justification?

No (EMPHATIC).

Would they be critics of AGRESSO themselves? Would they be more likely to fall into the 'AGRESSO is user-unfriendly but usable' or 'AGRESSO is not robust enough camp'?

Most of them (REFLECTING) would fall into the non-robust camp. They would definitely have issues with how AGRESSO is used, how usable it is but they also hear the horror stories surrounding SAP implementation in AGOCORP in the past. The 'as-is' condition they can live with, what the new system will mean when it's implemented, they'd be unsure about. I suppose to summarise, the things that jumped up at me when people came back to me on the project were along the lines of 'not another Accenture project'; (the perception of) a bunch of external people coming in to implement a system, then leave without providing any training. That kind of attitude was there...

Is that relating to Accenture's involvement in the big (corporate AGOCORP) project a few years ago?

Yes, yes; there's this thing about external people being involved in projects and they'd remember. Also as well they (the NOVOCORP engineers/KAM) would know a lot of people in AGOCORP Networks where they've had a few difficulties with this XYZ project that they've implemented.

Is that SAP based?

It is; it's not finance based. It's a SAP system intended to bring integrate all the different projects that (AGOCORP) networks are managing at a given time. To try and schedule the work, so if we're building a new unit, the plans and control for that is done through SAP so building schedules and costs can be controlled. Now, it's a huge project and it went in a year late and the project cost went from 10 to 20 million. Because of XYZ, we now have three people working for us full-time that we didn't have three years ago whose job it is to input data from what we do into the XYZ system to support Networks who would probably say themselves that it's (XYZ) not working as well as it should. So they (the NOVOCORP engineering

business) have that and they have Accenture pulling out too early (they would feel) as their experience (of a SAP implementation).

So, the SAP context would not be overly positive?

No, it would not.

I know you didn't work on the XYZ project but was there a similar governance structure on that SAP project as there is on the this (NOVOCORP) SAP implementation?

Yes, I meet the change manager (on the XYZ project) and he's one of the people I would have talked to in terms of trying to define my role. I met him a couple of times alright. What I've taken from the XYZ project and now this is from talking to external people, not people who worked on the project as there seems to be sensitivity around it, in terms of the management of change and the delays around it.

Sensitivity internally or externally?

Internally, when I talk to the change manager, I have sensed that it's not a subject to bring up. Now, I've tried to learn from him in what he's done but I haven't gone and asked him in terms of what went wrong or why things didn't work out. Because I feel he doesn't want to be asked that question; that's pretty obvious. I haven't gone there yet; I may yet! Externally, though the feedback I got was that the project lacked support from senior management in Networks to force it through. I believe that senior management from NOVOCORP have learned from that and are giving strong support to help the project through. Liam and Lorna have both said it to me that it wasn't there (in AGOCORP Networks) the project support. It's visible and you can see the support here (for the NOVOCORP SAP implementation) from the project board.

So, looking back over all the different SAP implementations in AGOCORP in the past and assuming their governance structures weren't overly different, that means that there must be say 5 or 6 change managers in AGOCORP group who've done what you're doing now.

Yes...

So, there's a lot of change management expertise in the organisations (both AGOCORP and NOVOCORP). Do you have access to it?

No, not formally. There's no access to that at all. I mean "Joe Rice", a member of the corporate ICT group who worked on the P and HR project in AGOCORP in a change type role a few years back; I'm meeting him next week. And there's "Colin Neeson" who was the XYZ change manager who's now working on a parallel project, and he's managing the change aspect of that. Now, that's a very

challenging project affecting 800 technicians. Previously at the start of the week, technicians were given a roster of jobs they would be responsible for in terms of assets, and they'd manage the workloads themselves. Now, that's all changing as the new system will manage their individual workloads which they'll get from a Palm Pilot. Once they're finished a job, they will enter that and update the system remotely and then they'll get their next job so a substantial change in behaviour will be necessary.

Difficult to manage in terms of peoples' IT skills and such like...

Yes, and that's how they've operated for years and that's quite difficult...

So, you're teaching base with other change managers and establishing connections...

I have yes, and people keep telling me that you need to consult, you have to do this or that...I'm just trying to see how I can do that. One thing I'm grappling with at the moment is the changing of our expenses regime because of SAP; I mean to be like the current expenses system in corporate AGOCORP SAP. Now we're changing our (NOVOCORP) expenses regime from off-line manual form to replicate what's in AGOCORP. There would be no point in changing a system to keep 1000 people in NOVOCORP and inconvenience the remaining 6000! Now, the AGOCORP expenses part of the SAP system is being upgraded in June, I believe to be made more user-friendly. Now, post-upgrade this is the exact same system we'll have in NOVOCORP; there's no change and it's exactly as it is in AGOCORP so you have to ask yourself what's the point in consulting (on the new expenses component of the SAP system) if there's no change that I can make. What I've decided to do is to call on the team leaders, to give them a presentation that they can give to their own staff and give them a questionnaire at the end to get some feedback so at least if there is some feedback on some issues that I'll try and I've concluded that that's the best level of consultation that I can do on that. Some people I've talked to say don't bother because I can't change anything but I still feel I need to do something.

Do you want to create even a path of communication around change so that people will know when change is happening and be told about it?

Yeah, they're not being ignored; they're being told what's happening. I mean some people have been using the same manual system for twenty years; to go to an on-line system is different for them and should we not actually ask them if they have any comments, any feedback on the existing system? Maybe, I can actually learn from them. For me, it's more about the process of getting their buy-in and making them feel they're being involved.

If the upgrade gets delayed in any way, is that going to have a knock on-effect on the NOVOCORP SAP implementation?

A serious effect; at the moment, we're in SAP terminology, in the blueprinting phase and will be so until the end of May; we have 120 BPID (BPID: Blueprint Phase Implementation Directive; a document used in the BLUEPRINT phase of SAP implementation whereby existing business processes are modelled and explained in their current pre-SAP ("as-is") and proposed within-SAP ("to-be") forms) on the finance side, 15-20 on the HR side. Now, when I say "we", I'm not directly involved in trying to define the "as-is" and the "to-be" as such which we must get done by the end of May. Because in early June, the June bank holiday weekend, the (SAP expenses system component) upgrade will be implemented (by corporate ICT) only after which corporate ICT can take on board our new configuration (i.e. the various agreed "to-be"s). If the upgrade gets delayed or pushed back, our configuration gets pushed back and therefore our whole project, so we have to go live by year end (of 2010) so potentially we could lose a whole year because of it. The (NOVOCORP) SAP implementation was supposed to go ahead last year but because XYZ was delayed, the resources weren't available and so we were delayed. So, at the moment we're next in line for configuration.

In terms of (NOVOCORP) staff knowing the system was on its way, do you think the fact the system was delayed a year ago had made the process of change management more difficult?

(A lot of people) didn't know it was happening last year. First I heard about it, now I'm down the food chain was when I was asked to take the change manager role.

OK, was that a deliberate policy as in wilful neglect or was it not a critical issue?

Well I suppose at the moment in AGOCORP, there is a lot of uncertainty, a lot of unknowns, in terms of where the organisation is going. With that, the XYZ project was going to be delayed and we didn't know for how long and also SAP were pushing (AGOCORP Group) to implement the upgrade to avoid falling behind. We sold part of a business, AGOCORP Contracts which utilised a SAP system. There was also therefore a fear that something may have to be done on SAP to facilitate a sale on that. So, there was uncertainty for the timeline on this project all along really until we got (Corporate) IT sign-off on this before Christmas (2009). So, we were waiting for all that. At the same time, I'm not sure if there was a need to tell people (about the coming implementation). People might disagree but at the moment, I'm not jumping up to put a page up on our (i.e. NOVOCORP's) Intranet to tell people all about the project. I mean we're now in February and if I tell someone now that how they submit timesheets or expenses is going to change as of next January, it seems a long way away for them. This whole idea of creating urgency...You're not creating any urgency if you're just telling people ten months in advance and even at this stage, critical buy-in and input at that early stage is not really needed. (I foresee) the broad communication starting in the next three-four weeks; I think that's an appropriate time as we're getting to have a scope of what it is we're actually doing in terms of the HR and Finance side so we can actually go out with clarity on scope. I'd rather spend the time at the moment, refining my communication approaches and techniques making sure that the right message is

delivered at the right time, as in a positive message...I'm met our communications manager in NOVOCORP over the last few weeks and I'm learning a lot from here in terms of what to do and what not to do (in terms of communication).

What do you think yourself will be the main issues with respect to communication to the end-users?

The best way, I would feel to do it is for me in terms of the end-users would be to provide monthly or bi-monthly briefings to the team leaders and expect the team leaders to pass it on to their team. Now the risk is for some team leaders, they don't get the right message or they don't engage in passing the message in. Now, the alternative is to go to everyone on an individual basis and that's not going to happen. But, if I can get access to the team leaders, if I can get across the right message and on the engineering side, if it's coming from myself and a couple of key people I will target, if I can get that message across. In terms of the high level...Intranet, e-mail and so-on will only get a certain catchment. I believe really to make it clear my initial target is senior management so that I want to try to do is say go down to Fleet street where there's 600 engineers or so working. Talk to the team leaders and ask them to pass it on and look at questionnaires and so on. For example, get the manager down there (interviewed at a later juncture) to maybe deliver half my presentation and show his support behind it. We are a company that follow leaders; we have in certain areas, leaders who well, to put it bluntly, if they say 'Jump', you say 'How high'! And it's not because of fear but out of respect and I want to maximise that. We're a young company and we've had a lot of older employees retiring in the last few years. We've had a huge influx of young engineers who are keen and anxious to make a career for themselves, so there's a natural intent to fall into what's happening (i.e. SAP project). The more we can communicate with them, the more we can make them at ease, then the better.

Do you think the KAMs are aware of their responsibilities when it comes to change?

Mmmm (THINKING). Some of them would – doesn't mean they're going to do it. There's one area, one group in the engineering area; about 600 people working there, the biggest area in the company, Now, I've gone to their SMT meetings twice and given presentations as to what's happening and in the last presentation I was outlining my approach to change and change communication and how my responsibility was to provide a change network, to give them the communication to feed to their team. I summarised that that's the only way we can communicate; I can't do all of it, so it's basically up to this guy. I'd already talked to the senior manager before hand and he rowed in after them at the presentation in terms of the message. There were a few (negative/critical) comments but it was reasonably positive. I'm going back to that SMT meeting next week and I hope to form a change steering group, basically of six managers around the business and sit down with me, and go through my change plan, my communication plan, which I'm trying to develop at the moment and basically what I would so to try and get them to agreed to it. I have a good idea of my change plan but what I will do is turn it

into a series of questions and see what they come up with and see if it's different. It may not be the same paragraph by paragraph as to what I exactly intended but it will be their plan.

Giving them a sense of involvement?

Yes, it's their plan and will look to them to take it forward; under that then, will be looking to them to take it forward and suggest people to target so it can be moved ahead with directly.

So, when you think about the user population, the engineers, HR and finance, of all the groups you'll be thinking about, which group do you think will be most problematic?

Yeah, in terms of the actual change... From the feedback I've got, there are two specific areas where the feedback is not great. Other initiatives that have been rolled out across the company, the take-up in that area has not been great. Some people say it's because of the specific manager and the other aspect is that the staff is always on the road, never in the office. They've tended to have done things in their own specific way and not engaged with change. So, there are a few areas I've been focused on but I haven't gone through everywhere to figure out...

Do you see yourself adapting your approach depending on the audience you're addressing in a change or communication role?

I haven't thought about it too much to date to be honest. It was more that I've haven't got to the point of thinking about the change message at different points. I was thinking more about the levels of knowledge being transferred and I'm conscious as well of not going out delivering something this month and then going out next month and maybe doing or saying something else. I'm aware of the difficult areas but instead of maybe going into these areas, more talking to the team leaders in these areas and suggest to them to give a first or second briefing so I can see the reactions and questions and get feedback as to whether there is a uptake or not or a particular issue there. That's all I've done to date...Ask me next month!

In the case of some of the users, they've kind of taken AGRESSO and made it their own; do you foresee or see an emotional attachment to AGRESSO as a result?

MMM (Reflecting). Only from the Finance side, there would definitely be an emotional attachment there. The greater IT community, they mightn't like it, but there are people there who would have supported it over a period of time – we actually have one of those people working here on the project. I have a sense that they've put a lot of time and effort into it over the last couple of years, they have supported it so it is important to them and I sense that when we're talking with a certain part of the business and they say 'Well, AGRESSO could never do this...'; there's a reaction along the lines of 'No, actually you can if you do this and this'.

So, there's a defensive reaction where they defend it if they can. From the business side, there's a comfort in knowing what they can do with AGRESSO, how they can deal with their clients, so it's more of a fear with SAP, that we'll land them with a system that they find more difficult to get information out of or can't meet the needs of their clients. More fear than emotion I would say, or rather more fear than attachment.

So, there's no kind of ownership (as in a proprietary feeling) around it (AGRESSO), as such?

No. One of the most challenging areas for us is the Networks key account (interviewed at a later point) as we have around 600 projects with AGOCORP Networks currently ongoing. Some of those projects might be worth a few thousand or even a few million. Some could start now and take a month, year or ten years. They're sitting there ongoing and any time, there's a bit of work done on them whether it is on a TNM (Time and Materials) or a fixed-price contract basis, then we bill. We have 600 active job numbers in AGRESSO, reflecting the 600 projects; we could be charging say for 200 jobs a month, that's 200 invoices. Now, that volume (of invoicing) has increased dramatically over the last few years from a low number and they couldn't manage that kind of level of interaction in AGRESSO at all.

The account team that manage the projects, the billing, the invoicing, the contract signing, whatever has to be done, contract approvals, that's grown from one person to ten over the last few years. Now the supporting financial side of it has resulted in the development of an ACCESS database outside of AGRESSO that deals with this high volume of data. We've gone down there a few times and had a look at it and there's a potential that SAP will replace it. Now, we got the impression from them and the KAM that if we could replace that entire database etc with SAP, that he'd be delighted. He can see himself that although the database works, that they have to keep on tweaking it to make it work. It's not robust and he has to keep on taking that into account. He's also aware that issues have popped up in AGRESSO where data has gone missing and we've ended up under-invoicing the client as a result and lost money. You can't go back and re-invoice afterwards – we've lost close to half a million and that's gone around Networks and all over (the organisation). So, if people say 'AGRESSO is not robust', they won't get a challenge because the evidence is there. I wasn't aware of this until I got this as feedback when I presented to them.

So, in terms of the issues arising as time goes on, do you see Finance due to their particular reasons and ways of using the system as being the most difficult users to manage?

Well. Yes, but the biggest risk I see with respect to the project. The intent of the project is to really adopt the AGOCORP (corporate) way of doing things. Like, if you have an accounts payable (AP) function in NOVOCORP, then the new SAP system will reflect how the AP function works centrally. So, it will be different and we're

mapping that (i.e. using the BPIDs) and there'll be a transition there to be managed. What I don't see is that although we have a project team on the Finance side, they are seen to be experienced in what they do, I do get the feeling that they're a little on their own in terms of the financial controllers back in NOVOCORP who all come from AGOCORP and are used to SAP. They see this new system more as an add-on with a few tweaks which they expect the finance team here to get right. There's a risk or a fear that the finance part of the system may not be as quick to get going when the system is up and running in January and I'm very conscious of that.

From talking to the main financial controller who has maybe 40 people working for her, her idea of the level of involvement of her staff and the level of change required is different to mine.

Is that Aoife?

Yes, it is. I would prefer us to be talking to them a little more and keeping them informed. Now, she may have a valid point in that accountants will do what they have to do; she'll tell them when the time is right what the system will be like and what they'll have to do different and they'll just do it. (She's saying) From your perspective, you'd be better off getting on with it and come back to us for the training. I'd like to do a little more (that just that). Now, I know that Triona (Braiden, interviewed at a later point and part of the Finance team on the project) would be very conscious of that in terms of developing something here to bring back to the business in July and August and to be told 'You should have done something differently' and they'll be resentment there.

Do you think that given AGRESSO works albeit in a limited way and the fact that NOVOCORP were formerly more independent; is there a sense that this is an imposed system or is there a higher level of resistance as a result?

On the engineering side yes, there is that. I'm not sure if you're aware of the recent reorganisation that has happened?

I've heard it discussed, yes...

Well, NOVOCORP and GENCOM are now one, and positions are changing and we're coming together as a unit so SAP could help facilitate that (Note: GENCOM had SAP already) and bring us together. There are probably two caps: one would think it's a good idea to bring us more closely together and back towards the mother ship whereas you may have others looking at it, wondering on the pessimistic side, this is them (AGOCORP) coming over to manage us, this is their way of controlling us, we're going to be managed and put in our box. So, there are many different opinions...

So is there a general feeling that autonomy (of NOVOCORP) has diminished over time?

It is and in one particular part of the business which is the Facility area which is the area that I come from, that's a definite feeling. For us to expand and be successful we (Facility) would need to be taking on bigger and riskier projects but AGOCORP is risk-averse. So, we've been limited in doing that. Our capability then has been, we've been very busy on a number of AGOCORP projects which are beginning to die off. I suppose with the merger with GENCOM as well, there would be a feeling that the business (within Facility) could be under a little bit of a threat. In the other areas, they've just been so busy, there is a hope and it also exists in Facility as well, that with coming together, there is an experience and a more commercially aware attitude within NOVOCORP as opposed to AGOCORP and that will help the (GENCOM) integration.

So would see less trouble with this integration?

Hopefully, yes. I suppose there's the ultimate expectation as well that we're coming together as a company more on the finance and HR side, that they'll be more opportunities to move around the business. At this point in time, it's only senior managers that are able to move across and no-one else can move. So, if a job say is advertised in Networks or GENCOM, then I can't apply. I'm a direct-hire employee (of NOVOCORP) so I'm on different terms and conditions and pension plan to employees in AGOCORP. Aoife, Lorna can move back and forward, I can't. So, for the younger employees, being part of one system may enable more opportunities.

Do you think that people perceive that across NOVOCORP?

In terms of the SAP system or the coming together?

Well, both really?

From the younger (employees') side, yes; there is that expectation and hope. On the project side, people might not be aware of it but I am and will try to milk it.

In terms of the reorganisation with GENCOM having SAP already, do you sometimes feel you have two parallel SAP projects?

Well, SAP exists for years in GENCOM so I wouldn't consider it a project as such. What we have to consider though is say we have two separate financial systems (GENCOM and NOVOCORP) that need to be integrated so we need the enterprise model first as they call it in SAP. Up to a week ago, we didn't have anything on that. Now, the FCs are looking for the enterprise model and we couldn't deliver that. So, we'll have to deliver that.

Would you have any concerns with regards to say maybe some NOVOCORP staff that may have to move across to GENCOM and have to work on SAP?

Yes and we're working on it at the moment. It has been identified that there are certain people working for GENCOM who'll be moving over to NOVOCORP at the moment. There'll be (NOVOCORP) managers then who'll be asked to approve expenses for these former GENCOM employees, who'll have to do it on paper not on SAP like they're used to. They'll probably be saying 'Why am I doing this on paper and not on SAP?' they'll think we're in the dark ages and its mostly senior managers moving across. We've also been informed that there are 25 employees moving to help manage the transition until SAP is live here next January (2011). Because of the realignment and restructuring that's going on, groups are being put together of both NOVOCORP and GENCOM employees, so if they have expenses and timesheets, they'll be doing them all through SAP.

Will people be physically moving?

Some will and some will remain here in NOVOCORP. We're also aware that if they (the NOVOCORP staff) do move across and are using SAP, they'll be communicating with their former colleagues in terms of what SAP is like to use, what kind of training and supports they're going to get etc. Also with the June SAP upgrade, we fully expect SAP to be much more usable come that time so we're trying to target those people. Now, we got a list of those people just last Wednesday and I'm on it! Because I fall under IT (due to being on the project team) and Lorna, her (BP/IT) team is merging with the GENCOM team and ironically we'll be amongst the first to use SAP! Because of the reorganisation that is, and nothing to do with the project. What we'll be worried about then will be to target everyone including ourselves early to debrief them on what they're going to see over the next three months and after that and what the intent (of the system is). So, ultimately they have a good feeling for it. But to be honest, looking at the list and the type of people that are on it, I don't expect it to be much of a problem and we can manage it.

The expertise that AGOCORP will be providing on this project in terms of the technical expertise, what is the general feeling on the ground in terms of the supports that AGOCORP offer in terms of IT, shared services etc?

We use to have a situation where we had a lot more support within the company (NOVOCORP). If we had a problem, there was someone, one or two people you could call on directly to help you. Now we've gone from that to picking up the phone, dialling a support desk and if they can't fix it remotely and you're waiting then for someone to come over and you have to wait a while. So there might have been a perception that we were going backwards. We were looking at our expenses as an organisation, the overheads with respect to our competitors, I mean the NOVOCORP HQ used to cost y million Euros a year rent, now it costs z. When we decided to stay and not move location for whatever reason our IT costs just seemed to grow astronomically; an IT overhead that was added to the charge out rates we were charging our customers. We have been told on umpteen projects (by potential customers) that 'we want you to do the job but you're just too expensive. Even if you come down a bit, you'd still be too expensive...'

How much of your or overall (corporate) IT budget say is your responsibility?

We're paying for SAP and we don't even have it. We have to share that (cost) burden because even though I don't use SAP for my expenses at the moment, I fill out a hardcopy that goes to HR and they input it into SAP for us. Payroll is controlled through AGOCORP. So we've been paying for all supporting and other AGOCORP (IT) systems for years and there's a feeling that we've been paying too much and we could streamline our overheads and charge-out costs.

Would you feel the IT support you get (from corporate ICT) is good enough?

From a personal point of view ... (PAUSES), I don't have issues but I'm a simple person who has a simple job when it comes to IT. I mean say I use WORD, EXCEL, OUTLOOK and the Internet. There are other systems such as document management and drawing systems, different technical packages etc and there's a big gap there. I don't feel it personally but people who work with me who use those systems would say that.

Would they be people who you'd target specifically re the change?

They would be...yes. But for them, they would probably look on it less as an IT project but more like a Financials/HR project.

That's great Fergal. Thanks.

Great.

Location: NOVOCORP HQ / Date: 26th February 2010/ Duration: 39 mins.

Interviewee: Warren Gatling, Financial Performance Manager, NOVOCORP.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.
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So Warren, just for the sake of context, you might describe your role a little bit, your current job title, responsibilities...

Sure, well I've been working for NOVOCORP now for nearly a year and a half. My role is basically financial reporting manager for NOVOCORP so almost like maybe a group accountant for NOVOCORP for want of a better word. So, I suppose my kind of day job is the financial reporting of the management accounts on a monthly basis to AGOCORP. To head office, the budget and the audit. They'd be the three key roles I have. Aligned to that all the technical issues that come up come through me or there is a dotted line or indirect responsibility that everything accounting comes through me and goes on to auditors or the department. My department is kind of a portal to AGOCORP, to the auditors or tax (ation) or anything like that.

Could you elaborate on the technology?

No, sorry I meant technical accounting issues should come through me, all the accounting issues, all the statutory issues should all come through this area..

A lot of compliance responsibility?

Yes, it's quite varied and detailed. You'd have to have an oar or a hand in on everything here accounting-wise.

A fairly wide portfolio of responsibilities...

Yes, very wide and challenging.

So, you'd hopefully be benefitting then from the implementation of the new AGRESSO system and SAP transition? Make your life more easy being integrated with AGOCORP systems?

Well, at the moment we're on AGRESSO and 80-90% I'd say of all companies within the NOVOCORP are on AGRESSO. There's what, maybe 60 or 70 statutory entities within NOVOCORP and four or five business units within NOVOCORP. Statutory entities criss-cross the business unit which then go into one NOVOCORP group and that goes over (to AGOCORP) to take an auditing aside for a moment. The

statutory entities don't really match up with the individual NOVOCORP business units. You could have 70 statutory entities here (for one NOVOCORP business unit) and 15 for another, with lines going across. The structure is quite complicated, so the fact that 80-90% of them are on AGRESSO is a help, 100% would be a help, and really 100% on SAP would be even a bigger help! From that point of view, it will be a benefit as much if not more AGOCORP Group Finance as we'll be on the same system as the normal data reporting role. We'll have to move to the same timeframe as them so it should make all the reporting smoother. At the moment we have to consolidate everything at an NOVOCORP level and move it onto BCS (Business Consolidation System), the reporting part that sits atop AGRESSO whereas now we'll all be on the same system, so if there's issues with group finance we can go in and out of the system.

Should streamline the process?

Should make it very streamlined as they will have a very clear idea as to what's happening here. They (Group Finance) can see into BCS but as far as I know cannot see into AGRESSO. It's difficult to do so, not that they need it to be honest. From a business process point of view it will make things smoother – I've always thought we should be on the same system anyway so it's a good idea that we're all going to be on SAP.

Would you feel that there could be any auditing or governance issues around the fact that you're on different systems anyway?

No, it doesn't really. Now I talked to Deirdre McNamee, she's in charge of corporate governance at NOVOCORP and she was saying that ultimately that our financing and accounting report system is fundamentally BCS. The integrity of AGRESSO is looked after over here. So, the short answer is no. In terms of the overall governance and auditing structure, AGOCORP is considered as a whole and we're audited by KMPG. A separate team (from AGOCORP) comes into here and if anything is wrong (they'll pick it up). Anything that criss-crosses from AGOCORP to NOVOCORP, payments, loans and receivables, intercompany is agreed through BCS – I'm not sure it's agreed though AGRESSO – it's aligned up anyway so even though we're not on SAP, it is lined up.

Now, I know you're going to be part of the integration process.

Yes.

Do you think the move from AGRESSO to SAP is more advantageous for AGOCORP than NOVOCORP or do you see the agenda as being something different?

Yes, it does depend on the agendas and they can be different for different parts of AGOCORP and NOVOCORP. When you look at the NOVOCORP HR department, it would strongly make sense that they should be aligned with AGOCORP HR. For ourselves, we've kind of got used to working with AGRESSO and being a separate

body and made it work that way. I think advantages will come here but at least the same amount of advantages will accrue to AGOCORP. We have an issue now for the last couple of organisations that we've taken over. They haven't been put on AGRESSO in light of the upcoming conversion to SAP so we have about 80-90% on AGRESSO with that recent 10% on something else. They're all on BCS, the reporting system but the more the secondary systems the more you'd worry.

Bit of downward pressure to control?

Yes, even when we go to SAP, not all the businesses will go on SAP due to being overseas or maybe we don't have a controlling share of them so we'd have to come up with some new shareholder arrangements or agreements to do that so...

Ideally you'd like them all on SAP.

Yes, sure.

Given what you see in terms of the utilisation of AGRESSO every day, do you see some advantages that may be lost when it's replaced or would you feel the business case for SAP is compelling enough for that to be overcome?

It's difficult to answer that at the moment. I'm waiting on 130 BPIDS and when I read them, I can give you a more informed response. I've never used SAP to be honest so the advantages for me anyway are a little theoretical at the moment. Sorry, I can't give you a more compelling answer at the moment.

I suppose over time you'll see that coming through with the testing and as the deadline draws closer, in terms of..

Oh, I'd expect to see it in the next month. The BPIDS I have are. I'm not sure if you've talked to people about them but they basically show how we're going to align what we technically will do in SAP (i.e. "TO BE") what we technically can currently do in AGRESSO (i.e. "AS IS") and what process effects is going to have to people's lives here. When we get them, the effects will have a little more sense.

Do these documents are about changes that affect the process. Are they going to be articulated to the people to be affected by the changes?

They will be or should be... I'm the change design authority (I think it is) and I'm on the board of change and there a lot of things at the start that will come through me and have to go out to the financial controllers and then feed back to me and back to the SAP design team where we can get a final decision on what we will accept and change and I think most processes will change.

Do you feel a sense a pressure or responsibility is to distil the documents down and explain or justify the changes to your staff?

Yes, I suppose some of these documents are 10 or more pages long and can be quite technical in terms of what the content is referring to and I'm not sure that everybody expects or needs that level of detail. I will try and insure that I'm saying to the financial controllers is that I will be advising them as to going with the approach that the SAP team recommends unless you have an issue otherwise. For the bigger issue we'll have a joint approach. Looking at the small things, I mean at the moment that we have 200 purchase order requisitioners and we'd be pushing for that to be brought back into a responsible team of twenty or ten people. That's a no-brainer for us but may be problematic for others, but I'd still be pushing to accept it though. For other ones like AGRESSO does it this way, SAP does it this way so if you post a journal differently on one to the other, then the financial controllers would need to know all about it. I'm not sure if that's what you're referring to and maybe you're thinking of say further down the track when people will be using it on a daily basis?

No, just generally when you ask about the business case, there's mixed feelings about whether the business case has been made.

MMMM (Nodding).

Your best business case is probably in terms of spelling it out, within the documentation so maybe is it a bit earlier to say the business case has been made or should it be made on a process-by-process basis?

MMMM (Reflecting); I think parts of the original business case mentioned the savings we were going to get moving to SAP. When you think about the way our business is structured at the moment, that's the way we needed to do it but it did entail having to hire a lot of accountants over here. An awful lot of time is spent on financial accounting and reporting over here. Part of the business case refers to the new (SAP) system and the savings it will bring and how reporting will work under it and the possibility of centralisation of some functions. Those types of things are definitely needed for the business to go forward. To make the case for SAP to go forward, you needed to show savings. So, from the business process case though, you're definitely right that until the BPIDs are understood by everyone, when the accountants and financial controllers really understand it, only then will you really understand if the system is successful rather than at a senior management level, if you know what I mean?

Yes, I mean at the moment the business case is more aspiration, it's something on paper that the business case stands up and the finances are sound and the effect and changes haven't been articulated as of yet?

Well, it has for Tommy Walsh and for people at senior management. I would consider myself pretty integral in terms of what I control and am responsible for (with respect to the SAP implementation) and I'm not really sure about the business case. I don't really know how it's going to change our lives on a day to day basis yet and so you're right. Within the next couple of months only, will people

like me at that level will really understand and really get what changes and effects are going to happen and that will be ongoing.

On an iterative level...

Yes...

Do you see yourself as an intermediary between the greater body of users and the technical changers?

(LAUGHS) Unfortunately yes...To be honest, even though I haven't used SAP, the fact that's in AGOCORP does help me in that we already know how a system would work. So, I may say to myself 'I'm not sure about that', I would be confident in so far as the system is already with AGOCORP. I might feel different about it if it was an entirely new system. Do you know what I mean?

You feel that there is enough user and systems expertise and experience within AGOCORP to make the system OK?

Yes, if it was a new external system,. I would feel we would need to know everything about it pre-implementation and be very sure about it.

Almost like there's a lot of "known unknowns?"

Yes, I would feel the risk management of the project would be more focused on getting it on time, that the change process works well. That's what we're trying to do with respect to the (financial) year-end and that's the key risk I can see (in terms of missing that deadline).

So by the end of January 2011, when you're collating and submitting all those financial reports, you'll have a clear idea as to whether the changeover has gone to plan...

Well, we don't actually report in January so it would be more...We audit in January and we do things differently at year end to AGOCORP. We have a period 13 where we do statutory adjustments as I was saying early. The way we report to our auditors would be different then how we would report to AGOCORP. In theory, they would be the same but the figures can move around a lot and it does. We do all that in Period 13..

Like a 13th month...

Yes, so in February we update AGOCORP with all the detail of the previous (calendar year) with January of the New Year as this period 13 which is also inputted into the February reporting. That doesn't happen at SAP; it's not a big deal this year (2010/Jan 11) as we will still have AGRESSO. The big difference will be when we budget in September 2010 for all of 2011 and that we remember and

consider that we can't have a period 13 as in January 2013 to do all the adjustments we would have always done as AGRESSO will be gone and SAP will be operational. We will have to work out a way of doing it..

This "period 13" adjustments...

Yes, we will need as well to consider how the go-live in January next (2011) is going to work as if we shut AGRESSO off on the first of January and say to everyone OK, pop your balance sheets etc on to SAP... Because we spent all of January and the start of February doing all the (statutory adjustments), and the audit, the final TBE (To Be Expected) Balance Sheet for the 70 companies and it's going to effect the bringing over of data to SAP; that might have to done a couple of times.

So AGRESSO won't be turned off on the first of January 2011?

No, we'll need it for a while and we also need to go back to it at the end of January for our final balance before we bring it over to SAP.

So, a bit of parallel processing at least initially. Has that been considered in terms of system planning do you think?

Not sure, I did say it recently to the project manager that there are definite issues like this will come up. So, I'll have to talk to him again so that there's something in place for that.

OK, when people talk about parallel processing, they often say the alternative option of a cutover is pretty risky. However, they also observe I suppose on parallel processing that it is risky also in that it perpetuates a connection to a system you're trying to replace...

Yes, sure...

Do you see that being a danger in respect of the move from AGRESSO to SAP?

I don't think so as I perceive the level of parallel processing to be limited to the essentials of what it is we need to do in January is these period 13 type adjustments whereas SAP will be used to process salaries, invoices etc so the level and nature of parallel processing would be quite defined or limited. When and where possible we need to be looking though next January at what (parts being parallel processed) could be easily moved back to period 12 (December 2011) getting our adjustments done and making our lives easier (in January 2012).

As AGRESSO will definitely be gone the next time (Jan 2012)?

Yes, want to get down to the bare minimum of issues that you have to be managing...

There will probably be a few testing problems along the way.

MMMM, MMMM (NODDING).

When you think about the business case for SAP, do you think financially a strong business case? Do you think that there is a business case for the user in terms of making their lives easier?

I think it will. But again, it will make more sense to me over the next few months just how. But I suppose fundamentally we have the same processes as AGOCORP, it's got to save us time. Not that AGOCORP processes are perfect or ideal but at the moment if we have an issue with AGRESSO, we have to fix it ourselves. If a problem happens with SAP, at least we'll have the equivalent people with AGOCORP experience and won't be on our own. The processes we have should be aligned with the AGOCORP processes so on that basis, problems should be solved faster and we won't be on our own from that point of view. From a management reporting point of view, in theory we don't have to jump through as many hoops (with AGOCORP) as we would now.

On a day to day basis, do you see it (SAP) being able to be sold as a time-saver?

Hard to know until the business process documents (BPIDS) come through. Now, I've seen one or two documents that show the ("To Be") map and the processes there definitely seem to be much shorter than what we do currently. The way it's done through AGRESSO here seems to be much convoluted.

Is the process shown through Business Process Modelling?

Yes, there is a model of the process showing it in both AGRESSO and SAP and it shows it through a diagram and also through a description afterwards.

So, in terms of your own views, you're not a long-term AGOCORP employee. I know you're not a technical person per se in terms of your role but how do you perceive the systems you use or have seen implemented here.

Well, I suppose I can mainly speak to the Accounting systems and the one thing I would say is that I've noticed is I suppose it's because we have so many companies there's a bit of a downfall here as to when we acquire a new company. They're often on a different (accounting/financial) system to us and what do we do when that happens? Take for example in the last few years; we've bought a lot of wind companies and brought them mostly into AGOCORP. Now if they're actually generating, there's a special division within NOVOCORP (i.e. renewables) which they're brought under. Now, say on the day they're acquired and brought into NOVOCORP, they have to work out what systems we have, how they work, how they feed into our own financial control systems. Now, up to now that's been a little lackadaisical and not as smooth as I would like. No, lessons have been learned from that and it's getting better but I suppose the point I'm trying to make

is that amongst all the different statutory entities, managing all the varied systems that we have is tricky. It's something we need to get better at. Now because of SAP, because of a takeover process, the technical accounting (i.e. Goodwill) etc should be covered but the financial reporting control systems probably need to be controlled more. That's something we will work on and get better at.

How do you think that would improve? Do you foresee a specific evaluation step for the systems (of the newly taken-over organisations)?

Yes, well I think...

Should it be part of the Takeover process?

Part of the takeover process should be that SAP is our set accounting system, so if we're going in to take over a company, we should be telling them that SAP is our system and as part of the takeover, you will be moving to SAP. As part of the takeover process, we'll have a man coming into your organisation and as part of the basic steps we undertake in taking over a company like the legal side and due diligence. Another step should be systems (as in evaluating systems) whereas it is a step now...

Is it a formal step?

No, informal. It could happen over a period of months post-transition and can cause problems if there are (system) issues. Instead of putting in actual figures, you end-up putting in budget figures and so on...

Things get thrown awry...

Yes, that's about the main issue I've seen here in terms of systems. In general terms, the systems we have work well and AGRESSO works well and feeds into BCS.

Do you think the systems are aligned, that they do what the business requires?

I think it's a relatively good alignment. I think there's a difficulty in terms of what we need internally from our own business units and what the AGOCORP Group finance want in terms of the level and method of reporting. A lot of work is done for group finance or the head of XX. It's the same figures but presented and done in a different way. I suppose the basic point is that the system works well and there can be differences and it's aligned to a point and maybe one taskmaster gets more of what they want than another.

Is that for historical reasons or is it just the way the systems work?

It's a bit of both yes, a bit of both. The things that say the executive director and say the head of the business unit would not always and often vary rarely align with

what group finance would be focused on. I mean the head of a section where there is a thousand staff and a lot of consulting work is done. They might look for data along the recovery rate, who's working on what, the costs whereas group finance want more high level stuff like total profit, loss, costs etc. So, a lot of reports run out of AGRESSO through EXCEL. So there are a lot of people who spend a lot and some, all of their month doing financial reporting so...

Would these be maybe some of the people who would have built a lot of add-ons to AGRESSO as a system?

They have yes...

Would be necessary if they run reports regularly?

Yes, pop it off AGRESSO into EXCEL and run macros. So, you could be doing financial reporting for the entire month for these guys (in different Business units) no technical stuff like financial accounting or advising or anything. Now, that could be their role and if that's the case, that's fine. Obviously if you could align the two or get what you need for this guy by pressing a different button, you could reduce time

Do you see SAP providing that?

Well, you'd hope you'd get that possibility from SAP or you'd need to get some process that could align what people are looking for...

I suppose that's how you envisage SAP with more control over how data is presented for you and you can pick your own reports to meet demand rather than always trying to fit data into a formatted report or requirement.

Yes, but whether you'd get the level of information that you'd need to meet the individual demands in that way, I'm not sure. I'll have to wait and defer (he may mean revert) to you on that. It would be part of it.

Do you think that's understood as an issue?

MMMM (Exhales)...

It seems like there might be a resource issue otherwise in terms of what would be required (post SAP implementation) to do this...A lot of duplication

Oh, I think if you go to the business units and they will say yes, definitely there's a lot of reporting effort in terms of turning a figure one-way for one guy and another for some other person. They would find that frustrating but needed and if the new system (SAP) could alleviate that in some way then that would be welcome. Now, I don't know a lot about how SAP works but if the HR and SAP is aligned as well as it says it is, then say for the (E and FM) function we discussed earlier then where they

have a lot of employees, projects, cost centres, then (with SAP) that might be able to be grabbed at more easily and aligned with the financial reporting information (that AGOCORP group may want).

OK, see the full connection.

Yes.

Do you feel that I know this might sound like a strange question, is there a danger that people might have some sort of emotional attachment to the system they have created?

Oh Yes...

Just thinking of the people who do the reporting and say the EXCEL add-ons they've created which will have to go away when SAP comes in? The emotional attachment can vary but can you see this becoming an issue?

Oh Yes, I would think the first couple of months are going to be a very difficult. You know, there are AP (Accounts Payable), AR (Accounts Receivable) and general ledger people whose daily life/job is very standardised. You'll be changing everything about their daily job from the first of January (2011) and so I would feel that the change management process is nearly more important for the people involved than the actual systems and getting them up and running. That side (systems) is almost easy and the real test will be I suppose on say the First of January (2011) when you ask someone from AR or AP to run an invoice, do they know what button process. So, I'll be very interested to see how that (change management) plan unfolds over the next few months....

That's the real litmus test, I suppose...

Yes, that's going to be difficult, it will require a lot of communication on the part of the change manager and it's so important that everyone knows their role under the new system, knows what to do and been trained.

How do you see your working relationship with the change manager evolving over the next couple of months? Do you see yourself as the eyes and ears on the floor or something more formal?

I wouldn't say eyes and ears as what I'm looking for in terms of financial reporting and performance might complement rather than align with what he is doing

On a technical (accounting) level?

But in terms of communication, slightly broader at times than what I would need it to be, because he's not an accountant. He might say that "I need to communicate on that" to say some of my people. I would know say that for certain things they

may need more (Communication) and for certain other things less. So, we'll be working in tandem together and try and get each other to understand what bits we need to communicate next to AP say, and the best way to do that and I can share with him what he might need to get a bit more involved or aware in an accounting sense, is the theory.

Do you feel, in terms of taking information from the ground up back to the SAP team....

Oh Yes, you're right there in terms of ensuring that (my) teams are doing what they should be doing and that the (SAP) project team are doing what they know is the right things from a financial perspective. Ensuring Tommy Walsh knows everything that's going on to the level that he needs to know. An awful lot of my job will be robbing Peter's stories to pay Paul. Ensuring everybody knows what's going on. So that's what I mean when I say that my role will be complementing the change manager's.

Do you see your relationship as being more formal and informal or the governance and structures rule the decision?

Well before when I've worked on projects, it was more informal but now Thomas is the project manager, and he's such a good project manager that I'd imagine that it would be more formal with things set-up maybe through SHAREPOINT. It might be using the IT systems that reporting is kept formal and that everyone knows what's happening?

Good snapshot of time?

Yes, well already there have been a few starter queries in terms of "we're thinking of this small change, what you think?" or a couple of questions with respect to the (BPID) mapping, and when I was talking to Thomas yesterday he was even saying and I agreed that we should make that formalised in terms of a format when a question is asked and when I respond that it's in a prior format so that there's a SHAREPOINT version of it (transaction) that's there.

You said you worked on a prior project; did that project have a change manager?

Well, it did and it didn't. It was the banking project, where we switched over our bank accounts to a new Bank. This had a clearing account where all our current account money gets scooped up into a single account for delivery to AGOCORP. All our balances are squared at zero overnight and AGOCORP can leverage the funds. Rena (later interviewed) was heavily involved on that and she's also the accounting lead on the SAP implementation project team. And, a lot of the things are done were informal so I'm happier that it's more formal this time.

So this is the first big financials project at least, with a defined change manager role?

Yes, I mean the banking project was never envisaged to become as big as it did and it kind of become more formal as the project went on, if you know what I mean?

Ok...

Whereas for this one, they know how big it's going to be so they have the board in place, a project and change manager, a different scale (entirely). The other (Banking) project was not supposed as big as it was...

Sounds I suppose that you were just combining bank accounts but there was more...

Not just combining but moving to a sweep account format and also trying to pool the accounts from all our entities proved to be a big change both banking and accounting wise. You're right in so far as people might say "Sure, you're only changing bank accounts, what could be so hard"... But it took over a year to do and was bigger than thought but it worked out fine.

That's great Warren, Thanks.

OK, Great.

Interviewee: Ronald Seaton, Chief Information Officer, AGOCORP Group.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.
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So Ronald, just for the sake of context, you might describe your role a little bit, your current job title, responsibilities...

Well, I'm the chief information officer for AGOCORP group so essentially I'm responsible for the ICT group and report to senior board level on the corporate IT function which includes relationships with external client and business units within the AGOCORP group, including NOVOCORP of course.

Could you elaborate on the IT relationship between AGOCORP and NOVOCORP, how it works?

We don't really have a specific relationship between AGOCORP and NOVOCORP as such; it's more between ICT group and the business units, all of the different directorates around AGOCORP. Our responsibility here in ICT group is to provide IT services required by the different business units but also to provide technology leadership, also to provide IT strategy for the company as a whole. I see it falling into two camps. In one camp, we have really the services side, meeting the needs of the business units and their customers and in the other camp, the customer is actually AGOCORP. Two very different roles and we've established the business to reflect these two service delivery and strategy/governance roles. We put in place a governance function in place a few years back, one of the first Irish companies to do so, with Lorna Doone having a key role before moving to NOVOCORP. It was described at the time as ensuring that the right decisions were made about the right technology at the right time and I put a different stance on it. What governance for me is about making sure that AGOCORP'S IT investments are aligned with the business strategy, nothing more beyond that. Full stop, end-of-story. We put a number of structures which mandate that happening, we established a leadership council, which I chair and which has representatives of all business units at a business manager level which meets on a quarterly basis, and actually takes a forward view as to what's coming down the tracks from an IT perspective and tries to deal with those big issues. It's more of a review than an executive body. Below the leadership council we have the technical council, which has on it all the IT managers from all our respective business units as well as our (the group) IT architecture manager and the strategy manager also. They look at the technologies and coming up with roadmaps for those technologies.

So you have a defined IT Strategy role?

Oh we do, yes.

Who's the current...?

Oh, "Robbie Ross". Strategy and governance role together which I feel should be together. Strategy sets out what you should do and governance ensures that it gets done in the intended view, making sure no gap emerges between the business and the technology. Governance and technology (councils) that's the main two bodies. Now within each business unit, we have a business council which is mandated and is tasked with determining the IT priorities of each business unit. On a monthly and quarterly basis, we take a view as to what's coming down the line. So, prior to those governance structures being introduced, AGOCORP as a company would not have had a clear sense of what IT issues would or could arise. They would on a pieced basis but would have been a job of work to bring it together. So these new processes give visibility to the totality of IT across the organisation, so we now know how much we spend on IT across the organisation in terms of CAPEX (Capital expenditures) every year. We can see the relative priorities within business units and we can make judgement calls on what needs to go ahead dependent on certain issues.

For example, the implementation of the AGRESSO move to SAP, it started a year later than NOVOCORP would have liked. There were conflicting issues across the organisation and we felt it was too risky to go ahead there and then. They (NOVOCORP) were not overly happy with that but we made the right decision in terms of prioritising... We're like air traffic control for IT here in the centre, we own the runway, we decide what takes off (in terms of projects) and more importantly we decide when projects land. We have a lot of planes in the sky and we need to bring them down safely (on the governance and strategy side). On the services side though, we provide not just the IT services but also technological expertise to the business units particularly in light of their own particular projects. The responsibility and authority for a project lies within the business unit fundamentally. My role in an individual business unit project is a) a provider of (technical) people to it and b) that the structures within the project meet the governance requirements as laid out by us at the centre...

More like an overarching supply and consent role?

Yes, but not an executive one. Want to ensure the projects stays within the line and that governance standards and procedures are met and followed.

No hands-on role as such?

I don't but some of us would have. Like the NOVOCORP SAP project, one of ours is gone to that as project manager. We've basically loaned him out for the 9-12 months. Now, that's a slightly different arrangement in that we don't usually

provide project managers to business parts of a project. The project manager role splits into two, the business piece, in terms of business readiness and management and the IT project management bit. Usually we do that (IT) and the business unit itself does the business piece. Now in this case, this is an upgrade project and that the level of knowledge in the business unit and the acceptance of it, we provided the person to the business as well.

Could you elaborate on what you mean by the “acceptance of the project”?

Well, I suppose the problem for any project is that it gets initiated within a business unit by somebody who’s is very interested in making it happen. It’s more the changing of the business that’s critical, the change management role and as such that’s what I meant by the acceptance of the project. This initial project is a year late for different reasons and there’s a broad acceptance of this being the right thing to do for the business and the business seems up for the change management that will come with it.

More of an internal change manager role?

Yes, I would be very nervous putting one of my people in to manage of an IT project in a business if there was a significant change manager component reporting into them. That needs to be built from scratch. It’s difficult enough to do change and you really need a business person from the business to do it. If you drop an IT person in there, the reaction you get back is that “this is IT trying to change our business”.

Keeping it at a support function?

Absolutely, absolutely, this particular example that’s very true.

You have a small semi-upgrade I believe coming in your own SAP environment?

It’s more than semi (LAUGHS); semi-completion wouldn’t keep me in my job! No. We’re upgrading the overall SAP R/3 environment...

Could that have a knock-on effect on the NOVOCORP implementation?

Well, it’s more of a sequencing issue and as such there needs to be resource considerations, as in getting the planes to land on time etc. A technical upgrade in moving or upgrading from one version to another and make sure that we remain within support and maintenance. This is the last upgrade we will have to carry out in SAP for another five years probably.

Is there a positive usability gain in terms of the interface?

Yes, there is.

Would it be happening anyway for maintenance reasons?

Well, yes but it's more about getting the platform to a stage where we can look over it. AGOCORP has high ambitions in lot of areas and we need to ensure that the platform is robust enough to live up to those ambitions in the future.

When you look back at the relationship between AGOCORP and NOVOCORP, is there any reason why NOVOCORP didn't like all the other business units, move to SAP and be like the parent sooner?

Oh, they're definitely a laggard in that regard.

Are there historical reasons for it?

Oh yes, there would be (NODDING STRONGLY), that was before my time but SAP was brought into AGOCORP back in 2000. NOVOCORP was always a bit different but very much so in the past but less so now with GENCOM and NOVOCORP being one, so now we have a bit of the old and new (businesses) put together. Back before, NOVOCORP was an independent directorate and there was more separation and an acceptance of them being separate within the company. There was a degree of acceptance within the business (AGOCORP Group) that separation was useful and a good thing for NOVOCORP.

They had differing commercial rationales as well...

There were yes. The decision to go down the AGRESSO route was probably taken within NOVOCORP and I'm not sure how well it was challenged to be honest. But equally, the decision was made at a point before ERP systems really started to bed-in. The view you've taken now is whether we want a best-of-breed approach (where businesses decide the most effective systems for them) or whether we want an enterprise-wide approach. We've come to the strategic view that an enterprise-wide suite of applications reduces overall cost.

So cost is the key discriminating criteria?

Well we see it like that; others might see it differently. I mean with best of breed applications, you get the best possible system for the individual areas or business units. But then you get a huge amount of interfacing to be done and is the same set of data going to be moved between different systems and require different formatting?

So resource costs for interfacing would arise?

Oh, absolutely. To go enterprise-wide rather than best-of-breed was the decision. Now, it wasn't a single decision to go SAP. We took the decision to go enterprise-wide with SAP in 1997/98. We took a separate decision in 2003 to go with SAP for

our market-facing applications, those that run the supply systems. Taking those decisions together, we are wall-to-wall a SAP House in terms of ERP.

But that strategically seem right as well to be honest. NOVOCORP coming in under that ERP structure would be the last piece in the jigsaw, so to speak. They (NOVOCORP) would have been encouraged by many people, including me, I must say, to move in that direction (towards SAP). And, I think what's happened over the last six, eight months would indicate the importance of the move in that way. NOVOCORP is no longer a separate entity within AGOCORP; it's now a fundamental part of AGOCORP when you look at the old part that is GENCOM becoming part of the same directorate with NOVOCORP. Definitely getting there would have been a hell of a lot easier at the time if NOVOCORP had been on the SAP platform when those changes were announced.

Was there any open resistance to that or was it a logistical or historical issue?

(NODDING). Oh, I'd say there was significant reluctance before I arrived here. Now, I'm not saying that I removed that reluctance. That reluctance was definitely there. I mean I don't think it was by chance that NOVOCORP went down a different path to AGOCORP; there's a cultural difference there.

Would you feel that SAP could be seen rightly or wrongly as a threat to (NOVOCORP's) autonomy?

It could, it could (SPEAKER'S OWN REPETITION).

Even more because of reorganisation (within NOVOCORP) and deregulation?

It could certainly, and I'd say that it is. There's the possibility of it being seen as something the centre wants to happen to NOVOCORP. Where the heads have come together over the last 18 months and I mean Lorna Doone and the former director of NOVOCORP would have been key to it is an acceptance. An acceptance sounds like they're reluctant and I don't mean it like that. A view has emerged that SAP is the right answer for NOVOCORP. That being part of the corporate fold is the right place to be. The last few reorganisations proved that.

If you want to see the alignment of the business with IT... If you saw the relationship between AGOCORP and NOVOCORP as one of NOVOCORP being an owned subsidiary of AGOCORP; that we invested money in it and resources in it and got a dividend from it..If you just took that view, you would say that NOVOCORP should be able to decide what level and type of systems they implement to meet their business requirements. If you said that and that the only point at which AGOCORP would have an interest would be at the point of consolidation, say at month end accounts etc. Everything within the four walls of NOVOCORP is their concern. That's not how AGOCORP operates. Now in fairness, AGOCORP has probably not been as clear with NOVOCORP as to how it should

have been with respect to say the overall business model, the relationship between AGOCORP and NOVOCORP and how different it is (as in different business models). Clearly NOVOCORP is not a holding company investment type structure; AGOCORP sees NOVOCORP as part of its big platform for growth. When you put NOVOCORP and the old GENCOM directorate and manage over the integration over a period of time, that illustrates that NOVOCORP as being different to AGOCORP is no longer the case. In relation to IT, you get a point then, where you have Business strategy and IS strategy aligned. If you were continue to go down the path of NOVOCORP having IT independence and have the NOVOCORP and AGOCORP relationship to be just based on finance, then the SAP decision would be up to them. So in effect, they'd be creating their own SAP instance rather than the corporate SAP.

The reorganisation might have another aspect I suppose you have people from GENCOM who have used SAP before and all that comes with that working alongside people who will be seeing SAP up close for the first time.

Yes, that's right.

Would you consider that to be potentially adding another risk or level of complexity to the process?

Any move from one system to another they'll be complexities or change management involved...

Some of the NOVOCORP people working very closely with GENCOM will have a bit earlier onto SAP. That may make change slightly more complex?

Yes, it could yes.

Any process risks concerns?

With respect to the overall change process or the upgrades?

The change process more so?

Well, I suppose that's one of the things that the project would have to deal with. It's definitely a risk, but there's also potentially a risk of distraction as well in so far as the varying users. As long as the project lays out the plan and follow through on it and are conscious of the scope of the project, and moving functions moving onto an ERP platform. I don't see a problem with say GENCOM people being on an ERP platform, I don't see it as a huge risk to be honest. I wouldn't see it as a fundamental change in the risk profile of the project to be honest. I think at a higher level, there's always a possibility with a major project more about change than systems and you've got AGOCORP reinventing itself. There could be a distraction (with the reorganisation) happening at the same time as the system change in so far as you could lose sight of the (objective). But the project is well

bedded down seems to have a clear scope and focus to it, so I wouldn't expect that to be a problem.

OK, so in terms of the AGRESSO-SAP change, it's one of many SAP projects and implementations of varying scales that have been implemented in AGOCORP. Would you fairly content and confident with the existing level of SAP expertise in AGOCORP available to NOVOCORP (bearing in mind that there is no implementation partner in the AGRRSSO-SAP changeover)?

We've been developing SAP implementations since 1997 or 1998 so more than 10 years experience anyway...

So, would the AGRESSO changeover be as per normal procedures and controls?

Well, I suppose the only difference this time in comparison to previous implementations would be the lack of an implementation partner, like say Accenture. That's not being done this time.

Would you feel that's a good decision?

Well, we're not doing something or implementing something new or different; we're just changing over from one system to another. When you look at the calibre of the people from NOVOCORP involved in the project, I wouldn't have concerns on that front...

There's no real value then in bringing in that external expertise?

No, the experience is here.

People have emphasised the importance of change management and there'd be an enormous emphasis on change management in this project. With the various SAP implementations in the past and recently, like XYZ in AGOCORP Networks, there's probably a strong reserve of change management experience in SAP projects.

Correct, yes.

Is there say a formal forum where Fergus Flynn could go and say talk or consult with change managers from prior SAP projects?

No, I'd say there isn't. That said, AGOCORP is a tightly networked organisation so if people in NOVOCORP working on the project want or need to pick up the phone and ring someone say in (AGOCORP) networks, then that's open to them.

Did you ever see the need for having that more formal, not say Lessons Learnt documentation or maybe does it happen anyway organically (as projects roll-out)?

Well, I mean projects are simple really. Get very very clear as to what you want to do, resource to meet project requirements as possible and get the right program and project structures. Make sure that the project board know what their body of work is, which in the past was certainly an issue on AGOCORP projects. And, make sure that people understand their roles and responsibilities. If you set out on a project with a very clear strong basis, you'll probably be OK. The projects that tend to be problematic are where the projects get decoupled from the management of the business and where the governance structures for the project structures are lacking or not put properly in place and your QA (Quality Assurance; Note: QA reviews are done as a standard at regular intervals in AGOCORP projects group-wide) isn't done then that's likely to lead to certain difficulties. You could have lots of "Lessons Learnt" fora. We do lessons learnt (reports) on all major projects. That information is available, Thomas Mulcahy would be well aware of lessons learnt in the past...

Access to all change management experience...

I don't think you need a process to make that happen... Lessons learnt should probably find their way up through the governance structure anyhow and come back to the fundamentals.

In terms of the history of SAP implementation in AGOCORP generally, are there any high level key issues you feel in terms of lessons learnt for the current implementation?

Again, I'd answer the question in general terms. The key issue is more process specific rather than technology. Understanding what's required before you commit etc; making mistakes generally would be down to right-to-left rather than left-to-right planning. And not really understanding what you're getting into before you go down that path, I suppose that would be our key lessons learnt if you like.

Context independence in terms of different people arises too in terms of pinpointing specific lessons or issues?

Yes, I suppose that's true but it does come down to some general issues. I have there a very good report the Chaos report which gets into good detail on a list of things that have caused projects to go wrong at various stages.

In terms of the business case that is necessary to make in terms of NOVOCORP moving into SAP and losing some independence with the reorganisation. Do you think that the business case is very strong for turning over the new system or is it more confirming to the existing platform?

Well, I suppose I'd have to say it's very strong since I signed off on it (LAUGHS). Well, in the first instant within NOVOCORP, it would have been signed off by the NOVOCORP Director but he would have signed off on the back of it and I felt it was strong. They couldn't really continue on their own; we're back to the business

alignment argument again where you saying well the reality is that NOVOCORP is no longer a different business but part of an overall AGOCORP strategy. Without that you would not have been able to have had the reorganisation of GENCOM into NOVOCORP that we had last November (2009). Who knows what decisions are coming later? Once you decide at the executive level to reorganise or that reorganisation is possible, then you have to common platforms if changes in structure follow, otherwise you'd have a mess.

For flexibility and scalability?

Absolutely, you'd have a mess – it's a must have. The alternative is to have "Best of Breeds" all over the place and deal with that huge mess; or take the investor-return AGOCORP-NOVOCORP old-style approach...

Hands-off approach...

I wouldn't say hands-off now, definitely hands-on, very much so.

More so the old systems development...

MMMM (Thinking), no, still hands-on but maybe it was, maybe more, not formally structured to do so, more push than pull maybe. I suppose for me it is a black-and-white question. Is a business unit part of AGOCORP or not, then if our strategy across AGOCORP is to have enterprise-wide rather than system specific or best-of-breed then everything flows from that. Are we going to have autonomous business units on an investor-return style relationship or are we going to have an integrated framework. The decision has been made; it's an integrated framework. Are we going to have best-of-breed systems? You not letting orgs in the framework choose their own systems in a best-of-breed way within the framework as if that's the case; you end up dealing with all the integration issues that come your way. I wouldn't characterise it more as a decision about how the company wants the organisational landscape to look like rather than a hands-off approach. So at one of the continuum you have the investor-return style relationship whereas at the other end you have the integrated company. Clearly there are points between those ends. Once you have an integrated framework, then at one point you have the best-of-breeds and at the other end you have the enterprise-wide. Under either of those options, you're still retaining some control over what the answer is. Now we have made the decision to go integrated, then the enterprise-wide approach follows...

SAP implementation (in NOVOCORP) being a consequence of that...

Absolutely, yes. What's your enterprise-wide architecture going to be? Will it be SAP or ORACLE or something else; we choose SAP so...

In terms again of the signed-off business case, and the sensibility in terms of improved integration, as a business case it's easy to "get" on a strategic level, would you feel at the individual level that the users get it?

I don't know to be honest; I would see that as more of NOVOCORP's primary (activities); I do know that one of the issues in terms of the delay last year was that a lot of work had been done in terms of conditioning people to the change but that became a concern in terms of that falling off due to the delay. More really again about business change rather than an IT issue...

Would you think yourself in terms of an average user how their view might be in terms of the system as being more maybe for AGOCORP rather than NOVOCORP?

I think one of the issues in AGOCORP and this is not just an NOVOCORP issue but no matter what business unit you're in there seems to be a view that things are done better in that business unit (as opposed to the parent) than here or anywhere else. I expect if you follow that thread through that the major view you'll probably see emerging without doubt I would feel is that the view that this is more for AGOCORP rather than NOVOCORP... That's part of a change management process and maybe that's not the overall view...

Managing that in terms of change will be...

Well, yes in the business case to move (from AGRESSO to SAP) and they were encouraged to move, was done by NOVOCORP for NOVOCORP. All of the building and the conditioning around the management and users was done by NOVOCORP so I'm probably not close enough to be honest to say; they may have come a long way (in terms of user attitude). I wouldn't know, but I think that expectations are a big part of a project is linked back to project management and the project change process needs to deal with that.

Has it ever occurred before that you've had a situation where within AGOCORP you've had one business unit left that is yet to implement a system present in all the other business units? For want of a better phrase, a systems anomaly...

(LAUGHS) Oh, there are a few anomalies across the organisation all-right but not just in system terms. They do exist...Like, I mean...

I suppose something akin to the current implementation in NOVOCORP where you're replacing System A with some corporate system B...

Well, in terms of (AGOCORP) Networks, we've just made a big investment in the XYZ system over the last couple of years. People (in Networks) had in the year 2000 gone to tender on a system to manage their work. Now, I wasn't in IT at the time and they had all the things set up and teed up to go although they changed their plans all-right. Now at the time, they were about to commit to a non-SAP

solution. Now at the time, there wasn't a directive in the (parent) company that you know you had to go with SAP...

When was this?

About 2000. SAP at that stage was the parent ERP and across the business units. (AGOCORP) networks were looking at a ERP solution for asset work management which would lean into SAP at many different points. Now, they were keen to go with an identified alternative as in non-ERP solution, now I think it was called MAXIMUS, I can't remember. Yes, back in 2000. Now, I remember being very interested in it at the time as I was in regulation and the market was being deregulated. Now the first 30% of the market was deregulated and we did it for the first say 300 customers and it was done on the back of a fag packet in effect. Spreadsheets calculated all the totals for the first few (commercial customers). The next two years (200-2002) brought it up to 40% and that extra 10% brought an enormous difference as in 10-15,000 customers with full market opening in 2005. Given how easily we had opened the market for 30%, I had my suspicions that AGOCORP would think full Market opening would say be only three times or so what we'd done to get to 30%...

(They felt you could) simply scale it up...

Absolutely, with the same systems. I engaged Accenture to come in and do a review of our progress to full market opening. They came back and said; "You can make it, you have time but looking at your existing systems, you're doing a lot in effect the asset work management system from Networks, customer billing and you need to do market opening as well...". So, pick a horse from these three runners; they can't all go at the same time. As a consequence of that, all the other systems were shelved and the whole focus was on market opening. The solution then picked by the market opening project totally separately was a SAP solution. Both customer supply and asset management systems were left to one side. It wasn't run from corporate; I think someone was taken out of corporate to head it up by the chief executive. There was a huge cohort of people, probably the biggest project we've ever run and they chose SAP independently as the solution. When that project was completed in SAP, Networks came back with their original asset work management system proposal, went to the market place and then independently chose SAP. Now, in 2000 they weren't going to choose SAP and then five years later on their own, they do.

It wasn't a case of one entity being left behind (in the case of AGOCORP Networks). If they had decided to bring something else back from the market place, they would have had to justify it internally and there would have to be a big challenge process... There was no-one saying you must have SAP but they would have needed to justify something else in terms of an alternative system. If NOVOCORP had gone to market and looked for say a successor to AGRESSO, say AGRESSO 2 then that would also have been challenged. We would not be saying "Thou must use SAP" but we would have been challenging and looking at utility companies

across the world, 80% of them are on SAP... To go for something different would be the exceptional route.

That would basically mean that when AGRESSO ran out of functionality, they have gone the SAP route anyway?

Well, absolutely yes.

Thanks so much for your time Ronald.

No problem.

Location: NOVOCORP HQ / **Date:** 26th February 2010/ **Duration:** 18 mins, 26 seconds.

Interviewee: Christopher Lloyd, Engineering Manager, NOVOCORP.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

So Christopher, could you give me some background on yourself?

Well, at the start of the last downturn (mid 1980s), I ended up in the IT area, introducing PCs and CAD (Computer Aided Design) and all that kind of stuff around IT and telecommunications and different roles like that. I spent a lot of time looking after the IT issues when we (AGOCORP) sold all our retail stores. The company like to do that, as in pick you out and throw you into a situation to see if you can survive or not. So, the chief executive (of AGOCORP) sent me over here then to lead up the engineering function. We have about 530 people working here in Ireland and abroad. I'm over here 6 months now (since September 2009). I've also been working on the smart metering project, on the project board and also on the XYZ project as well so I've been around that and a bit of strategy as well. But as for the AGRESSO-SAP project, I actually know nothing about the innards of it, other than AGRESSO is here. I have an icon for it but I don't need to use it. I certainly don't intend to start using it if it's going to be moved on... I do know that SAP Financials and the HR though as some of that I would have had to use over in AGOCORP, like the expenses and time-entry and all that...

Now I'm over here and that I'm looking at the implementation point of view, I'd be very strong on getting the project change manager into my management meetings on a monthly basis. From my experience, most business functions don't get involved unless they're arm-twisted into it and we've seen that ourselves on prior projects, even when those projects have had say IT experience and project teams etc.

Looking at it with your IT hat on?

Yes, from an IT perspective; I mean you can see it looking across the organisation where you'd have systems implemented and then users only engage and they're wondering why a system is this way or that way so...That's one of the big things I've noticed.

When you were in your old IT role in AGOCORP, did you have much to do with NOVOCORP in terms of IT? There was a bit of autonomy here.

Well, the history was that there was an IT group that was formed here that was originally part of an IT group that I was involved in over there and that was like a subsidiary dealing externally. Now we took that over and we merged it with, probably 5, 6 years ago and there was only one but you've probably noticed in each business group there is an IT function feeding back into the central IT function. We have it here too with Lorna Doone leading it up and she's responsible for bringing anything around IT into NOVOCORP; and it's the same way in say Networks or other business units so she'd be responsible for getting a team together to drive SAP, using project boards and all that stuff.

Where I'm sitting now, I'm interested in the business aspects that the change manager reporting into the project manager, coming over here and making sure things would be implemented over there. Now, I have him teed up from the start to be over here working on that and not waiting until it's all there and let them figure it out with timesheets and all that.

How do you feel so far, I realise that it's early days but how do you feel so far about how (your) management have bought into the (system) change?

On Tuesday, we'll have our third monthly meeting and I bring the change manager every time. They're buying in more optimistically now because of another (SAP) project in (AGOCORP) Networks that has impacted on them. That's had quite a few problems and I'm always saying to them (management) if people (in Networks) had engaged from the very start, then we wouldn't have had these problems that we have now. If you have people saying that's not half as good blah, blah, blah; it's probably done to a lack of engagement. That's why I bring the change manager along, but (I tell the managers) he's not going to do it, it's you (the managers) that are going to do it. I'm not managing the ins and outs of it, the holidays, timesheets and all that. I've told them that filling out a timesheet on SAP HR a lot easier than in AGRESSO from my own experience. The people who first encountered SAP HR over in head office threw their hands up in the air too because they hadn't asked or engaged. I remember being over in telecommunications where I was managing about a hundred people and they're on the road a lot and they went bananas when they had to (use SAP to) fill-out their timesheets. But after a couple of weeks, they had to use it and they grew to like it.

When, I came over here and moved into a manual paper format, I spend probably more than four times as much time filling it out. There are other advantages too in an on-line system...

In terms of doing calculations and automating...

Absolutely, it would calculate the total mileage or an overnight rate for you but manually, you have to take the time to calculate it yourself so it takes longer. You have to align receipts with the forms and stuff so it's not ideal and there the examples of (how SAP is better) that I keep on using. Now, I can see that they

don't have the interest at least at this stage that they should have and will insure that they will have by bringing the change manager back.

How many people would be reporting to you?

9 (Key Account Managers).

They're in effect Change managers too in the (AGRESSO->SAP) implementation?

Well, that's what they're doing all the time yes.

But in terms of the SAP implementation?

I'd say probably two or three will because they're stuck with the problems that XYZ has caused them and their team. Their team leaders and designers have to manage these problems and so I'd be saying to them that if people had actually got engaged sooner, these issues might be a lot easier. So, if they don't see themselves as or become change managers then...I mean I want the change manager to help them but them to do it and not the other way around. That's the big danger. It'll have to be the people on the ground and at this stage about three or four are well in tune with the (XYZ) exposure. But the others might get burned too!

Have you a fallback strategy to really get engagement in terms of the change manager's role?

Well, what I'd like to do at some stage is to get someone else that get burnt in a previous business unit that can say how they're burned but the XYZ people or involved people should see it.

It's all new for the change manager too; he's being challenged on this and he won't actually know. The few things over here since I came over in terms of engineering disciplines and how things operated, It's one of the things that I'm comfortable in the IT space. I'm trying to get familiar with the engineering way of doing things etc.

Now the engineers will use the system maybe for two or three big things like timesheets and expenses, totally different to say how maybe the financial department would use it...

Yes, but even on my team, I have some key account managers who have to use finance functions and collect financial data so it can vary. They do accounts with the other business units and we trade internally and externally like in places like DDDDD overseas and all other places. We have a project management side to that, where jobs are managed. Two or three guys are really into the detail but have yet to be involved so far but they are critical to the change.

How do they feel about the change?

To be honest, they look on it a substantial pain in the neck!

Do they feel it's being imposed?

Well, yes and it is being imposed. I mean we have to be honest and upfront about that. The company (AGOCORP) has decided to go down the SAP route. For whatever reason some years ago NOVOCORP went with an AGRESSO solution. Now the (AGOCORP) Chief Executive has decided that this is a SAP company so that's the way we're going.

Was there any conversation round that?

At a high level, there was no going down and asking people in the organisation for a view; that's a corporate call.

Was that a mistake?

Well, from my experience, ideally you'd want to get everyone on board but from my own experience in implementing corporate IT solutions, you're never going to be able to do that.

Would you feel the delay in implementation has had an effect?

Yes, screwed it up big time yes. I'd say that they created a certain amount of hype about it and then it died. That would be my impression or feeling; I haven't great evidence to prove that.

Sense of deflation arose?

Yes, and you have to reenergise people again and some of these guys dealing with XYZ would not have had a good experience and that will be an issue, no doubt about that.

Would XYZ be similar in terms of how it was managed etc?

Similarly managed yes, with a project board, change manager, all of that. The people over here didn't engage in a similar fashion to some groups in Networks. If you talk to people in AGOCORP Networks and they'd have had similar issues in trying to get management and I'd have been told before coming here that (the level of engagement) here wasn't great either. Now obviously people here will say that that's not the case but certainly that was the view. Even back when I was in AGOCORP, I could see this happening. I can recall the software manager Seanie McMurry would be saying when I was on the project board that we're at the end of the process and we still haven't got the information we need because they pushing back all the time. That's because they weren't engaging and I (knew that. Now, part of that is due to how busy people were in renewing the supply networks

around the country, billions on network reinforcement and then you have this new XYZ system taking people out of the (renewal) work and wanting them on XYZ...

Become a distraction?

For some, but it was a necessary distraction. And now you see the Network services people who engaged are OK, but the Networks projects people who didn't are suffering the most because they have to use it (XYZ system). I could see the same thing happening here unless we're careful...

In terms of lack of engagement now leading to suffering down the line?

Absolutely, yes...

How do you feel you can incentivise people to get more into it?

Well, there's no answer to that. I'll keep it current at our management meetings which we have monthly. We only cover five or six issues a time so safety is always on it and I can keep the project on it as well. I'll also keep in with Lorna and she's given some insights into feelings on the project and I would bring her or Thomas Mulcahy to a management meeting if I felt it would be helpful. There's going to be a bit of a struggle for the 300 people who have seen or exposed to XYZ.

Not a great context...

Now for others, like say the people in Engineering and Maintenance and Civil say, they haven't been in this (implementation) space for a while, so I'll be trying there to keep it as positive as possible. They don't have a template, they're more blank slates. If I can keep it high on the agenda and the change manager and the doors open for him and we will find that easier.

So, there's no great love for AGRESSO?

Well, I couldn't really comment to be honest. I'd say that like other systems once you get used to it...

You don't hear too much negative comment?

No, perversely it would be better if there were! Might be easier to get across this new system then...

Some people have said to me that engineers using AGRESSO, being engineers have actually adapted the system or built little add-ons here and there.

Yes, have they?

Built little databases and so...

That wouldn't surprise me...What they're going to look for is those adaptations to be taken on board into the new system and when that doesn't happen, they're going to be cheesed off.

Some level of emotional attachment?

Of course, there will be if you've built a system yourself. But what happens when these people move on? We've had islands of systems like for example where a guy built a system and they asked us to take over in corporate IT and we said no. There was no documentation and it was all in his head so I could understand the emotional attachment but would be opposed to something like that. But if people like that engage early on in the process, they may be able to get as much of their features built into the new system. The problem with not engaging is that those people will be bad-mouthing the new system and saying my own (version) or the old system was better...

That's great, Christopher. Thanks.

No problem.

Location: NOVOCORP HQ / Date: 31st March 2011/ Duration: 53 mins, 9 seconds.

Interviewee: Liam McHale, (then Manager, NOVOCORP Engineering Solutions, now 1/11, HR Director, AGOCORP Corporate).

<u>Colour Key:</u> Interviewer / Interviewee.

So Liam, could you give me some background on yourself?

Well, I've over 31 years in the company so I have a lot of experience in different aspects of the business, including IT and change but in this role I've been it for around three years and there's about 1,200 people (that I'm responsible for) in the organisation.. That's the main business lines; also we've established a head of engineering role (*Christy Ryan who was interviewed at an earlier research juncture*) which is a fairly small team here which has about five people which look at the strategic role of engineering and what we're in and should be getting into. He has a person on all on the main engineering projects here and helps manage project delivery. That's under his (Christy Ryan) role. They also have a capability function and they look at where we're targeting our technical resources and see whether we could be targeting better as well as looking at the overall positioning for the future; whether that's correct in terms of the overall NOVOCORP function. There's two others reporting into Christy and they're experts in AAAA and BBBB (respectively) and their job is to look 5-10 years down the road and see what's happening in terms of the functions and technology and how it might affect the business and how should we position ourselves for that. They've only been appointed in the last month or so and they're finding their feet.

We launched the rebranding of the company yesterday and there's a drive to move the organisation to move to the next level which is what our clients and AGOCORP require of our strategy and then what that requires from a technical and developmental perspective. So, there are many streams of work going on but that just gives you a flavour of what's happening at the moment.

In terms of the business strategy, could you elaborate a little on that?

Within the management team, I have Christy as (Strategic) Head of Engineering, then there's Christopher who's Engineering Manager, then there is Ryan English, "Lorna Smith" looks after Consultancy but then there are a others; I have a small team here and "John" who looks after the business strategy, have you met "John"?

I know "John", yes.

Well, so "John" would have a small team that looks after quality, strategy, marketing, risk and then he is also the custodian of a brief to make sure that we all input into the strategic direction (reaches over and produces the five year plan). Now's that's the five year plan document for strategy and this is a working document that we revisit and revise which is "John" brief along with marketing, risk etc.

With new strategies and rebranding etc, would you feel that your business strategy has changed considerably within the last six months or so, or it is more of a long-term change?

Well, we've found that well when I came over (first) three years (ago), there was no real accountability in the organisation. There was a consultancy wing, (also) a mass of engineers doing different things without overall control. What I've tried to do is to bring in these business lines as in "You run the business, it's your business and I'll support you as I can in terms of resources etc", ensuring that the NOVOCORP competency is moving in the right direction. We needed to get change in focus and I also had to strip out external parts of the business embedded in the organisation. For example, you'd have, say different people in different parts of the business doing external consultancy. I brought that in under one (structure). They (the consultancy side) now deal with all the external work and they then go to the body of engineers and resource it appropriately (depending on the skill sets required on the project); that's the business model. Now, also there's a different business model in terms of the other parts of the business. So, it's been quite a big change in terms of the change of accountability, in terms of the focus. Also, in terms of service offerings to customers, I feel they've been enhanced. Also, in terms of the marketing changes (i.e. rebranding), I brought in a professional (external) marketing person and that's really made all the difference. I wanted to do that, the whole organisational rebranding and customer improvement changes also.

Have customers become more demanding over the last few years (and/) or has there been an increase in competition?

Well, customers have definitely become more demanding and as such we have also the capability to interact more with me. People often say to me "Oh, customers are getting more demanding" but I think they always have been; we just realise that a bit more now as we can do more market research. I often go visit our top clients and we do a lot of online surveys and interactive feedback from me.

Stronger and better customer profiles...

Market research is a much faster process now, thanks to those kinds of technologies.

So technology plays an important role in your business?

Oh, it does. We look on our role here, I often like to describe it as an "enabler" of strategies; IT will be an important tool to help us enable our strategies, to enable us to do things better and faster for our customers.

So IT has a more strategic role when you're dealing with customers?

Yes, but the difficulty you have with IT is that people (as in the engineers) expect IT to deliver more and quicker. Some people allow for the fact that you know if you want an IT solution, you have to manage, deliver and govern it. It does help offer a better service but users want it now so you can end up with a plethora of IT systems which can be hard to manage.

Like IT "Islands" so to speak...

Sure...

Was that a big problem, when you first came over here?

No, well I think... I came at the same time as Lorna Doone, who was developing a strategy and putting it (IT Strategy) together anyway and she was pretty clear in terms of telling people as to what IT can and can't offer. People can be very (critical) of IT when they feel, you know "IT can do this for me, it's brutal" and stuff like that and you (as management) might say back "I can do that but you have to do this for me or IT can only do that...". Another thing you have to consider is say (what we did) in the Marchwood facility in Southampton. I went over there, got all the (NOVOCORP) staff over there into a room. Now, we're very tight on safety and we emphasise that always. You come to work, you go home for work and you're not injured, that's core. We've have had some serious accidents but we've had a big improvement on that. Our Chief Executive is very focused on safety and it's something that's discussed and asked about a lot. So when (in Marchwood), I'd finished talking about safety, then after going through all the main things on the

agenda, the last question was “well, have you have any issues any concerns?” They all said “Yes, we can’t do this printing or access this...” the whole thing was an avalanche of IT concerns. They had learned to live within these issues and had never really emphasised them to me on my previous visits. So, when I came back, I rang up Lorna (Doone) and asked her if she’d go over to Southampton and discussing these IT issues with me. Lorna came back and sorted out these issues one by one. They were giving out about the IT services and in that scenario, you need to spend time talking about these issues, and I’d never given it the time or had the time before.

Do you think the fact that these (governance) structures are here make it easier for these kind of (IT) issues to be resolved whereas in the past maybe people would have lived with it or found their own (ad-hoc) solutions?

No, I think that (these issues) could happen regardless of any structures to be fair. But we’ve learned a lot from it so for example, when Carrington (another UK facility) was being constructed, Lorna and her team were over there, dealing with issues and requirements and managing any issues before they arose. The lessons are being learnt and service quality is improving and we’re more attuned to that. Lorna and her team are watching that space. Since Lorna has come on board, IT is much more focused on meeting the business needs, so we’re aligned.

IT enabling the business?

Yes, enables us to build our facilities and run our operations efficiently. The problem with IT is say if I can’t access my Outlook say the one day in thousands that I can’t then I give out. It’s happened before when head office went down before. Now, we have continuity planning but that was little value as head office goes down. You’re so reliant on IT and it’s so critical...

How do you feel about the desktop services being provided centrally?

Well, when we had that problem, there was a meeting to discuss the reasons and Lorna represented us as the user. We wanted Lorna to represent us and it really affected us in terms of the international business and the services we provide...

How do you feel the service provision works? Would you like your own IT Department/services?

No, I don’t think so (FAIRLY EMPHATIC); I’ve no problem with the service provision as long as we have an input into their service plans, their continuity and crisis planning and all of that. That input really came out of the meeting that Lorna had with the centre that we just discussed. Lorna got involved and had inputs into the resolution and what would happen if something similar recurred.

In terms of the engineering population, what do you think their views are on the new SAP implementation?

Yes...

I suppose there is a feeling that in the past, the engineering population went away and did their own thing, at least there's the perception of that in terms of say AGRESSO and their own workarounds that they created to manage the system? Is that a common perception or phenomenon do you think?

A lot of our engineering people are some of the best in the world and are extremely intelligent; they're fundamentally engineers and so they can write programs or solve technical problems anyway. I mean in the case of SAP, it's there and we've got to use it and that's it.

What I found is the various phases of change, once you stick to it and come out the other end...I was down say in "Watson" Street (another Dublin office of NOVOCORP) and was there with the rebranding and there was a few brand champions with me as well. They went in and we had the T-shirts on and we were talking about changing e-mail signatures and about using different letter heads etc. You had some people there saying you know "I don't like that font; I want to use a different font".

When I went down, I was talking to the brand guy and asked him how things were going and he said to me "Things are going well, but some people aren't happy with the font and want to change it". So I brought all of them together and said how great and exciting a day it was for the company, launching a new brand, but some of you will like it, some love it and some will be neutral...TOUGH, all this about fonts, colours, drawings etc is not going to happen...

Once they get used to it, they'll be fine. The key is to stick to it because if you allow deviation, deviation becomes the norm and if he'll do it, she'll do it and so on. So, both in the rebranding and SAP implementation, this is what's happening. People will accept it and get used to it.

Is there a danger or a risk if you like in terms of people feeling perhaps that the system is imposed?

Well, it is being imposed (EMPHASIS)...

I suppose you may find some font analogies (from the rebranding) in the SAP project?

People are going to find SAP difficult; they're used to doing certain things in certain ways. They write their expenses, sent them down to their managers and approved and then sent down to accounts and inputted. Now, they'll how to do it themselves and that's going to be change and in any situation where you make

change...If you tell people that there's no other option; if you do not use this system, you do not get paid (TAPPING TABLE FOR EMPHASES) Simple – that will focus the mind very quickly. We won't allow any deviation at all and that's why Fergal Flynn has a big job to do but he's not alone and will be helped...

When you say we have no deviation in the system, do you feel it's decided...?

No, no the design phase will allow for that and that's where that will be sorted out but when that's over, that's it; there will be a scope freeze and no more changes will be possible.

How do you feel the design phase is going in terms of what you know about the inputs? Are people taking the time to think about it?

You know at times, yes, I'm a realist, some people will and some won't (engage).

Some people may be more incentivised by the effect the change might have (on them).

Not incentives so much say as some people don't want it to happen because its change...there's a huge amount of change in the organisation, you'll have champions who'll come with you and you'll have those who won't... It would be important to articulate in the appropriate forum why the change is necessary and convince people of the need for it.

Do you think the business case has been made or does it need to be made if the system is coming in anyway?

Well, I could tell you that yes, the case has been made and you could walk out the door, ask someone else who'll tell you "SAP, haven't a clue about that". There are 600 people here and there in the building with 200 away... It's difficult to communicate here, there's e-mail yes, but face-to-face can be difficult. What we tend to try and do then is to do it on a floor by floor approach (i.e. as in one office floor at a time) and communicate that way... If we were waiting for everybody to be here, we'd never communicate. So I'd give the communication to the managers and then they can go out to the floor with it. SAP will be on their radar a bit more...

Would you feel the fact that people are never all here make the change manager's job harder?

Yes, huge(ly), huge(ly) [SPEAKER EMPHASIS]...

Have you a strategy around change communication?

No, but we're working on it....

What has tended to work well in the past?

We conduct staff surveys and one of their managers; all of his staff are on the road. His area excelled in terms of feedback on communication, morale etc. 80/90/100% and he's done it – now that manager, Paul McGrath and Mitt Ryan will be working with the change manager on the change implementation plan.

In terms of the change management role, was there anything that prompted you in particular to appoint Fergal?

Well, I suppose the first thing was that he is an excellent project manager and the other thing is that it's a challenge for him. He's got good experience, good at relationships, has energy and drive...

Was the fact that he was an engineer come into the equation in terms of being part of the majority target (SAP) user population?

Absolutely yes...

In terms of speaking their language as such?

Sure, yes. I know in other areas, we used change managers outside the user population and it's worked well. What I told Fergal was obviously this is not the first IT project we've ever implemented so he needs to talk to people who worked on previous projects before, what they've learned and what mistakes they made etc so I asked him to do that and he's doing that.

Of course, he's not available as much as he'd like at the moment (Fergal was at this stage Project Manager of a generation facility being constructed some 200km + from corporate HQ)...

No, but we knew that at the start and at the moment hopefully, that's coming to an end and is winding down in a couple of weeks...

Does the delay in facility completion cause an issue?

Yes, ideally we'd liked to have had him earlier and that's something we're watching very carefully.

We're lucky though in that we have Christopher over here who had a senior IT role in AGOCORP corporate for fifteen years and who knows this stuff (IT implementation) backwards. He was key in getting Paul McGrath and Mitt Ryan on board (in terms of the change implementation plan).

Christopher mentioned to me about the XYZ (SAP) project and the fact that it hadn't gone as well as hoped and that his staff were very aware of this. He felt it might be a help rather than a hindrance in terms of (his staff) realising that they have to participate...

I also spoke to the retired AGOCORP Corporate employee who managed the implementation of the original wide-ranging corporate SAP solution in 1999 also and if you asked him what's the biggest concern; he'd say Scope creep. You need to box it off because people will grab what they can. So scope creep will be locked around the end of May and Fergal Flynn can push on with the communication...

I know it's difficult given the project nature of work done to communicate effectively as you said earlier. How can those issues be resolved?

It's not easy but Mitt Ryan has shown you can overcome that issue and he's going to talk to my team as to how he did it.

You're reasonably happy that you can come with absent staff?

All the managers are here though, it's just their staff are absent! So if you cascade down the communication, you'd get it across.

Chris Lloyd that all managers he has are in effect change managers, all 11 say of them; do you think that they see that?

Well, that's about differences in management talent and personality: some will get it and be good at it, others less so...

What can you do in that situation?

Well, what I like to do and Christopher Lloyd agrees with me on this is to get some manager who's doing a particular thing well, bring them in and get them to explain and talk about what it is that they're doing well. You tell me and try and pass on best practice across the range of people in the teams you're dealing with. It can be anything, communication, involvement, strategy and performance say for example...

We're going to have issues with some people on the project, we know that and it will be important to communicate at those difficult times. Yesterday at the brand launch, I was talking to people, yesterday and today in the coffee dock we had brand champions with the t-shirts on and asking people what the change means for them, how to use the new logo etc. Now, I know regardless of all that, we'll have people who won't use the font or the logo or write reports the way we'd like...Now, reports go to the different managers before they come to me in a collated form. So, all the managers have been briefed and if the reports submitted to them don't meet the criteria, and then they're told to go back and do it again.

So, the managers act as a gate for that for me. It's about consistency and promising a certain service to the customers. We're not stopping individual creativity and there is a lot of scope for that...

Within a controlled way...

Yes, I mean some people might say I won't to do it the old way but that's just not acceptable any more. Within the report is where you do your creative approach and that's how you express yourself.

So in your role as Senior User on the SAP implementation... Maybe you could describe it. How do you feel things are going?

Well, I think it's going quite well; on the project board, I contribute to many of the issues we discuss like the project initiation document, the business case, the decisions around some staff from corporate IT around the issues say last week of someone leaving and I contributed to that. As senior representative of the users, my role is to insure we (users) get what we can from the system....

Would you see yourself as an advocate fighting for the users, getting support from the service side as well as getting the case across?

That's a tricky question as some of the users will say we don't want this system and I'm not going to go with that. As senior manager, I mean I'm not going to say "Hold on, this is crazy..." (LAUGHS); there are people here who're saying that, (also) that it's a waste of money, that it's madness...

In terms of your dealing with corporate ICT, I know there have been a few problems in terms of the initial (SAP implementation) delay, the upgrade that's coming etc...

Yes...

How do you feel about the delay; did you feel there was damage?

Well, I rely on these guys a lot; they've been through this change quite a lot. I mean I'm not going to second guess them; they've just come through a tough implementation (XYZ) and guys like Sean McMurry. They're serious hitters and that along with Thomas Mulcahy and Lorna (Doone); that gives me comfort. I mean, I would consider it most important for me to contribute where I can be most useful. When I see these guys, I'm not going to question their technical capability but I would question them if they're moving into my space and coming into the users. I say that look 12 months into the future and make sure we're making the right decision now that without which the project might fail. Taking the current issue with the (Corporate) ICT employee who might be leaving, I made a point of insisting that they stay on...

And what's the status on that?

Not sure at the moment, but we made our decision clear in the documented minutes.

Talking to people, the project delay might have led to a loss of momentum. How would you feel about that?

Now, that's interesting actually as we were quite annoyed about that at the time. We had everything lined up and ready to go and were briefing and we suddenly got word back that it had been pulled. We made sure that we would get the green light to go the next time.

What was the reaction on the ground when things were delayed?

Not really sure, my view was that people got on with it. It hasn't really come up as an issue. (We made it clear that the next time) we were going up the hill all the way the next time...

In terms of the upgrade?

I won't be well up on that to be honest; I rely more on the ICT people for that.

Are you happy then that the ICT function is being looked after and that you're contributing what you can as a senior user?

Yes, I mean I can't give this 100% of my time as I have other responsibilities and am on other boards etc so what I do is look at the others' track record of delivery.

In terms of the business case?

What I see in terms of my situation is that we're putting the right plans in place to make sure it's delivered on time. I keep in touch with Christopher and the rest of the team and we keep on top of what needs to be done.

I mean were already one quarter of the way into the game with three quarters left. What I want is when we hit the scope freeze at the end of May, that the shutters come down, then the upgrade and then the new Performance management and HR functions are added and then you're at the point where you have hopefully not too many change or alteration requests and then Fergal Flynn can kick off with the communication side of things.

When you get past May and on into the summer months, then things go quickly with holidays and then September. I had a long chat with Fergal Flynn about his planning and to talk to people who've done it before and then go...

In terms of the business case being out there, if you ask the average engineer on the ground about the SAP implementation, what do you think they'll say in terms of maybe it being imposed?

Well, we (SMT) signed off on the business case... They'll say "don't know about it"...

There are benefits associated with the implementation in terms of say saving time in filing expenses...

What you've got to remember is that you have engineers out there focused on delivery; for them IT is an enabler and they just click on and expect the service on or off site, remote access 24/7. Now, there was an issue last year with the remote access and in fairness to Lorna (Doone), that was resolved and they're good at talking to the users but feedback can at least by the time it gets to my level, the quantity of it can be enormous and it can be hard to identify the issue. Lorna can identify the core issues and sort them out and they (the engineer users) like that. Some of the engineers will get SAP and understand it and others may need to go to Lorna and ask about their expenses and find out what they need to do. The business has a much better view of IT then it used to...

In what sense?

Well, when I was first here, the (IT) service was terrible and Lorna and her team have managed to go out, meet people and deliver. At my level, I'm not hearing that (IT complaints) whereby before they be quite loud. I mean here (GESTURES TO A LIST PRINTED OUT ON HIS DESK) I have thirty issues that I'm dealing with currently that I've prioritised and there's no IT issue on it whereas before they would have been. My managers would have been saying that the service was crap, that there was no support and asking what to do. Our engineers are out there giving out but Lorna in fairness has taken care of it.

Looking towards the SAP implementation in general, what would your views on it looking into the future?

Well, my biggest fear is that we come to the end of the year and we're not ready for it. We don't want a situation whereby there could be a risk that there is an association of failure or non-delivery with this project.

Internally or externally (in terms of failure association)?

Well, both really. Internal view that it's failed will lead to the same external view. My biggest concern and it's something that I emphasise constantly whether on

project boards or here in the office is to look out there into the future. That's the way I look at things; I was head of corporate affairs at AGOCORP Group for three years so I always look a year ahead at different scenarios; and why Mr. McHale did you do that? Looking at the current resource issues on the project...You know the issue..?

I have an idea yes...

I'm adamant that he has to be here in December (2011). Acting as a user (on the project board) and senior manager. (Imagining) the future, I always make decisions on that basis... Now, they'd be stupid to let him go but we'll see what happens at the next board meeting...

So resource availability is a big issue?

When I listen to the debate on the issue (in the project board meeting), I immediately recognised that the risk of this guy leaving was a negative, a big risk on the project and in fairness to Thomas (Mulcahy), he had identified it as a big project risk and Thomas had been right and true before. The selection of the project manager and others around the table is critical in ensuring that I can contribute something. I mean if they're weak and are selling me dummies....

Missing important things?

Well exactly; so it's really important that people like Fergal Flynn are mentored by people who have done this before. I asked for and mentioned this the last time and it came up again. People have done this before; let's learn from what's happened before. Knowledge Management is a big issue for us; we still haven't cracked it. Looking at PDM now and how for big capital projects that's helping us crack things by allowing us to track and record things that happen. That's where IT can act as a big enabler for us.

Lessons learnt...

Yes, lessons learnt and they're all been entered into files that can be accessed down the line. That's new and IT is a big help in that regard...

What about the person-to-person side of sharing knowledge experiences?

*Let me give you an example [next three minutes involved the discussion of a highly confidential incident that is not research relevant and is not reproduced here].
(From 52 mins, 12 secs)*

Now, knowledge management has to be enormously enabled by IT and so what PDM is to formalise it in a structured way; let's recapture what you've done for say (a Power Facility under construction currently) which thanks to PDM will be available 25 years from now. I agree with you that ideally, you'd have the person

here but that's not always possible as people retire and they forget as well so... I hope that's given you a flavour.

Very interesting Liam thanks.

No problem

Location: Project HQ / **Date:** 6th May 2010/ **Duration:** 80 mins.

Interviewee: Fergal Flynn, Change Manager, NOVOCORP Financials and HR SAP Implementation.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

So Fergal, you might just discuss how the design phase is going?

So in terms of the finance staff, before this we had a couple of people we'd meet to try and get a feel for the processes (that we were trying to map as BPIDs) at least at a high level. It's quite different and complex in terms of processes across the business. So for example, finance, dealing with AGOCORP Networks; you could have 600 projects ongoing at a given time.

Taking say a division that could be dealing with GENCOM in AGOCORP and they might have only 10 projects, which sounds small in number in comparison with 600 but actually could be more complicated technically or more financially valuable.

Trying to balance that and also (for different customers), different information is on the invoices or they could be structured differently. Or finance could have various external customers with other requirements. So different people want different things; we've got an off-the-shelf SAP system and we're trying to balance that with people wanting different things from it so that's difficult...

Trying to avoid Scope creep also.

Well, yes, I've spent time managing the (SAP) contractor and the financial staff to try and engage more with the users. But, at times, they (Finance) often give the impression, unintentionally that they're looking down on them (the engineer users). They're certain people who'd react negatively as a result of feeling like that and say "Don't like that project" and won't engage.

Now, I've been spending a lot of time working on those people and going to the design workshops when they've been there and seeing what's happening. Lorna Doone has been giving out to me for going to the workshops, telling me "You shouldn't be going to those workshops-if you're going to those workshops, you're not doing your job; I'm not happy that you're going to the workshops and you should be focusing on the communication side of your role". So, I felt that I was getting beaten up about this over the last few weeks by Lorna with Thomas caught somewhat in the middle...

So, a couple of weeks ago, I took a step back from what I'd been doing, thought about things and then took out my job specification and arranged to meet Lorna. She actually came to the meeting with my job description as well. We have arranged to meet anyway every second week so last week, she came to the meeting with a revised job description. Lorna had rewritten it and we both brought it with us unknown to the other person; now, I'd been focused on the first point as well as focusing on the other of the five points.

The first point was my role which is change management and engineering lead. I suppose I had been focused on that, trying to manage people's expectations and try and leverage that for the business as much as I could. I was struggling because I can't do this and manage the other parts of the role. Sacrificing them, I know in my heart and soul that with engineering and them being 800 of the 1200 user staff... If I could get the engineering managers behind me, then with all their staff, I'd be two-thirds of the way there. Now, Lorna agrees with that to a certain extent but also pointed out that (managing) that wasn't my role. My role is to make sure that those people (the engineers) are engaged and stand back a bit. Now, when she said it, it made sense and I agreed (with her) but that was not what my role said.

So Lorna explained that the role description I was given...She was keen to get a business person, not necessarily a finance person involved on the project so she had put together that job spec with a view towards bringing it to the project board and looking to get a business resource along those lines and that such as spec would make it easier. If I combine that with me pushing the way that I was pushing things, to talk with people and to work on the communication...I came to the conclusion after talking to a few change managers who had worked on different projects that if we're running the system for timesheets and expenses like they have in AGOCORP and document it...What's that going to mean next year? I've been operating on the basis of doing the documentation for people by explaining to them about the system as we didn't have those documents available. I was trying to do it for people and really as I've said to Lorna and taking on board the change managers I talked to...Fundamentally, this is a Financials and HR project that is being implemented and it's going to affect people in those areas far more than say the engineers.

I suppose it's going to impact people and we can't change that; we can't have mass consultations with everyone as we don't have time, the energy to do it. So, really, I changed tack in the last couple of weeks, focusing on communication post design, briefing people as to this is what the system will look like, this is what's going to be and this is the training that will be (supporting it), this is what's going to be given back to you and the company and focus on the rollout of communication.

You don't plan to look on the engineers as a distinct audience anymore?

Well, to take a slight tangent for a minute, I've also formed a steering group where we have a couple of senior people and AGOCORP has a branch out in Santry and the Financial controller there agreed to be part of this change management

steering group that we've put together. He's impacted massively because of the financial changes. But, their financial interactions and so on are still connected to NOVOCORP, so separate from AGOCORP; we have to embed NOVOCORP in this SAP system. We're responsible for SAP implementation there so throughout NOVOCORP we have a lot of different financials and we're trying to bring NOVOCORP into a different part of AGOCORP as well as their finance, we also have their HR function which we have to bring them onto SAP and bring them onto another part of AGOCORP...

Has that complicated the project in terms of risks?

Well, to be honest it was always known that it (bringing NOVOCORP onto SAP) would happen; I suppose we mightn't have thought that it would jump up the way it did. The steering group met in the last few weeks so I presented to them in order that they were all aware as to what was happening...

Who's on the steering group?

Well, myself and six other people from the business... It looks at the changes in the HR processes, you know expenses, timesheets, sick-leave etc (and finance applications)...

And this is totally away from the project board?

There is a project board and a project team. Separate from that, for me to manage the level of change in the business, to communicate and work with the (affected) people, we have the change management steering group. So, because we have people nominated from the business, we can bring proposals and look for approval quickly to get agreement and decide a way forward. I have put together a terms of reference for the group where I say that they agree the change approach, the communication plan and approach and later the training plan, help to select the "super-users" and get them to do a "Train the Trainer" approach.

I will use the steering group as my vehicle to get super-users nominated, as in we take someone from the business, train them up in a (thorough) way that they can then go back to the business to train others. So, when this is rolled out, they have represented the needs of their area, not me or the project board or team. I'm hopeful that this approach will work well. Now, I've put a lot of effort into putting this together, not focusing on doing everything for them but trying to get them understanding what I want or need them to do; that they're responsible and I was there to support them. That's all I can do and it's worked quite well so far. Just yesterday, I meet a member of the steering group and we both agreed to go together to his manager in the next week and get agreement on what is going to happen and then he (the manager) will brief the rest of his line managers in that area about the scope of the project and (emphasising) the change and not the increase in responsibility that they will have for it. Pull all the 70 staff in that area and brief them on the project with the manager there in the briefing. The head of

the section will introduce it; I will then brief the group with the relevant member of the steering group and she'll finish it. We'll communicate the benefits, the project scope and the benefits of it which are often overlooked, the training concepts, how it will look, this is the kind of training you'll get, what it will look like with Susan there supporting it along with the steering group and the project team. The plan would be to do that across the business which will take time and a lot of effort but by doing that before the end of June (as on holidays in July) so will plan to have that done by the end of June. Everyone will know what's coming and the message will have been got across what's involved and what's been done. Direct communication will eliminate the risk of message changing in cascading communication.

Looking back over the performance management system which was introduced a few years back, I think bringing in senior or responsible managers who were part of the briefings and showed support, which was very important. Senior management coming in also for the first and last few minutes with the project in the background OK, but senior management there supporting in. If you get the right people involved then people will be more likely to accept it.

So, you hope to use NOVOCORP approach as a template across the business?

Yes, there's a different group also, they have 50-60 people and have an away day next week. I and the steering group have a 30 minute slot there and Investments, under "Don Caine", they're also doing something similar on the 21st May and we have a slot there for 20 minutes. It's easier to communicate like that with small groups but for the bigger engineering group, it may be more difficult and as such will be harder to do.

Do you envisage breaking up the engineers into small groups or blocks?

Everyone (eventually) with all getting the same message which won't change for the rest of the year. They'll all get an opportunity to have been given the presentation and what I also want to do is brief the individual managers and team leaders separately in each area first. Good to get feedback and will give them (managers) a brief questionnaire as to how they feel the brief went, come back to me or a steering group with some key questions, trying to get them engaging with their team and bring their questions back to us.

I mean the key is to get across that doing expenses and timesheets will take you 10 minutes out of your week; if they come away with some message that it will take an hour, then that's not the message you want anybody getting. So, it's important to get that across even if it means losing a week, so I'd like to get that discussion going.

In terms of managing the steering group, is there much involvement from Thomas (the implementation project manager)?

No, this would be separate to the role of the project manager; Thomas did come along for the first steering group meeting and did try to get across the sharing of the burden in terms of communications and presentations, jazz it up a little bit so they're not always listening to me, that they're getting someone else with a different perspective. So, he is outside it a little bit so I have to involve him as much as possible but he has his own challenges...

Would you feel that you and his responsibilities are clearly delineated?

I'm almost there. What I've left to do and I've gone through an iteration of plans with Thomas and Lorna, and she wants to change this and that. A lot of the documentation is going through me and so I've spent a lot of time working on that trying to come up with a schedule in terms of communications. We're planning one big briefing and different sessions, looking at the different internal communications and internal magazines which we can use to communicate, look at the issue of training, planning around that and the sources of trainers etc. There's a huge work load there. Previous projects to this, say in AGOCORP, teams would be a lot bigger. For steps like impact assessment and training evaluation, you'd have internal contractors and support, a bigger team like say with Accenture or another implementation partner to help. There would be a lot of additional focus on training and there'd be three or four months where training is the focus and they (the external people) focus on building up the training to a point where most of the training is provided by business people, like the "Train the trainer" approach.

Most of the finance and hr people on the project will be spending the summer (of 2010) months testing and testing so there will be a gap there in terms of people committing in the business. Thomas is trying to address the fears around the level of training and testing that people might have to do that they've said to me. He might hear what I'm saying but he's not taking on board. Lorna has an idea as well but I don't think she has a full realisation of the amount of effort involved in training for people.

How do you see the training working out in practice in terms of selecting suitable user representatives from the various user populations?

Well, let me break it up into three. I mean firstly, you have finance with 60/70 people who'll be using SAP a lot and so will be affected by the change pretty deeply; we'll need three or four people from that group alone for testing. Training will turn these four people into experts who will go back to the rest or combine that with external training or trainer. Now, we have an off-the-shelf system so we're focusing more on what's specific to NOVOCORP not a general SAP training. I'm not saying we're doing no development we are doing significant development but you look at the project schedule you're talking about a month to train 60

people just in finance given their budgeting/end-of-year commitments, that's going to be a lot of people. Then we have a thousand people in the company (the engineers) who have will have to learn how to enter expenses and timesheets. My approach to that would be to take 2 or 3 people from each part of that business (engineering) and that's about 60 people in total and get them to act as super-users. If we have 250 line managers who approve expenses and timesheets they might get half day training and particularly on the HR module side in terms of the policies with regards to say sick leave. We need to be clear on that as you could have a line manager who has never been sick or had people who'd been sick. They'd never literally seen a sick cert. It would have gone through senior management and HR would have looked after it. Now, that's all changing and as an issue this came up on the steering group and this worked out well as I got to think about the impact.

I went through the HR BPIDs (to be) and I picked out one I didn't like which was about sick leave. I explained that (the "to-be" intended process in the new SAP system) to the steering group and they went ballistic about it. They felt people would be doing things that might not be appropriate and also that it placed an extra burden on management. People were saying that they'd have to get legal advice as to how to deal with sick leave issues and that happened before with HR going the legal route for advice.

When it came to the (steering group) workshop, the HR issue generated a discussion that went on for say ten minutes, that I didn't participate in; I just observed and one of the managers there, said to me "Have you anything to say on this?" and I just said that I'm not the best person to explain it, the HR people are. They asked why the HR weren't there to explain it. Well, I said the purpose of the steering group is to raise and discuss issues and also to see what would arise if and when these issues are out there amidst the users, how would we handle them? I suppose they got that view, one person was a bit annoyed. They are going to have to deal with these issues themselves as they arise in terms of people management and cope with it.

I suppose they have to develop their own coping strategies to deal with these situations as they arise?

Yes, hopefully. For me, it was a like, people come in with an idea and exposed to something and have to take on board and deal with it in different ways. I know from my own experience I'm not going to energise or overly empower people; I'm not the jazziest presenter but I feel what I can do is to get people to think about it.

When you branch out to AGOCORP say (in terms of managing change), will you take a similar approach?

No, that was just say for people here who are more directly affected. How we're going to make it fit, provide leadership and the training. When I look at it in a year's time, it won't just be me that led and steered everything. Those managers

will have an input into what's happening and shaped things according to their area. I mean they know their area better than anybody so I feel that they should manage it – it's not about job or responsibility sharing, but more about them knowing best how to deal with their area. I know certain areas and certain people that we have to target but they need also to manage some of that themselves. I don't know the issues in every area. Like the guy in NOVOCORP, as financial controller, he would recognise certain issues that could arise and his staff asking him could we do it this way. Now, I was thinking of my own home division; trying to deal with people's expectations more directly than myself.

How did the rest of the senior people like Lorna on the project react to the idea of the steering group? Were they supportive?

Well, Yes; well, it was my idea first of all and I ran with it, but I suppose in my previous job over the last four years (as plant construction project manager), I was used to having more of a free rein and working on my own. Additionally, because of the project board structure to this project, I was more held back. I could come up with ideas say around a communication plan but everything had to be approved (by the project board).

This PRINCE2 methodology...

Yes, I mean that's been part of the discussions I've been having with Lorna and Thomas and they have pulled me back in respect of that which is good and understandable in terms of the message. It's not what I've been used to; I've just gone with things. So when I initially suggested the idea to Thomas (of the steering group) that it would be fine, then it was bought (into) and out there in the business and then Lorna heard about it.

But, what I've noticed over the last couple of weeks is that it's being accepted, almost embedded in the business with the result that in a few presentations recently, it almost feels that the project board came up with the idea and not me, but I don't mind. For me though, it's a great interface with the rest of the business, I mean I can ignore finance and HR because people like FCs and HR managers seem to be the mainstays always and I've focused on changing that a little with Lorna and Thomas.

Tommy Walsh has also decided on the financial side to get more involved and to bring in a transition group, looking at all the issues around the change in terms of resources required and the training necessary. What's going to be decided if we centralise say for example purchasing which is going to be a big issue for us in the business. You have at the moment within the business (NOVOCORP), 224 people who can requisition a purchase order and there's an automatic system; the PO is routed on the basis of its job number to the appropriate approver.

Now, in AGOCORP there's one bureau that deals with all purchasing orders (through SAP) so if we're to replicate all that, it's going to be problematic in terms

of fitting all NOVOCORP needs or else we try and literally create 224 different possible purchase order processes in the new system! Tommy wants to go with the one system approach but that's not something you can do overnight, it takes a while to make a decision like that – so they've decided to appoint a transition manager separate to my role from a finance background to look at and manage the PO issue which would be one and then there would be looking at issues around the assets bureau which would only affect a very small number of people but looking at issues around assets in terms of managing their depreciation say for example. I have been saying to Lorna and Thomas, which they accept that I can only deal with so much and as such the transition manager appointment has led to my role being if you like being split into two as such, even though I was never appointed to the role of transition manager; that's now someone else's role.

Has the transition role been a feature of past projects in the organisation?

In other projects...?

Other SAP projects?

It's been a combined role like in the P and HR project some years ago, it was one role, and the change and transition manager had an IT background and he looked after roles, security and administration etc. For me, getting involved in that initially would not have been useful. So, in terms of this Financials and HR project, the technical part, if you like will be looked after by the technical delivery person, whereas the bits that effect HR and Finance will be more the responsibility of the transition manager, whereas my role as described by Lorna will be more along the lines of communication, "winning hearts and minds", to communicate the impact and the training, whereas the other person makes the transition happen, manage all the planning and the implementation and the cutover and all that.

Are their responsibilities (transition manager's) more focus then on the user needs on the HR and Finance side?

They're all going to look at everything, but the real transition is going to be on the finance side as (the transition) for HR is more prepared...

So the transition manager will be emphasising finance a lot so a financial background is important?

And only more so as time moves on in the project. Officially, the post has not been filled and the engineers don't know about it. Very often when the engineers attend a (BPID) workshop, they would like to talk to me about it afterwards. Now, I've got a few calls from them and I would say to Lorna, I wouldn't have known those workshops were on and they want to talk about it. They like to talk about it and get the inside view in a way and I'm trying to help them and prod them along a specific way when they ask and say "Do we focus on this?" or "Should we go to that?". I have to be careful and I can see where they are and where they're going

but I have to be careful that I don't get too caught up in it although having that informal trust is critical.

Would Christopher Lloyd initiate any of that contact or does he canvass different views from his staff and come to you? He has said that he feels that his 8 or 9 KAMs are themselves change managers and have to be buying into the change...

Yeah (SCEPTICAL TONE). Christopher is very good at saying things, I mean he's good at what he does but he doesn't do a lot. He doesn't get his hands dirty; I mean he'll turn up at the right meetings and say the right things and the guys below him will get stuck in. He'll appoint the right person and make the right decisions...

There was an engineering team leader meeting last week and there was a slot intended for me to make a presentation on the project. But our new managing director wanted to make an introductory presentation as he's new into the company, so my slot was removed...

So, Christopher Lloyd (who also had a presentation slot) was going to incorporate into his words, what I was going to say. A couple of the engineers said to me to make sure that I was very clear with Christopher as regards what I wanted him to say, because he has to be primed with the (right) message. So I rang him to go through it with him and he said "There's too much here"; there were five slides and he was getting all caught up so I just focused on the key ideas. I mean the engineering business is new to him and the guys below him understand what works and doesn't, what's required to make this work... Now, he's doing a good job but he's not going to be able to really drive this process. What he has done for me is to appoint two people who are responsible.

He did that three months ago and now I'd asked me previously with the view to priming him towards picking certain people and he said to see come to an senior engineering manager team meeting and see who might volunteer. I didn't want to leave it loose like that so before the meeting; I made a point of talking to particular people and ask them would they volunteer. One guy agreed and the second said he'd volunteer on the day if nobody else would. On the day, actually, someone else volunteered instead of the second guy but I managed to steer it away from him.

It's a political thing and I'm trying to keep a balance between different views and the different social groups that exist and I managed to (manufacture) get that but I don't think Christopher was aware of that need. It could have been any two (as far as he was concerned) but I had a certain spread or rationale in mind.

I know from interviewing other people that some of the KAMs had got their fingers badly burned on a previous project...

Oh, you mean XYZ...

Was there any of the two people you picked particularly affected by XYZ?

Yes, one guy in particular was affected, the other less so. They've both experienced other projects and been involved at different levels, sometimes as KAMs and in other roles as they moved up the ranks.

Fairly battle-hardened?

Well, yes; they've seen both sides at different stages; one of them is an engineering manager with more than 250 out of the 1000 engineers reporting to him, so he's very experienced and he knows how networks operate. He does have this issue with SAP and the ability (of the system) to do what they want it to do. But, I've tried to stress to him when he's reacted like that to think about how much he was consulted on the previous project and he said "I wasn't consulted at all" and so when I said to him about the meetings and workshops and turning up for them, he said he definitely would. So, that's worked quite well. Emphasising that we're engaging with them and secondly that this project is trying to take something that's already in AGOCORP and being brought across to NOVOCORP with one or two configurations and we need him to get involved with the system development. We're trying to get away from system development and to try and create a system that challenges the way things are done and not developed to just reflect the current way of doing things. So, he needs to be engaged at all stages of the development.

The previous project that he got burnt by had 95% development and 5% configuration whereas this project has 5% development and 95% configuration. He's grasped that to a certain extent and I'm trying to use that to my advantage...

With respect to previous history, is the view of the level of involvement in projects as being low a universally held view (or experience) or is more dependant say on your manager or part of the engineering business that you work for?

No, at senior management level that view is universally held and particularly at that KAM level and more so for the section which is about a quarter of (the engineering number in) the company.

Do you feel that the distinction between the level of development in this project and previous projects is clear?

Only to the level of say of me saying that (to them) and which is trusted by them... But it's something I'm very conscious of and that I push a lot particularly in the terms of the project systems that I've pushed to get involved in because that's the bit they're interested in and which could affect them and have a big impact on them. Because of my background in the business, they've come to me and said "You know what I want", the amount of times I've heard that. It's like the 3 or 4 workshops I set up with finance and that some of these managers couldn't get to.

They'd e-mail me directly or cc me that they couldn't make it. I mean it's great that they keep me in the loop but it would be better if they contacted Leona Miles directly. So I've tried to put a control on that...

In terms of putting another level or tier between you and the body politic?

Well, the way Lorna put it to me was once they're engaged, that's all you need to do and to a degree I agree with that. But I went back to her afterwards and said "OK, they're engaged and I need to see what they're thinking after (I engage them) too". Say for example, last week when we had a workshop last Thursday, I made a point after on the Friday of sitting down with one individual and putting the arm around him and having a chat...

Do you find attending the workshops useful?

I personally do but because I feel that the Finance people are too eager to talk on board what's said and too often the Finance people are picking it up at a particular level and it's not quite what he said or meant or know what he means. I use it to challenge say maybe what people are saying on five occasions and maybe got them to clarify and explain maybe 4 times out of 5. Some of the engineers coming over here (Project hq) are saying things that maybe might not be (reflective) of the system we want – we're missing something. I being there doesn't bridge that gap but it helps...

Do you find you're learning a lot by being there (at the workshops)?

Absolutely and I have a desire to be there as much as possible. Unlike, my prior roles as project manager where I'd have to know everything that's going on, like the problem we had on Monday (i.e. Job Numbers), instead of reading three reports, I got three people into a room and they went through it and explained it. Took their different ideas and opinions and got the perspective of the contractor and the provider and get that down on paper. What I have to do here is try and manage finance, HR and the business and trying to keep the communication challenges open and that the clear communication happens even though clear communication isn't always possible particularly over the next two months as the design freezes and we manage the communication around that in terms of not all the engineers getting everything that they wanted.

Are you happy in terms of the design seen so far of the level of engagement?

There wasn't a huge amount of engagement up to the recent point when we got the external resource (i.e. SAP Design expertise). Thomas was trying to source this resource before Christmas and he didn't get someone until the 6th of April. The first guy he got was supposed to start in February and on his start date, e-mailed to say he wouldn't be there until Wednesday and then on Wednesday, sent an e-mail to say the following week and then another to say he wasn't coming. I mean I think I and we are all are beginning to see the impact that has had on the project.

We've lost time in an area of the project that's new, not off the shelf and another guy we had for an initial period of five weeks who we wanted to extend until October is finishing tomorrow.

What's the reason for that?

He said that the contract was only for five weeks and he got another position in the UK. So, a guy that's engaged well with the business, that people were happy with has left. I actually met an engineering manager in the car park this morning and he said that he wanted another workshop. He felt that his needs might have been missed due to these staff issues and he wanted to be sure that they were. So there is uncertainty that arises.

In terms of the project business case, do you feel that has progressed since our last discussion in terms of how it's being made?

I think so, people are getting understanding of the integration with AGOCORP and that's naturally happening. A few slides were put together by Lorna and Thomas and there's one particular slide where the benefits of a single integrated unit for both AGOCORP and NOVOCORP are stated. More modern systems, IT benefits and system efficiencies. It does summarise I feel why the project is being done at a high level and that's important.

It's difficult communicating and presenting on the project and then being asked why the project is being done. Is it to save on resources? People are understandably concerned with the economic situation at the moment. People are wondering if they're going to lose their job. A senior manager rang me last week and said that he saw a report that's being circulated at senior level. AGOCORP have their own "Bord Snip Nua"¹ project at the moment and they're conscious of cutting costs at all levels in the organisation but not necessarily cutting jobs but more about finding efficiencies.

They're being very careful about that at the moment due to political reasons as the Government can't take any more job losses. But AGOCORP are very concerned with maximising the outputs from what they have. You talk to any senior manager in terms of this project and they'll ask you questions like "Will there be redrafting of roles?" or "Will I have to handle staff changes or tell contractors they won't have a job because of what we're doing (on the project)?"

¹ AGOCORP's cost-cutting project: Bord Snip Nua (Eng: Board for new cuts) was the slang term given to a governmental committee set up by the Irish Government (contemporaneous to this research) to look for savings in the public sector.

I'd say no, that's nothing to do with it; I had a meeting with Tommy and talked this through as I needed clarity as to what's been happening; as in, is there a second parallel project (as part of the AGOCORP plan to cut costs) and really since "James Brown" did his first Quality assurance review of the project recently, there's been a realisation at project board level that there is a sufficient enough challenge in terms of achieving the January next deadline for the SAP implementation. So, there is a need to focus on achieving this first and not try and do two things at once.

So there's definitely more traction on the business case?

Yes.

In terms of getting input from other change managers, project managers who have been through a similar (implementation) process before. I know you mentioned that there were some inhibitions to this happening. Do you feel that this has improved?

Well, two things have made a difference. One man who retired last week formerly from ICT, as part of an early retirement package for those aged 53 and over, which a lot of people took because of forthcoming pension changes. One, I think I mentioned him before (which he did in the first interview) was one of those. He was very useful in terms of focusing on my role and my differences with respect with what I should be doing in contrast with others. Now, his roles were slightly different in that he always had a team around him. Some people told me afterwards that he needed a lot of people on his team as he didn't do much himself! The idea of a team sounds great but is not probably going to happen so instead of looking at it from a role breakdown exercise, I used a work breakdown schedule to breakdown what I should be doing, identifying where I might need additional help or assistance and focusing on getting one or two people when and where I might need them.

Another thing that I did was to re-engage with another guy from a different project which didn't go well and wasn't that keen to talk about it. But now he's moved onto something different where he's managing the behaviour change of several hundred (AGOCORP) Network technicians who have to now plan and manage their working work themselves (using remote handheld job organisers). So he has a different challenge where he's in more of a back-office role if you like, managing the process. He's preparing communication and providing it to other people who are fronting all the presentations. He prepares all the communications, prepares people for the presentations and directs them towards the appropriate senior manager but he has more of a background role.

Now that seems to be the new approach in (AGOCORP) Networks and when we looked at my role, I'm doing a lot of the fronting and communication whereas in his role that tends to be more someone else and also he's involved more in the transition.

Does he have a steering group as well?

He does yes; they call it a rotation group. He doesn't chair it. He has a local implementation staff member who usually does. (The fact that this is) a new project for me means he's happy enough to talk to me about it. He doesn't perceive me as a threat.

In a roundabout way, he's trying to diminish the role I have in comparison to his. That seems to please him but that doesn't bother me as I just want to converse with him. Others might be insulted but it doesn't bother me...

Still a very informal process then...

Yes, I initiated the contact with him again; there was some suggestions from the change board that I engage with a mentor but it didn't materialise. Lorna has a good background and good ideas and I meet her every week...

It's a pity given the level of expertise of change management within the business, that there's not some formal roundtable discussion group?

Yes, I was surprised that he's very focused on networks and they work away themselves at an Ad-Hoc level without much connections...

Given the level and depth of SAP project implementation experience, I remember asking Ronald (then AGOCORP CIO) a few weeks ago was any of the implementations documented and he said they were and were all available...

Someone else mentioned that to me previously and I tried to get them and e-mailed people about them but never got any response. There was very little there structured; he and I went through some P and HR (prior AGOCORP SAP project) change management documentation and there was little of value in it; I mean things that I would have identified or already come up with...

So any networks or connections, you've created for yourself?

Yes and I wonder have I overly simplified it. I mean boiling the whole process down to a few key things that I'll be re-iterating until next January (2011)...That's all that I've focused on.

So you've reached a place where you realise that you can't or shouldn't do everything?

Yes, and even if I could do everything, I'd still argue that I would rationalise it down to a few core concepts.

What I want to do is to develop a plan for our communication, do some organising and planning for the training and there's a huge workload for training that will be required, something we've only begun to realise recently and getting development managers involved and supporting it (the system).

The final thing is to work with the development managers in the workshops and ensure that there's engagement and that there's as many mechanisms as possible to embed the process. It's a challenge anyway to get people to use timesheets in those parts of the business where they're used. I have a few ideas as to how we might address that but it's a combination of approaches really that I want to tease out in the appropriate workshops. A carrot approach might work to some degree but you will need a bit of a stick approach also. Using notice-boards and charts to show (areas) where timesheets are being submitted; shaming process almost.

But looking towards the August timeframe, I would hope to workshop that a bit more.

In terms of (system) testing, how would you envisage handling a critical problem; would you see any row back buffer or feature at all?

I almost see testing at a separate role. Design will be done by the end of the month and for me the testing is more to validate that it's going to work as we go the regression and user acceptance testing which we will validate it and it will go live. It's a financial system so it has to work.

I mean 90% of it is already in use in AGOCORP, so we're not expecting any serious problems.

And the upgrade that's coming at the end of June, I presume that's still going ahead?

I think there may be some problems in terms of testing prior to upgrading the system which was unexpected. Some unexpected issue in integration that we heard about in the last week of March and there's a potential slip (forward in terms of time) and the next natural time for the upgrade would be the August bank holiday weekend. Thomas had to assess the risk to the project as a result and the conclusion was that there was no real way of knowing...

In terms of the upgrade testing (done by AGOCORP) will it directly affect the changes to Finance and HR (in NOVOCORP) associated with this (SAP implementation)?

Well, I'm not the right person to ask but my understanding would be that we will do some specific testing after the upgrade to determine any effects on those parts of the system we have that are different to AGOCORP. I'm hoping to take the opportunity of the upgrade to learn a bit more about the effects.

Will NOVOCORP have a strong involvement in the upgrade?

Not me directly now, there will be some people on the Financials and HR side who will be involved; we'll have a technical HR person from the project team inputting from our side into the upgrade.

So there will be an opportunity to get a feel for the nature of the upgrade?

Yes.

In terms of the support from AGOCORP in general, I know that there was an issue with a specific person who was due to retire (ref. Liam McHale Interview) and they were hoping to keep on?

That financial technical person will be staying on until October so that particular issue has been bridged. But in terms of support issues, no issues that I can see so far

[Interruption from Chris who leaves immediately]

That's Chris who's working with us this week on getting the HR testing ready for the upgrade, the preparation for which is going well.

One issue that does come to mind is around the issue of access to a Sandbox which up to now had been used for testing by AGOCORP for upgrading. Now Lorna had been pushing for us to be using that for demos and showing people what the system might look like. I didn't realise that we could not get access to it and Thomas got it in the neck from Lorna for not doing it. There are things like that which we could get more support from AGOCORP for and that's possibly down to a lack of project experience. I mean I realised for myself that I didn't know that so...

Even if we had access to the Sandbox, I am unsure as to how I would use it or show people how to use it or how to do a timesheet. That's something that we saw say in the workshops particularly because of the re-org where you had people coming over to NOVOCORP who had used SAP before...

[Interruption and we had to vacate room due to a prior meeting having been booked; moved to another quiet office down the corridor]

How did that reorganisation and staff transfer go?

Well, it happened on the first of April (2010) but it hasn't been managed very well. Wasn't just a case of flick a switch and there had to be training etc. Lorna pushed for immediate training on the First of April and not just for her but for all her senior management. Now, the girls doing it were very nice and it went down well but it was a bit disorganised and haphazard. There were a number of issues leading up to it- people didn't have the right access to click on the (timesheet) icon on the screen. Also, might be sending an e-mail and it should come or go directly from me back into NOVOCORP. People got e-mails from me with GENCOM in the parentheses. Now, the same thing happened to Lorna, who then got asked "Are you part of GENCOM?" and she went ballistic and tore strips off people.

The whole thing (i.e. reorganisation) is actually a very political and sensitive process and wasn't managed (that well). I was giving out to Thomas and he was giving out too. But he made a very good point (in terms of the training responsibility). I went to the HR person about the training and she said that half of it was done already and I was querying the communication on that and the message about the fact that they were on this new improved system.

She said talk to Carol re. training and I did but she said training was starting last week. So there were a lot of lies and untruths about the whole process...

For the 25 or so people moving as part of the reorganisation, would you feel that the fact that the changeover was not ideally managed could have an impact on the entire project itself?

Well, I felt it and Lorna did and the project did. HR (staff) didn't and were very lackadaisical about it and seemed to be not too bothered about that; we also heard that after the next upgrade that the NOVOCORP HR team will be moving across to the new system. They will be fully acknowledgeable about the system and I can see the benefits of that if done correctly as they will be fielding questions on the system so they have to be used to using it but what about (ensuring that they get all the) appropriate training? If I was looking at that and seeing HR and other senior managers and teams, I'd be wondering why I couldn't do that now myself?

Starting the ball rolling (can be problematic). HR people on the project are asking "What's the big deal?" I'd be jumping up and down saying it has to be managed.

Is the perception of the GENCOM staff that moved over also negative?

To be honest, I don't know as I haven't really talked to them but certainly on the project team, the feedback was very negative. But in the context of the rest of the organisation, there is a bit of that.

Does it complicate things for you?

Only really with three people that I would like to have a proper chat with about it. After it all happened, I realised that I'd better talk to these people before the upgrade as they'll be saying here's another upgrade, more changes. The rest of the business report into Lorna but there's three people outside that who have an opinion that I'd need to look at in terms of their views.

You mentioned discussing your communication strategy with the (corporate) communications manager and looking at in-house publications and magazines?

Yes...

In terms of how you're going to communicate and the need to get feedback, have you a communications strategy in mind?

Well, trying to get a mechanism for feedback will be important. For the next month will be a staff briefing, rather than Q and A just ask line managers to circulate a feedback sheet and work on that. Other than that, after the first briefing, that I just work on briefing managers who can then pass on briefings to their staff and then ask for feedback. I'm toying with the idea but more so on the time side (that's restricted me) to target 20 junior people, train them up and get them to brief their colleagues. Give them an opportunity for personal development as in sending them on a presentation delivery course; spend a bit of time with them. Something like that can be effective just as bringing Liam and Tommy in an engineer's meeting. They're getting visibility with Liam and Tommy as a result and will help me in bringing back a positive message.

Other than that, just talking to managers, getting their feedback on what's happening or not happening because I'm aware that in certain areas managers who tell you they brief, don't actually brief. There are certain managers like that and that's why I was so keen to avoid the cascade approach to briefing.

Things can get lost in translation too (in cascading)...

That too...

Certain things getting over or underemphasised...

Yes, I'm looking at other ideas and put a few pages on the Intranet and I'm hoping that Lorna will OK this today.

Do people internally use the Intranet as sometimes it doesn't get overly utilised?

In here, we do: have you seen it?

No

(Fergal then proceeds to show me the Intranet). We've targeted our internal publications and we have a monthly briefing we will send to 200 plus senior people. Also we've set up a (global) project e-mail address which five people will have access to and give people an opportunity to contact and I'm the contact phone number also!

Thanks Fergal, we can leave it there.

OK.

Location: Corporate headquarters/ **Date:** 20th May 2010/ **Duration:** 27 mins.

Interviewee: Thomas Mulcahy, Project Manager (SAP HR and Financials), NOVOCORP.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

OK, Thomas, there's a week left to go in the blueprinting phase (finishing 28th May). How do you feel it's gone in your own words?

OK, good and bad but overall good. 90% of our new system is already in AGOCORP and that part of the blueprinting phase in that space has gone well and is actually ahead of schedule. Now, the part of the system where we had to configure new system components, never before seen or utilised in AGOCORP to date. In order to get the system to a level of quality of design in both these areas [(1) performance management and HR and (2) project costing and billing], we needed to source external expertise and we had delays in sourcing that external expertise. There's no recession when it comes to SAP consultants! So, instead of the 28th of May, I'm going to the project board this afternoon for an extension on the performance management and the HR (functionality) until the 11th of June, the project costing and billing until the 18th of June...

Will that add a two week delay to realisation?

I'd hope to make that (time) up in realisation. I have to really. If you push out realisation, then where do you get it back? Ordinarily, considering we have two entirely new areas, we would have given these (areas) higher priority and scheduled them earlier in the testing and building. So, we have to reschedule testing and billing for these over both timelines so it will be a case of rescheduling (to make up time) rather than adding time on at the end...

How do you envisage the delay requests being received?

Well, I'm going to outline the causes, the impact and the actions we'll take to counteract the impact(s). We are where we are and we have to accept that and decide what to do. Looking at two weeks for performance management which is a stand-alone piece of functionality with no knock-on impact is more manageable than say project costing and billing which has the potential to affect some of our financial design and the HR design which starts with timesheet and expense

submissions. I'm hopeful and confident that the project board will accept the (delay) proposals and that we're on top of things and in control of the situations.

What would you feel has been the key negative project issue so far?

Funny enough, looking at the textbooks, one of the say 5 key "don'ts" for a project manager is to say "OK, we don't have a resource, let's go source it externally". Sometimes you just have to do that as you lack a certain resource profile even in a big resource rich company like AGOCORP. There's no guarantee though that you'll be able to access that resource in a timely fashion and that has been a big issue for us, in particular holding onto the resource (once acquired).

Did you ever consider making this resource a permanent position?

No, of course it would be ideal to have that in-house. But IT systems change and we change and innovate too so of course there will at times functionality that we don't have in house and as such will not to acquire. It would be good to maybe change how we acquire the resources though...

Would there be any management issues that you feel have arisen?

MMM (REFLECTING); you mean overall?

Yes, so far?

Well, we always knew at a higher level we were replacing AGRESSO with a Financial system already (mostly in AGOCORP) and taking the opportunity while doing so to also introduce some additional HR and Performance management functionality. It's not that complex or difficult (technically); the real difficulty always with a project like this was the change management of the 1200 people. Getting the user buy-in etc.

I'm not sure if that's going as well as we'd hoped, hearing what people are saying...

By people, do you mean (senior) management or end-users or both or a general feeling?

End-users more so and I think senior management are fully bought-in; I've no doubt about that...

But, would it be coming from end-users themselves or senior managers talking about how their end-users feel?

Across the board really.

Could you give an example?

Well, just this week, we've had a particular user community saying that they feel they should have been more involved in the design stage. We can't have workshops say with 1200 people but we try and be representative in terms of the users in the workshops. But that's an example of a group that's unsure or uneasy as to how things are going.

In that case was it more that the users were invited to a workshop and didn't come or weren't directly involved?

To be honest, I think it was more the latter. But you see we have reporting line in his business like any other; ultimately in line (management) to Liam McHale, who's a senior user on the board. Now, he has a lot of (engineering) groups that report into him and down the line they might not feel they're being represented enough but no project would have the resources to take every view on board. That needs to be managed...

Some of the key stakeholders, particularly in HR would be ringing me looking for communication asking me "Where are you?" or "Why are you not involving me in what's happening?", but we addressed that and ramped up the communication.

With regards to the change management side of things, I believe you're looking at a new resource in terms of a transition manager coming from the Financials and HR community?

The additional resource, which will not necessarily come from the Financials and HR community will be a Business Implementation Manager (by title) and I've been consulting with Lorna as to how this might work in terms of reporting structure for the change manager who might report into this new role rather than into me.

That role will have a number of responsibilities, really to make sure that the business is ready for the system, interacting with the business, getting us the data we need, the activities we need and the people for training.

Will this person be somewhat independent of the project or...?

No, they will be a full member (of the project team) and I think that person will have a reporting line into me as well...

Is this role a reaction to the problems you've had on the project or would it have been created anyway?

Would be done (created) anyway.

Has this role been a feature of other projects in the past?

Yes, we normally have what we call BIGs (Business Implementation Groups), and I mean we're here over in project HQ and the business is back in the normal HQs, we need that connection to that business. But we also need to at times to put on the blinkers, get the head down and focus on a key task such as we'll really be doing now in realisation, which we all about build, test, fix etc.

Now the businesses have a lot of activities that they have to get ready for and even in post Go-Live also. It's always been a transition activity that would happen in the projects.

So, this was always the plan to introduce a transition manager?

Yes, if anything we're a little earlier than other projects would have been in the past for introducing the role...Whether the change manager will report into this role...I'm not sure if we'd been clear about that up to now but that's happening. And it's a senior person that will be coming into that role now...

So, the person has been identified?

I don't know who it was but there's a good strong name being bandied about...

How would you feel about the recent GENCOM changeover which Fergal had mentioned to me previously – how do you feel it went?

Seamlessly – we had identified it as a risk at the time, but funnily enough we have most of the project team reporting into me on SAP now for HR functionality; they've all been part of the changeover. The early adopters are on an older version and this system is shortly being upgraded. I thought those changing over would have some negative commentary on the system they're (temporarily) moving to prior to the update. The opposite has been the case.

No resistance to the fact that they'd soon be moving into a new system? People didn't want to wait?

No, no (SPEAKER'S OWN REPETITION).

As you were documenting all the processes in Blueprinting, did you feel function creep or any pushback on the business case?

Oh absolutely, yes we had. But we dealt with those issues as they arose and I have to say I'm very happy now as to where the design is at the moment. Next week actually will be a critical week for us as we will be making a couple of key strategic decisions around the design. To some degree, we had loosened the reins a bit and now, we're pulling back on them, especially in the last few weeks. There's been a recognition I think that has happened and we have to pull it back to where it needs to be...

Would you feel there's been any compromise or dilution of the requirements and initial plan along the way? The pushback has been handled well...

The business case stands up as much as ever. When you look at the involvement of the business leaders reviewing the BPID process, we had thirty business people over here yesterday and that's a regular bi-weekly occurrence where they get a chance formally to raise any issues around functionality or reporting and bring them to the next workshop. That was getting a little loose and we had to pull back on that a little bit back to where we always intended it to be.

What would you feel would be the big issues around the realisation phase?

Now, is the time for the NOVOCORP project team members to become SAP proficient. When we look back at how well things have gone over the last few months, OK we have (in realisation) a body of work to complete but its well within our capabilities to do so considering our resources and the time available for testing and managing any defects that arise, its manageable.

In terms of system roll-out, how do you see that operating in high-level terms?

There's no piloting of this as it's a fully integrated system; cut-over from old to new comes online next year...

More in terms of testing?

Right, well the initial testing will be done within the project team then moving more into business readiness testing which will incorporate user acceptance testing later on in the year. We've really had user acceptance testing on this project from day one by bringing the business onto the project. 70% of the project team is business people; look at the textbook IT projects where you define a requirement than send it off to India or somewhere else. In that case you'd need (separate) defined user acceptance testing but business people are testing this from the beginning.

How is this testing recorded by the business people (on the project)?

OK, looking at the design documentation that we have; they're developed by business people and their reviews are formally recorded and reviewed and their acceptance of them. That's the detailed design so what we have to do in (project team) testing is to prove that the (system) configuration that we have will achieve what we have set out in the design.

How do you pick who does the testing? Does everyone get a chance to test or is it more about a specific part of the system in Business Readiness Testing?

This has to be planned yet, but in June we'll have training needs analyses for users, say for example there'll be 60 Finance users who'll need extensive training "under the hood", all day every day they'll be in. After training, there will be business readiness testing which almost if you like validates the training but also proves that the end-to-end processes (in the designed system) works. For some of them, it's not just about the system working – it might be a manual off-line functions.

Where is that done?

Well, we have a formal testing environment here and that will be planned for and it will be intended to have all testing here and we have plenty of facilities here to do that.

What were your views on the QA process and did it have much effect on how you were managing the project?

Well, I know the QA consultant for many years; he was my manager 20 years ago when I first joined AGOCORP. Some QA reviews I've been experienced have ended up along the lines of "Everything's fine" and you know that's a pile of rubbish. You don't get that with him; it's a very thorough process so knowing him and how he works, I wasn't surprised by the outcomes...

It has really energised us...

Was there anything in specific that was really helpful?

He would always tend to...Well, the feeling would be that the projects he had been involved in the past (now retired from AGOCORP) never had a shortage of resources and that resources could be called upon (to manage issues). I'm not sure that's always appropriate in every situation. The big thing for me from the QA was that we needed more resources in certain parts of the project and from my point of view, which was useful as it was correct in some cases. We needed to bolster certain teams and we've done that so it was useful in that regard.

Did the role of the (Business) Implementation manager arise in the QA?

Well, it was always the case that we intended to have one. I think though in terms of how the reporting relationship structure would work, there definitely was an input there. From my point of view, it's very positive as being a project manager and focusing on getting my tasks done as efficiently as possible, I already have 9 or 10 people reporting into me and now it's more like 6 or 7 which is much more manageable and allows me to manage my time more effectively.

How does this project compare to previous SAP projects that you've worked on in terms of the management, change management and communication aspects?

Well, here we are in May and very often they'd have waited till later to begin the communication or focus early communication on positives. In terms of change management, the change manager role might not arise until later on and we've had a change manager here since day 1.

I suppose in terms of communication, we probably should have focused more on the positives and getting back to what I said earlier, we can't have (all) 1200 (engineers) involved in design.

In terms of previous projects and resources allocated, I can't say that previous projects (I've worked on) have had much more resources. When I think about projects Market Opening, which was the biggest (SAP) project ever (in AGOCORP), the transition and the communication and that was concentrated on much later (in the implementation) which I feel is probably more appropriate.

(It was also more a case in terms of the design (in Market Opening) of) "Trust us, give us the authority to put the design together and we'll call on you for input as the need arises and we'll communicate with you then". Now, obviously without the earlier end-user input and buy-in, you'll have other problems so...

In terms of the user profile on this project, would you perceive this body of users as being more or less problematic than the user populations on previous SAP projects?

Well, we've different groups here obviously...The finance community (I believe) have been excellent, they've been very engaged and really participated in the review process; HR community a mixture of good and bad but that's more down to personalities really. The engineering community in my interactions with them have been very interested; they see that this is going to happen and they want to influence it as much as they can for them as ultimately it's for them.

There are a lot of them though (i.e. engineers) and it's hard to get to them all...

Also, some of them are working remotely also?

Well, that's not (so important) as they're used to that...

Great Thomas, Thanks again.

OK

(27, 00)



Location: Corporate headquarters/ Date: 17th June 2010/ Duration: 73 mins.

Interviewee: Paul McGrath, Engineering Manager (Civil and Structural), NOVOCORP.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

OK, Paul, you might give a little background on your own role, responsibilities and career in AGOCORP?

Well, I've been with AGOCORP since 1979 and NOVOCORP was basically formed around ZZZZ, I think. I was on secondment at the time but came here and have been here since. I'm a civil structural engineer and a lead a unit of about of about 70 people out of a total of YYY engineers here in NOVOCORP. Our main responsibilities and areas of activity include Facilities construction, extension construction, design and construction and the civil and structural aspects and physical parts of the systems.

Our work is divided largely between supporting AGOCORP's capital development programmes in terms of networks and Facilities, either here or in UK. One of the main ones would be renewable, as in wind farm construction – we supply a lot of the construction, management and project management expertise for those undertakings until and after they're delivered to the (parent) company.

Who do you report to directly?

Christopher Lloyd, who then reports to Liam McHale. Engineering was re-divided up recently into operations and head of concepts (Christy Ryan). Christy looks after the strategic long-tem stuff. We have some input into that, we're mainly project driven.

Since you've been to NOVOCORP, what's your feeling around technology, what's your view on it?

I certainly wouldn't describe it as positive, that's for sure. There's been a lot of frustration with IT here over the years. We more stumbled into it rather than anything. Any benefits we've got have been more user-driven, not choreographed as such...

When you say user-driven, do you mean that users have taken their own initiative, gone out there and created systems?

Yes, exactly. People have found ways and means of utilising IT to enhance how things work and somehow implement it. One of the biggest issues for us has been around the issue of remote access. I worked on a project where colleagues from different companies wanted a common website where we could share documents but that was not allowed (here) due to security concerns. A lot of the IT decisions here are driven by security reasons decided and set by head office (AGOCORP Corporate).

It probably doesn't reflect what an engineering company like us needs or wants. We're building a wind-farm on a mountain top in a remote part of the country; it's a huge issue to get remote access/broadband etc and then the encrypted issues around servers. Some of the issues have been resolved in the last few years but it's been a mixed bag more on the hardware than the software side.

On the document control side, there's been a lot of difficulty with different parts using FALCON or maybe MERIDIAN. The latter is not used all that much. Engineers are a victim of their own culture – we're used to having come from a more manual card-driven process to getting the software and adapting it to our own needs. As a result that's the way we've approached all the software like FALCON, AGRESSO or SHAREPOINT. We kind of used to making it work to what we need it for.

Would you feel that there is a perception (here) that there needs to be a change to move to a situation where IT is shaped by rules and routines?

I wouldn't think there is.... Like with the AGRESSO to SAP changeover, this is a new experience for me as we're actually being consulted and there is a change management aspect to it.

So that would be unusual?

Absolutely. Like when AGRESSO was brought in, it was like it just appeared and that was that. Gradually over time you got used to it. It was brought in as an accounting tool. There was an understanding at the time and I suppose this is belied by the SAP implementation, in that these systems were management systems. (In the case of the SAP implementation) you have a slight bewilderment on the Finance side of the house here in them wondering: 'this is a system for us, a financial tool, why are these people (i.e. engineers) getting so excited about it'?

If you learn how to use AGRESSO, it's quite useful. One of the hopes I had is that I have a budget of Z Euros to spend on training, meetings etc that I get measured on. There seems to be a mystery as to why I don't get updated weekly reports on that.

Now, I have to actively get that information out of AGRESSO. The reality is that you're busy and you don't get a chance to get out the data.

So, ideally you'd want a system that would push data onto you rather than you having to pull it out?

Yes, now my understanding would be that SAP won't be much better. I could be wrong on that but the impression would be that the appreciation for really co-ordinating the system isn't there.

So, you might feel that SAP may follow AGRESSO in being a reactive rather than a proactive system?

Well, from what I've seen so far...No, I wouldn't be convinced.

Has that been communicated to the people managing the change – do you know the proactive attribute is required?

Well, the message I get from SAP is that it's systematic (and it's the message I get from many people). More rules driven and inflexible.

So SAP may be less flexible than AGRESSO?

Yes.

Would that be a commonly-held perception (as in SAP being less flexible and less user-friendly than AGRESSO)?

Well, Yes, I suppose that would be the case. Now I put the question to the project group- why are we doing this (implementation)? Why are we converting over?

When did you start asking that question?

When I was asked to go on that (steering) committee – I was asking questions like this – the general view was that we want our systems to have a unified approach around our finances in the company which is sensible enough and SAP is also in the parent.

There's a big cultural difference between us and AGOCORP that's quickly becoming apparent. We're very project driven and at the end of each week, you have a situation whereby each employee submits timesheets which are compared against an account or job number. When this was explained to the parent, it became clear (to the SAP team) that was alien to them. Parts of NOVOCORP and Networks had multiple numbers for holidays, sick leave, job numbers etc.

So, there is a significant difference as to how we could use the system? I mean how we create job numbers, there is logic to it, but it's a logic that could be unique to each part of the business. When this became clear (in the project), somebody mentioned the creation of a job number that would "speak" to the observer, as in I see that number means Facilities, the job is in Ireland, that's the civil part etc. From project to project, you'd have similar codes – there'd be intelligence in the numbers. It would be much easier to pull out reports around information on projects etc.

Now, we specialise in certain skills and there's a collegiality in working together and sharing expertise and experiences. So, if we're called on in terms of a project, then you might have people working full or part-time on projects or working on three or four projects at a time in different parts of the business. A person could be filling in a timesheet for four of five projects. Other parts of the business have project managers etc but moving people around like that emerged organically. We have a project management methodology across the business that everyone now follows so that makes it easier to track across different projects. So, it's much better now as projects were run very differently so that uniformity has helped.

But coming back to the question I asked about why are we doing this? I mean the clear answer I got back was we're doing this to line-up our systems with those of head office which seems to make sense with having a strategy of having an integrated company. Are you familiar with the GTS model?

Yes...

GENCOM and NOVOCORP investments coming together makes sense, in that it brings two strong separate parts of the business together, so integration on that levels and in systems makes sense (*Note: GENCOM already on SAP*). At the moment, the wind-farms and renewable are separate but will probably change with time even though building wind-farms and Facilities are very different. Now, I've never worked in head office so have no understanding of their culture but how they work is very different – they use this Work Breakdown Structures as they call them; WBS 1,2, 3 etc to describe projects. We break it down into much greater detail and give job numbers for projects and go down even further. At the moment, I've been asked to bid for a project in Belgium. Ideally, I should be easily able to look at a similar project in Romania and work from that.

It should be easy to look at a project and price it accordingly and break it down in bidding and also use it as a tool for evaluation as in why did a job take longer or maybe what were the factors that delayed it etc...

Useful way of getting into the data...

Hopefully that can be elicited out of SAP...Now; I had a problem with the SAP meetings in that we were not really given a picture of how SAP would work.

Maybe, it's my engineering brain but I felt SAP should have been explained in terms of functionality to us and then maybe let us work with the SAP system over in head office for a few days to see what it's like. When you go into these meetings and they talk concepts, you'd have something to hang onto rather than...

So generally you would have felt that the system was being somewhat enforced (in terms of use)?

Well, yes and I mean I also asked the question what were the benefits including the costs associated. Because we're measured so closely on our job numbers, let's say you're building a new power-Facilities. So, you might have Investments getting involved initially and then it comes down to us and you have different projects and different project managers are looking at the job numbers and their staff are in this job number but may be unaware of what their true cost is – the project might actually be costing three or four times what they think due to the way in which people are attached to job numbers but they just don't see it. There's a strong culture here in terms of that here (in that lack of visibility). Now it's not across the board in all of NOVOCORP and in some parts of NOVOCORP they would work differently and reflect more how head office operates which also explains some of the cultural stuff that goes on here as well.

Now, when we work for head office but you've get this situations where head office keep telling us that we're very expensive but they're costing us a lot of money too – they just don't realise (LAUGHS)...

It came into focus fairly clearly when we had to start (in BLUEPRINTING) fighting hard for the job numbers and they're important to us in operations and client charging and how we access data that we need...

So, when Thomas (Mulcahy), when the project team presented the "to be" (BPIDs) documents to yourselves, they would have reflected more the "pot" approach in AGOCORP rather than NOVOCORP's approach re. Job numbers?

Absolutely. They were written for head office in my view anyway.

How amenable were they in terms of them being open to changes?

Pretty good – the proof in the pudding will be in the eating though! (LAUGHS)

Did the difference in working re.job numbers take Head office by surprise?

Well, Thomas might have thought about it but not the project team generally...

Well, I'm only giving you my impression but I did feel that there was puzzlement on the head office side as to why we were so fixated on the (job number) issue – they didn't quite get our level of concern on it – it was more of a case that this (SAP) is the system we use and you will have to shoehorn yourselves into it to be honest was my impression. That has never been seen explicitly but that's the feeling I get – we're not going to have two systems – we'll have to trick the system somehow...

How did the blueprinting phase finish?

Well, we're not there yet (LAUGHS). Well we're due to meet them again but if all the communications we made are taken on board then we hopefully will get something (that works).

When are due to sign-off (on the agreed design)?

I haven't signed off on anything yet anyway (LAUGHS)!

But if you're unhappy with how the Job Number issue is resolved, do you feel that you have some comeback on the issue?

Not really, no...

Would you have liked more time?

Yes, I would. I realise that they have to move on. In my view, we were presented with a "Here's the deadline, here's the system..." I would have preferred more hands-on system exposure.

Were there other (engineering) managers in the (blueprinting) sessions?

Yes, there were...

Would they felt the same as you?

Yeah, I think generally they would. They would have liked more time. That said, the approach has been better than in previous projects. A lot of the (success) outcome depends on how closely the project team have listened to us (and our issues/concerns). Even when we had a chance to get a look at the (mock-up) of the timesheets on SAP, it was obvious that they'll be a few issues that will come up and will cause difficulties. The system is for head office and we operate differently here.

One issue that came up and I wouldn't have had much awareness of this up to now. SAP is systematic and say when we're invoicing you should ideally be able to

click a button and off comes the invoice. Now the Key Account Managers who you may be aware of (Yes, I am), they have a lot more to do and need to know more about the invoices than I (or other managers do). They were also at the (blueprinting) sessions and one thing that became quite obvious is that in NOVOCORP we have all these idiosyncratic ways of billing for worked time.

A lot of that is client-driven. You might have Networks or Power-Facilities or a fiefdom and you have a manager who wants (billed-for) work presented in a certain way and with a particular level of detail. This nearly drove the poor Indian man (Sanjay, SAP consultant on the project) mental! He left the project shortly afterwards. You could see all the different KAMs who had built up relationships with their managers in head office and they all had different needs – is it time and materials, is it hourly billing or is it some regular milestone payment. I remember working on a civil project with Facilities some time back and there were very specific level of detail that their project manager required in terms of junior and senior engineer time hours, dam surveys etc. Managing expenses, then was very painful and that had to be brought out of AGRESSO describing the travel say, the purpose of the visit and saw the outcomes and etc.

That's the level of detail he wanted. Now, on a different project you may have an issue where you'd have a project manager who might say – I'm allowing 5000 Euros a month for expenses. Send all your expenses into me at the end of the month and if they're less than 5000, I'll sign them off, otherwise (not)

These things were coming up and on a higher strategic and holistic level, I realised that we were employing a lot of people on both sides to keep things going...

You mean in making these things intelligible?

Sure, there's a lot of extra people – but when you introduce any system it throws up a lot of things like this (extra people) but you're focused on getting things done. But I suppose from a systems analyst point of view, there is kind-of our financial director Tommy Walsh, he has his people on it and at the end of the day there's an understandable agenda for getting it in...

Now, five years ago you'd be told SAP is turned on and AGRESSO is gone and that's that (LAUGHS). Now, there's a project for cutting costs in Head Office and in terms of what we're talking about, I mean you could have 18-20 people here (I don't know the numbers) in NOVOCORP looking after that (job numbers) and then you could the same if not more in Networks. All that does is take money from the bottom line of the company as this people have to be paid – they don't create any money for the company. Now if you were to do a big project like that properly, you could find that out and maybe do (something about it). But the impression I get from SAP is that one the system is in and once the Blueprint is signed off, then

that's it. I felt that I was being put in the position of the implementation failing, then it's my ass! (LAUGHS).

Did you feel that there was a bit of window dressing around the whole Blueprinting?

No, I think it was worthwhile and necessary but there was a feeling that the big decisions had been made and that me and Leo Moriarty are on this committee and that if anything is found to be wrong afterwards, we'll want to know why...

Would you feel in terms of the strategic issues discussed, that the blueprinting was a bit of a missed opportunity?

Well, it's not as simple as that to be honest – as far as I can see; it goes back a lot further than just this (implementation). It should be more about let's look at how we do business. For example look at Networks who project manage and say they're building a facility in PPP. You give us x engineers and we'll project manage and in a unified system like SAP, it should be straight forward. But think of all the complexity we have now about service agreements and all the variations and people refusing to pay or querying x and y...Am I making sense?

No, I get the complexity issue completely – can you see SAP managing that?

Well, the optimistic side of me says to have SAP in place; we may know have a tool that can help. There's a big concern on this side of the house that we mightn't want full information and that's on both sides. I mean if we manage to get the work done with 70% Junior and 30% Senior, we might get more of that and might not want to reveal too much of that.

Would you think that SAP might lead to over-integration in that sense?

I don't think so in that there is recognition that some information has to be kept separate and such so...

But you have different business models and customer bases, so that information will be separate naturally anyway...

Yes, but whether we should have different business models is another question – but the regulator would insist on it. Now that might not always be the case and I've been thinking, well I'm not the only one now along these lines. I mean we have a resource here that needs to be fed and we have a body of work that comes through and as long as the work is done and the money is paid, that should be the core issue...No matter whether Joe spent two days going to Ardnacrusha or whatever...

As long as the job is done?

Yes, too much time is wasted arguing about stuff like that...

Do you see more and more reorganisation and integration coming?

Yeah sure, and I mean the regulator has to be satisfied as well. Our overall plan is that well that there are six big suppliers in the UK which affect us due to the All-Ireland Market – are you aware of that? (Yes) – So the worst place in the world is to be 7th in a six horse race. Hence, all our UK investments like our big power Facilities that we're finishing.

Look at our closest competitors in terms of scale, ACME, when you look at their business model, I mean they're a mean lean organisation...

Would they outsource a lot?

I believe so yes, but more I suppose that their business model is different in that they don't have a big engineering function. When we met our new director (of the NOVOCORP), I asked him had he looked at our business model in terms of the players on the All-Ireland pitch if you like us as no.7. When you take E-On which is so big in comparison to us, it would to compete there

Well, he gave a good answer in that they had looked at the competitors but I would suspect in comparison to ACME, we (AGOCORP) are quite fat, I would think and plus we have this consultancy NOVOCORP stuck on to the side of us. So, I mean for us (NOVOCORP) to be viable...

OK, we make money overseas and we have this knowledge and experience and that's the value we bring. I mean if we spend a billion Euros, then we manage it well and give a return and feed it through. What we have really is AGOCORP; we have NOVOCORP (DRAWING DIAGRAM) internal and NOVOCORP external and there's overlapping there. In this space (VENN DIAGRAM SHOWING AGOCORP, NOVOCORP INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL OVERLAPPING AND POINTING AT THE PLACE OF INTERSECTION), there's a lot of potential for synergies if you like...

Do you think systems that can integrate like the current SAP implementation will help with that?

Well. I'd like to think so...

Is the system being sold like that – I mean talking to other people as well, there's a very strong business case for it (the SAP implementation)? Is there that understanding of the business case?

The general feeling would be that it's (SAP) in head office and therefore it must also be here as well. And that's how it's been sold in so far as I can see...

That business case has not been made that strongly?

No, I wouldn't think so...

Why is that would you think?

The emphasis I think is trying to extract from us sufficient understanding of how we operate first and foremost which is a good thing?

More about functional understanding...

Yes, and there's also the case of feck it, it's coming anyway! The question I put forward (why are we doing this?) and the answer is that well, this is the deadline and this is what's happening...

People are used to using AGRESSO and have put an additional effort into it with the EXCEL add-ons and used to using it? Is it too strong maybe to say that people have an emotional attachment to it?

Well, they would I suppose in terms of what they've added onto it down through the years.

Is there an awareness of that (on the project team side)?

Well, I think so, there is yes. But this (system) is all so dead-line driven. I mean it has to be in place by 1st of January (2011) anyway. Nothing gets done if you have a deadline so the people involved are under significant pressure to meet that deadline. Their emphasis in meeting me is to get those functional requirements out of me...

Is it reciprocated?

A bit yeah, but not as much as I'd have liked but that could have been more a reflection of the stage that we were all at...Their view I suppose is to get something that people in the Sandpit (MEANT SANDBOX) can play around with...

I know as well there's a whole communication/change approach underway and planned so...

Would you feel that the initial SAP project delay impacted on the selling of the system or did it make any difference?

Well, I wasn't even aware of that to be honest – but I suppose more the way we were informed (about the system) – there was no discussion, it was just the decision has been made and the system was coming...There was certain bewilderment around the question I asked around Cost-Benefit analyses....

I never got an answer to that question. I mean we're spending X million bringing in this system – what will be benefit of it?

The tangible benefits...

Yeah, like the payback period over the first 2-3 years – we will have saved say 10 man years and the system will be paid back say over a certain known period of time. I got the standard (message) about the advantages of integration and all that but in terms of selling it to my own people, that's the kind of information I would expect to be able to find out or get. I'd still be after it to be honest...

How do your own people feel about it?

The level of awareness would be low enough to be honest. There are a few briefings coming... I mean I've said to people (on the project) that these are people (his employees) are in a very tight working environment in meeting deadlines that are very important day to day. It's hard to get them thinking about a system which is not coming on line till next January (LAUGHS)...I'm not making excuses – we have to be focused on the more immediate stuff.

Even though they will all have to use it?

Sure...

In terms of the users, you have a few employees who could be abroad at any time, is that correct?

Yes, out of 70 (employees) we could up to 40 abroad at a given time...

Is there an awareness of that special circumstance in terms of the project team?

No, there is an awareness of that now...

Is there a communication strategy to take account of that on the ground?

Yes, there would be on Christopher's side: he would try to feed it into the existing communication systems we have and feed it through the team leaders and managers like myself.

Have you had any formal project communication yet?

Well, we did have a senior management briefing with Fergal and I suppose Christopher would feel that we as managers feed it down into our staff in the different departments...

Do you feel that's appropriate?

I would feel so yes, in so far as the information about the system is better coming from us in terms of feeding back to the employees in order to make it more like it's coming from inside rather than outside through say a big briefing with Fergal Flynn.

Do you think the fact that Fergal, Thomas and the team are over in project HQ makes a difference? Would it be better if they were more visible?

Probably help alright – the fact that they're there probably makes it seem more like it's a head office project. It depends on the generation – if you've come here in the last five-ten years you'd feel different than people like me who've been here longer and are aware of the politics within AGOCORP. I don't think it's a major (issue) part of it...

It's more that we can't see the wood from the trees. The project is on the dance floor and next December (2010) is looming – there's no chance to sit down and ask what else could we do (strategically) as a result of this system. The way we will use SAP here will be very different to how AGOCORP use it.

In fairness to the project team they are focusing on getting it done. I mean the focus is them asking us questions – they don't want us asking questions – their view is that they want to ask us questions and get the answers they need for functionality etc from us. They're saying "Why are us asking us all these questions: You tell us the answers and then we'll give you the system you'll use!" (LAUGHS)

So in terms of the business case, is there a presumption of understanding?

No, I think the presumption would be that it's not necessary for us to understand it if that's not too cynical (LAUGHS) – the work is more dead-line driven and the system is going to happen anyway...I don't think that's a deliberate thing, it's just people are under pressure...

OK, just one final question – in terms of the project board, would you hear much about it or engage much with the Senior User Liam McHale who's representing the diverse views of the engineers?

No, no, not really. That's probably a loop that's missing there.

So, you'd like more input?

I probably would yes. But, I suppose the message, not explicitly said now, is that the system is coming and your job is to input your requirements into the system and if there's anything missing from the system, well then it'll be your fault...That's the perception. Discussion on the philosophy of it, well there's not much time for it...

Would you feel it's more functional rather than reflective at the moment?

Yes, I would...

Does that make your life harder in terms of selling the system to your users?

Well, if what we say isn't taken on board, then it will make it harder yes.

Have you been told anything about the rest of the Blueprinting phase – is that stage over or will you get more opportunities?

The message we got is that this (process) is systematic and if you don't get your "spake" (i.e. Input) in at the Blueprinting phase, well things will move on and that's the message anyway...

Thanks a lot Paul.

No problem.

(73, 00)

Location: Corporate headquarters/ **Date:** 5th July 2010/ **Duration:** 43 mins.

Interviewee: Simon Lyons, Manager, NOVOCORP.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

OK, Simon, you might give me a little background on your own role, responsibilities and career in NOVOCORP?

Well, I'm a chartered Quantity surveyor and manager of 30 staff here in the Group who are mostly architects, QS's (quantity surveyors) and architectural technicians. We're part of NOVOCORP which is fully owned by AGOCORP formally speaking. We have a lot of internal and external clients, mostly internal in AGOCORP in the current economic climate. If they're building new buildings or depots, we typically quantity survey for them.

So, AGOCORP is really your main customer?

Yes, previously it might have been 50-50 but now it's more 80/90% AGOCORP. We still do a bit of work externally but not as much, mostly for local authorities in terms of social housing etc.

How long have you worked for NOVOCORP?

Always worked for NOVOCORP for the last 17 years....

In terms of IT, what has the story of IT or your experiences been of IT?

Generally positive – I moved from a point where we shared computers, where things were done manually to everything is computerised. We had a loss of service recently where a cable was cut outside and it was like our arms had been cut off. The QSs could work off-line but the internet was gone and the architectural technicians who use AUTOCAD (Computer Aided Design) packages – they were unable to work really.

In terms of the many specific systems done through the years, say like AGRESSO or other systems, how well have they been implemented do you feel?

MMMM (THINKING). Certainly in NOVOCORP, to be honest, there have been a few gripes with the IT systems here, particularly here where people have to work on

different systems say AUTOCAD or MICROSTATION due to licensing issues which makes work difficult sometimes. Now, the licenses are expensive and people are often asked to close an open AUTOCAD system so it can be used by another user...

Probably would not be feasible though for every employee to have an individual license?

No, not really. In terms of AGRESSO, most people here would use it for timesheets or expenses; I wouldn't find it very useful...

Do you think the former IT independence of NOVOCORP could be problematic and the involvement in systems could be difficult?

Well, we've often had experiences here where you'd have a system that would promise a lot. We were on FALCON, then we were promised MERIDIAN which would be the absolute end-all of systems which didn't really materialise and now we're likely to be all using SHAREPOINT. MERIDIAN was intended to be a repository for all documents like a document management system. We have our own spot on the Internet, which only we have access to. It's not great either but sharing information is difficult. Some of the engineers would use MERIDIAN, some wouldn't and formats are different. SHAREPOINT is planned to come on line in this year (2010). At a high level, the IS planning seems fine, but the implementation does not reflect that.

But SHAREPOINT should offer something?

Yes – I suppose we'd all got trained up the first time round for MERIDIAN and that didn't happen and then we were supposed to have training again but we held off so we were relieved about that with SHAREPOINT coming on stream.

Was there a feeling of futility about that?

Yes, there was. I mean the systems we have are excellent in terms of the head office support and generally they're fine. The biggest gripe would be the lack of up-to-date desktop software due to security concerns and all the PCs are managed so you can't add your own software. All laptops are encrypted – some people had their hard drives wiped so that was a bit of an issue. The lack of software updates can be frustrating if you say get a new WORD version document and you can't open it, that kind of thing people will complain about all-right. But generally the systems are good and well-supported more so than most places, I would feel. It's a large organisation so there has to be checks and balances so...

So, what do you think about the AGRESSO to SAP conversion?

(LAUGHS AND SMILES). Well, I've been three years in the job (Head of BCS) and I had a manager who kept a lot of things to himself and when I took over, I had to very much learn on the job in terms of understanding how the accounts worked and such. Now, I can use AGRESSO for what I need it for in terms of interrogating it for account information. There's probably a lot more I can use it for but I don't. I have only got used to it and now they're taking it away!

Is it unwieldy to use?

Takes a while to run – it could be 3-4 minutes before you get the information back on say on a specific job number. The information might not be complete or the system might need to be tweaked....

Would you ever try and clean or complete the data?

Well, the accountancy side here (within GROUP), we have our own accountant allocated to us, would do that for us in terms of giving us a spreadsheet with information that is more collated and all together. The summary reports we get are all EXCEL based but the individual Job Number requests we do ourselves as we also do our invoices.

How long has that been the case?

For say about three years now. I suppose (LAUGHS) that the SAP implementation will be fine as we're getting used to change. People will moan about it but it was the same with AGRESSO. For me, what I've seen and heard in the workshops we've had is that SAP would be a lot more usable than AGRESSO and also I might get some training in SAP whereas AGRESSO it was more about learning it yourself.

So, you see it as a labour saving for you?

For us, because our jobs are so small, our worry is being so careful with what we charge and submit in terms of expenses etc. Once it goes into AGRESSO it's in – you have to journal the entry out or start again. We're different in that we still our expenses on paper.

Does that constitute a strong business case for you?

Well, the fact that the rest of AGOCORP is on it is a strong argument. The fact that it would be more usable – I think that's clear and a good case at my level anyway.

What about the rest of your staff?

Well, once they heard that they once they get the expenses in and then they get paid the following Monday, then they were happy with that!

They won't have an emotional attachment to it (AGRESSO) in anyway?

No, they would just it for timesheets and expenses. No one would say it's easy to use and often on Monday, I'd be going around with a stick trying to get people to fill in their timesheets but they won't have a strong attachment to it no... Also, in SAP there'll be a facility to save (an expense or timesheet) as you go along which at the AGRESSO is only a draft so....

What do they feel about SAP in general?

Well, they'd hear about it on the ground from people who use it in AGOCORP or in Networks so...People will have had different experiences so any system that's different, they'll automatically give out about it...

So some negative (SAP) feedback around say XYZ?

Oh Yes, for sure...

But, generally SAP is an improvement?

Well, yes; I mean AGRESSO posed an issue where AGRESSO would give you a cost but no hours that you can breakdown the costs – had to be done manually so not great at all really...

Could we talk a little about the BLUEPRINTING phase and your involvement with it?

Sure, I was asked to be involved due to my accounts responsibility here...

How did you feel the BLUEPRINTING phase went – did you feel that it was a worthwhile process or that the system was presented more as a fait accompli?

No, I thought it would be more of "we hear what you're saying but this is what's happening" but no, it was more than that...

How did BLUEPRINTING actually work in practice?

Well, about three or four sessions took place, and there was about 15 (users) or so in the room, all of us having an accounting use of AGRESSO; generally us and say people who had been seconded onto the project from here (NOVOCORP).

Why three or four sessions?

It became clear in the early sessions (particularly the invoicing and billing) that there was a lot more variation in terms of how people billed and invoiced over here (in NOVOCORP) than people on the project realised...

So, it wasn't planned to have three or four different sessions?

No, I'm pretty sure it just happened – it was necessary as I mean even the first invoicing and billing session proved to be much longer than planned...

You had rough guideline topics for each session?

Yes, but even that first session, you had people (on the project) expecting it to be done fairly quickly and then it was 12.30 and we'd spent since 9am just explaining how some of the different systems worked!

Was that a surprise to the project team, do you think?

Probably a bit surprised at the extent of it (the variation) which I suppose pointed out the need for a unified system. Well, we'd been told beforehand that this was our chance to have our say and I did feel that there was a genuine effort to take our views on board in terms of adapting the system in trying to meet different people's needs, well within reason anyway.

Is it fair to say that you found the process constructive?

Yes, I did...

Did you have enough time?

I thought the last session would be followed up by another and there hasn't been...

Has there been a follow-up from the project tying off the system?

No..not yet anyway..

Would you have liked a different session?

Yes, maybe but on our own rather than with all the other parts of the business. As our turnover is only say A million whilst others would be maybe B so it would be their voice that would be heard.

Do you feel that from the project team?

No, No (EMPHATIC), in fairness... -more so from the managers themselves who would felt that they should be given more time and input due to their business size.

More time automatically?

Yes, that they should have more time and that their needs should be accommodated first...

Did you feel your needs and priorities were taken on board?

Would so say yes – however, there wasn't a lot of compromise- we can't do that for you-on the system (they did say)...But my view would be that it's a new system, it will take some time getting used to it.

I mean, it's a bit rich giving out about AGRESSO and then expecting a new system to be just like it...

Did you get the feeling that generally people (the users) were happy with it and felt closure?

No, I didn't get a sense of it finishing or real closure or when the next few (BLUEPRINTING) sessions would be...

So, in terms of project communication in terms of whether the BLUEPRINTING phase is over or not?

Well, we've had presentations from Thomas and Fergal Flynn but in terms of timelines, in terms of IT, I'd take timelines with a pinch of salt.

Certainly when IT are involved...

How did the actual mechanics of the BLUEPRINTING work?

There were topics on a screen, and we went through them one by one – people there on secondment from NOVOCORP, Fergal Flynn and the various different managers...

Was Thomas or the Business Implementation Manager there?

No, Thomas wasn't at those ones – in terms of the Business Implementation Manager...

Someone appointed as the business-project link...

No, didn't see someone like that...

What about the Senior User(s) for the user population?

I wouldn't be aware of there being a Senior User on the project as such – they could have been there but I don't know – it was mostly the key account managers etc and as such...

Are you aware of the project board structure and the role of the Senior User?

We were shown something about the project board some time back all-right...

Would you have much interaction with the board members?

Me personally no...But again I haven't been jumping up and down about that...

Would that interaction been useful?

I think I would have been able to if I wanted – it hasn't been a big issue for me...

In terms of the project, what's your general view on it?

It's going fairly well I feel...

In terms of the project team being away from things in project HQ, do you feel that's right?

Oh yes, definitely better – the last thing we want is for them to be over here to be honest (SMILES).

Could you elaborate a little on that?

Well, if they here they could open to undue influence in terms of people pushing their views on them and influencing the way things are done – "Look after me" so overall it's a good thing.

What do you see your involvement in the project over the next few months?

I'm expecting to be told what to do to be honest – some trial runs or testing and a bit of training. I just hope to be able to understand it from a financial point of view.

What difference do you see it making?

It should make it easier to do accounts and get the invoices it – it should free up some time.

Does the fact that it'd coming from AGOCORP head office affect how the system is viewed?

Well, I don't think it should...If you'd asked me that question maybe 4 or 5 years, I would have said that there would be a feeling that it was being imposed and that there would be more resistance as a result... I think we've got a lot more integrated over the last few years.

Why has that happened considering NOVOCORP was envisaged to be independent?

Well, initially NOVOCORP was told to go away and do their own thing anyway, but over time the relationship has evolved – since I've been here, the relationship has changed three or four times...Over time the system won't prove too big an issue.

Has the IT function evolved as well?

Sure, I mean four or five years ago you'd have had more systems independence and that has evolved to reflect the fact that more governance and controls are required.

How would the systems support from head office?

In terms of the software that the QS's use here, upgrading once a year is typical and that's a bit of the nightmare...People wouldn't be enamoured of the (Corporate) Help desk.

Would you feel that the IT supports have improved?

I wouldn't feel that to be honest but the people who provide the supports seem to think that it has!

Would you prefer if more IT supports was provided locally?

Yes, well it would certainly help say in terms of the software upgrades etc.

Do you think the mixed feelings on the IT support will affect the perception of SAP?

People will expect it to involve change and for there to be a few problems as it is a new system.

In terms of the SAP implementation, how would it compare to previous (IT) projects that you have seen or been involved in?

It's probably superior and the fact that it affects everybody in terms of timesheets, the lifeblood of the organisation, it's crucial to the business, it's the relative importance of it.

Is the project importance or management more critical?

The fact that there is a lot of NOVOCORP people involved in the project reassures everyone – this is just not being imposed but has our people not just head office in charge. Also, the fact that Fergal Flynn, an engineer is involved as change manager is helpful as he has the understanding (of where engineers are coming from). He's not coming down here as an IT person shouting the odds...

Psychologically it helps and Fergal is quite well-known too amongst the engineering population. Not speaking as an engineer personally, I can see that the involvement of Fergal has made a big difference as to how the project is perceived. People know he's done projects before and he's got his hands dirty so to speak.

In terms of the communications side of the project, how did you feel it's gone?

Quite well – I mean we had a presentation we all attended one a few weeks ago as senior managers and a general one to staff...

Would that be typical of all projects?

No (LAUGHS) – they're normally imposed!

Was there much interaction at the sessions?

Not at the general public one, but there were a few with regards to job numbers at the senior management one with everything we do so predicated on job numbers...Job numbers link to drawings, invoices etc...A lot of concern as to how job number changes might affect customers. Of course there are so much job number variations even between what we do here and everyone else...

SAP will I guess try to impose a universal job number on all business units?

Oh, it will definitely but that will, have to happen...

So in terms of the lack of closure you mentioned (of the BLUEPRINTING phase), could you elaborate on that?

Well, I mean the last session on reporting ended abruptly or had to, I should say but we didn't really have a follow up session. Now the accountants who people

like me would rely on a lot did say to me that they were hoping they would get reports in a certain way.

We've had no real case need to be happy...The only thing would be the closure – It's not meant so much as a criticism – it's just that there was a bit of a mess at the end in terms of senior managers shouting that their report was more important than yours and that kind of thing. It was also a bit of a shock when Sanjay left to be honest – so with Henk (the new consultant) there was a bit of a transition...

Has the previous project delays affected perception?

Well, people would be a bit sceptical about January 2011 as a deadline and I have heard people say that it could be delayed again and stuff like that. I think the fact that it had been around for a while or in the pipeline and we were waiting for XYZ and that got delayed didn't help. I don't think it damaged the project overly though...

In terms of the use of AGRESSO, I have been talking to people who talked about becoming used to it and also adding their own add-ons...

Yes, sure...there have been huge systems, huge stuff set up (LAUGHS)...

But what would be much more of an issue was the failure by head office to realise that we work very differently and that our system needs would be different to theirs –that seemed to be a bit of an issue and the job numbers would be an example of that.

Would people be attached to these (add-ons)?

No, no, wouldn't think so...For some areas – the people who did the most in terms of adding work arounds are the people who have used AGRESSO the most and would have the most turnover and for them it will be a big issue moving onto a new system but having said that, the overall managers who don't have that connection will have to manage that

Would that feed into some of the grandstanding behaviour in the BLUEPRINTING meetings that you refereed to earlier?

Oh yes absolutely...

And a loss of control?

For sure – they may have a feeling with the new system that they will lose control over a process or information – that could be an issue all right.

Thanks for your time Simon.

No problem

(43, 00)

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Location: Corporate headquarters/ **Date:** 6th July 2010/ **Duration:** 37 mins.

Interviewee: Aoife Burgess, Financial Controller, NOVOCORP Engineering Solutions.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

So Aoife, how has your views and involvement on the project evolved from the last time we talked (on 17th February)?

OK, well we've been busy on the BLUEPRINTING phase which is almost over really at this stage. Considering that the formal project title is Financials and HR, then we (as Finance) have had a lot of involvement. The financial controllers all meet with the project manager on a fortnightly basis and a business implementation manager, Fiona McGregor, an NOVOCORP employee, has also been appointed to the project. That's very useful and necessary...

Why do you feel that?

You need someone to coordinate between the project and the business and there needs to be a point of contact between the two so communication is clear...

A different role to the change manager?

Oh Yes...

Complimentary?

I think that (the differences) needs to be clarified...My understanding of change manager's role is that of someone who, well I don't know, but my perception is that the psychology of ensuring the training is right, that the system is understood, what it will mean for them and how they will use the system....

Now, the change manager was also charged with a lot of communication – now communication on these projects – let's be honest, people don't read them – they get the e-mails and the vast majority delete them – it's only when you train them that I think they begin to listen.

There's also a difference between the Engineers and Finance – the Finance people will use it every day whereas the Engineers might use it once a week (for

timesheets) and once a week (for expenses). Most of them anyway – there is a project costing function which some may use more regularly so...
The business implementation manager will be really critical...

What's her background?

She is an accountant with SAP experience which is really important. The change manager I would feel, well it might not know the system and you're asked questions...The role of the BIM is to ensure that the project vision and business vision are lined-up...

Would she have worked on prior SAP projects?

No, but she would have worked on SAP at a nitty gritty level. It's a difficult one to get your head around – is it an IT project or a Business Project?: in my view it's more about the business than the IT...

You could have a very good technical person but they might not as much in terms of business knowledge as a Finance person might.

In terms of the BIM appointment, should it have been done earlier?

Yes, but in an ideal world you would have had a lot of the things earlier on the project...

How would it been better in terms of the BIM role – do you mean in terms of asking and answering questions around the design phase?

Well, if that was the case, then she probably would not have been a BIM to be honest. Theoretically her job is to ensure that the design that gets implemented reflects the business demands. If she'd been there earlier like other resources, it would be better...

What's your view on the implementation so far?

Fine... (AMBIVALENT) – We'll get there...

Anything that should have been done better or differently?

A few things – People (on the project) should have been trained in SAP earlier. The mix of the (project) team you would change – none of them have SAP experience..

SAP user experience?

Yes and none of them, actually that's not true in terms of project involvement – the mix of experience and knowledge is isn't quite right...Everyone here uses

AGRESSO so that (lack of experience) can't be helped – that's what makes Fiona so valuable – she has both AGRESSO and SAP experience...

How have you perceived User involvement and engagement over the project so far?

Initially engaged, then somewhat disengaged than engaged again...I suppose at this stage what they're probably missing is a road-test or show of the final design which would close off the loop for them...

Are there any plans to do that?

Not sure – it would be very beneficial...The problem is that the door is not shut in a few areas...they need to be closed in my view. That could be happening and I just don't know...

They probably need to see (which I haven't seen myself) the final BLUEPRINT design document and then a high-level look at the system which shows maybe the things they might be concerned about...

The problem with that is that you then get asked all sorts of nitty-gritty questions which you may not be able to answer...If you can manage that and think it through...

There may be demands for compromises too, I suppose...

Yeah, that's true – better to get them out there now though rather than next September...I mean the implementation is not that complicated, well OK it is complicated but we already have a SAP implementation in AGOCORP...This would be a far riskier proposition if we were creating an entirely new system...

Whatever we implement will work – there's no conceptual design or testing of transactions...It's in, it works. Like there's a process in SAP called F-02, when AGOCORP originally implemented SAP they had to design it, test it – they didn't really understand it...But now, we know what it does – we (as NOVOCORP) can just take it and use it...There's some AGOCORP SAP basics that we can take that works – no issue. What's important for us is to understand the key differences in what needs to be done differently...that's where change comes in, well hopefully anyway!!!

I mean 60% of it (the system) is there already...

In terms of the business case, the last time we talked you felt that the business case was very strong and was understood – how do you feel now?

Still very strong – if anything even stronger. I mean one of the battles we had in design, one of many, was around internal trading. Settling cash notionally (virtual cash transfers) across the different business units and within the AGOCORP. Some people felt that we always been independent from AGOCORP and should stay that way. For me if that had not happened (i.e. the change to notional settling) it would have really damaged the business case in my eyes – to have a situation, now again my main focus would be on the financial side – to have a situation in the modern financial world where we're still physically paying our fellow subsidiaries or being paid by them in physical cash is just crazy...

Why would people resist a sensible change like this?

Accountants could see this clearly – two accounting systems is an accountant's nightmare – the engineers wouldn't care as they still see SAP as an inflexible rigid system – I don't think that's true...

Is it down to AGRESSO familiarity?

Maybe, but I mean even at senior management level there is a realisation outside of SAP that AGRESSO is not sustainable – there's issues around it's support, usability – I don't know if there's any development been done in it or planned to be done.

Anyway since we last talked in February there has been a reorganisation and both we and AGOCORP are moving closer together all the time. This whole process makes sense on many levels. Once we sort out all the rights and pensions issues, we'll become truly integrated over the period of time...You can't have two accounting systems-it just doesn't make sense in terms of time, cost and duplication.

It's funny – I had a chat last week with Ryan English who I wouldn't have described as a supporter of the new system but one person said 'Does the business case stack up' and he was able to articulate in a few sentences why it was so necessary.

I guess with AGRESSO, people had something simple, small and easy to manage and now we're moving from something you like and know to a system where SAP which fits the need of a business and maybe won't let you do things that you would have done before...More of a behavioural change really...

Could AGRESSO be seen maybe by some people as a source of independence from NOVOCORP?

Well, MMMM (THINKING) – I never really looked at it like that but I suppose not so much a symbol of independence (from AGOCORP) but more of a differentiator – I'm an AGOCORP person so I tend to think of us all at one group – others would see

themselves as independent..There's only one way the company is going – so we're just going to see more integration in Finance, HR and other systems...

Could we talk a little about BLUEPRINTING and your involvement?

Well, it's been structured what with the BPIDs and everything and the project team have been working very hard on it.

Was there much give and take in the process?

I can't say this for sure...Feedback, hearsay from my team was that there was a lot of deadline pressure with some things being forced through...The team is very strong and can stand ground...

I was firm enough on say the first BPID in Internal Trading – I was strong and senior enough to say that – I mean there was outright resistance to certain things that we had to work through but I'm happy that we're in a good position now.

Speaking confidentially, not to be critical, we did spend a lot of time on things and issues that were already clear in SAP and then the really important things we needed to clarify were rushed at the end. That's probably due to a lack of experience...

This may seem overly-critical but in terms of time spent on Blueprinting and the outcomes of it; I mean they don't match....

Would you put that down to a lack of experience?

Well, yes but I'm familiar with SAP – I worked on the original SAP implementation back in 2000 and that was one of the best projects ever not only in AGOCORP but also internationally in terms of the outcomes, the resources, the calibre of people involved was second to none...Naturally, you're going to compare which is probably unfair on the current project...we will get there..

What I would say is that the devil is in the detail and getting technical...They have spent a lot of time on the high-level staff and not enough on the really difficult stuff...

Is that on the project management side of the project?

I'm not close enough to say to be honest. But I mean take a module in SAP called project control and also billing – they're yet to be closed off – I mean people say they're closed off but they're not... I don't necessarily have a problem with that. If we don't get to the bottom of some of the outstanding things – we'll implement the standard and it will work. The focus at the moment is to tell and show people what's coming so there's no "Mother of God – what's that" (LAUGHS).

So, the trick is really at the moment is to abstract all the detail whilst presenting a system that's usable?

That's it – in a sentence! Fundamentally it will be the same as AGOCORP with a few tweaks. Sometimes people will give out and say 'Oh, we can't have that now...'.

I mean if it was being brought in and people had to accept it, they would do it...What would go wrong? There's nothing in this that can fundamentally damage the business...A debit is a debit – we'll get there...The BLUEPRINT phase – we spent a long time and didn't get a lot of it...They (project team) didn't understand it and they needed the time to understand the system themselves..

How about the loss of "David Colton" – did that effect things?

Not really – he wasn't great anyway – if he was good that would be an issue! The new guy is better...We're six months in and all we have is a BLUEPRINT which to me feels a bit strange to me...

In comparison to the stage at different SAP projects?

Well, this is different in that we're not starting from scratch. I suppose just some of the BLUEPRINT workshops; I felt that they were very basic and that I was wasting time...

Could that be down to your own high SAP experience?

That's a very fair comment – really it was what was necessary to bring the other ten people along to where they needed to get to – I'm sure if Lorna Doone was in the room now, she'd say 'It was basic for you Aoife but not for the rest of them...', If you had a SAP person though on the team...

You maybe would have had more of a balance and the time could have been more effective?

Yes – I mean fundamentally things will work, but I would feel the hard part is really coming...in terms of the iterative design, implementation, data cleansing, migration, the rubber really hits the road now in my mind...So my team will be up to their eyes in it over the next few months and we're really strongly committed to it.

How will you select people to be involved in the project going forward?

Well, it's who is available or interested very often. it's a mixture of people really – differing levels of expertise – I have four different departments, so each give them 2 to make 8 roughly...For me the testing is a good opportunity as it gets people

trained as well which can sometimes be a bit wishy-washy...The difficulty for me is that we're very busy at the moment and it might be hard to get people.

That could be an argument for a shorter BLUEPRINTING phase?

Well, I said that at the start, why are we doing integration testing in November 2010)? - That's when you find the problems; what do you do then? On a positive note, it's not a brand new process – it's more Vanilla flavour SAP...I'm trying to ensure that people will be available to do the testing and also for the training.

We'll have to live with the system all next year (2011) so it's a huge opportunity for us to get involved in the testing which might not normally happen...

Is that the norm here?

No, and people see it as an opportunity...There was a guy who recently missed out on a promotion and he asked for feedback and a result he's determined to get involved in SAP training and testing – that awareness is out there...

Once we get the build right, we get the system testing well-done and that's when we hopefully will catch the problems – and integration testing will be smoother.

Data migration can be a problem, nitty-gritty and it can be tricky to cleanse data that has to go from AGRESSO to SAP; it's just like moving home – when you move, that's when you realise how much rubbish you have...But I'm very confident we'll meet the deadlines...

Thanks a lot Aoife...

No problem...

(37, 00)

Location: NOVOCORP HQ/ Date: 6th July 2010/ Duration: 37 mins.

Interviewee: Warren Gatling, Financial Performance Manager, NOVOCORP.

<u>Colour Key:</u> Interviewer / Interviewee.

So Warren, could you tell me how things have gone in the project since we last met?

Well, so far it's gone well – I think there was definitely a slow start as people got familiar with what was required but they're up to speed now – I'd be a lot happier with the current situation rather than what was experienced a few months back...

Why do you feel that's the case?

I don't know – I just feel a lot more confident about now or the last month or so – people seem to know a bit more and be more involved.

Is it more project knowledge or involvement?

Well, from the finance side of things, there's definitely more involvement as people get more engaged – you can definitely see that ratcheting up. In terms of the project team, there's definitely more knowledge...When they're writing the BPIDs, they can write the AGRESSO ("AS IS") very well but when they used to come to SAP ("TO BE"), they're following the book in terms of what needs to be done. Say for example, writing a cheque in SAP, you can see that in AGRESSO there is understanding but in SAP, then they're following the guide or asking someone who would know...

Would you feel then that having a project team with more SAP user experience would have been helpful?

Yes, definitely – I'm not sure how much of an issue it was it's preferable to have more user experience there... Now, Fiona McGregor, who's joined the project team as Business Implementation Manager, who's used SAP before I felt in some of the project workshops, that she was the *Chosen One* (INTERVIEW MAKES AIR QUOTE MARKS), the one that they all deferred to. If she said that this was how something would work in SAP, then they would go along with it as they wouldn't really know themselves.

I felt (her involvement) led to a one-sided view of things where because you (as the project team) have to trust the opinion as you don't have the experience yourself.

Definitely, one of the key things for future projects like this would to be having more SAP experience.

So, you'd look on the role of the BIM as being very important for the project?

Yes...

Do you think it would have helped if she had been appointed earlier?

(MMMM, THINKING) Yes, it definitely would have helped if she had been appointed earlier as there was a gap on the project. There was a gap between what Rena Carmody does on the project, which is kind-of a project link between NOVOCORP and the project (in my view). Where her role stops, the BIM role starts in terms of bringing the NOVOCORP and the project (team) together.

Is there an overlap and/or difference between the roles of the change manager and the BIM?

It's hard to say as I haven't worked on projects like this before – I mean there are things that the change manager or Rena in their roles should be doing that that the BIM will end up doing. Now, that's only in my view or understanding of these roles and I mean Tommy Walsh or other people on the project might have a different reading on that...

You see the BIM role bringing the SAP expertise to the project?

Yes, I mean looking at Fiona over the last couple of months; I get the feeling that she could do the job well. I'd have a lot of confidence in her to do the job well.

Would it be fair to say that she brings a certain advantage to the project?

Well in terms of her SAP knowledge and her drive and energy to get things done, then yes she does bring an advantage.

In terms of the Change Manager role on the project, how do you see that working at the moment?

From what I've seen of the change manager is little enough – I'd see a bit of him at change boards and that but that's coming to an end. We get updates and e-mails from him to be dealt with...

How would you feel about the communication so far?

Personally, I wouldn't be jumping to open those e-mails. I'm not sure how much strong arming or how much more he should be doing with the financial controllers or those managing those people managing those affected. I suppose I don't feel

much need at the moment (in terms of communication) in terms of managing my stakeholders from Group Finance... I don't feel any great burden at the moment.

In terms of my experience of AGOCORP and NOVOCORP, there will be a time for cracking the whip on that though later on in order to get things done.

Does the fact that the change manager not being from the Finance or HR side make a difference?

No, not really – I didn't know him beforehand but I'm not sure if his home department makes a difference. I'm not sure if I'm expecting more from the change manager.

I'm not sure where his role starts and his role finishes...I would have been expecting to see more of him. Now, that could be more my understanding of what his role involves rather than really what he should be doing...

Do you think that the fact that you see there that you're unsure as to where his role starts and finishes implies that there should be greater clarity as to roles and responsibilities on the project?

Well, I don't know if it matters greatly as to what I think – I mean the project manager might say rightly that it has no bearing on the project what I think of that.

Once the people and management on the team know and understand their roles, that's what matters, not what I think....

So, would you consider the role of the change manager to be less critical then?

It's not that I don't see him as critical – I just haven't been involved with him enough to be able to make a call really. He wouldn't be as critical as say the project manager and there are others on the team that would be critical to me other than the change manager...

How would you generally on the communication on the project generally?

Well, the last time we met we were busy putting the BPIDs together and sending them off to the project team and then going through the workshops and looking for approval or changes so the process of getting them out to financial controllers, how we go through the process of reviewing them and signing off on them then...There was a high level of communication in the process, maybe too much at times in terms of multiple e-mails and questions around them etc. Now, in terms of the SAP project team, they've always been available and communicative

Could you talk a little bit about the BLUEPRINTING phase, what your involvement was in the process as I know you were heavily involved in it?

Sure, the current system on AGRESSO, the "AS IS" and the SAP system is the "TO BE", which are both in BPID form and enable us and the financial controllers and others in say IT to get clarity as to what's required in terms of the system side.

Are they more business process documents than technical?

Both, but on balance probably more on business process; they're parts in it like say code that are more IT friendly so to speak...

Who wrote the BPIDs – the users?

No, the project team write them (the AS IS, TO BE BPIDS) but they've all worked for NOVOCORP, the people who helped write them, so they're users more or less. As I was saying earlier, I found the earlier AS-IS BPIDS to be very detailed and they were describing the processes in AGRESSO so the detail and awareness would be there.

In the case of the TO BE (BPIDs), it was more SAP from a manual; the experience and expertise wasn't there. It didn't really say anywhere on a BPID say for Posting a Journal entry, early on that this would be the same for both SAP and AGRESSO – you had nineteen pages to get to that.

So, the BPIDs had to be, not quite dumbed down but written in a language that the user could understand...The project team reacted very quickly and added a little summary to the TO BE document which explained in simple language the key changes...They would also have a small process map showing the flow of the process..

The changed BPIDs then all came through me and then I directed them onto the individual group accountants, who would have then brought them to their respective financial controllers for discussion with respect to any identified changes prior to the workshops and we'd send on the changes to the project team.

We'd discuss them (our own changes) separately and then discuss them as a group in advance of the workshop

How would you describe the workshops?

Well, in terms of how they were managed, I felt that the workshops became almost unmanageable at one point....The project team started off unable virtually to get any BPIDs approved and then once they'd figured out whether to take a softly softly approach or take a stronger line, they then began to run out of time, meaning they had to rush through BPID approval, without having the time to really discuss them...

It went from one extreme to another and I would personally be happy with somewhere in the middle...

What was that due to just time constraint or was there something else acting as a constraint?

Well, I would have been very much of the mind and I said this pretty early-on to the project team that they should prioritise the ones with few changes and get them through early and if people aren't raising objections or haven't read them, then approve them through....

Very early on, I was literally sitting beside the project team asking after a BPID was gone through, whether or not anyone had an objection, and if not, I'd be saying 'OK, Let's approve'. Then I'd be on the other side and some, not all of the SAP project team would literally be shouting you down if you raised an objection...

I felt that the project team were nearly talking the workshop discussion as personal criticism – 'We wrote these great BPIDs – what's wrong with them'?

If you did kind of have an issue, you were shouted down or abused, I mean at the end the workshops had a lot less value than was originally thought, in my opinion...It did get to the point where I wouldn't have any interest in going to them anymore...

Someone described the workshops to me as "he who shouts loudest gets what he wants..."...

(LAUGHS) That's true enough – now also there were some people who hardly said anything either – whether it was not feeling senior enough or didn't feel they knew enough to voice their opinions, even if they had a point or were afraid of being shouted down, I don't know...

Maybe having gone through the financial controllers earlier on before the workshop, maybe they would have been the best way of talking through the changes in terms of the financial controllers leading it?

Exactly, yes, that could have been a way but the workshops would needed to have involved fewer people in the discussion – there was nearly twenty people which was a good thing in terms of involving senior people but at some of these sessions so it's hard to get everyone's view...

Now, in some cases, some of the financial controllers weren't attending the workshops so maybe they were happy enough with the BPIDs and didn't feel the issues raised needed to be discussed – but I suppose having them there might have helped – I think I might have even missed a few myself to be honest!!!

Could you talk a bit more about the relationship between the project team and the people involved in the workshops – you mentioned at times that things got a bit difficult?

In fairness, it wasn't a case of telling us 'This is the way it's going to be...' – it was more of a case of 'We need to get this amount of BPIDs done in the next few weeks so...' – There was a definite change of atmosphere between the first day and the last...

Were certain BPIDs prioritised?

Yes, between myself, the project team and the financial controllers, we prioritised 130 or so specific BPIDs. We categorised in terms of importance – high level, medium and low. But in fairness, BPIDs were produced as they were produced so even though we prioritised certain BPIDs, if easy-wins materialised early-on we'd deal with those too if we could...But in terms of the workshops, they were organised on the basis of the type of business process we were looking at. So, you might have a workshop for Invoicing or AP (Accounts Payable) or Fixed assets where you'd have different degrees of importance in terms of the BPIDs -a mixture of high, medium or low...

Was the change manager present at your workshops?

No, but Rena would act as a facilitator from the project team – now sometimes someone strong and senior on the project team could also do it as well....

At times, could you have benefitted from a defined moderator role?

"Linda Dundee", an Australian girl who is an external person on the SAP project with SAP experience; I always viewed here as a moderator, an external person who took comments and minutes and made comments...

Almost facilitated things at time?

Yes...I thought so and she was very good at it and she was unbiased – that worked well

Could there have been more done to keep things more on track?

As soon as it went off track or more if I had any issues, I took it up with the project team – 'Personally, I wasn't happy – we need more time'...At one stage, we run through a 4 hour Workshop in 2 hours and there was no discussion on the BPIDs– I understand the time pressures, but everyone there had taken the 4 hours out of their schedule. We could have done with more discussion if people did have issues...So my worry would be that anything that's not picked up and dealt with now may bear down on me next year when the system is implemented. Myself and the Group Finance team strongly link to AGOCORP head office, so if something doesn't work or if we post a journal wrong due to a problem in design – this is rubbish, it doesn't work....

There was a burden on me to be familiar with the BPID process and to understand rather than just go away and approve it...

Would it be fair to say you weren't overly happy with the (BLUEPRINTING) process?

No, there were a few things I wasn't happy with. But, if there's a bit of argument and discussion about a few things on the way, that's fine in that at least people are getting engaged. If people are all passé about it, then that's worse...

A healthy level of conflict would be good...

In my opinion, from what I (and my team) needed from the project, the level of conflict went beyond healthy...

Do you feel that you've got to a level of closure with respect to this (BLUEPRINTING) phase?

Not really – I and the financial controllers meet with Tommy Walsh, Lorna Doone and Thomas Mulcahy every fortnight to get a project status report – now, I haven't got a sense so far that 'OK, here's your SAP system', but I don't really feel I need that...If I understood all the BPIDs, I should be able to see that myself...

Notional banking became more of an issue so the focus has shifted somewhat but the issues are becoming resolved...

So you think people are confident about the design and their desires being met in this system?

I think so...

Maybe, say that were clearly told what's possible and what's not?

Well yes, well for me anyway at least up to the point of discussing notional banking – I still have a few issues around that that has yet to be resolved but we have a meeting on that this week so...come back to the SAP Project team side so we can resolve that...

Is there a BPID for it (notional banking)?

No, you probably could do with one! It's more of a high-level issue though and then the BPID could be 50 pages long...

How did (notional banking) arise as an issue?

Well, as far as I understand, it was first raised by Aoife Burgess, who was looking to do it her own area where she would automatically settle with her internal

customers – AGOCORP Networks or GENCOM...So rather than her paying them and them possibly paying her, the invoices settle themselves through some notional settlement. This is how it's done by AGOCORP in dealing with their own internal customers so it would make sense for her to follow that...So the idea then went back to the project team...They said, well OK if you want notional banking, it probably makes sense to do it across the board and if that's the case, who do we talk to about what needs to be done...That's where it really started, back in Aisling's office and spread across NOVOCORP...Everyone agreed that it's a good idea – should we have thought it about and maybe decided about doing it six months ago or when we were considering the SAP implementation...Maybe a BPID would have been a good idea....(Maybe, as part of discussion in the mobilisation phase?) Yes...

In terms of the next phases, how do you see your involvement?

Between testing and training, pretty heavily involved, more my staff than me...I never used AGRESSO or the SAP system for that matter which helped in the workshops as I was naturally impartial...

How will you identify the staff for the testing and training?

Well, in my section here, I have people who do financial reporting; consolidation and group accounting work, but who also do management accounting so depending on the particular training and testing steps or needs....

Most people will probably be on the same level as regards to SAP or would there be variations?

Yes, I only have one person who's used SAP before, albeit to a very high level...

Now, the way the BPID roll-out happened – I tried to ensure that all my staff was involved in the BPID stage and they'd be familiar with them. They may not be familiar with SAP so to speak, but at least if they've seen the process laid out and explained, it might help them – 'That's how the journal posting works – I remember the BPID' or using the BPID as a fall-back (reference for them)...

For me, the roll-out of the BPIDs is a great idea as it ensures all the group accountants all know what they're doing in (training and testing) – in effect, the BPIDs are almost a bit of training/testing themselves – that's hopefully going to help them anyway (LAUGHS)...

Thanks again Warren.

No problem...

(37, 00)

Interviewee: Margaret Blair, HR Manager, AGOCORP International.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

So Margaret, just for the record, you might give me a brief description of your roles and responsibilities?

Margaret Blair, Head of HR for NOVOCORP. I've been working for AGOCORP over ten years and I'm responsible for all the HR functions as far as employees would be concerned; getting them in and getting them out the door. Including the hiring and firing of employees and everything in between including Industrial Relations, training, paying them, setting them on pensions etc. I have 12 people working out there for me at the moment, down from 15...

What's your day to day involvement with technology?

Well, I would use SAP quite a lot to find out employee salaries, start dates etc, just this morning I was using it to look into how we'd go about transferring an employee to the UK so SAP can tell us where he works, who he reports to and how we got the transfer authorised.

In terms of the ongoing SAP implementation, just I suppose some extra background for you in so far as to why we're so comfortable with the current implementation. With respect to ourselves, we moved from a CORE Payroll application to SAP in 2007, so a lot of the pain Finance are going through now, we went through before in the past, from transferring from an old system to a new system. So, in effect we've been paying our 600 or so employees in Energy International, those that are based in Ireland through SAP. Our employees are very used to working in SAP in so far as most of them use it on a regular basis, inputting leave payroll issues etc into it and getting information out of it.

For us, there's two new pieces in the current implementation. The first is around expenses. Formerly expenses would have been paid through the CORE payroll system but this would have changed in 2007. At that point the rest of the organisation made a decision to go online (in terms of paying expenses) because we couldn't recharge back to the centre – we would stick with what we have. We have two employees who are manually entering expenses into SAP using a GUI (Graphical User Interface).

So, for us (in HR) the new system is not a massive change from what we would have done before. Two employees who would have done manual entry would not be doing it anymore...

So, there's no issue here in HR – it's the wider user community that need to be educated as to how to do their expenses and HR can play a part in that. We need to communicate out to staff as to how to do it. Everybody who has a problem in expenses knows that they can go to the two girls and they'll sort it out for them... Their managers know that if they sign off on something (as an expense) that they shouldn't have, that it won't get past the girls. So (the new system) will pose a behavioural challenge for us.

System wise, we know the system is technically sound, it's educating everyone outside the HR that is the key concern.

We have found in the past that if a system is concerned with money or expenses, people tend to learn a lot quicker (SMILING), but we do anticipate doing a lot of handholding and communication between now and next January (2011).

So, the two girls will be stopping working on their system from early next year?

Straight away, come the first of January, they won't be able to do it and the system will be turned off and so will be the GUI backchannel if you like and everyone will go online for both expenses and timesheets. Now, we expect to be doing quite a bit of handholding along the way, particularly in the early days of the new system.

And all timesheets will go online too; at the moment, people are billing timesheets into the AGRESSO system which works fine on the accounts side but the SAP and AGRESSO systems don't communicate, so for example if you're entering 26 weeks maternity leave on the AGRESSO how do you bring that into AGRESSO (?), well, that's where the girls come in – it's a manual input – you'll put in your maternity leave, it happens...

That's what we're telling managers, if they have say someone taking a Friday off for (unpaid) parental leave, they need to make that clear through an input into the system – if they don't and say that person takes each Friday off, and the manager doesn't account for it in the system then you'd have overpaid staff all over the place, so that's why educating users for us is so important.

From my side, it saves workload as I don't need an input person!

So the business case in your department, there's no issues – it's really a no-brainer?

Absolutely, I can't wait (LAUGHS)...

So, it would be similar to how the Finance side is feeling...

I would think so, I mean when you think about managers coming to us all the time for different information in terms of people's qualifications and other HR information...With the new system, they should be able to access that sort of information themselves, enabling us to be freed up to do more strategic stuff if you like...

So the (new) system will almost be like an outsourcing system for you?

Exactly – at the moment we do a lot of reports on sick leave – we have a policy of 13 weeks full, 13 weeks half-pay – we were watching that space all the time, pulling all that data from AGRESSO from managers – we don't foresee ourselves doing that for much longer once the new system is introduced – it will be a case of showing people once and off they go – “Teach the man to fish” approach...

So, in terms of use of AGRESSO at the moment...

We use it mostly for timesheets...

How do you find it?

Awful! (EMPHATIC).

In what sense, in terms of data cleaning etc?

Yes, I mean we'd usually extract data into a pivot table and do analyses from there but it's time-consuming – we have a person like Maeve here who has also worked in finance so she really knows the system (AGRESSO) very well.

Anyone else coming in would find it hard to make sense of it... I have two employees here who would enter timesheets; but say every two weeks we'd extract all the sickness and all the absence reports out of it... Other than that we wouldn't really use it...It's difficult to fathom and it's not that at all intuitive. I mean if we have a specific report to run that we wouldn't normally run, we'd get someone up from Finance to do it and then they'd figure it out for us so...

Speaking in terms of the Finance department, there is a push from the parent for integration...

Yes...

Would you see that yourself in terms of HR or generally?

Well, we're already there (in terms of integration) already...

What benefits do you see in it in terms of SAP as you were on Core HR before?

Well, so was the rest of AGOCORP initially so as we moved over together there was a natural integration on the corporate side. It's more corporately that they can compare us against the other parts of the organisation – in terms of sick leave or say payroll costs etc. We can get reports out now in SAP, present them in a more usable way and we also have a package that sits on top of SAP called INFORMHR which is a nice suite of standard HR applications and reports, so give me my average parental leave, sick leave etc, number of promotions etc for each unit and so on...I really like it....

Looking back on your experience with IT in AGOCORP, how would you describe it?

My experience would have been reasonably good – the only issue I would have would be that at times, they're slow to change things – we might say for example that there was a need for a new expense account and therefore a new expense code on the system – you ask them (the IT function) and explain that you need it now and they say 'we can do it in March of next year'...OK, what do you then in the interim to deal with and manage this new expense account(?)...You have to do a workaround – when they get it out, they get it very right, but if it was a quick one-day task that would make my life easier but No, you have to wait which can be frustrating..

Why is that?

Usually, as far as I understand it due to SAP platform upgrade reasons – all these systems are in constant upgrade and then are locked down as a result, so it can make it difficult to change things. In AGOCORP, there is one small unit that has to coordinate everything so it's hard (for them) to do everything...All the support stuff is fine, as in "my e-mail is down etc", all that gets supported and solved quite quickly.

As for the example earlier, putting through a change request, that's quite frustrating, I have to say....It can take a long time – I was trying to bring in five different pay codes for example...We used to have just the one band spanning people being paid say 5000 to 65000 Euros and we (in HR) wanted to replace that with different (indicative) bands as in Band A would be 15 to 25 (thousand Euros) band B, 25 to 45 and so on...

It was very (SIGHS)...it was like trying to get an audience with the pope..."No, no, you can't do that"... Eventually we got it through but it was very difficult, a lot of strings had to be pulled...

Is that down to the system controls and governance, the fact that you're not allowed to be as independent as you used to be...

Oh sure, I mean in the old days, if we wanted to buy a new system, we'd just go away and do it – now if it's not SAP, we're told "Get Lost!" (LAUGHS OUT LOUD).

Are there Pros/Cons with the dilution of the independence? Would you regret losing a bit of that independence?

Well, I would...I mean when there was talk of SAP coming into (the HR space) a few years ago, I would have resisted it quite strongly and been more for something like PEOPLESOFT which I would have felt would be more suitable...

But I'm over that now (SMILES) and would be accepting of the need to have SAP...

I just feel it's a very expensive system for what it does...The costs associated with it...I mean we were looking at bringing in a specific HR system from the UK, which would cost around A Euros but for SAP you could be talking about B Euros so you're talking about a big difference...You might say where's the commercial sense there, but I do appreciate in an organisation this size, you do need that level of support and you do need something reliable to ensure people get paid. At the same time, you're looking at a Sage system which does the same thing reputedly enough for say z (Euros). They're saying you can do this maybe if we wait until the end of 2012 when we can maybe integrate everything then.

I look at it and I say to myself – 20,000 versus 500, 000 Euros (for SAP); there's a big difference there and you have to wonder; it's a very expensive integration... At this stage I'm over that – if we have to have SAP, so be it...

Some people would feel that it's difficult to determine with any system, the cost-benefits up front – would that feeling apply to this system?

I would think so but that argument has been lost. There would be a generally held view that this is a very expensive system and we're spending a lot of money on a system while trying to more cost conscious.

I mean, is SAP going to end up running AGOCORP? The answer to everything is that SAP will do this and SAP will do that and you're just kind-of wondering really if that's the case...(SIGHS) You can change the system but you have to run your business – the business must tell the system not the system telling the business what it can and can't do... That's my view anyway.

Would you feel then that for SAP the IS strategically is driving the business rather than the other way around?

Would feel that – I would have a concern on that – it has been rushed and pushed at a really high level, in my eyes anyway in terms of whether SAP is needed and the answer you get is that SAP will be implemented. It has been very much "We (AGOCORP) are a SAP house..."

Would the HR policies and processes be force-fed into SAP?

To some degree...Yes. I mean the bigger thing is when you talk to some of the financial controllers and they're getting the Money back from shared services that we're spending on SAP and they go "That's some amount of money to pay for a shared system!"

We're upgrading an expense system and we're paying D million Euros for it! We're like sharing the whole cost but D million for what?

There's nothing wrong with the current system so why are we doing it? Because SAP is the system.

So in terms of a business case, it's really that SAP is the only game in town...

That's it to be honest.

It's not being more nuanced than that and it should be?

Yes but if I was in another role in another organisation, I would go at things differently. The only suggestion you can make here that's going to work is SAP – that's it so why would you go around banging your head off a brick wall – I've been there before and I mean there's no point. All I've ended up with is a sore head!

Do you think Cost Benefit analyses would have convinced people (as to the business case)?

Well, they did that a little bit at the time, but sure they fiddled the figures. I mean we were told that we should go away and project cost savings over the two years starting out from implementation and get a number for the savings. Oh and by the way, here's the number we said would be the savings so make sure to get that number...So...

The savings didn't really materialise as such as we just moved the process from one place to another.

Even on the NOVOCORP side?

Well, I don't think...From our perspective, I mean the view is that NOVOCORP is a bold child and we didn't conform the last time we got into trouble, but now we have to confirm this time....

When you say "into trouble", do you mean HR?

No, the entire organisation...You'd rock-over to AGOCORP HQ for a meeting and you'd get the (reaction)... "What do ye do again; oh go on, you're so commercially aware and so commercially driven...." etc.

You'd meet a certain negativity –you'd have a laugh and a joke about it; we'd say back to them, "we're bringing in the money, we're keeping you going" but it does wear you down.

Now, we are different to AGOCORP, we are more commercial but at the same time, I'm not sure we're as commercial as we'd like to think we are. People here say "we're very commercial", but if we were that commercial would we be spending that much money on a SAP system?

Our cost base is too high; our salary base is too high so there's a limit as to how commercial we are.

In relation to AGOCORP we're certainly more commercial but not as commercial as others out there.

This difference in outlook – are people in NOVOCORP happy to wear the "independence crown"?

(REFLECTIVE) We certainly were at one stage....we're probably on our fifth senior management team since I joined 10 or 11 years ago...Initially, the first directors here would have emphasised the independent nature of NOVOCORP and the need to stand on our own two feet etc. As new directors have come in and senior management as well, there's been more of a shift back towards that we should get closer to the (AGOCORP) family and that's been happening more and more. We were going to be a centre of excellence for AGOCORP and be an independent yet integral member.

The last two directors have been very much – "come into the fold now".

We forgive you! (LAUGHS). Come back into the fold – I think they realise that we did things very well over here and I see them particularly over the last two years, doing things more like us, getting more commercial, being more selective, like closing pension schemes to new entrants for example. Common sense things; I mean there would have been a good number of people with the attitude of "I'm here for life, I won't rock the boat and I'll see how I get on" – that has to change...

(PHONE CALL INTERRUPTION)

So, I suppose just to come back to this idea of NOVOCORP moving away from being different to being integrated – do people see this SAP system as an agent of increasing integration?

More so that it's costly; people accept the integration and the fact that SAP is the only game in town. They're not worried about what we do here becoming transparent – we're already transparent; they have access to everything, it's more the cost...

In terms of the restructuring (GENCOM addition) and the rebranding; that's added complexity in terms of other variables...

Indeed, all the fun and games that brings... (SMILES BROADLY).

Has that affected you in any way in terms of the SAP integration?

Well, operationally it has. In essence two companies are joining but as far as the (energy) regulator is concerned, they can't be joined, so we have to integrate but keep separate NOVOCORP and GENCOM at a HR functional level. We will have an overall integration view but we can sort that out in terms of the system functionality later on in implementation. Our current chief director to be able to access and view GENCOM details etc has to have special system access which we wouldn't have needed before, so it creates its own problems like that. Some of our senior managers now because GENCOM and NOVOCORP are on different systems (i.e. GENCOM were already on SAP) and they're managing both groups of employees are verifying expenses and timesheets online for some employees (GENCOM) and offline for others (NOVOCORP) so...

The holiday system is on THE INTRANET and some managers are verifying holidays on THE INTRANET and some on-line but we're working towards ironing those out as the system is implemented.

In terms of your HR role, how would you feel about the system conversion? Is it an issue for any employees?

The expenses online is great – they like it. On the HR side I would be a bit more nervous. I mean I have two girls sitting outside. They know the expenses rules backwards and you can't get anything past them! Now, employees just input and a manager just click OK and off it goes, bypassing HR and we'll never see it. Now some managers will just click and OK anything...

The worry would be that something would get approved that shouldn't and get flagged in an internal audit and someone would get into trouble...

Would you have seen this "watchdog" role as part of HR traditionally?

No – part of me will not be sorry to see it go but at the same time we did offer an important control system, a safety net in case managers approved a timesheet or expense they shouldn't have. That role will be gone so it will be very important that the managers get educated like we discussed earlier as to their new responsibilities...

You can't do things that can impact on people's pay...

The reaction you get is often "I'm a manager, now I'm an administrator...". You tell them they're just managing like they always were and they ask you who's doing

the administrating...The employees like always and you as their line manager like always are approving or rejecting. That tends to catch them out because those who weren't doing it up to now realise it should be nothing different and stop giving out about it...

There is a little bit – when you talk to managers they might perceive the system as adding administrative workload...

The oversight pressure is being pushed back onto them...

Absolutely, we've made that clear for the last while that this was coming...if you approve a mistaken or fraudulent invoice, you're as mistaken or as guilty as the person who submitted it and it could lead to disciplinary action. They kind of go "OK" when they hear that!

Some people will sign anything knowing that we would catch it and stop it. If the SAP system in AGOCORP is replicated here, you could do a global "approval" and not have to look at every detail of the expense. We'd prefer not to have that option on the new system as it could be problematic given how people might have been used to doing things here.

With respect to the education side of things, would you feel that's part of the change management role?

I would yes...

How does that work then for your-selves?

The change manager is there working closely but each business area has a HR business partner who I see as being really up to speed doing the training in November and December (2010) and we'll be there to support them. This idea that each area has a super-user and we provide a fail-safe. But, the sooner they get used to it themselves, the sooner we get to removing the dependence.

So you see that as a separate communications channel to that used by the change manager?

I would yes...

Would you have a huge amount of interaction with the change dimension of the project in terms of HR?

Not as such...intentionally as I don't want to be interfering. We will be able to see if there is any negativity or bottlenecks on the ground and be helping on that score.

Training is a key function of HR – how do you see your involvement in the training stage of the project?

Well, the formal training will be led and co-ordinated by a training co-ordinator as far as I understand it at the relevant point in the project. We may be asked to add some support but there will be formal specific training and training roles. That's recently come on the tracks – we used super users in the past where departments nominate someone who does all the training and goes back. It generally works well except when they go on maternity leave or change jobs and don't want to do it anymore or can't do it.

We've flagged this at the centre – could we have a central resource that could train or support staff in situations where the super user might not be available, and we were told NO! (SPEAKER'S OWN EMPHASIS), which was a bit... We'll manage that if it arises.

It arose when we put in the Core HR system and we had no super user or central resource, we had to go to get training brought in by SAP themselves which was very expensive but....

When you think back about that Core HR SAP implementation, I know you said you took a lot of pain, could you talk a little about it?

I certainly took a lot of pain alright (LAUGHS OUT LOUD)

What kind of pain do you see maybe happening again?

One thing I would insist on and Lorna would agree, there was an attitude that it wasn't a big deal, you could do it a few days a week. Of course that was far off the mark – it was a solid four months of going up and down to project HQ and back here, keeping the day job going too. So it was a rough process.

When we were sure that this current SAP implementation was going to happen, we went and got someone trained up in VISIO and process mapping and we had all our processes done and we know exactly where we are in the "to be" particularly when it came to the SAP Module on Training. When we engaged with the project we knew exactly where we stood and would know what SAP could do for us.

We also sent two people onto the project full-time, took their day jobs away from them, unlike what happened to me and told them to focus on SAP now. From our side, our prep work is standing to us now in comparison to 2006 or 2007 where we really entered into the unknown and we were faced with system functions and options we had to live with and couldn't change.

We went in two or three weeks before the end of the blueprinting phase and we were looking at stuff that was signed off and disrupting things because we had to change certain things. They were looking at us saying "NOVOCORP are off on one

again”, but we were different, our pay scales, our grades, our sick-leave and maternity policies, all were different...

They had merrily chugged along – they had invited us over and we hadn’t come; our management hadn’t probably engaged enough and early enough...

They billed differently to us and all our policies were different and this was nearly at design phase and we had to cope with things did not suit us...

Was there a change manager etc on that implementation?

There was and it was well-run and all but we were determined that we would be prepared if anything like this ever happened again.

Considering the SAP Implementation project experiences you had, were you asked how you felt this current implementation should be done?

Had conversations with the HR manager and Lorna and we focused on getting the lessons out of it. The main thing for me was the incredible pressure we and I was under at the time and I see it in Finance now. I mean it’s an awful lot asking people to do both their project piece and the day job...

People say “Oh, it’s only a month” – but let’s see how you get on in the boiling pot for a month, it’s just not right.

If someone makes a mistake in their day-to-day then they’ll be saying “I was focusing on SAP at the time” – you have to be realistic in terms of what you’re asking from your staff and I think people can’t be hauled over the coals if something goes awry and they’re doing multiple things.

Our two girls who are over there at the moment, they were working until 9 or 10pm every night and they’re not the only ones....That’s Ok in the short term only...

They would feel the pace of the project is very fast and they’re very driven by deadlines which are definitive and which might be newish for them. The documentation (i.e. BPIDs) is detailed and getting good at that is a skill in itself.

Once they got through that, then it’s on to design, writing use or test cases, getting them tested, training etc so it’s very intense....

They have to go ABC not A to C but there’s still pressure to get there as quick as possible,

Are they experienced users of SAP generally?

Not especially no – there's added pressure in terms of having to learn more about SAP quickly, but we're also designing and testing an entirely new HR module for the first time in the AGOCORP entirely.

This module will be a learning and development solution module and it's a big win for us here in NOVOCORP HR that we'll be the ones piloting it in the whole organisation....

Could you elaborate on that?

Well, originally SAP had a combined Performance Management and Learning and Development solution module which didn't really seem to work all that well to a point where it wasn't really used that much as far as I understand it. In the (AGOCORP) training school, they might use it but that's about it...

So, we're trying to develop a learning and development solution that allows for each individual to link into their performance management and personal development plan, and it will be fabulous when it will be up and running. We're designing and developing it within a broader SAP module and we'll bring to the wider (AGOCORP) organisation, so it is extra pressure for the girls. It is being created from scratch, a blank piece of paper so to speak and it will come on stream next year.

Now, it's exciting having that blank piece of paper but also we have to be conscious of that political space – we'd love to do certain things with it, so would NOVOCORP, but we have to be conscious of the wider AGOCORP boundaries as well. We can't be seen to be the usual NOVOCORP running away with ourselves, and need to be emphasising that this is a vanilla flavour module, no bells or whistles...

The education piece around that in talking to our sister businesses in GENCOM, Networks and say Customer Supply and asking them are they happy with it – they'll be delighted with it...Asking them what they want would mean we'd be inundated with requests and it would become unwieldy or complex far too early – let's get the basic version up and running and add afterwards...

In terms of the project team, would you have had many dealings with the BIM (Fiona McGregor)?

I would yes, Fiona would have come over to talk to me a few times...From our side of things, Fiona is a finance person and that's her focus so far – she's only in the job two weeks. When I went over (to project hq), they said to me we have 68 tasks from the HR side to be addressed.

I went OK (LAUGHS) – but they made it clear that was the BIM's responsibility. Now, she's a finance person so that's where she'll be initially focused on and there's problems in finance she has to look after too.

So, I went "Look, be realistic, she's a finance person – she's hearing HR is doing reasonably well, Finance is in a mess; of course she'll take her spade to that first" and they went "you're right"...

When we met, we discussed the HR task list and we agreed to divvy it up between us three or four and I don't intend putting a lot of pressure on her now – we may need her a bit more in the November timeframe...

In the Core HR SAP implementation, was there a BIM Role?

I honestly can't remember...

Would you see it as necessary?

(REFLECTING) I don't know – useful to have an interface between the project and the business but my concerns would be that it's a very big job and also that people might use her as a scapegoat.

She could easily fall into the trap, and I think she has already, of being another finance person on the project...Some of the finance people are already asking her to do things...It'll be interesting to see...

I think as well there's an attitude now that we have a BIM on the project so they'll look after things for me...

People might be acting a bit naively, thinking that she's there to take on and solve all their problems...

She provides a comfort zone almost?

That could happen – when the cookie crumbles, it'll be the responsible person as opposed to the BIM who'll have to step up...

In terms of the roles of the BIM and Change Manager, is there a possibility of overlap in their roles?

Oh well there would be a bit of overlap – I see their roles being defined more by their different personalities rather than their titles, to be honest....

I don't think that was what was intended....

Could you elaborate a little on that?

Well, there would be a perception that the role the change manager is playing was not the role that people would have envisaged him playing...

There's a perception that he's not doing what he's supposed to be doing and that he's not delivering where he needs to be coming from....

This is why the pressure has been put on for the BIM to come in, a much stronger personality and a much stronger business focus as well...

This might result in...I can see them changing roles – Fergal will become the BIM and Fiona the Change Manager.

Nobody will say it, but it will just happen....That's a certain sense that Fergal doesn't have clarity as to his role or if he does have clarity, that he's not delivering on it.

Do you think the BIM role would have been appointed anyway or it is more of a reaction to how the change manager role has unfolded?

To me it appears more of a reaction – I haven't got into discussions about it and to be honest, it's not a space I'd like to get into...but I would perceive it as a reaction.

How does Fergal feel about the BIM role?

I feel Fergal is out of his depth to be honest – he's struggling and no one he can turn to for help. Now, I know Lorna is working with him closely but...

Fergal has been sold as, and is an extremely competent guy and he has a lot of strengths...but he doesn't know enough about SAP...

People are running rings around him and he doesn't even know it. If he's going in and saying I'm the change manager, he should be getting on and changing things.

Any project I've been involved in, the change manager is almost like the Granddad role, somebody with lots of kudos and can say this is how things will be.

The vibe I'm getting from the project is that people are saying or acting like "shortcut him, take him out of it, go to the people that matter and tell him what to do then (afterwards)", not really the role the change manager should be doing.

Do you think picking a change manager from the engineering population was a good choice with respect to the business knowledge for the project?

Well, initially I would have felt that he was a sound enough choice, a good solid guy with a certain reputation and respect among the older staff and managers but also have the respect of the younger managers too.

I mean he had (project) delivered one of the biggest projects we had ever undertaken and delivered it effectively and competently. I think people assumed that "of course, he'd be able to do it" – no-one educated him in advance as to what

his role should be and what SAP was about and even now, they're not getting to grips with what his role should be. He's really trying and I think there was huge "Oh, Fergal managed in that space...", and that it would be fine – but we never gave him the skills to be able to do it.

Now, he's an excellent engineer and an excellent engineering manager but he's not a change manager and that's the core issue and we're in that space now, trying to manage it...

Now, we have Fiona coming on to the project and I would feel that she's more of a change manager, and that's my view and I suppose I wouldn't like that getting out around the place...(SMILES)...

Of course...in terms of the blueprinting phase how did it go given that you were prepared well...

From an operational sense, very smooth overall, very happy with the communication over and back through the girls etc and all that. But in terms of the learning and development solution (LDS), not as happy...

We're in the unknown – we're comfortable like with the performance management piece that's already in AGOCORP, so we're just checking what's happening. In terms of the learning and development solution, we're in a new place – if it goes well, we'll be on the pig's back – if it doesn't well, it's a big risk for the organisation (NOVOCORP).

How do you feel it's (LDS) been received on a technical level?

Went well, particularly on the corporate side, as they're our biggest stakeholder. But now, that it's designed, I'm not sure...We've signed off on all the BPIDS, let's hope they're right! That's my worry...I don't know if they're 100 percent right but they're 90% percent there...It's the 10% that would be a concern...

Did you feel you had enough time for the blueprinting phase?

Well, you could always do with more time...we already had a two week delay due to the difficulty of holding onto SAP consultants, but another week would have been a help but I don't know if we'd have added much more – I'm a little bit nervous about it due to the unknown and how much is riding on it more than anything.

Were you there for some of the (blueprinting) project meetings?

Yes

How did you feel they went?

Grand, fine – reasonably good. Would have lot of faith in “Maura”, the consultant and also in the two girls but less so here in terms of the skills necessary to create a course catalogue (i.e. internal or external courses for employees to choose from for training and development as part of the training and development module) – not sure if we do so a bit nervous about that. If you put rubbish in, you get rubbish out

At the moment, that’s Patricia’s role and space to mind (Patricia Clarkson, see Interview number 19) and I’m leaving that up to her to mind to be honest....I’m the operational side of the house...

The course catalogue should give you a set of drop-down boxes and details on the course options so people should get up-to-date and accurate information on what’s available.

I emphasised to Fiona (BIM) that that was one thing she could focus on in terms of design delivery. That this level of expertise has to be there and used to design the course catalogue on a technical level...Talk to the two girls, and they might find our hundred most subscribed courses, but are the providers still operational, are their rates and fees still competitive, so it’s a detailed process. I hope we’re doing that...I’m not sure whether that level of detail is understood on the technical or design side.

Again, we have 6-9 months to get through it...

Would you feel the Blueprint phase is fully over?

Yes, I have a great sense of closure on the operational side – I mean all the expenses are going to “Beechpark” directly (AGOCORP have a financial processing office) so that will be a bit of a change for us and them so there’s an education piece of it there.

Training and development and the course catalogue side, which needs to be looked after a bit still...

Overall, what are your impressions of the project so far?

Overall, very happy – Lorna is doing a great job and cuts through to the core issues, and I’m particularly pleased we got the chance here in NOVOCORP to develop the LDS module. I wouldn’t change a whole lot now...

Going forward, how do you see it shaping up?

We have three people who will be testing and they’re the best choices in terms of system knowledge...The issue for me will be freeing them up to do that away from their day to day jobs...

Would they have worked on the BPIDS?

Yes, but we all would have contributed to writing them up. The three ladies doing the testing, it's their day to day job and they write the test cases, go over to Project HQ and test them and make sure that the organisation management part of SAP works well.

Could you elaborate on that?

Just a way to ensure that time and expenses are approved by your appropriate line manager and above which is what we decided. So when all the testing is being done, we can ensure that the test expenses and timesheet cases are routed to the right person or persons for approval.

Thanks Margaret.

No problem...

(87, 00)

Location: NOVOCORP HQ / Date: 6th July 2010/ Duration: 23 mins.

Interviewee: Patricia Clarkson, HR Development Manager, NOVOCORP.

<u>Colour Key:</u> Interviewer / Interviewee.

So Patricia, just for the record, you might give me a brief description of your roles and responsibilities?

I'm the HR development manager for NOVOCORP looking at HR change initiatives, but not really on the current SAP implementation as they have a wholly separate change management team. I'm also responsible for equality and diversity, continuous personal development and other HR functions that I get involved in.

Did you come from AGOCORP originally?

No, I came from the outside four years ago.

How would your experiences of technology since you joined?

From the HR perspective it's pretty poor – it's quite simple to get user friendly designed for HR systems. They're relatively inexpensive – well-regarded and respected, well-tested and portable across different functions.

SAP is enormous by comparison...

Would you feel SAP is HR appropriate?

Not that as such; it should be better than what we have – at the moment all we have is EXCEL which we use as a labour intensive tool for reporting across the learning and development function...

For what we need in terms of HR functions, SAP should be better than EXCEL.

And do you use AGRESSO?

Yes, but really only for recording my own time and expenses as such...We're currently rolling out our mid-year performance review processes and as a result of that there's input and output on the basis of individuals' training plans. We send out a survey for people to fill out in terms of their training needs which comes back to us in the form of a survey in EXCEL that we process – the hope that SAP would improve that process.

So generally, you would feel that SAP should offer a HR improvement?

Well (LAUGHS), I would hope so yes but we'll see!

In terms of your involvement in the ongoing SAP implementation?

I haven't had much involvement on the operational side yet; we had to draw up all our processes into the BPIDs...

How was that process?

Relatively straightforward – no real issues so far..

How did you find the project review boards?

Fine...

Did you find the project team interactive and helpful?

Yes

In terms of the change management and project management functions?

That should be fine as it's really a finance-driven project so adequate resources are being brought to it...

In terms of the HR side of things we're hoping to do our live testing after the August Bank Holiday weekend (2010), a bit earlier than the rest of the business and we're hopeful that that will help – I think it's a good idea. This is a big project that's important to get right so people will push on...

What are your views on the project so far?

In terms of other projects on the HR side that I would have worked on in other companies, they've been much more business driven than this one; much more customisation was possible – not the case in terms of this project...

Do you think that this (project) more of a fait accompli?

I don't think so – I know so...

So be it – it's not ideal but we've been pretty much been told "that's it"...

If the project is that much of a "fait accompli", how useful really was the project BPID meetings- was it more of a rubber stamping exercise?

Well, they were – we understood that from day 1 that we were told that...

Did anyone ever try and change it?

I don't know – our IT manager (Lorna Doone) was fairly clear that we would have to adopt our business processes to the system not the other way around as that would be too costly.

There might have been some HR adaptation by AGOCORP when they originally brought in SAP and it was found to be very expensive...

So, a very similar HR system in SAP to AGOCORP?

Yes, with the exception of the learning and development solution module...

That's right – could you elaborate on that?

Well, the LDS should really drive all our performance management and all the learning and development and book and record all our training and development, everything though bookings, trainers, courses, metrics feeding into performance management.

I believe this is totally new, this SAP module in the whole of AGOCORP?

Well, this (LDS) module does exist but SAP has been updated and a lot of this would be totally new unlike the other HR module the PHR module for personnel management hasn't changed....

So, you're trailblazing a little?

Not that much, a bit...

What was the reaction so far to the new module?

Hard for me to say as I haven't been involved so far – I believe there was a few heated meetings as to the changes being brought in but that has been clarified as people have been given more leeway (as managers) in using it...

OK, so the LDS module should enable people to bypass HR in terms of accessing course information and bookings directly and therefore take some of the pressure off you?

Well, I hope so for me and my team...

How involved do you see yourself being in the project going forward?

Well, I'll have to understand the system before everybody else – we'll need substantial training and development – the LDS will be rolled out from January 2011; people will be trained on this anyway as part of the natural SAP training processes.

The performance management and the IDTTP part of the SAP will be rolled out in mid 2011 so training will be looked after that then...

How strong would you feel the business case is for SAP?

There is a business case for it – too many independent non-integrated systems across the business and that has security implications as well...There was no HR system in the business really before SAP which to me is astonishing...

SAP offers a solution to those issues but it's a bit of a sledgehammer to break a nut...

A customised system for HR would have been more useful and a lot less expensive...

Do you think the business case is understood and justified amongst the HR and general staff or it is more just accepted as happening?

A bit of both to be honest...

How would you feel the communication has been on the project?

It's been good – we had IBM in and the business case piece of the project was a lengthy and detailed time back last year (2009) and a lot of the stakeholder involvement at that stage....

That seemed to disappear...

The project has been a long-time coming and Lorna Doone and her team have used and done stakeholder management well.

Do you think the quality and quantity of communication has been sufficient?

Yes, I would feel so...

Would you feel that there is much emotional attachment to the systems being replaced?

Well, there would have been so maybe 12 months or 2 years ago but people are accepting it as a fait accompli so not so much anymore, I would think...

In terms of AGOCORPI's traditional importance, how do people feel about moving closer to the parent?

I think again, that people realise now that it's inevitable...

What do you think will be the biggest challenges facing you in terms of the LDS?

The training roll-out and the cost centre piece have to work perfectly.

Could you elaborate a little on that?

Well, as different managers have differing rights of system access, we have to make sure that you don't have a situation where you have different managers booking the same course or course instructor at the same or different time for different prices...

We need to still have an umbrella control measure – I'm not sure what the new processes for individual training on SAP will bring.

We've developed a lot of systems for that in house – I doubt they'll (the new SAP system) be as good as those...

How the new organisation structure in SAP is key to what we do – in terms of controls over leadership programmes like we're running at the moment, who reports to who and what roles they have.

In the current SAP org structure, middle managers and team leaders will be hard to track and configure as they don't necessarily translate to the (preset) SAP structure, where you have consultant 1, 2 or 3.

In some cases, our middle managers and team leaders here might be the equivalent of multiple consultant levels like you have in SAP at the moment – not ideal so I'm a bit worried about how that's going to work...

In terms of the project team workshops, did that arise?

It did and I have been assured that there will be a workaround....(SMILES). Will see...

Overall, did you have enough time for the BLUEPRINTING phase?

Well, yes but then again from day 1, there was a strong sense that it had been decided that the system will be the way it will be...

You got a strong sense of closure with respect to the BLUEPRINTING phase?

Yes...

How would you sum up the project so far?

Well, for me it will get busy more towards the end of the year...with the system roll-out, that's where I and my team will play a key role.

In terms of key benefits, there should be some value in terms of functions and savings on back-office admin.

In terms of (the LDS) we were supposed to see it in action in another organisation up to now live, but that never happened.

Very much an unknown quantity then...

Ah there is, would like to have seen it live – I've only seen screenshots so far...

How much interaction are you having with the project team and Lorna Doone?

Well, I've had two meetings with Lorna this year...

So, in terms of the BLUEPRINTING phase so far, any final thoughts on the understanding of the business by the project team?

Well, I suppose I had more involvement on the change request board and that worked well, with good interaction and involvement. I think in HR we had something like three or four changes and they were dealt with well.

Thanks Patricia.

No problem...

(23, 00)

Interviewee: Freddie Jameson, Key Account Manager for AGOCORP Networks, NOVOCORP.

<u>Colour Key:</u> Interviewer / Interviewee.

Freddie, you might give me a description of your roles and responsibilities first off?

Well, my role is Key Account Manager or KAM for AGOCORP Networks, a role that I took up in March 2010, which for the SAP project is relevant. I was previously KAM for the wind business.

It was well underway, the SAP project, when I moved over into this new role but it was immediately on my radar.

From the wind business perspective, with respect ostensibly a basic simple change with regards to this system change, a limited number of jobs and interaction with the parent AGOCORP, only about T million Euros or so last year, so not a great impact.

The Networks Key account though is a totally different ball of wax. It is the biggest customer for engineering responsible for half our turnover, projected this year at AB odd million. Very complex and complicated. Last year we sold about 300 man years worth of consulting services to Networks.

At any given time, we have about 600 job numbers live, reflecting about 230-250 ongoing projects. In a typical month we would process 250 invoices, 3000 a year which is a hell of a lot.

As an internal customer for many many years, we have developed our own way of invoicing them for better or worse. That's began to change over the last few months and we've moved away from invoicing on a time and materials basis and more so on a fixed price basis like we were 6-7 hours. Either approach is very administrative heavy for both us and the customer and in fairness there is no incentive to change or work faster on a time and others basis because of the calculations etc involved. It is when you have a fixed costs approach more of a driver as you need to get that money in to minimise the loss or maximise profit on a job...

The level of recording that we're doing now is just asinine – I mean we have 300 people inputting into AGRESSO at any given point so time recording etc is important for us but at the same time, its critical and the level of information and detail required if billing on a time and others basis is just ridiculous and as such even when you think about all the activity codes that we have for a given process and are applicable. We can identify by an activity code on a timesheet what people were doing at a particular time and the length of time involved.

At the moment we're doing through those activity codes and trying to rationalise them because of the ongoing SAP implementation – 18 pages in an EXCEL spreadsheet, about 700 activity codes which is ridiculous.

Even though the client is internal, they'll fight us over buttons in terms of money. If they go through an activity code and say they see a misallocation of an activity code which could amount to 100 Euros out of a total invoice of 250, 000 they can stop the invoice until the issue is resolved.

The AGRESSO system is what it is and there was no money being spent on it.

So, believe it or believe it not, we were in parallel with using AGRESSO, developing and continuing to develop our own ACCESS database which would take inputs from EXCEL, allocate activity codes and generate invoices.

What's the quality of the data coming from ACCESS?

Clean to a point and adequate for generating invoices and getting paid but AGRESSO is a beast and we're getting rid of it.

Can you interrogate AGRESSO?

You can to a degree yes, but it's cumbersome. I mean for an occasional user like me, AGRESSO is a nightmare but for a more professional user it probably offers more in terms of extracting data and report generation etc.

So the issues for us at the moment are the large number of jobs and invoices that are live at any time, the volume of invoices that are being processed and the level of reporting the client has become used to expect.

Given those issues, would you see there being a business case for the move from AGRESSO to SAP from you and your customer's perspective?

I wouldn't feel anything of the sort (EMPHATIC). Taking that the question about my role being finished, from my limited knowledge and experience of these things and given that I wasn't involved in the decision-making process...

To my mind, it should be a case of determining what's wrong with the existing system, fixing it or getting a new and improved system. That's not what I happened in this case...

AGOCORP is a SAP house so we were getting a SAP system and that was that. I would feel we didn't approach this the right way.

I know with upgrades and maintenance etc that AGRESSO is a dead system and we had to get something.

I've been one of the most vocal AGRESSO critics – I can remember a colleague of mine years ago talking about AGRESSO and he had a great phrase; it's not user seductive, never mind user friendliness!

AGRESSO always had a bad rap here – timesheet entry is time-consuming and a pain in the ass –fine, get rid of it.

It has to go, fair enough, but why replace it with SAP?

I mean there are people here who would say on a high level, that SAP is an all-singing, all-dancing system that would make the coffee for you. There are others though who would feel – I mean colleagues in Networks that have been through two major SAP implementations in the last 5-8 years, the second one of which is still ongoing (i.e. XYZ) and they would tell you that SAP is a very admin heavy system.

The XYZ system...

Yes that's the one, and prior to that the ABCD system which depending on who you're talking to in Networks at the time was short for XXXXXX or XXXXXXXXXXXX, I'm stuck" (LAUGHS).

That's about ten years ago, since ABCD was introduced.

You hear trotted out about SAP is that it should cut down on HR and Finance admin and even here we have four people working here on Network account admin on AGRESSO; there would be a view sure that once SAP comes along that they won't be needed...Just push a button...Anyone who works on SAP would think differently but that's a view that is held by those who are making decisions in terms of the business case.

I don't know what the business case for SAP was – I wasn't party to it.

Is the business case out in the open?

Not as far as I'm concerned – I don't recall seeing a business case or seeing a presentation on it.

It's a bit of a push and a pull here. There's a push in terms of AGRESSO becoming obsolete; I mean 80% of our business is with AGOCORP who use SAP as a financial and accounting system. I mean in terms of our timesheets – they get sent down to the second floor here to the HR department where there's four people employed full-time to manually input timesheets and expenses into an SAP system because our salaries and expenses are paid from head office, so those sort of things are no-brainers...

At the end of the day, we're an engineering company and we don't have a cadre or company of people who know enough about SAP and that scares me a little.

On the finance side, we have some who have SAP experience from the main AGOCORP or elsewhere but still not a lot of people.

Taking a high-level view for a second, how long are you with NOVOCORP?

19 years last week not that I'm counting or anything (LAUGHS)...

When you look back on your exposure to IT in the organisation, what's your view?

In general positive, I remember AGRESSO being introduced when we were doing paper-based timesheets. At various stages we've had different experiences, some of them would have been good like the intranet which I think was particularly successful and is really the go-to site for company information that everyone uses. SHAREPOINT is also successful so far from what I've seen. We also had different document management systems, knowledge management systems etc with varying degrees of success depending on who's been in charge at the time. Overall, mixed.

Would you feel that IT has generally supported the business?

(SMILES) In general yes, in terms of electrical design there's been a few really useful developments like overhead lines are all automated and it designs lines etc in comparison with what used to be there before...The design software we bought was a little before it's time.. In terms of buying proprietary systems, we're good at it and the IT supports here are good...

Over time, the independence of IT in NOVOCORP is not as strong as it was, say in terms of the focus now on governance?

Well, that's true and there are times say, if you had a very specific system in mind on the design side for example and you'd have to go centrally to get the OK on it...

Would having to jump through all the governance hoops if you like act as a deterrent at all?

Ah No, but you'd be entering the process with your eyes open and be ready for a battle – I mean this is a tough process and you'd need to have your homework done. There are things like say we're paying 50, 000 Euros on developing this piggybacking ACCESS database - we still got approval for it even though SAP is coming early 2011 and a program server has also been supported where we can store useful programs and applications etc. You generally go to IT or BP (Business Process) here with your homework done and don't treat it like a fait accompli, you generally get a fair hearing and support.

It's probably more difficult say at IT on a corporate AGOCORP level, like where my boss Mick Fox came from.

There's a fair amount of frustration here in dealing with them here. Simple things like admin rights on a laptop – grudgingly you might get it for a short time. You have to get admin rights for everything like say Sim card back-up or Google Earth.

Same when we were a Blackberry house, when I got mine I sent it back and the world has moved on, but you're often stuck with it...

Is the SAP implementation looked on in the same way as a policy that must be adhered to?

Well, I'm not definite that's the case but that would be the perception yes...

Is it fair to say that at times there has been a bit of an imbalance as to IT and the Business with IT at times taking more of a lead?

Well, in fairness to everyone involved here in this implementation, there has been an opportunity at various meetings and workshops to air views and opinions and we're trying to get a system that works for us.

Anyone who's inside the tent would get that feeling and those who don't buy into the process might feel that... (IT leading the business)...

Are they substantial in number?

I don't think so – generally they are people who'd be resistant anyway.

What causes that resistance – is it simply reluctance to change?

Absolutely – they'd moan about AGRESSO today and SAP tomorrow – that's who they are – they're only happy unless they're giving out about something to be honest...

In terms of these add-ons like say your ACCESS database – would you envisage workarounds like that increasing resistance as people might have an attachment to systems they created?

Not in our case anyway. Definitely not is the answer to your question really. For us, it was a necessary evil and we had no great desire to do it. We're painfully aware that for us the ACCESS database is a large risk. We have an ongoing administrative and maintenance cost. One guy designed the system and the day we run the invoices he has to be here. So we have the invoice run dates from now to the end of the year in his calendar. We have him here that date, we'd prefer not to have him here but we might need him and we only get that one day to run the invoices. It's as simple as that.

Most people running (AGRESSO) add-ons would be very aware of the risks and wouldn't be emotionally attached.

At this half-way point in the project in terms of timelines etc, how do you feel it's gone?

Well (REFLECTING), the amount of effort that's gone to initially at least involving people in terms of workshops and meetings and the give and take of different and competing systems requirements that different users have, all that really has to be commended...huge amount of work went into that...

Would you feel that it was effective?

Any workshop is only as good as the people who are there participating – I've been at a few and no doubt there's been a lot of bullsh*t spoken by people who should know better.

One of the initial consultants was proficient in one area but outside of that he didn't seem to know much...

The next guy, I did say to Fergal Flynn who wasn't there, to be cautious as for this guy, the answer to every question was "yes"!

The initial guy was very clear: "SAP can and here's how" or "SAP can't, here's why not"

My biggest concern though was the composition of the project team if that's the formal title, was selected from different departments in NOVOCORP, mainly HR and Finance and the team is relying on external consultants and the IT experience of SAP projects within AGOCORP as they don't have the SAP knowledge themselves.

That's a bit of a blind spot...

Would you feel that the project team would be boosted by more SAP experience?

I would say so yes – I might be wrong – some people might have SAP experiences in a previous life that they're bringing to the team...

Did the lack of SAP experience come through in the workshops and affected their legitimacy to a degree?

It did – I mean initially you'd ask a question and they (the project team) might say "I don't know the answer to that, I'll find out" and you might have the concern as to who they would ask... That might be beside the point but you would have a concern there...

As time evolves, you hear more "Yes" and "No" rather than "I don't know" but whether they really know or not, I don't know.

But given the team composition, they were chosen on the basis of their backgrounds and as such they should know more about their areas...

With respect to the project team, would you feel that the roles people had were clearly defined?

I think so – in parallel with the workshops, there's been ongoing communication that has been mainly Fergal Flynn's responsibility...

He comes to Christopher Lloyd's monthly KAM and engineering manager meetings and fills us in on what's been happening...as a relatively senior person in the organisation, you see and hear about it...He's also been doing the individual team briefings that the engineering managers and KAMs have themselves. He missed me in terms of team briefings before he went away on holidays but that was my fault and he's been at other team briefings answering questions and listening to people's comments...

What kind of feedback has he been getting?

Well, in those kind of public forums, you wouldn't get too much negative comments – that tends to happen over the coffee etc...

Fergal being part of the engineering pool made much of a difference to how he's been perceived as the change manager would you think?

Not really at all – you can argue it different ways but I mean the positive is that he as an engineer should have a good feel for our business; the negative is he doesn't know enough about SAP...You put someone in there who's strong on SAP, then they don't know enough about our business so you lose out that way....

What are your views on the business implementation manager? Have you had many dealings with her yet?

Who is she?

Fiona McGregor from the financial side of the business.

Don't know her – oh actually I do, I met her at a couple of the workshops and exchanged a few e-mails with her alright – *I didn't* even know she was the business implementation manager to be honest...Just to replay, I met her at the *second* consultant's first workshop but I had no understanding that she was a BIM – I would have hoped that there would have been some communication on that, a circular maybe...Interesting....

Speaking of those (Blueprinting) workshops, how many did you attend?

Oh, quite a few, five off the top of my head.

How did you feel they went? Did you feel the objectives were clear and that it was valuable to attend?

Well, it was definitely valuable to attend as we got an opportunity to have our say. We wouldn't be backward about coming forward...

But now, we're in a vacuum as we have no understanding or concept of what or how much was taken on board...

So you don't really feel a sense of closure?

No, absolutely not – this really only hit me last week (late June 2010)...

I was always aware of different design freezes etc and that there would be periods of time, maybe even months, where we would have little or no contact with the SAP project or project team – I was aware of that and I understood that could be the case....

I would have felt that towards the end of the summer (2010) that they would come back to us with something like a system that you could smell and touch and get a sense of whether the system was going to do it (what was required) for us. That would be the concern for us

Now, the self-service stuff like timesheets, the HR stuff, line manager approval of expenses; we're not overly concerned about it and it will be what it is...

The only HR thing that might concern us is how people would enter their time given all the job numbers that would be ongoing at a particular time etc.

I got an e-mail this morning from Leona Miles with a full-list of our activity codes, all 700 of them and that we would have to rationalise them, which will happen and there's a job of work there but we'll get through it....

Other than that e-mail and the ongoing communication from Fergal Flynn, we would not have had much contact with the project for some weeks now...

I would have accepted that and understood that.

But last week, Aoife Burgess was very adamant in a meeting that Finance were in charge of the project, a comment which troubled me – I mean what's the point in having workshops etc if you have a situation where Finance are vetoing everything good, bad or indifferent?

So, I don't know – we haven't had a chance to test that yet....

Would you feel blueprinting as a phase is over?

I do...but in terms of closure, I'm not sure that the project team have enough SAP knowledge and experience to definitely say "this is finished" ..

The concern would be that later on in the process that we or some division as awkward or as complicated as us has a showstopper, something that we can't stand by in the system and that will probably happen...

I would expect much more project involvement later on when we're looking at the system etc...

Coming back to the workshops just for a moment...

Sorry, we got a little sidetracked there – I had a hobby horse that I had to take out of the stable there for a quick ride...

When you attended, you were with other KAMS?

Yes, but I wasn't involved at the very early stages – my predecessor Leo Moriarty, now in charge of Asset Management Services (AMS) was in charge...

I thought that some of the workshops were trying to do much with too many people. In that hall of mirrors (the room in project HQ) environment, you have people who clam up and then you have the squeaky wheel effect (as in the old phrase – "the squeaky wheel gets the most oil"). You had people from finance, the project team and of course the consultants – I'd have a couple of people with me who would be working on the Network accounts.

I did feel that there were too many people – now I realise that they are time constraints and also the financial cost of the consultants – I do realise that but I did feel that a few (of the workshops) were lost to be honest...

Size of the meetings was a negative factor?

Yes...

Were the consultants and others surprised by the variations in terms of operations that the different KAMS discussed?

Well, we're one of the exceptions – I mean take one part of our business, big Z million Euro capital projects; as I understand it, that's meat and drink to SAP. From our perspective, SAP is not comfortable with 3000 invoices a year and supporting the backup information that the internal client expects from us...

What is Networks attitude – were they present at the workshops?

Well, it's a chicken and egg situation– not at this stage – if you go and ask (Networks) an open question, of course they would insist on the status quo being maintained as much as possible if they were involved...

I would much rather engage with the SAP project team as per the Leona Miles e-mail we need to rationalise in terms of the activity codes etc., then go back to Networks...

Anyone in Networks who's lived through it (SAP implementations), would be aware of this and it may be a strange thing to say but work practices will have to change to reflect what's required for the SAP system...

We have to get our head around it – now, the way we work now with all the reporting, activity codes etc, none of that is going to be supported in SAP but here's an approach that could work and we bring it back to the project team and interact with them, sell it to them...

So, it will be August or September (2010) before we begin to engage with Networks on it to be honest...

In terms of Network's difficult SAP implementation history, has it polluted the well a bit in terms of your group's views on SAP?

Very much so – we've had engineers over here working here who was part of XYZ...

The perception here, now this could be based on ignorance, is that it was a f**ckin disaster...

There has been a big impact here on us – we had people going over and back during the XYZ implementation, who were involved, four of whom are champion users and who input data into the system....

It's increased our administrative workload by a lot and we've probably had to recruit two additional people – so we've seen the administrative burden that SAP places....

That makes it pretty hard to accept SAP as a cost reducer then?

Totally...

Is that generally felt throughout the engineering community, that SAP has these additional admin overheads?

Not at all, the feeling abroad within the engineering population would be that SAP is all singing, all-dancing and only those who lived through SAP implementations can distinguish reality from that perception.

So moving forward into the next phases, will you be looking to organise the testing?

Yes, but I suppose in terms of my own staff, I have someone coming back from maternity leave into an account admin role – we have an incumbent doing the job, doing it well and she also has some SAP experience so we want to keep her. People as in Aoife in that meeting we discussed earlier on are questioning my overheads. My view would be that there is enough admin work there at the moment for 1.5 people so the incumbent lady could be kept if half of her time was spent watching our back with respect in SAP.

Now, Aoife warned me against that, saying well that finance would be making those decisions and that wouldn't be my role as a KAM sticking my nose into that...

I was relatively happy, should I say happier up to last week, until that meeting....

But that's the way; we all know accountants rule the roost in every company so...

In terms of selecting people for training, any particular criteria in mind?

Well, the lady we just mentioned with the SAP experience, there isn't enough work for her and the returning lady so she'd be appropriate for that especially as she's been working on our accounts for 8 months and also that she has some SAP experience...

Just the one person?

Yes, half-time involved and hopefully onto the project full-time. We'll all work together on the test cases. The individual KAMs like me at the back-end have to work together with the designers at the front end so that come 1st January (2011) when we push the button, the invoice comes out...

We have a lot of work to do before that happens though...

Thanks Freddie.

No problem...

(51, 00)

Location: NOVOCORP HQ/ Date: 31st August 2010/ Duration: 60 mins.

Interviewee: Conal Bond, Key Account Manager for Wind, NOVOCORP.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

Conal, you might give me a description of your roles and responsibilities first off?

Well, my role is Key Account Manager or KAM for Wind, the group responsible for the construction and management of the wind-farm generation projects. I previously worked in Wind before taking the manager role in the last four months so it's been a busy and challenging time...

What were the circumstances of you taking over?

Just in terms of managerial rotation (note: Freddie Jameson, the previous incumbent had moved to become KAM for AGOCORP Networks)...So they engineered a promotion for me... (LAUGHS)...whether intentionally or not, I ended up in the role...

How long have you been in NOVOCORP?

About 11 years now...September 1999 I joined, moved around for the first 6 months and then when Wind was founded in early 2000, I joined and have stayed ever since.

What's been your general view on IT since you joined?

In terms of systems or technology...?

Well, in a general sense...

Well like all engineering firms, we're becoming more and more software driven. I was just having a conversation on this recently with a colleague with respect to our Quality system... In the old days, it was all lever arch file based and you get twenty files and you filled them in, in a structured way and put them in a shelf. The same file system exists now but in an IT system with a bit of flexibility. New younger graduates take that for granted – we do everything communication wise by e-mail and that's a huge change for us...

When I was a young engineer, communication control was critical and you would draft a letter or a document, a typist would write it, an engineering manager would

redline it, you' revise it etc and when he was happy, it would go out and everything was like that...They'd review everything before it was released. Very strict controls on official paper...

A young guy now will send stuff out in an informal e-mail and he might copy us on it whatever, and we're struggling to control that...We try and work on it...We try and emphasise that once you press send on an e-mail, it has the same significance as a letter but they don't realise that. If you ask them to send a letter, then it's a big deal – do I use the official letterhead paper, do you have to sign etc...Just a different mentality.

In terms of systems, I do know in other parts of the business, you have reliance on IT say in design and there would be a concern that the design skills are atrophying a little bit. Before we would have designed it from first principles so to speak, then maybe gone to the system, now people are designing with the system from the beginning. People have said that all right.

In the old days, there was a lot more rigour on the written documents but now you have engineers coming in who get up running on WORD and POWERPOINT and off they go. For reports with a capital R, as in going to a more senior level, there's more quality procedures around that, part of an ISO system.

They tend to be exclusively around the formal cover sheeted documents who get their document numbers etc and the governance is different.

Overall, these things were very laborious so on balance it's more efficient. In making it easy for people to do things, it's more efficient but sometimes get people doing things they're not qualified to do.

In terms of contracts, we have a font size, format etc but for some departments, one in particular who never did their own typing, they wouldn't take it as seriously.

In terms of the SAP implementation that's ongoing, would you have much AGRESSO experience?

Yes, as a project manager as all the costing and billing would have gone through AGRESSO and then you have your own timesheet and expenses entry etc.

My general impression would be that it was a pretty user unfriendly system with issues as to formatting and reporting and whether data was complete etc. Invariably you'd copy and paste the data into EXCEL and go from there.

You'd often wonder whether you have the complete data – talk to someone in accountants and you'd begin to question whether you had all the relevant data.

I suppose it was quite static – I mean we always just had AGRESSO 2.17 – we never got an AGRESSO 3 or 4.0 which was needed so in that sense, you had an issue as to upgrades.

It had run its course and had to be changed.

Would you see usability as the key driver for its replacement?

Well, from our perspective yes, but from the finance side there's probably a host of reasons why you'd want to replace it, in terms of integration etc.

We have lot of separate systems so getting data from one place to another is problematic if at all possible.

We are self-contained here in terms of NOVOCORP but AGOCORP on a corporate level have different systems and processes and moved to SAP so you'd need to integrate etc...

Would you believe there's a strong business case for moving to SAP?

Well, you do hear all the scare stories etc about SAP but they may be true or a partial experience

You hear it takes a year for things to work properly etc but from our perspective it should make working with AGOCORP corporate a hell of a lot easier.

Is that a generally held view or what you hear on the ground?

Both to be honest. People give out all the time about AGRESSO, in extreme terms to my mind. There are all these stories about SAP and experiences not being great and it's takes a long time to work and that it's a restrictive system. That's just scaremongering in my view....I've yet to see that...there are issues.

Just this morning we had an issue with respect to a training form on the new system because on the form, it said mandatory course – the explanation of what it was wasn't mandatory though...

Someone asked the obvious question – can we not change this to reflect the fact that's it not optional?

And the reaction from Marissa Walsh and Martha June who led the presentation was a lot of gasps, and sighs [INTERVIEWEE ACTING OUT] and saying things like "Oh, we had a chat about that and we can't...That has a certain SAP significance and therefore we couldn't change it...".

Now, most of the time, everything they show looks perfect, but the odd time there's just something that's not quite right and if they're asked about it, it's "No,

not sure SAP can do that [MORE SIGHS AND GROANS]". It come up particularly in the form of a discussion with the finance side when we were discussing job numbers – which we would think that's fairly simple – but they can't do it...

It's clear that there are things we would like to have that SAP wouldn't be able to give us; they'll be 5-10% which wouldn't be there, but 90-95% seems all-right.

SAP is not a blank sheet of paper – it demands a certain inflexibility...

Would you see AGRESSO as having any emotional attachment?

Not amongst the engineers, but if you're an accountant and you might have all these ways of preparing data from AGRESSO which you have to redo and learn a new system from scratch, then I could see how that might lead to resistance, but not here, not at my level anyway...

Would you feel the business case has been made strongly for moving from AGRESSO to SAP?

It wasn't party to the discussions but AGRESSO was marked for replacement and once Corporate went the SAP route then it was a done deal.

In terms of making a business case, I suppose you need to make one too those at the top table – but in terms of the general user population, there was no great effort to obtain buy in.

It's for the good of the company, so...

Should there have been more of an effort to involve the affected users?

I don't really think so, I mean everyone is going to use the new system but in real day to day terms it might affect 50 people and they're the people you target – I mean...

SAP might still be user friendly – but it's unlikely to be more user unfriendly than AGRESSO was.

By integrating a number of systems, a number of things will improve – expenses will be done online and you'll get paid them quicker which is the way to do it...

In terms of those really affected 50 or so people you mentioned, is there an obvious defined strategy to communicate and engage with them?

Yes, it's been rolled out very slowly but to my mind, that's a very difficult thing to do...

90% of the people won't care – senior management are paranoid about the mundane stuff – in terms of PCs being compatible, all the data being loaded and everyone being able to do their timesheets on the 1st of January next.

But take a junior engineer here a year – the new SAP system won't mean a lot to him or impact him or her greatly. They're used to new Software and will get into it very quickly...

For the older lads, they're might be fear as to what might happen.

If it was just an expenses system and it was up and running over a weekend and you were given a "How-to" list, everyone would get into quickly because everyone wants that...

Do the same and call it SAP, then people feel differently.

In my view the majority of staff couldn't care, but senior management do as they have invested a lot in this – in my view, they're projecting a lot of their fears onto the staff.

Would you feel the organisational history of SAP in other parts of AGOCORP has coloured their view and seeped into the organisation?

Probably I or anyone of my staff have had no direct experience of SAP so we don't feel that but others would...

One thing though this project is doing well unlike other SAP systems that I have heard about is that this is a single system...

You hear about previous systems whereby someone might say we're going to bring in a new system that runs all the processes, and someone says "You can't do that, as this part of the organisation does processes 2 and 3 on Monday, another part, 7 9 and 10 on Thursday" and so on.

This part of the business uses job numbers and another doesn't and so on...

You end up with a system that has to account for all these permutations and combinations and then becomes unwieldy. You start to build in all these bespoke software fixes to keep everyone happy.

You then end –up with a bastardised system that doesn't work and you have to try and spend six months trying to make it work.

What the project team here have done is to try and change what they can – what are the variants that we need in terms and what does AGOCORP do etc – now, I only sat on a few of those sessions....

You mean the BLUEPRINTING?

Yes...the few I was at went well, with most people happy – there was a few people who had different requirements...

Could we talk a little about that and the project team? How have you viewed the operation of the project team?

Well, in my role I'm seeing a bit more, probably on a fortnightly basis...they've had the foresight to add a change manager to the project...whatever that means as a role.

We want Fergal Flynn on the team so let's give him a role and then try and define it...

Has he suffered from that?

Well, I don't know from his side, but from the outside yes he has...what does the change manager role mean...

He's more of a liaison really and he's done that well I think – at the meetings and the presentations...you'd see at the presentation that people were not too bothered about the system really – even the HR side (the new HR SAP module being trialled in NOVOCORP), we already do our Individual training plan online anyway so this is a new system that allows us to do the same. Well that's fine....

They need to be informed – when it's brought home is people getting the training over the next few months...

Get to see and play with the system?

Yes, I haven't either – I've got to see screenshots etc...

In terms of the BLUEPRINTING phase, what was your involvement?

Little enough as my promotion occurred towards the end of it. The bit I was involved with at the end was the invoicing and cost billing which was an important issue.

There were people from all sides there – the accountants might get the data from the system but more importantly we're the ones who'll use it so it's important that we had a strong input into the system...

We as management and key account managers run the business, not the accountants – their role is to support us and to carry out the reporting which is important...

But at the end of the day, we're the ones dealing with the customers every day so the idea that a system would be created that would be based on what the accountants think is important. We can't be faced with a fait accompli...

So, I think it was a good idea to bring people in as they did...

Were you with other KAMS?

Yes, we were brought in together as a group – there were both – we had sessions as a group and some short sessions on our own...

Focused on getting deep into not just how the invoicing and costing looks like on the system but how the data is accessed and how the process will work.

One of the mundane issues that caused a problem was around the use of project numbers – there's different project numbers and activity codes being used across the business.

AGRESSO offers more options and flexibility and SAP has certain specific project number formats – this was a particular problem for the Networks Key Account (Refer to Freddie Jameson interview).

They (Freddie Jameson) have a desire to hold onto the project numbers they use as the data it contains is meaningful to them and the client so that exchange was useful.

How do you think it went?

I thought it went well. There was good interaction with the SAP professionals, the technical experts rather than what the HR project team members say...

What was the view amongst your colleagues?

There was a general sense... I suppose there was a feeling in the room that's hard to describe – not quite resentment, something else...

Disquiet?

Kind –of...Once people heard the word SAP, there was a default setting almost that this is going to be a nightmare...Once, it's installed, it's at least six months before the problems get sorted....that kind of stuff.

They seem to forget about the quality of the staff the people on the project team and our systems implementation track record – that all goes by the wayside.

They have experience or involvement in the SAP projects here and that's what dictates their views. We had a SAP system installed in Networks which I had no involvement in...

The XYZ...

Yes, XYZ and you hear them talk about it and they say like just this morning how much of a disaster it was and how they had to work so hard on it etc... all this kind of stuff...

They're resistant to it initially anyway and they're coming to the team and to the meetings trying to identify problems and manage them in advance...

Do you think that more could have been done to manage these fears?

Well, they are aware of them certainly and in all my time here, I've never seen more of a concerted effort to get everyone on board.

That may be as much of the fact that it is a critical implementation as much as the context and you're also dealing with relatively senior people in the organisation who are not going to be comforted by some weasel words from senior managers.

They're in their roles because of the strength of their opinions – you have to assume that's there and give them a chance to vent, and keep them within the tent so to speak...

The meeting this morning was a real HR focus?

Yes, well this is a financials and HR project and not just all about AGRESSO – and all this extra new HR stuff around continuous professional development which was new – so it was good to hear about that from the two Sineads – I mean we know that the expenses system in AGOCORP is better than our own so we're interested in hearing about that aspect also.

We use the same payment system but staff in AGOCORP enters expenses electronically and it goes straight into the payment system.

Here, we get them signed manually and then someone in HR here inputs them manually into the same AGOCORP system and we get paid then a few days later. So the new expenses system will save people a few days and that is an improvement you could hang your hat on.

The stuff I saw this morning is not different the systems we have now but it's an integrated single system rather than the separate systems we have now – not a huge impact and more easily defended. The girls had screenshots and no system to show us as its being tested.

They apologised for that but if the systems will be the same, then people will be relatively happy with it.

In terms of the testing/training phase, how much have you heard about it?

Not a lot yet – we keep on being told there's a big training plan coming but none of the detail is clear but it's expected that everyone will get a chance to look at it.

Not everyone will be using the system in the same way so some will need some more exposure than others – depends what they do – they might have the same training path at a level above where you just are and have everyone together – that would be practically difficult to do.

In terms of the project schedule, is there much clarity and visibility around that?

Well, Fergal Flynn did explain and refer to it during the presentation but again there wasn't a massive amount of interest in it but everyone knows the 1st of January (2011) is the date really.

No-one is clamouring to me looking to see it to be honest...

If you could elaborate on what you think the key things that have happened during the duration of the project?

Well, as an IT project, this is really being viewed as a real project, an operational tool that happens to be IT, rather than being led by IT.

The amount of business experience and expertise full-time seconded onto the project is also a sign that it's being taken seriously in so far as when the 1st of January comes, that we'll have a system more for the business.

I suppose the second thing to say is that the team and project generally have been at pains to communicate.

Whether people want to hear or not!!

The quantity of communication has been enough?

Well, definitely, but for most people especially engineers who don't view it as a sexy topic to be honest.

I shouldn't be saying that as it's a recording but generally people aren't overly interested. Even this morning, when Simon Lyons and I were asked about invoices and did we have any major issues with how invoicing would be done in the new system, we don't really. I mean we here only produce about 20 invoices a month so if there's a change, it won't impact on us too much. Freddie Jameson in Networks produces 200 invoices a month and he has a fine-tuned machine that

predates Freddie and his predecessor. He's going to be impacted seriously and he has to be brought into the fold.

Some for Patricia Clarkson in HR whose team's processes are going to be fundamentally changed.

Your level for interest and engagement is dependent on the level of impact on your own role, so it will vary...

What's your own view now going forward in terms of deadlines etc?

Well, the 1st of January 2011 is the goal and it wouldn't surprise me if there was a delay but that's life, that's project life...Set in stone dates are often hit here and sometimes missed...

I believe that the 1st of January is probably over-emphasised; this is a very complicated project and to get it in on the 3rd of January would be a great success but because you said the 1st, people will be asking why and so on...

I mean for most users, they'll be up and running in six months anyway, the HR, Accounts team and Freddie Jameson's team.

If it takes us three times as long to produce our invoices, then for us that's six hours as opposed to two a month for us so no big deal. If the same applies for Freddie, then that's a big problem and also if the invoice formatting has to be adapted to fit what the client expects.

The client will not be satisfied by Freddie saying SAP won't let him – is his problem to rectify, but overall I expect it to be fine.

Thanks Conal.

No problem...

(60, 00)

Interviewee: Fiona McGregor, *Business Implementation Manager for Financials-HR AGRESSO-SAP project*, NOVOCORP Engineering.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

Fiona, you might give me a description of your roles and responsibilities first off?

I'm in AGOCORP for about 6 and a half years –I was initially working in AGOCORP for about four years where I would have had some exposure to SAP, posting journals in the early days and progressing on to more reporting. When my part of AGOCORP was sold, I then moved across to NOVOCORP engineering where I was originally supposed to take up a finance and governance role. I was there for two months and then this role come up on the project team.

Now, anyway I had been going to the (BLUEPRINTING) workshops anyway in my short-term NOVOCORP role as I had some SAP experience and there was hardly any SAP experience on the project.

Most people were used to AGRESSO which is totally different to SAP in that the controls and rights users have are very different. When I attended the workshops, you could see that some people were looking at the AS-IS and TO-BE and saying for certain processes, which this would be fine, whereas I might say “No – not sure that SAP will allow that, so might need to review this” and so on...

That's probably why I got the BIM role – in the NOVOCORP role, I had started work with project systems with Aoife Burgess, financial controller, so in the AGOCORP system, similar systems are used but not the costing and billing which I looked at...

So, around the middle of June, I was officially appointed to the BIM role.

Was the role always intended to be created or was it just created in response to a need?

No, I think it was always intended – they had someone in mind from somewhere else in AGOCORP. However, this person's availability was hard to pin down so it dragged on I believe that the initial target was to appoint someone in April so it came to a point then in June when they had to appoint someone.

When I started, I was given 121 tasks, 60 from Data migration, 60 from the finance, functional side – not all for me, some passed back to the business to make a call.

Some for HR forms or other processes, some of them might not even impact the project, some riskier in terms of impact on how the process will work in SAP.

A lot of them are HR tasks, and some of them really only begin on the 1st January next as the performance management side which is an ongoing process, and some of those are working on...

The finance side I'm comfortable with and I can predict what the five financial controllers might ask in meetings – less so in the HR side and I do have to work to get a handle on that.

In an ideal world, would the BIM role to split into two: a HR BIM and a Finance BIM?

Yes, I would think so, even when you look at the differences...

There is a single HR group with so there is group that work closely together and make decisions efficiently.

There are five different financial controllers and teams because in NOVOCORP we have five businesses but Tommy Walsh keeps them in check...

On this project, so far where you'd usually have resistance to things, we haven't here so much because we have SAP in AGOCORP so we're working to edit that where we can.

I meet the financial controllers and the HRs once every two weeks. But I'd more likely to extract a decision from the financial controllers that I would on the HR side.

Now, in fairness Martha Jane and Marissa Walsh have been great in dealing with a lot of the major HR issues already but my worry would be that as a finance person, I'd be relying on others to manage the HR side.

Could we talk a little about reporting structures – who do you report to on the project?

Well, I report to Tommy Walsh, not anyone on the project...

How do you see yourself in terms of the project team?

I would see myself more of an add-on – I'm not sure that the team would see me as part of the team either.

I report to Tommy – If God forbid, the project didn't work out, then at least I'm there to close off and protect the business.

The functional team are no longer business people, they're part of the project team – I bring the business requirements to the project and at the moment, they probably wish I'd stop talking!

Most of the issues that I bring to the project team are issues that need to be raised – at the moment we have decisions being made on the project by the team but without the financial controllers, which I would be pushing for.

At the moment on the project team, there's a reluctance to talk to the issues that are important.

Decisions on reporting structures or processes within the system?

The decision with data migration – the project team said they'd be no transfer of project systems data - my concern was there they'd probably be a couple of hundred SAP financial tasks or jobs that will be outstanding and will have to be done and carried over. It's different to project costing and billing where you have initial parameters around length of time, cost etc.

The call as to whether these jobs are to be done, as in the data will have to be migrated is to be made by the financial controllers in my eyes, not the project team...

There was a bit of toeing and froeing between the financial controllers (FCs) and the project team on this but generally there is reluctance on behalf of the project team to engage with the business, why – I don't know...

Maybe there's a fear that the business will demand some new or different functionality from them – that can't happen – all the business have been told that design is over...no new functionality can happen.

The business accept it – the engineering managers might have a different attitude – the project is sitting on or making decisions and the FCs aren't being told. There are big issues say around foreign exchange...

NOVOCORP has a lot more foreign currency transactions than AGOCORP due to its business model and all the internal trading so if we get this wrong, it will be huge. People in the business are very concerned but the project team say there's no issue.

If the design has taken care of an issue, they need to communicate that back to the business...

This is not a typical IS implementation – most of the time, you'd have a lot more input as users in the design – if you wanted purchase orders done in a certain way, then it could be done and you'd see it being designed tested etc.

In this case, financial controllers in NOVOCORP are getting the AGOCORP system but they don't know what they're really getting – is it the same, is it different...

Is that an issue around communication – has it been more focused on the engineers than the financial staff?

Well, I'm not sure that the engineering staff would agree that they had a lot of communication – they certainly had a lot in the design/BLEPRINTING phases but it ended pretty much after that.

We have a change manager, Fergal Flynn and there's me as BIM and in my view we're not the people to communicate design issues except at a high level. You might have someone in finance looking at foreign exchange and asking whether or not their sterling code for a client in AGRESSO is going to be the same in SAP...(LAUGHS) Fergal wouldn't know that and I'd struggle too and I'm the finance person!

But generally, the business realise that there is closure on the design?

The business knows the design is over but they've yet to see the design.

There was no workshop for the FX issue despite many requests – it's being addressed in a meeting.

We had another issue around a code in AGRESSO which had an exact equivalent to SAP there was six weeks where the team were deciding to keep the AGRESSO code or switch totally to SAP – eventually the business made the call once they were aware of it very quickly – there was no need to spend 6 weeks thinking about it...

The project should have been more direct with the business with respect to the foreign exchange issue – if they had asked the business what the issue was and taken the perspective of using the BPIDS as the basis for discussion that would be far better.

If someone in the business wants to talk to me about a query, I'll direct to the BPIDS prior to the meeting...

The BPIDS are good in terms of the general flow of the process, but it's the exceptions that people are generally interested in...

[In terms of the BLEPRINTING workshops]

Not enough people on the finance went and those that were there knew nothing about SAP so the importance of knowing SAP on the project is a massive advantage.

I know relatively little SAP but I'm still using it. That's a big learning outcome for me on this project – need more people with SAP experience.

Would you have any concerns with respect to say people who are not that SAP aware involved in crafting BPIDS and trying to visualise and decide how processes in SAP will work?

Yes...there is training now...

BLUEPRINTING might have been flawed as a result?

I guess it's easy now to see that and that's accepted on the project. Ideally, the training should have come first...

But overall how did you feel the workshops went?

I thought they were well-managed and things were covered well. At times there was a lot of discussion around BPIDS that were going to be just as they are in AGOCORP SAP and as such no changes were going to be necessary, taking the example of purchase orders...

OK, we were adding requisitions but we'd managed that...

Some people have said to me that there wasn't enough time [in BLUEPRINTING].

I don't think it was a question of not having enough time – I think it was more that there wasn't more time for the more important BPIDs...

More a question of prioritising – as in the more changes and involved a BPID, the earlier it should have been discussed in the workshops?

Yes, and that's an example where somebody with a SAP background would have been useful.

Like say, project systems came late – I know the consultant developer left but that's not the reason...

We should have done the interfaces first – they're getting there but they're still not there completely...the final sign off is not done and that impacts on system test.

It looks like the BPIDS were divided up into sections – somebody did the PO and AP part and then someone else did the reporting and someone else the ARs and the GLs (General Ledgers). There are codes in AGRESSO for where sales and costs are all entered into the general ledger. These need to be mapped to different codes in SAP but users need to be able to access and use the right codes and they can't go

back to AGRESSO as it will be switched off. So, there's a good bit of work in that to be honest, a lot of data migration...

John Jakesmith (note: interviewed at a later date) and I had to take it on, again that's not really my role – I should be doing my impact assessment and cutover plans but again, I'm back having to focus on functional issues rather than on what my BIM role should be.

We're being driven to the tight deadline of January next so it has to be done, now the data migration team – they're not finance people, they're technical and they're asking me "What's GL stand for?" so they need the finance input in that process... They're bringing data over together in journals, that was the idea but you can see all these different things together like AP, write-offs etc.

But journals taken over like that need to be broken down by finance people – otherwise you'll be reverting back to AGRESSO to see what codes are what.

Some people have said to me that there is a lack of finance knowledge in the project...

We've functional leads and their teams that are all finance – but they don't know SAP!

I go the team meetings and there's only me and a functional lead who know anything about SAP and she's making suggestions – but it's all about meeting deadlines and that's the priority...

It can be necessary to delay things but getting a deadline moved is very difficult even if it's necessary and there is no impact or resource assessment done.

Speaking just of your role as the BIM, some people have said that there is a bit of change management in your role in terms of interfacing with the business and also managing Tommy etc...

A bit yeah... [SMILES]

How does that work with the designated change manager?

Well, Fergal and I get on well so I said to him, Fergal – I won't be doing any communication as I spent my first few months managing project issues, rather than being the BIM per se...

So Fergal is doing the communication part of the change management role...That's fine – I didn't mind doing the issues initially but now I'm growing in the BIM role...

So, we meet and tease things out and he now comes to the financial controller and HR manager meetings so there's no fear that I might forget to tell him something...

So, in essence he's nearly now a change and communication manager?

Yes, well he's doing all the communication – I think maybe his title might have been changed...I'm not sure...he's doing all the communicating

He's arranging the lunch and learns and briefings and there's a lot more of it coming...[SUB VOICE] cause I'm not doing the communicating

Did you ever feel coming onto the project that you might be usurping him in any way – some people looking in from the outside might say that you have a change manager on the project already, and now a new BIM role...

Well, we did clarify in a meeting with Lorna Doone – I said to Fergal "I'll give you the process and you communicate it all..."

Anything Fergal can't communicate I help him with – I stay away from the engineers to be honest as I go to enough meetings...

How do you feel the roles work?

Well, I feel to be honest...

In some respects was the fact that his role wasn't that clear allow you both to dovetail better?

Yeah – in some ways, it probably works well because of our personalities – we both want to just get it in, do it well and do it right...

Fergal doesn't care that I go and communicate – he's not saying 'Oh, I'm the change manager and I do all the communication' and vice-versa.

I even found now in the team meetings that I support Fergal a lot and he doesn't get support from anyone else. Because I know SAP, I can say this goes back to the FCs – he has to report to Thomas and sometimes his comments don't get taken on board. He doesn't have the flexibility I have outside the team.

Would it have been better if his role had more flexibility?

I think so...at times, he is held back a bit. He's not very sensitive – he gets on with it – I have a huge benefit in that I report to Tommy and I can say that...If I say the FCs need to look at something, I can say it and get listened to...

We talk about communication – most communication comes from the outside in, he's being asked questions like 'When will we see this, when will we get this?' – He's coming back from the business and he's not getting answers whereas I because I have the backing of Tommy can do things, like the FX functionality.

That kept on coming back from the business as an issue – I was trying to close it off and the project kept on telling me ‘That’s fine...’ so I raised it as an issue as I had the backing of Tommy. So, I was able to get it sorted with Thomas.

So, you and Fergal work well together?

We dovetail well – there is no problem with us here...Fergal feels now he has a bit of a support – no longer on his own and people might say he’s not communicating...He’s asking the project the questions but he’s not getting the answers to communicate...A lot of it does come back to the project being date focused – there is a focus on risks – but if you manage risks on the project you might be passing them onto the business so it’s still a risk come the 1st of January.

That approach is a problem, I would feel.

Coming back to the BLUEPRINTING phase, how did you find the process – you were a user initially and your role changed during the phase?

I think it worked well – some people asked questions and some people said nothing...

Was that a lack of preparation or a lack of understanding?

Well, people were asked to read the BPIDs beforehand, but some of them are twenty pages long and they are IT documents...You had a week to read them but not everyone is going to read them all.

Looking at them myself, I can see maybe the business impact section as being the most important. There might be twenty BPIDs in a workshop, twenty pages each...

Some people turned up and didn’t read it – others had read it but you probably had to have studied them to be honest...

You had people say, like a friend of mine who is the Accounts Payable Team Lead on the project – she could look through her BPID and find problems and issues easily enough....

She’s very aware and knew the process and could flag the processes but for other people Accounts Payable is where accounts get paid and they might not care as to how this things work...

If you don’t know the AS-IS, how can you comment on the TO-BE....

Certainly in the earlier workshops, there was a feeling that the (project) team wanted to sign off on BPIDS quickly, even if people had issues or questions about it...

Closing off on issues – anything that was raised by the business should have been done like... here are the four questions say the business might raise for a BPID – follow up and come back to the business rather than just add notes on the BPID, and then progress to sign-off...

The business then, were coming back asking questions about how things will be done in SAP and how different will that be with respect to AGRASSO, stuff like that...

The business process and the BPID are not identical so you have sign-off but people unclear as to the process...

Well, that seems to be fall on the BIM –if it's not configuration or testing, it's a BIM task and I can't go around doing all the business processes.

Rather than saying – 'There is a job of work here - the business will have to take the BPIDs and the VISIO maps and go back to the business and design the business processes in time for training'...

That was never said – there were a lot of things that were never said.., and then they appear and you have two weeks to do a process which may really take you months to do all your processes...

There seems to be this approach that if you don't mention it, if you don't meet the business, then they can't ask the questions....

Will these issues come up in (Business Exception) testing?

They will but it will be too late to change things on the project, well, the Business will have to fix the problem there and then...

We've been working on things like that over the last few weeks, so I'd say I've become quite unpopular but that's OK, I don't mind as I have to raise these issues...

Just take the company codes (AGRASSO to SAP General Ledger codes), in ten minutes it was done, and we could have a quick meeting and sort it out rather than leave it hanging there all the time...

At the end of the day, this project when it goes live, 80% of the functionality is already been used in AGOCORP.

If the whole system failed, you could copy over the old AGOCORP system and be OK – OK, you wouldn't have the fancy billing etc...

Like when AGOCORP contracts were sold, we just set up a new (SAP) code for the purchasing company and they were tested and up and running in a week or even less

Here, the approach in the planning phase should have been to explain the POs, APs, standard functionality etc and then say this is how they're going to work for you in the new SAP, get all that transferred across and then focus on things like project systems, all the complicated billing which is late now and will involve detailed and complex testing...so many variations..

I don't a lot about testing – but that will have to be very thorough...

The fallback will be the standard system but most of the development is reporting, the big exception is the project billing...that's the real new bit...

If that doesn't work, then you have wasted six months...That's why we have a dedicated person working on that now with the consultant...

In terms of the system testing, what are your views on that?

I wouldn't have much to do with that – I might hear things say at team meetings that we've tested 200 (test cases)....

Have the business been asking how the (system) testing is going?

They presume we're testing away. Aoife Burgess did ask for the integration testing scripts...She's worked on an implementation before and she wants to see how it's going. Thomas will facilitate that...

You'll be more involved in the Business Readiness Testing (BRT)?

Yes, but no one knows much about that yet...We were at an integration testing meeting last week and BRT was mentioned and people kind-of looked at me...

I've never put together a BRT plan, never worked on a project before – I presume the BRT plan will come from the project...

It's the same story as before – if we could just work together, then...

Fergal and I will do what needs to be done – I sat in on his training meeting initially and we planned say training needs and that worked well. But the project doesn't do that any more...

If I hear something about training that I'd need to follow up, I would...

In terms of going to Tommy?

No, I wouldn't go to Tommy, unless it was something very serious like they're not testing Project Systems say...But I would talk to Lorna a bit all-right – I have to chat with Lorna when she comes back from holidays...

She's been great and effective but she's taking more of a hands-off approach now which is fine, it's working well...

What's so effective about her?

She drives things and is clear about what can't be done and what can be done...She's had a role in the planning side and has been involved a bit more before Rory Harrington came in ([Note: interviewed at a later date](#)).

Who's Rory Harrington?

He's doing the planning part of the PM role from Thomas. He's an external consultant but he's very familiar with AGOCORP as he's worked on many projects here....

He's really put a detailed plan together, outlining in real detail and you can drill down as well into it what it is we are doing and what we need to get done by a certain date...

We're still behind but I can see my tasks and they use RAG (Red, Amber, and Green reporting) to track your tasks and you can change your forecast dates and then I got queries as to what happened as the Project Board were promised something was done...

You have to smooth things for the project board but if you don't have it done, you don't have it done...

Are the project board playing a key role in this project?

They are very important in AGOCORP and also in the case of this project; we have a very strong project board with good people on it...

They're all getting involved rather than just sit down people...They'll ask relevant questions and they went through a phase when they were asking questions and not getting answers or getting answers that weren't ideal. There was a few concerns regarding the planning and some tensions in the business about a month ago but that seems to have been addressed...

Tommy was asking me – will this go through and I was telling him – yes it will, it might not be perfect but it will go through and it will be fine...

There's 15 years now since SAP first came into AGOCORP – there was a lot of effort involved in getting NOVOCORP prepared and ready for this – it's very important that it goes in...

I have a bit of concern about my role – I'm happy to do data migration or impact assessment so I need to talk to Lorna about that.

I'm now outlining the SAP roles for administration rights and access. Roles are a big thing in terms of systems security – and the project is going to validate what I design. Not really a BIM role...

The technical people said to me in a meeting that I need to talk to the FCs and determine what the different SAP roles are...

How can they know? They don't know SAP. There is a gap at the minute as the FCs doesn't know how the system will work as usually they're involved in the design from day 1.

They can't say who'll be doing what yet – the technical people can't understand that...

Would you think a system demo for the FCs might help clarify things and help a bit?

I think a system demo would be great but there's great reluctance to do that. HR have done it and worked a treat...

They couldn't show learning solutions which is only live – but they showed a few standard screens and it worked well.

The finance parts of the business have no idea what the system looks like and they often ask about the look of the system...

What is the issue there if HR can do it?

(MUSING) Don't know – a bit of a communication problem. There's a view that they'll see the system in BRT or training and that will give them a sense of it...They'll only be asking if we showed them

Some people have said that there is a bit of a gap in terms of BLUEPRINTING being finished and now, a bit of an information vacuum...

Yes, there was a little bit of well, BLUEPRINTING is over now, so see you...

I remember that I was here three weeks back in June when Lorna gave me a list of jobs when Fergal was heading on holidays. One of them was to communicate project systems, back in June, start of July...

The communication now is scheduled for the 7th of September...we talked about who would present it etc...

Like what the two girls did for HR...

Exactly – now there's one Finance person (Note: Leona Miles who's interviewed at a later point) working with the design consultant and she has two people from the business helping with the testing...

They can't see the value of letting her free for two days, get the two people helping here to do more of the testing in that time...

At least, people might get a sense of comfort...

If Fergal or I do that presentation, we could get asked something and we wouldn't have a clue. Leona though if asked, could say that an issue is in testing etc...

The engineering managers will want that detail – how will my AGRESSO process work...

We had a meeting to prepare for that last week. Fergal put together an agenda, Leona would have a few days to prepare, three days max and Fergal came back with the three days agenda and people seemed to think Fergal came up with it himself on his own even though we'd talked about it many times...

One of the functional leads even said that we could even show them slides...We're gone past the point of slides we might not need to show the system from start to finish but at least we could show them what a job or a bill looks like etc...

They can see what might be on the screen...They're asking why can't we see it? They understand it's not done but May is a long time ago and they say they've seen nothing...

Some of them have commented on the lack of a formal sign-off...

Having been at those workshops, some of them wanted super SAP and we had (the then consultant) saying that SAP was a Ferrari – we just want the Fiesta, we haven't time for the Ferrari!

Add-ons can be OK but let's be sure that the basic things work. I was there with Rena (also interviewed later) and we had to at times explain to two of the engineering managers that were there, that it was a financial system...

We'll try and bring in some project information when we can but at the end of the day it's a financial project and we can't be configuring for everything...just try to manage their expectations....

Since that day (May) the engineers have heard nothing – they don't know what it will look like, whether it will run their job or not, so at the moment the engineers are not happy....

Thanks Fiona.

No problem...

(64, 00)

Location: NOVOCORP HQ / **Date:** 31st August 2010/ **Duration:** 46 mins.

Interviewee: Mario Rubin, Engineering Manager, NOVOCORP.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

So Mario, you might fill me in on your career and organisational roles?

Well, I joined AGOCORP in 1979, so I'm a lifer, 31 years now! I'm a civil and structural engineer and have worked mostly in generation. I've worked internationally in Vietnam, Russia and Indonesia but in the last ten years, I moved back into different roles. I moved into Key Account Management and was KAM for all internal (AGOCORP) and external commercial customers. Then, I took over another department, then I took over all the KAMS by being a commercial manager.

Then we were re-organised and I was asked to become engineering manager of this section so no more Key account management! I've never worked anywhere longer than three years so that's been great...

What's been your view of technology in this time?

Well, mixed...We'd often be working with other external third parties and we'd almost be envious of the technology – back in 1992, we were working with GE guys who could type in and send on a daily report. We'd be doing manual stuff and communication wasn't sophisticated – faxes were still being used a lot for example.

Now, we're a utilities based electrical consultancy services company and we always refer back to that (from the perspective of technology). We have therefore a utility IT system so a lot of extra security is required. I'm not an IT expert but all our IT systems are interconnected so everything has to be secure and my understanding is that if someone accessed our IT systems, they could access our facility IT systems also – that's my understanding...

So there's inflexibility here that wouldn't apply to other companies in terms of IT policy. Safety and security is justifiably important.

I was charged once upon a time when I was commercial manager to bring in a CRM system...

The same system Christy Ryan might have referred to?

Probably yes as he was involved in it – so we went away and looked at these systems were done and the usual things they would involve like e-mails etc...

We got agreement that what we do is the same as other companies in CRM but in a more disjointed way. We had the situation of us going into a room to present a pitch for a project in the middle east and being on after someone else for the company and not knowing so...!

We needed some kind of system to get clarity and we got an external consultant to come in and advise us on this...but the (implementation) was traumatic as every time the (CRM) system went to access data from another location or move it to another location, there would be enormous security problems to get over. It never fully integrated with OUTLOOK either, which was frustrating with respect to arranging meetings and moving documents etc.

It was never really a success as it never fully integrated and as such I persevered with it because I believed in it but a lot of people, once it didn't work, they didn't go back to it anymore...unless under some duress (LAUGHS)...

When I first had to use AGRESSO and had to access as KAM, the timesheets and expenses and other stuff that I can't forget, I'd get into it and if I couldn't find data or do a function, I'd ask someone and find out – others used it and would complain if it was not like Microsoft and say "It's a useless system". I found it had all the data and gave me everything I needed and had more potential, though I do understand there are question marks over the long-term stability of AGRESSO and we have to move over to SAP, I understand that....

Was there a steep learning curve with it (AGRESSO)?

Well, there was no training with it and I'd extract the data from the system and manipulate it in a spreadsheet and sometimes maybe a month later, I'd find a way of accessing the data directly or differently.

Most people only needed it for timesheets and expenses, that was the extent of their interaction with it...Others like me needed to get data out of it and we were able to...

Was it time-consuming?

For me, no. But the guys who didn't bother to go in and look up the data themselves, I said 'Listen, I'll set up a report for generation, we'll get someone in AGRESSO to run it and it will be presented in a non-AGRESSO, nice spreadsheet with a Pivot Table. The data was in a form that they were used to seeing.

So, Joe Bloggs worked X hours today and had Y expenses. The budget has X left and the project has Y days to go (LAUGHS)...Perfect level of detail for them.

The time and effort that you put in – would that be typical?

No, though there were a few others who would have (done the same).

Would there be any emotional attachment to something people had built themselves to work with AGRESSO?

No, indeed not in my case anyway – we'd welcome a simpler and easier solution. Let's go (with SAP)...

Is there a strong business case for the SAP system?

Well, we could have one system – I'm not happy with some of the system that's coming at us...

What's coming at us is a utility system and we're a consultancy business so we're being constrained by the prerequisites of parent...

It has to be tailored where possible and decisions are being taken to say, 'we'll we're not going to tailor to that bit but we are to this bit...'"

I think there might be a few problems with it – I have two in particular...

So, is there a business case for SAP abroad?

Well, AGRESSO is not always accurate and as a manager looking at reports, some of the timesheet and expense data might not always be there as I believe someone in finance has to run a report so that the software reflects the data. Data might be inputted and not processed – so you might have a report which I used to the say to the managers is 95% accurate...

My understanding with respect to SAP is that once it's inputted, it can be seen straight away...

If you're trying to explain a customer why the data is left out and not up to date there and then...so (that could be difficult)...

Also, I believe that the platform that AGRESSO is built on is not stable, and if it went down, you could lose all the data...I don't understand it but I'm led to believe that's the case...

Also, we need something that's more user friendly and more interactive and instead of people like me having to put in workarounds – you should be able to go into the data directly...

To be honest, I'm not sure people are that bothered by it – if you tell them SAP is here, and then they'll go 'right, off we go'...

Is there any issues around the fact that the systems is coming from the parent, somewhat imposed?

I wouldn't feel that no (EMPHATIC), what there would have been an issue with was in the past things like remote working with the CITRIX system where you'd have packages that wouldn't work properly and barriers to systems....You'd be working remotely, say e-mail in Paris – and the guy beside you (from a partner company) would get in, in an instant and you'd be fiddling with numbers to input etc...

These are the things an electrical utility business would throw at you as the firewalls etc are such secure...my worry would be that there'd be a few things in SAP like that...

How has the communication been around the project?

Oh, that's all been excellent and we've had the (BLUEPRINTING) workshops to interact with them (the project).

This particular item which I'll come to in a meeting was just brushed aside probably due to cost...

I suppose the organisation, particularly now is going through a lot of change and as such there's a lot of initiatives going on....

Does the (project) communication get lost in the noise sometimes?

It would but there's a lot of work going on in the project and if it ends up making the system easier to use, then it will all be worth it...

To be honest, the younger staff will adapt quickly – to be fair, most people are up to speed on the new system...the few that aren't are probably not worth worrying about to be honest...

Would you have much insights into or involvement with the project team?

Well, I would have known that they brought in a (SAP) specialist to advise which was wise...They pulled in NOVOCORPHR and Finance staff who know what we face as a business day to day, and could reflect that in the system...

They also brought in a communications and change manager...

How do you feel that's gone?

It's gone well as I nominated him from our area in Facilities...

He's a very capable fellow but he has an uphill job in order to get the communication across as people are so busy but so far it's gone well...

There isn't anyone saying 'Oh my God, SAP is coming'...which would say so far things have been communicated. On the First of January next, we might be facing into a monster of a system which is totally problematic...

Communication has been done the right way certainly...

There have been a few SAP projects in recent times, the very big implementation in the parent some years ago and more recently the XYZ implementation in AGOCORP Networks...

Yes – I wouldn't link those two big projects but I am aware of the XYZ implementation and that people have verbally commented on it being an unusable system etc but I wouldn't link XYZ to our SAP project...

There are users of XYZ who will also be users of SAP – Would there be a fear that as XYZ had some issues and was a SAP project, that there might be some fallout for this (AGRESSO to SAP) implementation?

I wouldn't see that – actually you're the first person to link XYZ and this (project) as SAP projects – XYZ was a massive project and it got delayed a lot and I sat on some of the (project) boards substituting for certain people who weren't available. I know they have problems with XYZ – but I wouldn't link it to ours.

Could you talk in more detail about the BLUEPRINTING phase?

Well, it was fine, it's all about timing I felt it was well-attended. You had a lot of senior people, 20 people who you'd charge out at 1200 Euros a day giving a half-day or a full day to go over and discuss things.

I felt there was good discussion – good challenge and the Indian SAP expert (Sanjay) was capable, knew his terminology, accountancy and finance and was able to relate SAP to the processes we would have.

We also had the girls from HR and Finance who had their own task lists interjecting and inputting into the discussion, so that all went well.

I suppose its early days though – you tried to influence it (the SAP system design)...

Was there enough time for it (BLUEPRINTING)?

Well, as much as we could give as the time constraints were more on our side; We'll know more when the SAP system comes in (as to) how much of our input was taken on board.

There was a feeling of give and take and that it wasn't a political exercise?

Well, definitely not a political exercise...there was a clear sense that we could input but at certain stages, decisions (on the SAP design) would have to be taken as to whether we could include that or don't...

We could highlight certain issues but at the end of the day, someone else is going to decide "We're going to do it this way and not that way"...

Did you feel that your issues were taken on board or were they deflected?

Well – I have two key issues that I've had all along and basically they come down to the following:

Firstly, we (AGOCORPI) are a matrix organisation, and so all our Facilities engineers are here, the Civil and Structural engineers over there etc...If we have a project, then we draw on all this disparate (engineering) backgrounds into one team with a project manager.

In a given week, you could be working on one project or a hundred as a team member. So, when you go to enter your timesheets in, you put them in on the (AGRESSO) system, your line manager, who is your direct report, who's responsible for your training and development etc, will not be your project manager...

But the new SAP system that's coming in, you enter your timesheets and expenses and it goes to your line manager, not your project manager. Your line manager might not know what you're working on...

In the old AGRESSO system, you entered your timesheets and there was no sign-off on them – they were checked when it came around to billing the client...

We're now going to move to a system that has sign-off but that's meaningless at the moment...

If you met a customer and you provide them with a billing invoice, you mightn't know much about the actual work and if a customer says to you 'What's John been doing for that ten hours?' you won't be able to answer and you'd have to go back and check the system again to clarify....

We're creating a disconnect between the project manager and his/her ability to manage costs etc, the team's time and the client...

Some of our customers' monthly invoices might total several hundreds of thousands of Euros and we're asking line manager to approve those costs who know nothing about the project....

Was the reaction to that in the BLUEPRINTING module?

The reaction was that it can be done, within the SAP project module, we can divide up the project roles, so that the training and development can go to the line manager and the timesheets and expenses to the project manager, as John, Joe or Phil could be working for six different project managers. When John entered the job number he's working on, on his timesheet, then the system would route it to the appropriate project manager...Then (after that explanation) it all went quiet (in the meeting)...

There was no commitment then or no communication and then some time later we were told that the approval would have to go through the line manager as that was the system...

I can see that creating problems for us as you might have a line manager approving something and then a project manager saying "Hold on, I can't have an expense like that attached to my job Number" (LAUGHS)...

When you were there did the finance representatives comment on it?

No, not really but everyone is aware of it...

So, at the moment, I'm in the process of putting together a budget for Facilities for next year (2011) and I'm adding two additional hours a week per project to ensure that these timesheets and expenses are checked on paper first and then put into AGRESSO...

Our Consultancy Services do something similar at the moment and we'll be replicating that – now I hoping this issue will continue to bubble up now and into the future...I'm trying to get airtime on it (LAUGHS)...

This (2 hours extra time) is going to be very expensive – roughly about 400, 000 Euros a year in an area where costs thanks to new systems and for other reasons are supposing to be going this way (GESTURES THUMBS DOWN)...

But if the business wants and needs timesheets and expenses to be entered accurately, then this is what needs to happen...

But you're past design stage now...

Oh, I know....

It will probably come up in the testing phase though again...

It probably will but I suppose we're trying to show the problems we feel will occur – I'll be at my desk ringing up different project manager wondering if these timesheets and expenses are OK...The approval process has to mean something or

otherwise both timesheet and expense approval (in the new SAP system) will just be a rubber stamping exercise....

This is a common problem across Engineering?

Well the new system might suit other areas which is more self-contained but in three or four other engineering areas like Environmental etc it would be a big problem...

Maybe the decision is that we accept that it's going to cause a problem in these area and we just accept that...I don't know.

In BLUEPRINTING, did the other managers express this view?

Oh, they did yes...

Would you feel that BLUEPRINTING was a little unsatisfactory in that you have no sense that there was an endpoint?

Well, there is in (the sense) though as a decision has to be made by someone – they've told me that line managers will be doing the approving – so that's going to make me less efficient unless I just go with the rubber stamping and leave it...

It would me coming to you – you look after my training and development – I rent you out to all these different people and I come back from Bahrain and they're 400 or 500 or 4000 or 5000 Euros and you tell me they're OK – then it comes back to me after being picked up if there's an issue in the invoicing in the billing process later on...these are the two issues that I'm focused on...

The two issues are timesheets and?

The same issue all the time – timesheets and expenses.

Some line managers were very diligent and tracking the 95% of the expenses and timesheets like we discussed earlier on, so if a project manager came back and queried an expense etc we'd be able to say "This is what you've been getting, all along etc, you've been approving these up to now" and so on and that takes care of the issue...Now, the project managers will be able to say, "Oh, I never saw that"...

What you'll be getting now is an expense or a timesheet popping up on some line manager's screen and you'll be ringing up the project managers verifying everything...the project manager mightn't even know the line manager and the line manager is approving everything...

That's something that probably would have been easier to do in AGRESSO almost?

We could do the same thing in SAP like we used to in AGRESSO, stick with the same uncertainty that basically timesheets weren't approved – which is not an improvement by any means – this (non-approval) kind of makes a mockery of the whole process – why not just leave them unapproved...

Was this new (real-time) approval process identified in the BPIDs as a big improvement?

Oh, Yes (EMPHATIC)...As a matter of governance, the need to be able to stand over a timesheet with a client and say those timesheets were approved...

You walk into any consultancy and they can do that – the project manager will say that John worked on those three days as entered this week, we want to get to that...that level of traceability...

If there's an audit done, the line manager (could be) asked questions about a particular claim and know nothing about it?? That doesn't sound right...

This is what concerns me - the pressure may come in as to how to change our work to reflect the new system rather than the system helping us to reflect our work...

In terms of your meeting, how did it come up?

It was in the Learning and Development with the two HR girls this morning and I brought it up afterwards (LAUGHS)...

I think it's important that if we want this system to have credibility, we need to look at these issues as the staff will see through this straight away...

Has this been discussed at project board level?

I honestly don't know –it has been discussed at senior management meetings all-right.

It's crazy; you have a line manager in Hanoi, 7 hours out of sync validating expenses and timesheets for someone working down in Ballydehob, and the line manager is approving...

I can't have my most senior mechanical engineer looking after the training and development of a new graduate or mid-level engineer because the system requires sign-off on timesheets and expenses to be done by the person they're working for (officially)...SAP will be driven demented because people will be moving from project to project, their project managers will change but their line manager will be trying to follow them if you know what I mean...

Yes...

If that's what they say the way things are going to be, well that's how it will be...

Did you get a chance to bring it up with your Senior User for discussion at project board?

No, just in BLUEPRINTING and we got the decision that the system will go with line manager approval afterwards...

It may be a cost issue, the cost of adapting that (Project) module in SAP, there could be (a sense) of the tail wagging the dog in that we're the only part of the business who do things in that way.

In GENCOM (for example) you sign in daily using timesheets and that's it – if you don't sign in, you're on holidays, maternity leave, certified sick-leave etc.

For us, you could be working anywhere for anyone, if we say our external work is so small in comparison to our internal work, and we dealt with the external work say on timesheets or if you reorganised the business so that you didn't have all this internal customers, then you might be able to do it on a single timesheet...

But that would be a very complicated process and would be a very loose system. In AGRESSO, I wanted to get to a work breakdown structure so we could measure how efficient we were in measuring say vibrations on a wind turbine or how long it took us to take apart a transformer say...If we could review those (time) measurements we might get a sense of where our bottlenecks might arise and work on that...

It would be great to pass that on in terms of experience - if it took someone three weeks to do a task normally you could give it to a new graduate engineer, give them four weeks and benchmark and measure it...

That's the kind of power that's in the data we have but we've yet to fully utilise it...

In terms of the testing phase coming now?

Some of it was underway and we saw that in the screenshots with the two Sineads this morning...I'll ask people to do the testing and bring them back into the business but I've no criteria as such for selecting people to go and do the testing...

Is that normally how testing is done for new systems?

Well, this is an unusual system in that it will be used by a lot of people in engineering and we don't typically get a lot of new systems. I've given a few people to Lorna Doone for the SAP project...

We did a lot of that for the CRM system, involved a lot of the users at all the stages of development and then in the testing but then ending up with nobody using it (LAUGHS)...People just veered away from it but they won't be able to veer away from SAP...

So, the 1st of January...How you feel about that?

I'd be fairly optimistic – we looked at SAP for CRM so I presume they're spending enough money on it to make sure it works (LAUGHS)...and it has been working well in head office for a good while...

Do you feel that the project team in their offices may be a bit detached from the business?

You'll always get that when people are taken away but out of sight, out of mind...

Everyone was taken from over here to over there – that was a practical space reason too...

No concerns at the moment with regards to system resistance?

No, concerns yes, resistance no...I mean even AGRESSO with all its foibles, people learned to work with it. SAP is going to come in and we will adapt to it...

Thanks Mario.

You're welcome.

(46, 00)

Location: NOVOCORP HQ / Date: 1st September 2010/ Duration: 26 mins.

Interviewee: Christopher Lloyd, Engineering Manager, NOVOCORP.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

So Christopher, how do you feel the project is going?

Well, up to now, I would have felt that things were going very well and the closer we're getting now to the finishing line, the more I'm realising that Fergal is very good at building utilities, where there's an engineering structure and a defined beginning and end...

Coming back from my holidays, I made a few enquiries and he's never done a change manager role before – this role is about people, it's not about engineering systems...

He's beginning to realise that now himself, and put a lot of effort into communicating and sitting down with people. He was great at coming up with training plans and the like etc...

What we've been trying to do here for years is to change the work to fit with the SAP system and that's going to involve different levels of change for different people. He's beginning to realise and deal with that now, but it needed to be pointed out to him. He's accepted that and there's a huge effort going into that now...

I see him more now not just at the KAM meetings but meeting him more one to one and with Paul McGrath and Leo Moriarty...who I asked as my KAMs to be involved all along...There are also staff here on the road a lot and people are putting in expenses for them etc so that's another change issue...

That happened before in the main (corporate) AGOCORP and we moved across to online expenses...

Peter Jackson is involved in dealing with the expenses side here –have you met him yet?

No, will do soon...

It would be interesting to see what he has to say – I'm not familiar with all the business processes here but he and Fergal will have to be to try and make sure that everything is up and running on the first of January next....

We just had the XYZ implementation here (on the Networks side), didn't go that well, mainly because people weren't ready for it so we're trying to prevent that happening again...

There are different views on XYZ in terms of how it relates to this implementation – some people say it had little impact, others say that it colours the view of SAP, a bad context...

Oh, absolutely no doubt about that – that's left a sour taste – SAP as the system gets the blame...

There's a view that (with respect to the AGRESSO –SAP implementation) that it would just go away and I've emphasised from day one that this is coming the First of January next so get on board and get involved and don't be cribbing and complaining when the system comes in...

How would you feel the BLUEPRINTING phase went?

Well, you can't get all 500 odd people to go but there was participation and sign-off on a design – that's the design we have and we have to deal with it – we have to as the business put in workarounds and make sure it's right next January... Lots of different issues have come up.

Mario Rubin mentioned one to me yesterday about Line managers and expenses...

Yes, and there's another one about Job Numbers. I don't know the details but the lads have to sort it out...

In terms of Fergal's change manager role, the role of the BIM that some people felt emerge, also involves some change management...

It does...

Has that disempowered Fergal in any way?

Well, this is a developmental role for Fergal and he has to use his influencing (skills) rather than rank to get things done...he needs to know the high level and he's coping with the new roles for administrators within SAP.

Another issue and no-one can answer this for me is how many people we're going to save (in terms of overhead costs) on the back of this new system...(LAUGHS)...

Regardless, we're entering a really critical phase now for the project...

Heading for the handover for testing and training and how things are going to be different...

Will that be logistically easy to do?

The timing might be hard as people have other commitments and coming up to Christmas etc. At the same time, these things do take time and commitment and need to be given the effort required...

Even yesterday, we had a presentation on the new HR module, for learning, training and development which is well-laid out and understandable...

People are used to doing it differently – there's a bit of work even so...

How did it go?

Well, the two HR girls presented it and unfortunately two of my line managers were on annual leave so 200-300 people weren't represented but Fergal will have to take on that role of communicating what's involved...

Identifying the power and system users is an important step that has to happen next...

How would you feel the communication has gone in the project?

Well, if high-level people say there is a problem well that's different – it's hard to judge as Fergal has been at our fortnightly meetings and he's getting a platform to communicate...

It might be useful to do a survey of people to see how effective communication is because it's hard to judge how the ordinary punter is reacting to be honest...

But over the next few months, there will be a lot of communication that will be happening at all levels. They'll be a meeting in October with 150 team leaders and he'll be at that...

He'll need a bag of tricks, a demo and training plan and other bits and pieces to show people who have questions – some of that he doesn't have at the moment...

I've seen the screenshots so I know what the system looks like but the engineering managers and team leaders haven't....

Do you think a few images could be circulated?

Yes, would be no harm to give people a mental image of what the system looks like.

They'll be a learning curve involved for people; they'll need a few examples...maybe a well-down physical demo rather than a video demo...

I'd be happy for people to sandbox as they call it, get a chance to use it and get more comfortable with the change...

Is there a variation amongst KAMs in terms of happiness with the system?

Well yes...everyone knows its coming and they're getting more accepting of it...I mean not everyone is affected the same. You have someone like Freddie Jameson in Networks and there's a big impact for him in relation to Aoife Burgess and they'll have to sort it out amongst themselves...Networks need a huge amount of detail as the regulator can demand it from there...I've questioned whether so much detail is required as its very demanding on us but I've been assured it's necessary...

Some of the other KAMs aren't affected as much and in some cases I nearly worry about them more as they're not giving things maybe as much attention as they need to as would Freddie for example...

Would you feel that the communication around the project has been conscious enough of the need to communicate differently based on the effects on different parts of the business?

From the point of view of the system – the design is done and we have to deal with that but in terms of say being conscious of how the business being affected, no, they haven't been aware enough of that...

In terms of impact...

You've said the right word there – impact – that has to be understood...

How does Fergal manage that?

Well, he's a lot more aware of it now and it's his first time doing it so in fairness...

I mean I had no involvement with the initial planning of the project but in most SAP implementations here, we've had an implementation partner who's experienced...In this system, it wasn't done and in hindsight, it might have been better to do so, even if it was a bit more expensive...

You'd get the external independent view – like what we offer here as a service and guide and steer – we can body-shop as well...

There's no political baggage or agendas from the outside too which can be a help...

In terms of the project board, how useful and effective have the members been in articulating the views of the users?

Well I've been on project boards before and I've been proactive on them – I'm not that conscious of that on this implementation to be honest.

In retrospect, it might have been better for the project board to have had more people closer to the action so to speak – you don't want project boards buried in detail and not to be overly critical...but I'd say you need people closer to the action.

The issues get diluted and you need to get people on the board that will be affected by what the issues are and will act on them and not just be accepting what the project manager might say...

Would you be optimistic about the system going forward?

I would – in comparison to XYZ – I never got the feel that it was accepted. I could bring something else given that experience is to impress on people the need to get involved and get engaged...

When you have things like expenses and you have people who have had administrators doing their expenses being told that they won't get paid (their expenses) if they don't submit them online...That tends to concentrate the mind (SMILES)...

Do you think the cost/expense selling angle could have been used more?

Well, I would use it because of my experiences with the corporate SAP implementation where it was a big issue for people.

The timesheet is important for the businesses to be paid, the new HR changes will be different and because it doesn't directly impact your pocket it might be more difficult and could get put to one side if someone is shouting for a drawing or whatever...

The parts of the new system like the HR side that don't have an immediate payoff say in terms of expenses or timesheets may prove to the parts that require most attention in the longer term...

That's great, Christopher. Thanks.

No problem.

(26, 00)

Location: NOVOCORP HQ / **Date:** 1st September 2010/ **Duration:** 46 mins.

Interviewee: Leo Moriarty, Key Account Manager, NOVOCORP.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

So Leo, you might fill me in on your career and organisational roles so far?

Well, I joined NOVOCORP 15 years ago, and I was in AGOCORP before that. I went into projects and key accounts and then 5 years in management, over 75 people and then here in to line design, feasibility, design, managing about 200 people.

It's an important role we play here not just in design but we're moving further down the (supply) line into distribution as well. Anything involving output that gets designed (in AGOCORP) gets designed here.

As AGOCORP core moves away from that space, we're moving more into it in terms of distribution and it's a real partnership that's worked well, always on output but distribution is more new, more the responsibility of AGOCORP Networks in the past. We both have common corporate targets.

So in your experiences in AGOCORP, what's been your honest appraisal and experience of technology?

Fairly patchy, like it is in most organisations to be honest...someone decides somewhere to implement software that's effective in a role, and then roll out a few adds-on that don't meet the expectations and requirements of users...

So, you might have a brilliant financial software system that does all the important financial stuff and then try and use it as a project management tool and of course it doesn't work...

That's happened here?

That's happened everywhere, AGRESSO is like that – it's primarily a financial accounting tool and it works perfectly well as that and an improvement on what was there before...

It accounts for time and financial inputs and outputs...It can't look at other material inputs or you can't track where you are on a project with respect to milestones etc...Perfectly good for the financial stuff but it needs an interface...Great for accounts and the staff there and for the others looking at time

and materials, fixed costs which we need to track month and month in terms of where we are on a given project...

So, to do that we have lots of adds-on, interfaces, spreadsheets to get that data out of AGRESSO in a way in which we can utilise.

It's (AGRESSO) not a complete system...

So the business case for replacing it is quite strong?

Oh, yes, the business case is very compelling – I have no difficulty with the corporate decision to replace AGRESSO with SAP. Integration of different businesses makes complete sense, all the assets, all the timesheets etc...all good stuff...

No issue at all with the business case, everyone accepts that...the concern though is whether or not the new system plugs the holes that were in AGRESSO – is it going to be a better system, is it going to have that financial and project management functions, the billing information be available and visible to those who need that access to information at the appropriate level with some intelligence around how the inputs can be set but in some standard fashion– by time, or by costs with respect to the project plan, how much we need to invoice and we able to do that monthly and yearly...

You mentioned there about people adding features that bolted onto the AGRESSO system – is there any emotional attachment to those adds-on?

Well, they weren't really bolted on as such, they were ring-fenced by different people – people extended a lot of effort onto creating macros that got data out of EXCEL and moved it around different spreadsheets...

I wouldn't think there would be great emotional attachment to these add-ons as they never quite worked – some people would have great macros but they might not be widespread. They work perfectly for them but it's an ad-hoc rather than a system per se...

People would be pragmatic about the switchover?

Oh yes (EMPHATIC). People are very tech savvy here, so they'd be no resistance like that...The only resistance regardless of the system that you'd tend to get is where you're trying to bring in a system whereby the work people do is made more inefficient in some inherent way...a new system has to be at least as efficient and ideally more so than the one it replaces...

Is that the case with the new system?

Inherently so, we used to approve our timesheets in an eventual centralised fashion say at my level through the old AGRESSO system; most people would just enter their timesheets and that would be that.

But in the new system, the actual approval will be rolling down to say the immediate reporting or team leader level, work they never had to do which will now be added to their existing work load...

So, if they're going to buy into this extra work load, they have to be seeing some benefit in return...it has to be sold to them like that...

Is it being sold like that?

Yes, it is but my concern would be that the benefits of seeing this financial information clearly at the level they want not just at the transactional level, knowing the status of their projects wouldn't arise in the way we thought originally...we just don't know...

Is that feeling of (system) ambiguity commonly held or are people aware of it?

Well, we don't really know what it will mean...we do know they'll have to approve expenses, timesheets and the annual leave that I do now...

Some people welcome that as it institutionalises the position of the team leader which they like....

But the selling point is that they need to access the financial information in that preferred way and we're yet to see that...the design has got to a point now where we don't know – we haven't see that. We had a meeting earlier on today where there wasn't as much clarity as to what the system will be like...

I haven't even got to see it and I'm on the steering committee...

In retrospect, would it not be better to see some screens or...?

Well, IT projects are usually driven by huge groups of people who talk amongst themselves but then there is no output at the end to those outside...

They have the formal discussion meetings with us all-right, we get a chance to air our views but then you get no follow through in terms of agreed outcomes – there's no minutes kept say or forwarded on afterwards, so you don't get an understanding of what was agreed...

Look at any development – they often say 'here is the system' at this point in the process and you can have a look at it...

Here, in about two month's time, we'll be brought into a room, shown some system and told there will be no changes...

That's been the...I've been involved in loads of implementations – they're driven through and accounts have to be satisfied – they're sacrosanct – anything else is a nice to have...

That's problematic if you end up in a situation where you've promised, as in certain things and then the system doesn't deliver; that's not a position I want to be in...

I'd rather if they said, 'Listen lads, this is going to be painful' and you could get on with accepting it and making it work or if it's a case that the system is going to be wonderful, well that's great, but whatever the case, let's be honest about it.

Are they open as to the outcomes?

Well, I don't think it is a case of not being open; it's more that they don't know...So instead of saying we were hoping to do certain things and now it looks like we can't, this is more a case of finding out what's not going to happen three or four months after we agreed something else...

Did you get a sense of communication on the system after the close of the BLUEPRINTING phase?

Well, for me, communication is not a meeting or a presentation; it's getting to see the system...

Showing it in some Sandbox set-up or giving us a sense of what we're going to be getting, all that would be a help...

That what's happened here the last few projects, no different to anywhere else, I'd imagine, where a project like these with very many stakeholders who want to be able to get a sense of a system with some scope to suggest some changes...

So, you'd feel at this stage that design is done regardless of what shows up in the testing?

Oh, I do yes (EMPHATIC)...unless there some kind of accounting problem...

Are the general users aware of it?

Not really but people in other units who like me have been on steering projects know that this is how things happen...and it has on other SAP projects in the past, where the tight financial deadline is driving the design...cutover and rollover and all these at specific times...

So the deadline is a bigger driver than (getting) the functionality right?

I would think that's correct yes...time definitely the driver...

The recent SAP implementation XYZ in AGOCORP networks, which did affect certain users in NOVOCORP didn't seem to have had a lot of positive outcomes...what would be your view on that...

Yes, and exactly for the same reasons – that system is a very complex project, you're trying to put in everything on the same template...which is not really taking account of all the different processes as to how components could be managed...

Would you feel that perhaps in this project also, there is a danger that the different processes have not fully understood in the design phase?

I would think so yes...Now, in fairness, the (SAP to AGRESSO project) team has made every effort to get people together and to give everyone a chance to announce their systems and processes and they did that well...

But the problem is you don't get to see the outputs of all that good thinking – you never get to see whether their understanding of the processes actually tallies with your understanding...what they perceive to be our processes and what's achievable in SAP – that two part process seems to be missing well in terms of what we get to see – now SAP is a powerful system and can do a lot of different things...Maybe some of our processes can't be done in SAP or can but in a complicated fashion...

My own processes, I know well and I have some insights into other processes we connect to but what would happen if you have to manage lots of processes all of which interconnect and get some composite of those...

Starts to get very complex...

Yes, for sure, how that composite system will work how it affects me and others and how that works in SAP or even looks like...I have no idea – the project team may be beavering away over there and my processes might be exactly replicated, I just don't know...

If there is a bad aftertaste of XYZ - would there be a view held by the general population that this project, as you just mentioned there is being viewed differently as a result?

Well, I would be able to separate the two (XYZ and the current implementation) and I would feel...XYZ was a very complex system brought in at the worst possible time, when people were extremely busy at the maximum point of pressure at the end of a 5 year capital acquisition and then they bring the XYZ system down on top of all that...

And you have to work within the system – and the system just doesn't work, it has loads of little quirks and links within the system – the links within the system and the process are extraordinarily complex...I mean if you want to order a certain material you have to have a code for it, which you have to find and that has a cost and the link has to be possible between the code for the material and the given price and if any of the links are broken or the source is anyway wrong, then the system crashes...

The timing was wrong – Now, it has some benefits and like any SAP system has some strong benefits but in its current form, needs a lot of changes to be made to its current design in order that it might work and that hasn't happened – it's still the same as what came out of the box...

Essentially because you have two SAP implementations running at the same time, XYZ and AGRESSO replacement and you can't have both systems changing core SAP and there's lockdown now on the changes to XYZ which is part of the problem..

The timing is...if you had run off XYZ to the very end and...

Closed it off...

Exactly, extracted some lessons learnt and then moved onto the AGRESSO project, it would have been far better for both projects...

So this project is under pressure now, because you there are some changes agreed to happen to XYZ once this project is over so...

There are dependencies there?

Yes – no one would really criticise the people doing the work on the project team – they're doing great work but they're under huge pressure now in terms of timescales and budgets as well...

In general communications, how do you feel Fergal Flynn has managed this in his role as change manager?

Oh, I think he's been brilliant, very much the face of the project, open and honest...

Would you feel that it was important that the change manager came from the engineering population?

Yes, absolutely...

You don't think a financial or HR employee would have been...

No, absolutely – that's the problem...it's been (called) a financial system, it's been driven by financial staff, all for the own valid reasons...people accept that...

But they're interested in forensics, the details of the transactions, six digit transaction numbers, most people have no interest in that - they just want the high-level big picture...

That's why an engineer who's managed projects is the right person....

What role do you see him fulfilling?

Firstly, he is a conduit informing engineering management and users as to the progress of the project and the system and also to bring back to the project team our concerns regarding functionality, and that maybe parts of the system that is being imposed will not work and to change it, regardless of time pressures...

Has he fulfilled that role?

Yes (REFLECTING)-he's certainly tried to – there are...other stakeholders with different roles on the project team and different pressures that are not complimentary...like resource and budget pressures, how many people are going to be licensed to use the system as licenses are expensive...These are fundamental decisions...which the change manager has a certain influence on but that's hard to know...

So, you would see his role more as a communicator rather than influencing...

Well, we'd like to think that he's influencing and being deeply involved in making decisions but it's hard to see that as the financial and IT powers that be are the people who'll be making the decisions so where he fits into that, I don't know....(SHRUGS)...

Would the impression therefore be that he can have little influence in the project due to the strength of the other forces you've discussed...

Well, he's a good guy and he'd done his best but the impression would be that he has not had a free hand...no...

Not necessarily blaming him per se but more about the political forces at play...

That would be the case, yes...

Can you talk a little about the BLUEPRINTING phase?

Well, I was involved in a lot of the meetings, now they were productive and useful and open but again I've seen no output from that and as such would not be able to judge how useful the process was...

So, no agreed outputs...

Not really no, well there were certain agreements about who would validate certain timesheets, expenses etc...

For example, there was a discussion about who would approve timesheets and expenses and whether it would be a team leader or a project manager...The decision was that it would be the team leader and there was a lot of discussion about that...

That was one clear decision that will influence the design...I could see that...

We agreed we would have job numbers and yes, that was an output...

The big thing from it should have been clarity as to the system reports, which is more important than the system in some respects...

This was coincidentally the big issue with the XYZ system – it doesn't do reports, well at least not in a way that the output is believable or credible...

What I would be afraid of for this system is that the reports won't be that useful...

What was your view on the level of SAP expertise in the room?

MMMM (REFLECTING)...Initially we had a project manager who left the project (means the external consultant rather than Thomas Mulcahy) and then was replaced by someone else...

I would have felt more towards the end of the phase that was more SAP expertise in the room...

Was that an issue for you early on in the project in terms of your level of confidence?

Well – the SAP expertise is....I would have been more concerned about the project team getting to know our processes...Knowing SAP is fine but if you can't understand the processes then....so it was very important that across the organisation in the different teams that they made the project team understand those processes...

Are you confident that was done?

Oh, very much so -a lot of very good meetings took place – but to what extent they were able to sift through these processes and make sense of it all...

I know they know SAP and then they have the processes – it's the bit in the middle I don't know whether they have got or not to be honest...

So you would have preferred to have seen a detailed agreed output document?

Absolutely – almost screenshots that would give us the view of the process and this is how SAP can do it or not...

Clear understanding of the limitations of SAP also?

Yes – I'm sure that there's a lot of good work being done but....

Definitely some outputs and some kind of communication?

Well, communication is all well and fine but it's only good if it has something to say...

Coming around saying here is the business case and this is the deadline and everything's going great is not communication – people believe and have bought into it...

If you said to them out there, stand on your heads at 10am next Tuesday, they'd do it because they're used to meeting business targets – that's the way things are...

That doesn't have to be hammered home – there is a work addition that will impinge on people so it would be helpful to get a sense of the positives that they will get from the system so...

Unless they can be shown that, then that's communication, the rest of it is nice and all that but...

Do you feel a little strategically hobbled in that you have no idea as to what you'll be getting because of this information vacuum?

Correct...

How do you hope to sell this system?

Well, we have a steering group meeting that's meeting with technical staff –to try and see what screens and reports...

This view is commonly held?

Absolutely...

Is the meeting just about this issue (of the information vacuum)?

Yes – to try and get some sense of what reports we can utilise...

In terms of the testing, how you put much thought into that phase in terms of picking people?

Yes, we have - I've put together a group of six to eight people who'll go and represent the key areas...

So, done in a streamed way...

Very much so, yes.

Is there anything else that strikes you as negative and positive about the project?

Well, the fact that Fergal Flynn, an engineer is involved is a good thing as far as we're concerned...

We don't want the system just to be a replacement for AGRESSO – if that's all it is, then we'd have no interest in it...it's much more than that..

Do people see (SAP) as AGRESSO Mark II with bells on or do they see it as something more valuable?

Well, the finance people will see it as a finance system and the HR people as a HR system and that's their goal and that's very reasonable...

The engineering people who are the prime users in terms of the numbers of users and so important in getting the billing and bidding right and reduce the cottage industry that goes on in getting all these things right (at the moment).

They are the core stakeholder – hence Paul McGrath and I were asked to get involved – in the development of AGRESSO we were not considered and we're trying to avoid that happening again...

In terms of the next few months, how do you see the project going?

Well, it's hard to know...

It will definitely go live next January though?

No doubt about that, definitely...

Would your gut feeling be optimistic?

Well, we haven't seen anything – we would hope that all the good feedback that we have will be brought back to the project and that it will be taken on board – I suppose that's the point of the meeting next Tuesday...

XYZ unfortunately isn't the greatest example in that regard...I'm hoping in this case that it will be done better...

Was there any knowledge transfer between the XYZ and AGRESSO projects – I know there was some level of overlap, but just in terms of lessons learnt and involving people on XYZ with the AGRESSO project...

Well, I don't know specifically in terms of who transferred across – in terms of the SAP projects already done there would be a lot of core experience in the parent and hopefully that would have carried across...but I wasn't involved in an organisational sense on that...

Overall, you feel it would have been better if XYZ had been closed off before the AGRESSO changeover begun in terms of lessons learnt etc...

Yes...it would have been the way to do that – the two together impact on each other and replicate as well so...

In hindsight so far, is there anything so far that is positive and problematic...

Well, it's a huge challenge bringing in a system like this that has massive stakeholder impact – I realise you have to make decisions quickly and you have a deadline that pushes things along quickly...but there's a balance there that has to be achieved between the different stakeholders and I would like to have seen a bit more of bringing the majority of people with them and also to be showing people the system...More screenshots, more this is what the SAP system can do...

Do you have enough time in the BLUEPRINTING phase?

Yes, there was and there is time and the project is going now for seven months to a year and there are plenty of people working on it...but back to the ground troops, they've seen nothing- at my level, I saw a demo last week of a few screenshots and that's it...

You have to bring people with you and engineers need to be shown things...

Is there a danger that this information vacuum could lead to people having fears about the system that prove to be unfounded?

Well, that's more a fear at engineering manager level – if the system can't do things – now, we could be looking at replicating the extra-mural systems that we did before and we don't want that...

It's hard to say to people that here is a new system but we'll still be doing the same reporting we did before or not as the case may be....

Do you think the issue that Mario raised in terms of validating expenses and timesheets will be handled successfully?

Well (THINKING) – I think that's more of a cost issue – if it's too costly, it won't be done and we'll be back to another way (of doing it).

Thanks Leo...

No problem.

(46, 06)

Location: Project HQ / **Date:** 1st September 2010/ **Duration:** 39 mins.

Interviewee: Marissa Walsh, Team Leader, Learning and Development, HR Department, NOVOCORP; *appointed as HR operative on SAP project team.*

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

So Marissa, you might fill me in on your background on your roles?

Well, I started in NOVOCORP about January 2008 so I'm quite new in – in ACME where I worked prior to that for 10 years, I had been involved in SAP implementation working on helping the change management and training around the E-HR sap module...ACME had a very sophisticated and useful learning and development solution or Learning Management System where we had a single training administrator who looked after the training in all the company...

When I joined NOVOCORP, I was a bit taken aback to be back managing training plans on EXCEL to be honest...the infrastructure and supports around the roll-out of training and development was a bit basic to be honest...So after being made permanent I was looking after the learning and development team so we looked after any of the training needs, Finance, IT, Soft-skills etc that arose of an individuals' training and development plan which are done annually...

The roll-out of that training was done in EXCEL and any follow-up then was paper-based...

So when I got the opportunity to get involved in this project, I was delighted to do so (SMILES), based on my previous experience and the administration load on my team in the current system – we spent an awful lot of time doing systems admin and not nearly enough time engaging with the business.

So for you, the business case (for the project) was a no-brainer?

Absolutely...for me no... So given all that and the fact that I had only been here a short while, I was delighted to be asked to join the project team...

People often emphasised the expenses and timesheets as the business case. Was it also the case that the training and development side was also a strong reason for adopting the SAP system or has that more emerged as time has gone on?

Well, initially, investigations into the performance management (PM) module in SAP in AGOCORP corporate gave the impression that it was under-utilised. Considering the fact that the whole SAP system was being upgraded and that

NOVOCORP had not adopted the PM module in 2007, it was a great opportunity if you like to use NOVOCORP as a guinea pig and see how we'd get on...

So, it might go through the whole organisation?

Yes...I would imagine that...Along the way we had to engage with AGOCORP and also senior people in HR to try and inform them as to why we were proposing to do this the project is SAP standard – there's a lot of performance management systems across the whole of AGOCORP – what we were trying to do was to try and make sure that the SAP system supports a process, not a situation where we're trying to bring the NOVOCORP performance management system into AGOCORP which would be expensive to do...

So, there are benefits for NOVOCORP in trying to bolt on the performance, training and development aspects and also benefits for AGOCORP in terms of performance management – that's beginning to be understood?

Oh definitely yes...

Is that understood by the users say in the general population of NOVOCORP – I know from talking to Christopher that you've had meetings with the engineering managers and shown them some of the HR aspects – what has been their reaction?

Well, positive- but we need to up the pace of communication as to the benefits of it – initially Martha and I would have presented to the steering group way back who would have gone back to the business units and sell the benefits – we need to do that more – we were delighted with the reception at the presentation and Christopher was great in terms of standing up afterwards and saying how great this was and that people would have to buy into it etc....

Even so, we only have four months left to GO-LIVE and we have to get stronger about communicating the benefits in terms of training and learning and development and that everything is going to be done online...We should have been doing that sooner...

Everything is between the line manager and the employer – the line manager can print out reports for or on individuals – HR is kind-of taken out of it a bit to be honest – we're not like big brother monitoring everything- they're only certain reports we're getting out of the system and that's just to support the bonus process which is done outside of SAP, so it's a win-win for everyone, I would feel...

No paper, an on-line document between the manager and the employee – you can have historical documents and if you move managers your documents go with you...

Would you feel that there might be a danger in so far as for the users, expenses and timesheets are immediate and urgent whereas for the HR side, it might fall away as a priority or get lost in translation?

People will learn the system I would feel quickly anyway as they will want to be paid their expenses – if they don't, they'll feel it themselves...

What we're asking them to do in January (2011) is just the setting of objectives – as an employee you meet your manager three times annually and that's built into the system...They're used to that anyway – it's there – we'd expect them to only use it three times a year but the data and reports are there in online form which they'll like as often as they want...

The current process, the training plan isn't viewable after a certain amount of time – it's viewable as a web based application – but there's a lot of free text and as such we have to go in and tidy it up at the end and we don't get the opportunity to go back and change it afterwards (as employees) – you try and get a feel for what people are trying to say...

So, the version control can be off?

Yes, it's one big spreadsheet that comes out of the system but now if they do a course, they can actively go into the system any time throughout the year and tick if they've done a course and they can do that any time as can a training administrator...

So, it's a gradual rollout and time-lag on the HR side and has a chance to bed-in?

Yes, the initial training they will get will be in January will not only allow them to do training and expenses and request annual leave – it will be an introduction to how to go through the first actual performance meeting in their year as it will also allow them to say set objectives, set their training goals etc...We'll mention this in November (2010) to them but it will only really start in June (2011). We'll let everything bed in first...

Are they getting the feel that the (HR) module will be rolled out like that?

Well, the communication around training is more Fergal Flynn's role...But considering that the only thing they'll do in January is objective setting, why do more...We said yesterday in the meeting that this is what initially we'll focus on – and then we'll come back to the training and development module and the individual learning and training development plan later on...

Your involvement in HR and your use of systems, you'll see this is a big improvement...

Oh, yes absolutely (EMPHATIC) – I mean you had a situation before where you'd have 800 individual training plans that I and my team had to manage in EXCEL which was no easy feat, I can tell you...

In fairness, the ICT people here (AGOCORP) built a nice web front-end for it but there was no database behind it and so, we were still left with a big spreadsheet to manage...

Online feedback – everything was typed in and then you'd have to get paper copies of all the training documents and reflect them in the spreadsheet- lot of time stuck behind a desk at a PC...

One of my biggest thinks was always how do you show you add value to the business?...We wanted to be able to give feedback to (training) suppliers directly from the employees rather than one of my team pulling out comments from a written sheet – that will all be online...it will be a huge improvement...

Would you have used AGRESSO much?

Not much, just the usual timesheets and expenses stuff...

So for you, this will be more an EXCEL to SAP changeover rather than an AGRESSO to SAP changeover which will be unusual?

Yes...

In terms of your involvement in the project...

Been involved really from the get-go...

What have been the key things that have happened, positive and negative on the project so far?

Well, the learning curve around the processes – knowing the processes really well on the team not even at the point of doing the BPIDs – just I suppose in case someone more longer term than me left, I'd be at a loss as to what to do...so even before the project started, I was working getting understanding of the processes.

One of the big things joining the learning and development team was to try and map all the processes out...

Using data flow diagrams?

Yes – back in my office, I have all our processes mapped in a big folder which was done about 18 months-2 years before SAP but in anticipation of the project – they really were our "AS-IS" – really a cut and paste exercise when the BPIDs came along to be done...so when we were talking to the SAP consultants, we could say

here's what our processes are like – how could they work in SAP? So that was enormously helpful – we had a good foot-up...

Almost a head-start on the project?

Yes, absolutely...we knew the SAP project was coming – it was delayed a couple of times along the way but we knew it was coming so we tried to get prepared...

Were you the exception in that regard?

Well – I don't know – when we first met Thomas (Project Manager), he was delighted we had all our processes done out in advance...My attitude anyway would have been as a team leader coming from an American multi-national that documented everything that on my first day starting on the team how would I get to learn the processes...

Had you any certification process that you could use to map the processes?

No, nothing at all...

Our processes have been audited externally by Engineers Ireland as we're approved by them but we could go that ISO route...

So a good starting point how did the rest of things go?

Well, with the SAP consultant we then got a feel for what the coming (AGOCORP corporate) upgrades would mean- so we upgraded first from a training and events module to a learning solution and we also upgraded our current performance appraisal module into a newer enhanced one. It was important that we got an understanding of how the rest of AGOCORP operated (on a HR level) and we meet people from all across the business and got to see how they did things (from a HR perspective) and there was a lot of great things going on...We then started to workshop with participation of people from across the business... It actually become so unwieldy that at one stage, Lorna Doone had to remind the business that this was an NOVOCORP and not an AGOCORP project (LAUGHS)...We will roll out the system to the rest of the business but not just yet...

People were getting excited about it and there were so many different (HR) processes were going on, that we had to get some uniformity around that and that led to this another project and I think that was a good outcome from this...there were also questions (from the business) on succession planning and talent management so we had to manage people's expectations around the system – 'This is only an NOVOCORP system at the moment –we'll hope to get around to all that in the future but SAP can do it for you...'.

From the moment that the BPIDs were put together, it's been a bit of a rollercoaster ride to be honest with the design, the testing going back and forth to the business and getting a feel for what the business is thinking about the system...

Users had to be reassured that the (training and development) process itself won't change – we still need to have those three meetings a year – but the actual system will make things easier through all the online reporting etc that it will offer...it will streamline the processes and we want people to have the human conversation also...

Would there have been anything negative about the implementation so far?

Well, don't know if it's negative but we certainly have come across some stumbling blocks with some people's lack of understanding and buy-in into it...

Lack of understanding of SAP or the business processes?

Both really – lack of understanding of the AS-IS business processes and what they could be going forward and also the lack of IT skills.

It was quite stressful having to explain to people all the time how certain things worked and also the negativity towards it (the system)...

Where did that negativity come from? Is it a fear of change or was it more about the implementation and how it was going?

A bit of both I would think – for this (particular) person (note: identified off the record post-interview), it could have been more that they felt they were not involved enough and Martha is representing one part of the HR function and me the other...That person wasn't, I don't think expected by people outside to be involved but that person felt they should have been involved more as they were the manager of 'x' function in HR, then they should...But there was also a lack of process understanding, particularly around the AS-IS of the processes, never mind the TO-BE...

That was difficult – it's a good system, a good change and generally everyone is on board, but you have the one person who's supposed to be rolling out the system across the business actually quite resistant to it...

I struggled with that to be honest...

Has that resistance reduced over time?

(LAUGHS) Given the meeting we had yesterday, but given that there were more senior people than her at the meeting, I feel it's their responsibility to ensure that she's on board...

When we had the auditing process last month (August 2010), (note: the implementation underwent several quality assurance audits by a retired ex-AGOCORP Senior project manager in Late March, 2010 and also by an external consultant in August and December 2010), I was asked what was going to be the make or break of this project – I stated this issue - senior people have to manage it after that...

Would they not have got that understanding of the processes through the BPID process?

I honestly don't believe they read them – they would complain about not having enough notice to read them for meetings – in the meeting, saying they only had 24 hours whereas we would have given them a full week...

I wasn't there – Martha was involved more with it – before I went on holidays I had put all the (BPID) documents on the hard drive – they were e-mailed on...supposed to be reviewed before I came back – never heard anything. Thomas and Martha eventually had to say in an e-mail that as they hadn't heard anything from them in terms of feedback on the BPIDs, that they assumed that they were happy with them...

We'd had other peer reviews (on the BPIDs) - just this one person...

Was this person on their own in terms of the BLUEPRINTING meeting?

Yes...others also...

Did they stand out even though people resist generally for lots of reasons?

Yes, they did stand out – even the external SAP consultant commented on it...this person is at a disadvantage in that they don't know the current processes – so any fear they would feel about a new system would be accelerated by that...

Thankfully the exception so far?

Absolutely – from the business perspective, we've had a lot of buy-in and interest – people looking to see the system...

Generally, how would you feel the BLUEPRINTING sessions went?

I was very happy with them – the information was documented thoroughly and we gave a high-level presentation of what was going to change – the BPIDs AS-IS and the TO-BE were reviewed and gone through twice so people got a good sense of what the new processes would look like...

How did the process work?

Well, Martha and I would have lead the workshops – from a point of view this was what we’re proposing – keep it high-level – you’ll still have your three meetings a year – the process itself won’t change...

Was that how the expenses and timesheets were approached also?

Well, for the expenses, we had someone from the HR team be part of the write-up of the BPIDs and verify them – both Sinead and I work in HR but our experiences of the expenses – you might know that the expenses were entered by someone in HR manually (YES) – it was critical to have her involved so she would come over (to Project HQ) and she would answer any questions we would have on the documentation of the process...and we were able to get her to check things.

We also workshoped the processes with “Beechpark” (Note: where AGOCORP have an administrative office) who’ll be taking over the whole process anyway from us...

In that way and also on the Organisational Management (OM) processes, we were able to leverage the expertise within the department as we have someone who’s been doing that for many years...

Sinead had also done her own processes also – so we were in a good place...anything we were documenting as we went we were able to involve people who did it every day and get them to verify what we’re doing, so...

So key people from the business helping you might get also get a feel for the system and also for the external SAP consultant to see the processes and relate them to SAP?

Well, the consultant only really dealt with the HR managers, in terms of the business, they knew we were following SAP Project principles as per AGOCORP (Corporate) in terms of timesheets, expenses and leave etc...

Were they the same for both (AGOCORP and NOVOCORP)?

No, not all the same – there were a few things that were different – different terms and conditions...

When someone (in NOVOCORP) is entering their timesheets and they’re entering a code for the work they’ve done by choosing from a drop-down list, you wouldn’t want to see as an NOVOCORP employee all the AGOCORP codes...there’s different terms and conditions like for example in AGOCORP you have flexible (working hours as a code)...

So, we thought about leaving those out but after some consultation, Anne Wilson, senior HR manager on the design authority decided we should leave the AGOCORP ones in as long-term, the development costs for changing – we were better off leaving them in and explaining to (NOVOCORP) staff in training, so it’s covered,

why these codes were left in and how to pick their codes as NOVOCORP employees and why they're seeing certain codes...We workshopped that so we got people to understand it....

Could you talk a little about the design authority?

Well, it contains three people – Margaret Blair, senior HR from NOVOCORP, John Jakesmith representing the (Corporate) ICT function and “Bobby Winthrop”...

Anything that fell outside of the AGOCORP SAP standard but that we felt would be needed or worth having...for example, the AGOCORP code for Flexi-time which appears on the AGOCORP SAP Timesheet entry but there's no Flexi-time in NOVOCORP, so we wrote a document justifying why this code should not appear on the SAP timesheet entry for NOVOCORP staff...

Then the decision at the end was no, considering the amount of development days and cost required to do it and also that there were people in AGOCORP seeing this code who weren't entitled to flexi-time either...So we're just making this change for NOVOCORP...that was denied but we got an explanation...

Anne particularly on the design authority and just generally has been very helpful in guiding us and her knowledge of both AGOCORP and NOVOCORP is immense...She knows a lot of people on the ground and who to go to and how to get things done.

She also knows where things are going here so....like we would see something in timesheets or expenses that NOVOCORP staff aren't entitled to and we'd be sure that it would have to go from the system...but she'd be aware of some team within AGOCORP who wouldn't be entitled to it either and still see it when they're entering their timesheets so that was a big help...

Has the design authority still involved with the design phase over now?

Well, MMM (THINKING) – I believe they still are *but that's* moved over now to more of a change request board...

John Jakesmith has been very involved in the project – he's been pulled left right and centre – the project has relied on him a lot, maybe a bit too much...There's no real need as such to get the design board together as the design has been signed off...

Margaret has been meeting with Martha and me every fortnight and been the champion of the project really keeping everything going in terms of AGOCORP and NOVOCORP...

So, if a change comes up in the change board, then that acts as a mechanism to make a design fix?

Well, there is a mechanism as Leon can pull the change request board at any time and there has been a change on the PS timesheet but the justification for a change to the design has to be very thorough and clear and you would need to have a very clear justification as to why this wasn't picked up in the design or BLUEPRINTING phase...

You have to estimate the cost and time and the business justification so...

It's not a case of submitting a change based on something a manager might want added...

No, has to be business justified...

Are you aware of anything like that out there at the moment – other than the PS timesheet issue you just mentioned?

That would be more Martha's side but there are a few issues out there – after that presentation yesterday, one of the managers come up to me afterwards and said to us 'Great presentation, well-done girls but I'm very concerned about the PS time sheets...'...

That is something that's going to be a little bit troublesome...

Initially there were workshops and the project managers went to that and they didn't hear much and now it's coming back as an issue and maybe in the BLUEPRINTING, it wasn't understood as well...

We have a new team member ("Rachel") coming into Martha's organisational management role and Martha will be coming into mine as I go on maternity leave...

But even early on, she's had a few issues and questions about it and she'll be the one testing it and looking after it...

Because design closed on the 18th June, it needs to be looked at as the screen doesn't look great – we have boxes the full length of the screen. So the scrolling doesn't look that great...the justification is that we have long titles in NOVOCORP but even so....That's going to throw up a few problems...

How do you envisage the testing going over the next few weeks?

Well, it's started already – our end on the operations side in terms of system test 1 as business acceptance testing hasn't started yet, is 100% done...now the PS timesheet issue will have to be looked at also...

HR ops are done and now we're in performance management (PM) now. The learning and development solution (LDS) was only switched on last week and the testing for that planned for the 29th of October (2010)...In readiness for me going out on maternity leave, I've scripted out all the test and use cases and sets for the LDS so that should save time...

Matha will be looking after the PM testing as she's been involved in PM since why back in the early design days of February (2010)...When she's been so involved in Ops testing, she stepped away from the PM and LDS side so it makes sense for her to get involved in the testing...There's only 12 test sets in PM...It's not a huge body of work...

She's (a pair of) "fresh eyes" in that OK, she knows the processes but at the same time, she hasn't been as involved as I've been in working on LDS or PM...Also, as well as I said earlier we've leveraged the HR experiences in the business...

We've had our OM expert in – we've had "Annie" our expenses expert who was the backend in that she did all the manual entry of expenses – so it made sense for her to test the front end which she did on her own significantly...

We had someone helping us with the testing of staff in OM – as in (can the system take) someone moving departments, moving up a grade, promotion etc, changing managers etc...

So, what's left is the TMS timesheet which "Rachel" will test with fresh eyes, and Martha the same on the LDS side...What we were saying in terms of Business Readiness testing, we should get someone over from the learning and development team by November to get them looking at the system and at that point it should be handed over to corporate ICT by the 10th of December (2010) and all should be fine at that stage, hopefully (LAUGHS)..

Thanks a lot Marissa...

No problem, you're welcome.

(39, 00)

Interviewee: Frances Lomax, Manager, NOVOCORP Consultancy, NOVOCORP.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

So Frances, you might fill me in on your background and your roles in AGOCORP and NOVOCORP?

Well, I started in NOVOCORP actually thirty years today, September 1980 and moved from engineering courses which you did to work in facilities. In 1981 when we came out of these courses, there was a lot of project work on capital projects – you might be aware that project just finished earlier this year... (Yes)...

I remember that when the last major project officially finished in 1989, people said that there would be no more capital projects until the turn of the century so we had a lot of people in civil works, projects and facility with not much work to do...Well, NOVOCORP was embryonic at that stage and you had some international work going on but not in a very structured way – I was doing some consultancy work for the Portuguese and the Middle East...They were building their own facilities so we would help them with specifications etc. This (international consultancy) was more opportunistic rather than anything else so in 1989, NOVOCORP was founded with a view towards keeping all those staff employed...

Actually, we began to build new projects (in AGOCORP) anyway starting in Dublin in 1991...but out of the original 125-150 AGOCORP employees who moved to NOVOCORP, only 10-15% are left...I myself am really technically on loan from AGOCORP twenty years later...

My original background is in control panel and instrumentation and that's what I would have worked on back in Ireland – I was in the States with AGOCORP for a few years and then came back to NOVOCORP in 1995 back into what was then really Projects, but what was now called Facilities. About 12 years ago, I might more involved in bid proposals, meeting clients and doing that up to about 2006, doing what we do for AGOCORP but for other customers as well...Did a lot of work then in AAAAA as they have 35 times the output we have...so if you're bidding for a coal based job, you'd bring them in if putting proposals in Vietnam, Indonesia...They then had a spike in demand in their own country and I went to South Africa to help them put in SSSSS then come back in 2006 to the GENCOM account KAM so I now had to keep an internal customer happy and that grew to X million (Euros) in 2008, so we needed to give GENCOM 120 bodies up from 80 – we

had to get those bodies in and we're always reluctant to recruit if we're at a peak but...

So, anyone in GENCOM, they had a commercial and capital group so a lot of work – we refurbished the facility so spent a lot of time chasing bad debts and listening to praise and criticism...They needed project managers and we saw ourselves as project managers and we'd be soon as being good at that and they saw themselves as the operators so...

We got involved in the last project and we were doing overhauls – in the last year we've had that finishing and also another project where we went from 35 to 3 people on site so...

Why is that?

Just the nature of the work – it's cyclical and as a result when things go quiet we go look for international work – it's a bit of a filler....some people would feel...

So late last year I was asked to come back to work on the international side to compensate for the loss of GENCOM work...

So the international work we do falls into one of four categories, namely, international generation (power facilities), facility and distribution, operations and maintenance, and then a type of international feasibility service where we do modelling and design...By far the biggest revenue generator is operations and maintenance but facilities have a big job too and they do a lot of work in OOOOO...and also a four year job in PPPPP...

We wouldn't have ten people working on those three projects so we need to grow that...

What have been your views on IT in the organisation?

We've moved from faxes to dumb terminals to a point now where the IT in a Facility is a turnkey solution – we used to make our own in-house systems to automate the diagrams when we were developing power facilities...

Back here in 1995, in terms of timesheets and things – we did them all by hand but before we had AGRESSO or anything like that...that's now been dumped – I suppose that's an unkind way of putting it but funnily enough and other people might say this to you – we considered bringing in SAP about say 10 years ago, but it was too expensive...AGOCORP went the SAP route but we stepped out of that; In fairness the intranet site has been used extensively – and has photos and contact details for everyone – links to get into documents...

We had no content management system – so we brought in MERIDIEN and people in Leo Moriarty's crew had FALCON – I suppose we weren't sure whether we wanted to go the longer-term owner-engineer route or just be pure consultants...

We've been pushed back into the owner-engineer fold – MERIDIEN become the document management system as it had 3-D functionality which was useful for the design documentation which a lot of people used...

SHAREPOINT is here – we do feel that it's a bit foisted upon us –from head office – fine for documents but not really worth a damn for drawings...

The idea of it being foisted upon you – is there a general feeling that the new SAP system is a bit like that?

Well, there might be but I mean I've never used AGRESSO that much bar timesheet entry – there is a need when as a project manager, you'd be looking at it and getting reports from it in terms of billing or time queries from clients- it's reasonably usable – there is some icon direction etc on it...

The finance people would like it...

There is a bit of a Chinese wall between us and head office – the projects and the facility side all moved over here so you do sometimes get an attitude of "oh, those mavericks over there in NOVOCORP..." though they usually only say that to me when they're retired!

We wouldn't have invested in SAP ten years ago as we would have felt that it was too expensive and we could do it independently...But I suppose in the last few years, even though in NOVOCORP we'd have, as we discussed few core AGOCORP staff and given that we are a wholly owned subsidiary, we have moved a lot closer...

We are being drawn back into the fold whereas we might have felt that we were pushed out (initially)...there's a lot less of 'us' vs. 'them' now though I got the impression from talking to Fergal Flynn that there is a bit of that feeling still...

The SAP system is mainly going to be for the benefit of corporate –there are some things we do differently – in AGOCORP you might work on one job number a year, here you might need 4 different job numbers a day...

Also from a HR perspective, you might have different needs also – 80% of our employees (in NOVOCORP) are direct hires, with different terms and conditions to AGOCORP so...

As a KAM, time, expenses and any third party extras are what I'd be looking for – we only got to see the system for the first time yesterday in a presentation with Fergal – in terms of screen shots...

Mostly KAMS?

Aoife, Tommy Walsh...and Liam McHale were also there to whip along the unwilling (SMILES) – in order to get us to take ownership for it and not to be pushing it back onto the project...

There were people there trying to cause a row but that's the personalities you have – they enjoy causing an argument regardless of a new system or whatever...

But I can see the benefits of having a single system for sure...We weren't asked or I wouldn't have been asked about it but I can see that...

So the business case makes sense for you.

It does, I'd be a fan of a structured approach – take a project management approach and do things that way...

Has that been reflected in this project?

Well, I attended any meeting I was at and the people giving out now are more the people who missed more meetings than they came to and then when they came along, they'd be asking questions that were answered three meetings ago – I'd be thinking that they missed the boat to be honest...

That's for Fergal really to defend – I would have had a lot of dealings with Mario when I was KAM for GENCOM because Fergal would have been involved as the project manager for a project – he was very proactive and we would have talked a lot about issues around costs and billing etc when they arose...

What were your views on him being change manager for this project?

Well, he came to me and said "what have I let myself in for..." (SMILES)...the last project had three or four months to go and I was asked to go to the client to release him – they thought very highly of him but once the full performance test went well, around St Patrick's Day (17th March), that was a milestone and he was able to disengage then...He was caught between two stools for the few months – he was very busy and he wanted to be involved with the new project...He didn't want to leave the client in the lurch considering he's been working on Aghada for six years so...

He's an organised, meticulous kind of fella so I said 'Look, this is probably not a role (change manager) that you'd want to make a career out of' and at the same time, there was no obvious project coming down the tracks – the next job would probably be a foreign posting... he UK but that was being managed so there was a uncertainty there...

Now this was an opportunity to raise his profile with important people in the business and he's still young – he's probably the youngest ever project manager of a project the size of that...He's another opportunity to raise your profile with the Liam's and the Tommy Walsh's of this world. Also, he would be working centrally with people back in AGOCORP so...

How do you feel it's gone for him?

I suppose you had to ask that question! Well, the optics from the outside looking in, certainly he's been well-received at any presentation I've been at and he's well thought of so...

Do you think it's important that the change manager is an engineer?

Well, I think it's helped...people know Fergal, he's considered competent, has a good reputation after the last project and as an engineer knows the processes we need to work in the new system...

He's not asking 'What would this system do?'; one thing though is that he would have, because of his background, is more of a strong Facilities perspective – one of the biggest generators of invoices and billing though is the Networks key account that Peter Jackson (and now Freddie) used to run and that he'll gladly tell you all about...

Networks also have been involved with their own SAP system, the XYZ?

Yes – I know Networks require as well a lot of detail on their invoices, I mean you have purchase orders coming there after the fact and catch-up being played – I hear about this detail second or third hand – I'm not that familiar with it...

Networks though had a turnover last year of x million Euros; Facilities was y million so it's a big account with a lot of jobs – Facilities would have less jobs but more money per job like one which was eventually z million Euros, Networks account would have more of the 100-150, 000 Euro jobs – Mitt Ryan who you have met (not yet), he's looking after Generation and also electric vehicles – we provide some bodies for that also...

How would you characterise communication on the project?

Well, I'd have a lot of dealings with Leona Miles who's on the Finance part of the SAP project when I was KAM for GENCOM – every KAM has a designated finance person who may have a staff of three working for them – I had three designated people in my time as KAM there, Leona was my last one and she was also the contact finance person for Networks so she would know what accounting needs the new system would have to meet...She's been on the team from the beginning and she might informally come to me if she needed something from someone...She

knew the GENCOM and Networks business well – also familiar with other areas – she was sharing the presentation yesterday with Fergal...

How did it go – what was the reaction to the system?

Well – the reaction was... I suppose People were happy to see the system – they were happy that they could be getting something to play with...For me, they've done enough communication...

International business is slow at the minute, three projects so I wouldn't be expecting a lot of system customisations based on what I do...7 or 8 invoices a month in comparison to 400 from Networks so getting them happy and on board is key...

Freddie is the KAM there now but we had Peter Jackson there before and he had invested a lot of time and energy into creating a database that could pull data from AGRESSO and put into reports etc...Now, Freddie wasn't there yesterday but a girl from his team was there and I asked her "What will this mean for your database?" and she replied 'Thanks be to God, It'll be gone'...

Peter Jackson at the initial stages of the project would have been very resistant to the new system – he would have put a lot of time and effort into this database and would have preferred not to have seen it gone as a result...

So, there would have been some emotional attachment there?

Yes, I would think so...I looked at it for the GENCOM account some time back and it was way too complex – I had a girl in accounts that can pull stuff out of AGRESSO and can look at the reports which is OK for us...

Would it be far to see that the Networks account people would have been more resistant than most?

I would think so – seeing them in the early meetings and hearing what Leona and Freddie were saying – that was definitely the case initially; from my perspective I saw no need to get customisations or workarounds due to the size of our business...

Would you feel it would have been better to have seen some of the system earlier?

Well, time has moved on very quickly on this project – and it's nearly September already. But my big concern now as the project moves on quickly is the training – the system might go in on the first of January but there'll be a few issues left to clear-up. Tommy Walsh said in the meeting yesterday that there were a few issues to rectify so...

There have been enough competent people, a huge amount of Finance and HR people, Fergal is the only engineer as far as I know, on the project so I have no doubt that they'll produce something that will work for us...

The only worry would be that...most people's interactions will be on the holidays and timesheets and expenses...You might have 40 people out of 600 who are on the KAM side and would be worried about it...the rest wouldn't care that much...

The timesheet is the key one to get right – I said that to Thomas yesterday that the project might get a bad name if the things that are used by everyone don't work exactly right...

How did the timesheet look yesterday?

It looked OK –it's not all on one screen so you'd be looking for it and then you'd tab to the right and its they're so...it's like anything new and come the launch people have to be able to use it –I believe in November and December (2010) there's going to be a big push to get people trained so that will be important...

Some people have commented on the gap between design closing and actually getting to see the system – was that something you felt?

Well, I'd see Fergal occasionally as he'd still be at his own desk over here occasionally and he'd remark on how things were going...I wasn't unduly worried. But then yesterday when we saw the screens was the first time anyone outside the project had seen the system as far as I know...

We would have had some generic AGOCORP version exposure – but it clicked with me yesterday that its September and they're still a lot of issues to fix so...

Was that a generally held view?

No—one said anything but just looking at the dates, they'll be busy to get it in on time...

Would people be confident that they'll make the deadline?

(THINKING) Well, there was more acceptance in the room in terms of...I've been at meetings where there was more criticism and people asking "What about my Number", "Can I have a year in the number?" and there's definitely a lot less of that, people have moved on – still a bit but not as much...Networks really are the most affected – Peter Jackson was holding back on the horses a bit at the start – his turnover was x out of a total of y million so it had to be important...so he'd be a good guy to talk to (he was interviewed at a later stage)...

Were you involved much in the BLUEPRINTING phase?

I attended all the meetings I was asked to attend, which was three I think we had an initial SAP consultant from India who departed the project later on – but he found it hard to understand how the business had so much internal custom – taking money from one pocket and putting into another...and so much time on the commercial relationships, lot of time fighting and sometimes bad blood trying to get paid...a lot of “wattless” energy as we say but he was fascinated by it, but outsiders do find it strange, some insiders as well in the bowels of it...

He was very much – ‘what do you want?’ and then SAP can do this and SAP can’t do that...

Most of the meetings I went to were finance related so Fergal and Leona would have been there and the other KAMs...

Fiona McGregor?

No – I only ever saw her for the first time yesterday...though she’s been on the project, I believe for two or three months...

The HR side would be called in if there was an issue if people working a weekend or time in lieu – as generally we would be concerned in terms of the system that people wouldn’t be building up too much time in lieu.

Were you happy with the general level of SAP knowledge in the room? I know THE first consultant was replaced by another...

I didn’t meet him though I heard about him all-right...

Some of the team weren’t SAP experienced even though they had some SAP training; was that obvious to you or an issue?

Not really – it was more a case of going around the table asking people what they would like from the system – all the KAMs had a chance to say what they wanted and then the different requirements came out then – you’d have the billing issues and how you’d produce invoices.

The key thing we all wanted was definitely not a system which if you pressed a button sent something straight to the customer – we needed a system whereby the KAMs would be able to capture the different data they needed – the costs are what they are but to try and say – maybe a KAM might need be able to tweak things if a client’s budget was tight that month but something still had been done but would be paid for next month – that kind of human intervention or human side of things was important for us to have...

And the first consultant, in fairness, though he might have wondered about some of the business processes we engaged in, why so much thought and effort was

going into making sure one part of a business could deal with another even though the money was going into and out of the same account...

Overall, though at my end, I was happy with it

Did you feel that there was clarity for you and your colleagues as to what was coming out of the process – what was possible?

Well, I thought well of him, in fairness he might say yes or no or I don't know but I suppose the key thing for me and what come out of yesterday even though Freddie was not there, was the general feeling in the room was what would be the reaction of Networks...

Because we have a small amount of invoices, we could do a bit of manual interventions – I got the impression from Freddie's Key account lady that there were happier than they were...She's more at the coalface than Peter or Freddie...she's the one going in there sorting out the problems...if she's happy then that's a good sign and hence my question which I mentioned earlier about the database...she seemed happy enough to be getting rid of it...but the devil of this is in the detail..

Overall, how did you feel about the communication about the project? Quality and quantity-wise...

Well – my query was and I said it to Fergal the very first day he came to talk to me was "What does a change manager actually do?" -I wasn't quite sure...

Do you think that the role was clearly specified for him?

Initially, there was some uncertainty...my understanding from him and I probably didn't get all he said was that it was about facilitating communication to and from the business and liaising with HR on training etc. and preparing us for the change and geeing us up for it – that's what I get from him...

Has he done that, do you think?

It's (THINKING) hard to say as the vast majority of people here other than me and the level at which people get certain communication, the KAMs and their staff etc, most people would be unaware as to what's coming – ask them what's changing from an IT perspective on the 1st of January and they'd probably look at you...

Has the role of the BIM being discussed? Do people see her role as being different to that of the change manager?

Who's the business implementation manager?

Fiona McGregor...

OK – that's who it is – I have to say now it's not my call whether she is or isn't on the project, but I'm puzzled as to why she's on the project...

She was announced in that role suddenly two months ago – we got the impression that this wasn't planned when the project started in January...whether they were run off their feet or this was a gap identified that needed that she addressed...

Did people see it as disempowering Fergal?

I wouldn't see it as a reflection on Fergal at all – I'm unclear as to the demarcation between what they do on the project or why she was on the project – it wasn't part of the master grand plan as far as I know – I just saw here at the meeting for the first time yesterday...

Would people query it (her role) broadly do you think?

To be honest, people are going down to Project HQ all the time so some people who are more proactive might be...but the feeling is they're down there doing their thing and there's enough of them there...

In terms of the testing side, have you been informed much?

I would have seen a schedule way back in January in passing but when we saw the schedule yesterday the reaction was more OK, get this done by January 2012 rather than 2011!

I said to Thomas Mulcahy that there's a bit of light at the end of the tunnel and he said "We'll get it in for January"...these things take time – there's a lot more than my little area as a KAM...

Would you feel there's a comeback in testing?

I know there's a change request process which looks at cost, impact and timescale and maybe push stuff back to next year if not critical....

Tommy Walsh did say that there were three key issues – now he didn't spell them out or get into them but yesterday was more resignation, not in a negative sense more a suck it and see approach – I would be more worried if I was someone in Networks who could really be affected by this if it does not work rather than say my area.

Thanks for your time Frances...

You're welcome.

(60, 00)

Interviewee: Martha June, Operations Management, HR Department, NOVOCORP;
appointed as HR operative on SAP project team.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

So Martha, you might fill me in on your background and your roles in AGOCORP and NOVOCORP?

Well, I started in NOVOCORP about six years ago in an admin function in a learning and development role – managing and recording training courses etc on a spreadsheet which is quite laborious...but which needed to be monitored and recorded for CPD (Continuous Professional Development) purposes to ensure we remained certified by Engineers Ireland. That was my main focus for the first four years and I also worked on the bonuses and salary review processes which is linked to the performance review process, so collating all the review data and linking it back to salary increases and bonuses...

In the last two years I had started to work on the Operations side with Margaret Blair, mapping all the businesses processes as well as still doing the salary and bonuses work as well...

So, this entailed the mapping out of all the processes that was a help in getting ready for the BLUEPRINTING phase?

Yes, I had just come back from Maternity leave and Margaret asked me to start working on that...

That helped us when we came over to the SAP project as we know the processes inside out – so I had to work with all the other staff in HR like the girl who entered the expenses and other things people did as well. I mightn't have done those things but when we sat down and mapped out those processes, I got a good understanding...

So the new SAP system has enormous potential for what you do every day?

Oh absolutely – I like IT anyway and have taught OFFICE applications in a prior job so even though I like EXCEL, I can see the benefit of SAP...The system is very EXCEL and WORD driven – e-mailing 900 people to keep those CPD records up-to-date and we're not really capturing all of it as you know, not everybody will reply to an e-mail so....

And the Learning and Development module is something new and different in all of AGOCORP, I believe...

Yes, we're the guinea pigs if you like and we've also had expressions of interest from GENCOM to adopt it if it works out so...

We've a couple of presentations on it around the business and it has a lot of potential...

Talking to people, even though there is an important HR dimension to this project, it mightn't be as immediate as say the expenses, timesheets etc...

People were aware the HR change was coming but I suppose even at the workshops, it was clear that this was a financially driven project which is understandable as they have to make that first of January deadline for the accounts etc- for us that deadline is not as important...

You have a bit of a (time) buffer...

We have a six month buffer really until June – we could run our old performance management system if we had to...

It's very exciting in terms of OK – you can submit your timesheets, expenses and leave requests on-line...Some of that people were doing on-line anyway but it's the integration power that SAP give you that will be the difference...

In HR, we were doing all these things, unpaid leave and expenses at the back-end and looking at the annual leave which people submitted through the intranet site...so empowering the people to do it themselves...

What has been the response of staff to these changes?

Well, the presentation recently to the engineering managers, who would be a tough audience and HR, went down well – in January, they have to initially use the system to agree their eight objectives and the nothing happens till June when they have to do their training and development plan...So we're aware that they'll be getting to grips with timesheets and expenses in January as well so we're careful not to inundate them with new functions...

No more paper – it will move seamlessly between the manager and employee and if you need to change objectives or if you change managers, the system can accommodate that – get your objectives out of the way and we won't come back to you until June...

The good thing about SAP (for us) is that the business processes we mapped are going into SAP unchanged and for the user there's extra benefits...

Such as?

Well, there's a very time consuming process I undertake every September or October where for each manager, I put together a spreadsheet of their staff and their performance rating from last year and then what they have to do is to carry out their performance rating for the individual for this year and then update the spreadsheet...

It's like pulling teeth trying to get managers to come back to us with that – we end up calling them and chasing them and we need to collate it all into one big spreadsheet so we can see the spread of performers from top to bottom...

And SAP will allow this all to be done on-line?

Yes for the managers– now the employee can see the descriptors but not the figures as we don't want an argument around that...

HR and managers will be able to extract reports and empower managers to have this information and see who's outstanding. For us (in HR) it will save an enormous amount of time...

So the actual work change for them won't be that great?

Well, no as they have to have the three meetings – there'll always be managers who don't use the new system...it's not a click exercise as one manager says in terms of the meeting happening – the manager and employee have to arrange the meetings themselves...

How did you get involved on the SAP project?

Well, Margaret Blair asked me to do it and to be honest having mapped all the processes and unsure as to where I'd be going in HR, I was happy to do it...

When did you start?

January (2010) last – I was a bit unsure as to what to expect as I had never worked on a project before so even getting used to the terminology – BLUEPRINTING etc was all new and a bit intimidating and all the BPIDs and all the phases...So Marissa and I wrote the BPIDs even though Marissa was on the learning and development and I was on the Ops side, we wrote them together and I'll be replacing Marissa on the learning and development side as she's going on maternity leave and "Rachel" will be coming over to replace me...We're at integration testing in terms of Ops – and that's replicating what's already in AGOCORP so that's flying – we just have to wait to test the timesheet once it's finished...

How's that going?

Slow and the SAP consultant (Henk) isn't great we have internal consultancy help from a lady from the SAP competency centre in AGOCORP...but her focus has been mainly on the Ops side as opposed to learning and development. She has been caught up in the PS Timesheet as they have been slow to pin down what exactly they want in the timesheet. The Ops are already in AGOCORP so that's a concern we've raised with Lorna Doone this morning...he's more a back-end (SAP expert) so she's had to work on the portal (front-end) side as well as trying to make sense of the specs he's put together...

When the SAP consultant leaves, she should be in a position to have that knowledge (in respect to learning and development). She's lost a bit of time (because of the PS timesheet issue) but still she's been quite disengaged from the process.

In terms of the BLUEPRINTING phase, when you sat in on those meetings and from your own perspective, dealing with the consultants, what did you feel it was like for you?

Well we started off with the BPIDs, the AS-IS and TO-BE so we engaged with the experts in the business and also with the "Beechpark" office who administer the processing of expenses to get a full view of the AS-IS...

So in terms of experts, Margaret and Patricia Clarkson?

Well (SMILES), not so much of Patricia...but the people under Margaret looking after the processes and "Drew" who looks after the expenses and timesheets back in HR were involved also and we all put together the TO-BE in SAP and worked through it with the Tullamore office who'd be operating with the changes...

The TO-BE in SAP language – how would you have put it together?

Well, "Martina" who came from the (corporate) SAP centre would have helped us put them together to reflect SAP...Carol who was familiar with the reports that Tullamore run on expenses and who was really critical on the project and also "Roisin" who was the Ops expert and linked in with corporate ops...They were both deeply involved...

We got AGOCORP test accounts as well and we were able to look at say how leave was requested in AGOCORP and so get some insights into the TO-BE (BPIDs) out of that...Some of the processes were relatively easy to right – others like the timesheets and expenses took longer as there was a lot of detail to get right...

The BPIDs were reviewed by the experts – say Martina would look at the Ops BPIDs and Roisin at the timesheets and expenses ones...

Would the (external) SAP consultants be involved?

No – they were only involved say on the new LDS module stuff – this functionality was already in AGOCORP...

We e-mailed out the BPIDs, they reviewed them as peers and then Margaret and us all went to a meeting in Beechpark to finalise them...

In terms of the BLUEPRINTING meetings, you sat in on some of the workshops with Sanjay also...

On timesheets and expenses I was yes from the HR perspective – they were fine – one meeting was with the engineering managers and the issue of timesheet approval was raised – timesheets at the moment in NOVOCORP are not approved, so there would be changes to how they (the managers) would work...

What was their reaction?

Initially, quite negative...things like '(Our reporting) managers won't do this', so we explained that if you have someone going on parental or unpaid leave that's agreed and if you don't approve their timesheets then they're hit in terms of salary at the end of the month...so...

Also, AGOCORP are doing this for thousands of employees- why can't we do it? So, I think they're coming around, they're converted...

More receptive now? What do you attribute that to? Is it the business case becoming more accepted?

Absolutely – the presentation they had yesterday or the day before on the PS timesheet over here, the presentation we attended...It's been a while...

Initially (in BLUEPRINTING) the finance people, Leona Miles etc brought them over here and then showed them how the job numbers, processes etc would work and then there was nothing for a while...

Was that an issue?

Oh definitely, people were beginning to ask what was the story with the timesheets? We had presented the previous week and given a few screenshots of the learning and development solution and the HR side of things and people were coming up afterwards asking about the timesheets...there was a period there of about three to four months whereby they hadn't seen anything at all...

How did that arise?

Well, there was a change of consultant (left the project to be replaced) and there was a lot of messing going on in terms of say moving columns (on the SAP timesheet screen) around and stuff like that...

Was there recognition on the project management side of things, say by the project manager that it could be useful to show the business something and manage expectations?

I would say that yes...In fairness they were trying their best to give the engineering managers what they wanted...and once they got a look at the timesheets, I think things settled down – now, the timesheet isn't that pretty and certainly it's a bit awkward in terms of the size of things on the screen etc but with the next version of SAP, we would be able to move columns around and stuff...

They were happy when they saw the billing and invoicing and the power at the back-end...The biggest issue I suppose is that the line manager approves timesheets and expenses as opposed to a project manager which they would have wanted in NOVOCORP...and it was decided on the project that it would be the line manager...that's a big culture change

That's fixed then?

Yes – well the principle of the project is SAP standard and as such the standard in AGOCORP is that the line manager is the approver not the project manager. Now I had an engineering manager in NOVOCORP explain to me that I've a guy in Civil who's working on a project for a project manager in Facility. That guy's line manager in Civil has no idea as to what his employee's really working on in Facility so when he gets the expenses and timesheets, he'll just approve them...

With the SAP reporting though, the project manager will get a report that the employee is putting in their expenses and timesheets in some way against a job code and if there's a problem they can identify it there...

If you had a situation where in NOVOCORP, project managers were the approvers, you'd have workflows going everywhere...it wouldn't be feasible to do it...

Would the project managers be concerned about traceability or billing do you think?

Oh definitely more the billing – nothing gets billed unless the project manager approves – and its extra work for them...you may get some mistakes going in...But the project manager can go down through the report and pick out any issues...

That (approval process) can't change now at this stage...

Oh no, definitely not – a decision was made quite early that you couldn't have workflows going everywhere – wouldn't be feasible...

Do you think people realised this issue back in the BLUEPRINTING phase? Were they told that this approval process wouldn't happen early on?

Well, it has come up now again as we say yesterday when the manager mentioned again that he wasn't happy...(In BLUEPRINTING) there was a lot of meetings but there were gaps between them and also you had a communication gap when the meetings were over that didn't help either...they were very anxious to see it...

On the team or the change manager side?

Oh, the change manager – speaking confidentially he's not the strongest person...

In terms of the quality or quantity of communication?

Well he can be quite nervous even though he is an engineer himself, going over and talking with managers in the business...there were a few missed opportunities in terms of sending out electronic mails and also in updating the intranet project page where we were updating how things were coming along...

Would that have been used by many people?

Well, it would have but it's kind of fallen away a bit now...I haven't time to view it myself but I do believe that there was interest in it yes...

Could some of this communication issue stem from a possibility that he might not be totally clear in his role as the roles of a change manager can mean different things to different people...?

He would have got clarity on that at the start and also he did get coached by an external consultant who would have emphasised the importance of communication. Now, he might ask us to help give presentations etc as he wouldn't know the business processes or the technical stuff in finance such as tax...Now the HR processes in AGOCORP are not that different to those in NOVOCORP so if he read the BPIDs he should get a good understanding of our processes and would have to ask not too many questions for clarification.

Do you feel it was a good idea that an engineer was chosen for the Change Manager role?

Initially, I would have said yes...I'm not sure it matters – if you had someone confident and forceful who could go in and discuss with the engineering managers who aren't the easiest to deal with...

I'm not sure he would have been the most well-known guy in the business either...but he was picked by the most senior engineering manager so he was probably thinking about his next role back in the business...but I do feel he needs support...at this time

Is he getting it?

Well, they're going to have to...

How could they do that, do you think?

Well, you can't pull the rug from under him either because that wouldn't do him any good or the credibility of the project...

But the BIM, she's very good, very strong and I know she's finance but she has supported him a lot, I would think...

Do you think there might be a perception that the BIM role could disempower the change role in any way in terms of the business looking into the project...the BIM role, though it was always intended to be filled seemed to be a bit of a surprise to a lot of people?

Well, the perception might be there...The BIM role was always in the plan and she does add value...

The communication around that (BIM) role maybe could have been better?

Maybe yes – but the training part is part of the change manager remit and I have seen none of the training needs analyses in terms of the HR side. I emphasised that with Marissa going on maternity leave that he needed to get that clarified and get her input on the Learning and Development side before she goes as she's the brains on that and he says he'll get onto it and the next thing you know that's now the responsibility of the training consultant we've brought over from the UK...he's disengaging from that but that's part of his responsibilities.

This trainer has a huge finance background and wouldn't know much about HR really – again the finance side is driving things – it's like 70-30 Finance here and its clear in the meetings that that's the case...Not to be critical of others, but we get our stuff in on time and we had the processes done in advance which was a huge benefit...

Would be helpful for everyone to be doing that really...

Absolutely, regardless of the project happening, we should be doing this anyway...

Given you had so much of the preparatory work done, could have had a longer time for BLUEPRINTING?

Well, for ops we definitely had enough time but on the PM and LDS side we were under pressure and working all hours to get it in on time – working both Marissa and I working till 11 or 12 every night to get it done but we did it and that's the nature of projects I guess....

How is the testing process working?

Well so far, ops and performance management are pretty much done – the PS timesheet is tested bar the workarounds that are being done at the moment while we wait for the final changes to be made...And we'll moving onto integration testing which is the end-to-end test if you like...

At the meeting yesterday, did you notice a difference in how the KAMs and engineering managers view the project?

Well, I wasn't there but the feedback I heard was that they were positive about what they saw...Senior management were also there in terms of 'Right lads, this is how we'll be working from now-on, get used to it' kind of thing (SMILES).

Is the involvement of senior managers typical of communication events in this project?

No –but they have attended at times...

Is that a good thing?

Yes, absolutely important to have senior people there supporting the project...

And you have a new planning consultant on the project team also?

Oh Yes Rory Harrington (interviewed later) with his Microsoft Project (LAUGHS)...

Why was he brought in?

Well, to be quite honest Lorna stood in for three weeks there in August when Thomas was on holidays and she was pretty shocked at the state of the project so she brought Rory in to put a planning structure. In fairness, he's a good addition – he brought a planning discipline – we know have very structured meetings where we talk about development, release from development and testing and how things will go...

Has Lorna still stayed involved?

Well, she's pulled back a bit but she's still coming to meetings, she's still getting involved if we have an issue –like this morning we had an issue around signoff documentation on the HR side which we would have liked in the SAP system but that AGOCORP don't have. We're not going to get it but she was able to explain why not just in terms of the development time required and the deadlines we're trying to meet...She's still of course on the project board also as well...

How do you feel the project team and project board have worked together?

Thomas would really be the contact – they'd pop in – Rory is our representative (Senior NOVOCORP HR manager) and he'd often meet with us and can raise issue for us...

So that structure works in terms of bringing issues up at that level?

Also, you have in between that the change board also where you have Margaret, my old boss who sits on that and she comes over to us quite regularly and she'd support us very much as well...

How has the change board process worked so far?

Well I would say – we would raise issues with Thomas and he would pass them onto the change board for discussion...Marissa or I, the functional leads would suggest – the biggest change request was around the grades...

Which was?

NOVOCORP had 500 people all at one grade and it made sense from a reporting level to be able to split this one grade into several...In AGOCORP you didn't have that many people at one grade so their SAP wouldn't have had to cope with it...It's something Margaret and "Roger Burns" was a big support for her on it so it happened after a lot of tooing and frooing...

Who's on the change board?

John Jakesmith and "Lisa" from AGOCORP and she'd be a heavy hitter on the corporate side, Warren Gatling on the finance side from NOVOCORP and obviously Margaret and Thomas chairs the board and calls it on the back of a passed request...

What are the criteria for a change request? Is it mostly about looking at cost?

Cost is one issue, whether it's a defect or something cosmetic and then you'd have the reasons and the impact also of the possible change...

Is it still being called?

Really, I suppose it shouldn't but around Performance Management and the LDS...The performance management module will go live in January (2011) and the LDS will also go in January and its deadline in February...but there was a delay due to the extra development as it was brand new and then there was a delay around the support packs also so that pushed us out a little bit...

User Acceptance testing won't be identifying something that will create another change request?

Well, if it does, we won't have done our job! Well, there might be small cosmetic things but sometimes you may have something that you feel is more of a defect than something cosmetic and you have to get a call on that from Thomas but it may result in extra support for and queries from the user...

In terms of the remaining time on the project, what would be the big issues that you would foresee?

Training and communication for me would be the big issues, certainly with respect to business readiness testing...

In terms of the testing?

I don't see there being massive issues around the testing – there are people in the business that you often can go to and ask to get involved in the testing side of things...I don't see that being a problem – people will want to be involved...certainly from the learning and development team, they'll be the ones testing the LDS module...

In terms of the business readiness testing, I'm not sure how the engineering managers will do that...

How about the communication?

Well certainly more presentations – like the reception we got yesterday would reinforce that – I certainly don't have the time to be doing it even if the change manager is asking me to do it – I see that more as his role and responsibility.

When you look back over the project so far what are the key things that you feel have happened?

It's been quite positive – a very tough learning experience but I'm excited about what it means for the business...

I developed more competences from being around Sinead and the interactions with the wider AGOCORP community which I wouldn't have had before – that networking opportunity...

Any negatives?

Other than worrying about tight deadlines – not really...

So other than communication, any other concerns...

The training side of things like what we discussed earlier would concern me and frustrate me – the finance side does drive things but it does annoy me in terms of

the training as the finance side only affects x people, the HR side of things will affect everybody – everyone will be logging in and using it...so...

Perhaps, the new training consultant can address that concern?

Well, so far I wouldn't have massive confidence in him I have to say in terms of what I've heard...the change manager mentioned that he had sent on all the roles and the respective rights of access associated with these roles and when we talked about the HR transactions within SAP, he felt the training consultant didn't seem to know them so that would worry me...They've pumped a lot of money into this guy so we won't be getting other resources although we'll be getting some bodies from the business...

I'd also be a bit concerned about the project manager – he's a nice guy but he lacks objectivity at times. He would be close to certain people on the project and if their work is not in on time for a meeting, it's not a big deal whereas I'd always be there and on time and he'd almost be minding the AGOCORP lads on the project a little bit...

OK...

I've noticed that a little bit recently...

In terms of Rory's role, would that have had any effect on how the project manager would be perceived? Could it seem that he's been disempowered somewhat?

Well, I certainly felt that – if we have this gut doing all the planning, does this mean that the project manager can't do his job? Why does he need help? Surely planning was his responsibility...

But when Lorna came over for those three weeks, it was clear that the finance side was slipping and something had to be done so at that point she got us into a room and told us this had to be delivered – we all sat up and listened and we needed it, we definitely needed it...so...

Thanks for that Martha...

You're welcome.

(46, 00)

Location: NOVOCORP HQ/ **Date:** 8th September 2010/ **Duration:** 51.5 mins.

Interviewee: Peter Jackson, Engineering Manager, NOVOCORP.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

So Peter, you might fill me in on your career and organisational roles so far?

Well, I joined AGOCORP 35 years ago as an electrician and then training for ten years and then onto NOVOCORP and worked my way up through key accounts and then into a key account management role – we roughly stay in a KAM role for about five years and then we get rotated...which I like actually and is I feel is good and healthy...I was Networks KAM and Leo was here and Freddie has replaced me so...you get to move around...

It can be hard to move people on and funnily enough we don't have that much interaction after we move – the odd phone call after we have the handover...

So, my official title is Engineering Manager and we look after about all the maintenance and commissioning of facilities and we have about 80 people working here at the moment and we act as first response to maintain all the cables and the overheads. Leo's group design and build the assets but we maintain them and change them if needs be once they get established...We deal mainly with the Infrastructure overseers and NETWORKS – if you like the Infrastructure overseers have all the power and NETWORKS the responsibility. We deal with Infrastructure overseers but through NETWORKS as an interface...Infrastructure overseers set the policy and NETWORKS implement it and we help...

NETWORKS do some low level work but we do all the asset management so that is what we do.

So your prior role as KAM for Networks must be useful in terms of knowing the business etc...

Actually, has very little to do with it – Freddie's role is more commercial – dealing with the contracts and the invoices but we'd do the work here in assets – it's fairly standard, can change but it's fairly similar, year on year...We also have some interaction with Leo's group in advising them on any new technologies or approaches out there that they can take and also doing factory tests as in testing newly finished assets that they have built – I would use one of Freddie's key account people to manage my side of the business here as well...We'd also go some external work – we have a person in Bahrain and we also have something on

the new connector between the UK and here – we would work on external things if we get the opportunity and the resources available...

If you were in Y Street and you were walking around Leo's group, you'd see mostly 29-30 year old people – around here you'd have people more my age and I'm a lot younger than I look (LAUGHS) or older maybe—we bring that experience and expertise...

What's been your views on IT in your time here?

Not much initially – I started to use IT twenty years ago – some people would take to it very quickly but I had no formal training or anything – a colleague showed me how to use it and of course you have to learn as it becomes more used....

I'd be a bit scared of technology to be honest – my view on technology would be that systems are a bit like cars – they're great but they don't live up to expectations and keep on breaking down...

We have a very specialised use of technology here – what we call protection equipment and that they're expensive, Y Euros a go – we have very bespoke systems that we need but it's hard to integrate with and send them back to the systems/databases we have here and also to get access into the AGOCORP systems; as you probably know, they have to be and are very secure...

(SIGHS) – We have a novel (BUNNY EARS MOTION) solution that we came up which to use a Laptop and have a virtual machine but as soon as I heard about that I knew it wouldn't work and it didn't...

We have guys out in the field and we need to be getting information to and from our systems as quickly as possible and it's a nightmare because of the security...I have invested a lot in an important IPS system...everything that goes on in the network, all the assets have to be on that – really important – Infrastructure overseers would insist on it and could ask for it in the morning...

How about the (CER) regulator?

(LAUGHS) and it gets more serious then that data is really critical and if we can't provide it, well there would be consequences for the wider organisation and not just us...So, the IPS system is very important and there's seven or eight people working on it - we're trying it out at the moment to see in terms of inputting data and being able to test different equipment and being able to input the results of different types of tests....trends and footprints of equipment – a footprint is like a lifetime ongoing check – stops things going faulty in advance - monitoring reduces the need for maintenance, assuming that the maintenance system works (LAUGHS)...

The main system we have here though is AGRESSO – having been a KAM, I know all the problems with it (LAUGHS)...When I was up in Y Street, where Freddie is now, we and a few other lads, one of which was good with systems, we specced out and designed our own system – a database that inputted and outputted from AGRESSO and worked around it like that..

We had serious issues- it was very manual, wasn't in any way generic, and lacked support and we had...this is one of my biggest issues with systems is that we built the process and then managed the work around it and not the other way around...

The people who built it would have had more of a financial motive – I mean it wasn't great in terms of helping manage contracts...

It was more of a financial system?

Absolutely – we were able to input raw data into and output from it and we accepted it as the bible, we had to really but we found one or two problems with some data and I had a few audits done on it to see if I could have any comfort in it...At the time we had a new purchasing system brought in that engaged with it and as such we had concerns about how that was done in terms of involving people like me on it...it's very important at the start to ask people what they think is important for a system rather than presenting people with a system and saying here's the new purchasing system – not a great way to do things. And also, when we got to use the system we found that a user could either be a requisitioner, as in order purchases or an approver of orders and not both which of course can happen in practice...

I approve what other do and obviously don't approve my own but there was no way then of identifying rechargeables as in things we buy for clients and get paid back for them at the end of the month...I had to hire people to go through an airfare here and there and we do all the planning permissions here for Infrastructure overseers and others and that can cost 30,000 Euros a time – the customers would obviously reimburse us for that afterwards but if you have no way of identifying rechargeables, how do you recharge the customer? So that could have lead to a lot of lost money and luckily we managed to capture most of it...So now, SAP is coming...

What did you feel about AGRESSO being sunsetted?

I was delighted – I had seen it before when you could never get the same information out of it twice...someone could have gone into the system a slightly different way and you could have macros for job numbers but...One of the biggest things for me was that the people who were managing the projects, our project managers would never do any of the financial stuff on the projects because they didn't know how to use AGRESSO – even if they wanted to, they wouldn't be able to figure out how to...that was part of the reason why the KAM group was set up – it's an unwieldy beast – we couldn't trust it – you could do TNM all right – you had

to do all the expenses on it but the procedures weren't great even when it was written down...

No problems with the business case?

No, no – I'd love to see something different...

Any emotional attachment to the systems you developed back in Y Street and elsewhere in the business?

(LAUGHS) If you ask the lads in Y Street if they've any attachment to it, they'd laugh – they'd be delighted to get an IT solution that works...

Our issue with SAP was that we felt it was going to be a system that for us, would not allow us what we wanted to do – we drew out what we did – the way we do jobs and it's quite complex...But if we can fit that into SAP and if it can all the processing and invoicing, we'd be quite happy with that...if it can handle what AGRASSO couldn't, we'd be happy...

We knew SAP was not getting to be that flexible...

Was that the commonly-held view?

Well, we'd have heard it from our friends across the way (meaning AGOCORP Corporate) that that was the case...

You buy Windows 7, you get support – you get Windows 7 NOVOCORP, you don't get the support...so we'd be happy to get SAP and have it supported. I mean we know and we all accept that this is happening...

We would regret though that the Project management module in SAP wasn't purchased- that's very short-sighted in my view...

AGOCORP (Corporate) don't have that?

No, I don't think so...We don't have a lot of things we have -we could have got it – the timesheets and expenses being done on SAP, that's a great advantage and you want the people, your manager, and your overseer to be okaying them, not me who wouldn't know whether the expenses are right....

That's addressed by SAP which is great and it's all automatic...

Now, the problem is for me is that any commissioned work that happens, the person you work for on any project should be the one signing off on your timesheets, expenses etc – if you're building a utility facility in the city centre in the morning, your project manager could be anyone, might not be your line manager who might have no idea what you're doing – now instead of your line

manager signing off, we could have gone away, bought the project management module in SAP and then been able to have your manager on a specific project down as the approver and not the line manager who's away from you. That impacts on us quite a bit but much more so for Mario whose work is nearly all commissioning and done for someone else...He probably mentioned that to you a lot if you were talking to him.

He did indeed...

What happens here is that the customers (as in the system users) are not listened to...

What happens if you try and raise issues with them?

Ahh (SIGHS) – we're not getting that module for project management because it's too expensive and so on...

What will happen now and what you'll see in the budget is (accounting for that) – I mean you're project managing and come a Friday afternoon, what are you going to do...You'll be ringing around the project managers asking them about whether people are doing this or that...I think Mario worked out that it will be an extra 2 man hours a week per manager to deal with it...

You add that up – 70,000 Euros a year I think it works out to being...

How much would the project management module cost in SAP?

No idea – conversation never got that far – to be honest, I was deep into the KAM stuff when that was being discussed and was focused on client issues, the job numbers and the invoicing and all that – that's all Freddie's headache now of course and I'll let him deal with that...(LAUGHS)....

In terms of your dealings with NETWORKS, how much did you hear about the recent experience with SAP in terms of the XYZ system?

Ah yes, did you know that are on our own (NOVOCORP Intranet), we have a page that explains all the acronyms in the company and some reason XYZ which as you probably know stands for X is actually down as Z which I think is pretty cool (HUGE LAUGH)...

What a disaster (that was)...It was an experience...we don't seem to be able to learn from these projects at all...

It was a very similar structure to this project in terms of the team and change manager etc...

Yes, but the way the system (XYZ) was designed, people ended up pretending to build assets in the sea – actually using co-ordinates in the sea, pretend assets in order to be able to requisition materials, crazy stuff like that...

You can't just buy things – you have to tell the system where stuff was going straight away and also you might not know exactly as to where they might be going...Also, we work just in time most of the time so we don't have the capacity to store things – the XYZ system couldn't handle that way of working...

A lot of people in (developing) XYZ went away and did it and didn't communicate with the people who were going to be using it. I was acting as KAM for Infrastructure overseers more at that point so I wasn't party to it but others are....

Considering that the XYZ system was supposed to make things more efficient, the fact of the matter is that we have five extra people we didn't have or need before working for us in Y Street trying to help us manage that system tells you something...(LAUGHS)...

We should look more closely at what we do –SAP is well-established over in AGOCORP – I don't see the same issues with our project. "Abraham" and I would deal mostly in XYZ and we'd have four or five meetings a week on that...

This implementation is better in that at least we're being asked what we want in the system and in fairness they're doing a good job asking us and they might come back and say 'We can get you this but we can't get you that' but at least us and they might come back and say 'We can get you this but we can't get you that' but at least they're trying to get what you want in the system...

They're doing a good job selling it...I was over there at the meeting yesterday for a presentation and it looks good – the SAP module seems to work fine...I would have seen a lot of questions – now obviously they (the project team) want to standardise a lot of the functions whereas the KAMs focus more on the job numbers want to decentralise – you can't have a procedure for every KAM – that wouldn't be realistic....what they want to do now for job numbers is to try and...

Say, how it would work in AGRESSO you're building a power facility in the city centre – you should be able to open a job number for this job with some nominal 1 Euro charge and then add to it as the job proceeds...Once that's done and OK you can't bill it but you can add the TNM, so the time you entered is paid for and then the scope is ready and they say 'OK, scope looks fine, go ahead but at a fixed cost rather than a TNM rate' – so you alter in AGRESSO the rate to reflect the new rate which is fixed regardless of the hours people work on it...or they might want an extra structural component or feature...So the detail for the job is modified and added in AGRESSO and this kind of process might be happening for multiple jobs...The KAMs are looking after the process and their accounts team as well...They were able to change things themselves in AGRESSO to reflect the ongoing job – but now because of the new centralised job numbers, any change

say, from TNM to fixed cost will have to be done through a central request...if the customer wants to change anything in terms of cost or scope, then the KAM has to go centrally....

The argument from the financial side of the house here and above (the corporate side) is that if this was to happen in SAP, then the level of training required to input such data and changes would be very detailed...

That's a lot of crap as far as I'm concerned – just financial people talking crap – they just want to centralise everything so they can control it – why wouldn't you do it yourself if you could (as a KAM)? All you'd have to do is to get people from the centre to get trained by the KAMs here and it would work...

If they control everything, that's what they want...Every couple of years this control issue comes to light – are we an engineering services company or are we a financial company or a HR company...

My view is that centralising tendencies get you further away from the job – they're not the ones who are trying to complete the job – they're not as interested in we are as making it work. At the end of the day we're the ones issuing the invoices and we'll take the hit anyway – we'll right the credit note if we have to...

They'd say oh, this is all best practice...that's a great phrase "Best Practice" what does that actually mean? Best practice under what terms and conditions...I mean we have unique approaches to job numbers here – we might start 400 new job numbers a year, changing all the time and added to that – you might have 600 already underway and every time you need to change one, you need to ask them centrally – that's just never going to work...

At the presentation yesterday, how did you find the communication?

Generally on the project very good – Fergal has done very well – he's been great and helpful...

Has he been a good advocate for you?

Yes indeed – he'd come over and have a chat with you and understand where you're coming from – he'd argue it over with you and then he might say 'I see what you're saying' and he'd go away and look into it for you...He'd understand Mario's problems very well given that's the area of the business he comes from.

Do you feel there's clarity in his role given that sometimes a change manager role can be a little unclear?

I have total clarity as to what he's doing – I see him more as the PR man for the project, selling SAP...Thomas, the project manager, I would talk to him about specific things on the project and talk to him and Fergal I'd go to his presentations

and things and I'd often go down the country to my staff all over the country and give them Fergal's presentations as he hasn't got the time and he's happy to let me do that....

For me, he's far more important than Thomas or anyone else on the project because he takes back the stuff and he knows what we're looking for and Leona is the same – I mean she used to be my interface into accounts and she knows what we're looking for and to have people there, OK they might not get everything you arguing the toss for you and fighting for what you want, then they listen and they're knowledgeable – they listen, that's the difference...

Would you feel that they have much power to get things done?

Well, I would hope so but in this project Finance have more power than the engineering side; I couldn't say on the HR side as I don't really know...But for us, when we didn't get the Project Management module on SAP given that all of us on the engineering side are either project managers or potential project managers tells it's own story...

With the centralised billing, although the work we do and our interactions with NETWORKS involve a lot of people and interactions, it's very powerful work that we do – I mean when NETWORKS go to the regulator and they can show in a very detailed way, just how competitive we are, from the building to frames of reference – we do about A million a year with NETWORKS - Finance would love that here if NETWORKS just payed us B million a quarter – they don't get that as far as the regulator is concerned, we're a subsidiary of the same company as NETWORKS – why aren't NETWORKS going out to tender to other competitors? Why do they always do business with us? We have to be able to show on a job by job basis that it's because we're competitive and cheaper and give that detail back...

We can pull out the fees with the system we have now - the billing system will be big one block so we can't do that detail – we have 4 people that can look after that z million and they do a lot of work...OK, we could get it down to 2 people if we billed a different way but we'd still need some bodies...

Unfortunately, there's no-one senior enough who really understands that argument and is willing to fight and argue for it – I'll say what I can when I can but...

The likes of Freddie and I mightn't be there when these decisions are made.... I suppose not inviting people to a meeting is a way to get a decision you want as the business to get made....

Would you have had much interaction with anyone else on the project?

Well, Thomas occasionally...I asked them initially to take "Eva" that I had worked with over in Y Street on to the project team from the point of getting her on board – usually they come looking for people but I really wanted her on board as she knows our processes well and would really be useful in the BLUEPRINTING but they didn't use her very well unfortunately...The client asks 4000 queries a month...

Why did they not use her very well?

Well, she was moved back and forth from the business and wasn't there for a long enough period of time so...They did talk to Freddie and Mario as well...from that perspective Freddie wouldn't have known as much as me and I was moving jobs at the time so Freddie, I mean he should have maybe pushed for her to be involved a bit more...But then again if you were Finance, you might not want her on the team as her experience and understanding could maybe influence the project in a engineering direction...But then again if you had the 1st of January next as your deadline, you probably need to push on and not be doing too much different, you'd have to simplify the process – but we'll wait and see, we'll wait and see...

Were you involved indirectly in the BLUEPRINTING phase?

I was indeed I worked directly with Leona on BLUEPRINTING some of our processes – she came over here and had an understanding of what we did but I went into the detailed processes. The auditing we had done previously had involved us mapping and flowcharting what we did. Also, when we had created the database for interfacing with AGRESSO, "John" who had designed it for me, he had flowcharted everything as well. So, we had tons of information we could give them and as such we were doing all the processing and we could have clear boundaries in terms of what SAP was going to do – you tell us and we can draw the line. At the moment we were only doing AGRESSO to input and output out into the database again...But it wasn't considered that important – even though it was the most important account we had...A million is about C a year on an account and that's the way they want to do it....But then it's easy to say that for the outside...

But Fergal and Leona are doing well in terms of...even at the presentation yesterday; you'd have Leona clearly saying 'There's a change request in for this and for that because it's not a simple request'. What became very apparent was that she was very proactive and she knew what areas would cause grief and she also knows the limits in terms of the processes already in AGOCORP. So, overall very good...The team are very good.

Some people have said that the BLUEPRINTING phase even though that finished three months or so ago, that yesterday was the first time you'd actually seen the system...Did you feel that affected the project in anyway?

No, because Fergal in the interim came along and was communicating the information as to where they were and I know there were issues there around

consultants and experts etc...HR were also good in terms of the involvement around the timesheets etc...

There was no information gap as far as you were concerned?

No, they've been proactive in terms of thinking outside the box – I didn't see that gap...I was told it would be a few months before we'd see it and there's nearly four months left to go so...I had a chance to see it last week but I couldn't make it so...

From the company's perspective, there might be issues too in terms of raising expectations...

(LAUGHS) In terms of scaring the life out of me more to the point! Well, that can become an issue...Well, in terms of expenses and how they're done now in AGRESSO at least for me is a tremendously complex process with someone coming to me, me signing off what they have submitted and then they go back and input into the system – the potential for errors is huge and then there's limited scope for me in getting reports from the system in terms of accuracy etc.

Now, I can just do it online and my expenses go to "Beechpark" and in a week, I'll get paid. Cool – much better (than before) than having to wait two or three weeks for stuff to come back...

Also, invariably on a Monday morning because I have staff out there in the field, I end up signing about thirty or forty timesheets for people because their managers are unable to do that, which is appalling....

Which shows the power finance has – every time we have an audit, I ask them the same question – can you show me the different authorisation levels in the company for the auditors and things I'm doing...I can send in a contract for Z million Euros and I can buy all the beer I want...but I wouldn't be able to buy a postage stamp!!

With all the other KAMS, I wrote an addendum to the authorisation policy and it's staying there untouched for the last three years.... (BROAD SMILE)...that just shows you where the power lies here in the organisation...

How do you see the next few months rolling out in the project up to the deadline?

Well, I hope we go to do a lot of testing and I would be anxious to get as many of my lads trained as possible...we have an issue here in that a lot of my staff are away from the office 99% of the time...We often had to use various areas (in terms of common meeting places) like Z two or three times a month – if you're back in the office, you're hearing something at least about SAP, If you're down the country, you're working away and you might never hear anything so there the people I'd worry about more about...

Would you communicate to them regularly?

Well, I would go down as I say to Z a few times a month, appraise them and pass on Fergal's presentations and keeping them in the loop...

But it's not the same as them being here...

Actually, they're the ones who are on the road all the time, working all the time, with the biggest timesheets and expenses and they're the ones with the most overtime and we also are special in terms of having our own transport so....

Fergal has agreed to come down with me to Z a couple of times over the next while and you also have some of the administrators here in my own area – they've sat in on some of the meetings with Fergal and asked their own questions and got to understand the system...I'd be hoping to get them trained up and send them down the country to help on the training side...

That's also important as the next big one for me is the purchasing (part of the) system...I had a good meeting with Fergal. Hopefully, having them (the administrators) involved in the testing will help as it's a thundering disgrace at the moment, it's the worst thing ever...absolutely appalling and also from an auditing perspective...If I want to requisition something, I have to get one of my girls to (do it) in terms of writing 'Peter wants this' and then I sign it, which isn't a great way of doing anything...We get a requisition in and we might get the plant or equipment but then the supplier might never get paid because the price or currency might be SEKs (i.e. Swedish Crowns)...and they might not be set up or we might not set them up like that...They (the central business) might not tell us and the next time we go to buy something off them, they'll say 'Peter, you never paid us for the last time...' and I'd be saying I did, I signed the requisition order and then we'd follow up and they'd say 'Oh, they're not in the right currency, why didn't you do it right' – and I'd be like 'Why didn't you tell me?'appalling stuff...

I've spent the last three months trying to set three people to be able to requisition on my behalf..."Lisa" has the power of authority and anything that comes in, she spreadsheets everything and tracks them to see if they get paid and sometimes that (information) comes to her and sometime to me...terrible stuff...You'd like to go back to the old days when you'd have the book with triplicate copies and it would be much more useful...I'd be interested in seeing what the purchasing system will be like in SAP – can't be any worse than what we have now...(LAUGHS)

Thanks Peter...

No problem. (51, 31)

Interviewee: Thomas Mulcahy, Project Manager (SAP HR and Financials), NOVOCORP.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

OK, Thomas, How do you feel things have gone since we last talked in your own words?

Well, at the moment, project costing and billing is a particular risk for the project John – it’s an area of functionality that’s totally new – not at all in AGOCORP in anyway – about generating costs and billing customers...

All our existing billing systems in AGOCORP are geared towards billing domestic and commercial customers in terms of supply – we didn’t have any of the expertise so we could to go out and source that externally – we had to look for a delay back in June – it’s hard to source the right external person – we’re on our third person at the moment, started with X, who was based in the UK and all the problems with the ash cloud made his continued involvement impossible on a personal level, then we had Y who recently has left us – that just didn’t work out – he was coming over from Holland and we have Z now and we’re getting frustrated now with our provider – we had a fairly serious conversation with them – we have a service agreement with them and not a relationship with a person per se...

We pay a premium for that service but it still took some pain on all sides before we got it sorted out – it was the FT, CS and CATS modules in SAP which is the skill-set we require and you need specific integration experience and that (all) is hard to get. They’re not as widely used as other modules in SAP-what we’re trying to resolve is the fact that you have a certain number of specific jobs in NOVOCORP, about 3000 per annum that you need to collect information on and bill...

Like the NETWORKS account with the different job numbers etc...

Exactly, stuff like that...SAP is really for large manufacturing projects, a classic utilities system where you doing batch processes not a number of small individual jobs so the skill set is rare as Y reminded me in a difficult meeting we had - it really is a seller’s market...

Did Henk have those skills?

Well, yes but it didn't work out...so we're behind in terms of system testing on that, we're also behind in terms of developments on that part of the implementation....

What are the implications then in terms of the rest of the project?

As you can see on the wall (GESTURES BEHIND), we're in the process of redefining the project plan – we were looking at system testing which is followed by integration testing and then onto what would happen next – we had a back-to-front approach where we started at GO-LIVE and then work backwards to see where you are as opposed to where we should be..So, as you can see we can look at a particular task, see the prerequisites and then try and see the start and the end of the task and the days as well...

So after integration testing, you'll have business readiness testing (BRT) and then user-acceptance testing (UAT)?

Well, in AGOCORP, we don't really do UAT; because we have so many users in BRT, we take UAT as implied...

The BRT phase takes in IT expertise and also the users – because our users are so involved in the BRT and the systems are internal, than traditionally in AGOCORP, we don't do UAT – of course, if it was an entirely new external system from a software house, then you would be expected to do testing differently...

About 20% of the final user community here already working on the project – we would have about 70 people in the NOVOCORP finance function and we have about 12 of them...

Would you feel that's a fair representative sample of the business?

Well, allied to the internal review process – we would have documented all the processes here with the ICT group and then we had the nine BLUEPRINTING workshops as well which was really a review process with the user and we took their inputs there, we had systems testing where we delegated some of the testing responsibility to the business and now BRT...

Now, there has been an official request from the business that we do engage in user acceptance testing and as such...from the project point of view, we are opposed to it from the point of view of the timelines required to make GO-LIVE. There is an element of risk in allowing a new group of users to come in now and start testing without any defined entry and exit criteria....

But the users are going to be using the system and we're conscious of that – so last week we had a meeting with the financial controllers on the project where we proposed to bring new people on board from the business onto the BRT – we would train them and there would be a flavour of user acceptance testing in the BRT...

We'll define the tests they'll do – they'll be passed tests that have already gone through system testing – we'll do the first week here in project HQ in a project environment where they will have project support and the final two weeks back in the business in a test environment...

I suppose for cultural reasons in that UAT is not done really in AGOCORP and the fact that BRT involves so many end-users that there should be a positive filter or HALO effect in the business...In terms of using super-users etc...

Absolutely, super-users will be selected for the initial BRT testing – there will be about 20 people – we'd love more but from the finance side a lot of people have already been committed on the project and we can't leave them shorthanded...

There are two cultural aspects to our approach to UAT – first of all, in terms of our approach to our design which here is critical and if you deliver on that, you reduce the need for UAT...Also, here in AGOCORP, because so many business units have a history in projects of committing people to participate, that in turn builds in UAT into the implementation of a system....

Would there be a UAT culture or expectation in the business?

I wouldn't think so –the only push for a general UAT would have been from the financial controllers not really the general population per se...Over the summer, the financial controllers went to have a look at an SAP system in ABC see the transition of a system distinct and separate from the project in terms of we didn't know anything about it...

They got a strong impression from ABC that they need to have a robust UAT and that fed back to the financial side of the business. Also, the nature of the collection of time and associated billing that ABC would do for their customers is more like what NOVOCORP would do and less like the rest of the AGOCORP, so that would have been in there as well...so the project costing and billing side is....

When did project costing and billing get identified as such a serious issue or has it always been identified as possibly difficult?

It was always the case that this is the area is the area with the highest complexity...and which needed the most management...We put an ad out there for the SAP consultant (with that rare skill-set) last November (2009) – we didn't have

any interviews until the 4th of January (2010), believe it or not and then eventually it took us until April to source anybody...As the project progressed, it is always highest on the risk register...it is always the critical piece in terms of the testing and ideally you would want to do this up front and not have it late as it is now...

Was it ever financially feasible for you to hire a second person (SAP consultant)?

Yes – that's was in the budget – but we couldn't get the bodies – even with Z coming on board, I would have liked to have kept Y but it just didn't work out for personal and professional reasons...

Just coming back to the end of the BLUEPRINTING phase, a few people have commented on what they felt was a lack of communication and they also commented that they would liked to have seen the system...How did you feel about that?

I had a lot of feedback on that –but we didn't have anything to demo so we looked at showing them screen grabs, but Fergal felt strongly that the screen grabs weren't strong enough and as such, that we wouldn't show them to the users who were looking to see something...

I suppose in my role, I'm always looking to prioritise and the project costing and billing space was the space which had the greatest shout for 'show it to us' and as I said that was the area that was most difficult, that was the hardest to manage, and where we were behind with the design so we had to test it too so...

Coming back to the BLUEPRINTING discussions around the project costing and billing space, did that create a delay or?

Well, we had X who would have been in at those original sessions who would have guided us as to how things and then he was replaced by Y who would have advised that this was not the right way to do it so and then Z came along and questioned Y's decisions, who has come up a simpler and more efficient solution and has gone back to discuss with X...

So, the delays coming out of BLUEPRINTING have all been a function of the lack of an external resource...there is a huge lesson for the ICT group in AGOCORP broadly on this – sometimes it's unavoidable to use an external resource but there's a risk involved – so it's critical to shadow people and support them with internal expertise so that we're learning from them as well...

Would you ever have felt that given that a lot of external resources were being lost on the project that people began to question where the project was going?

That impression was probably there but being over here in project HQ, I suppose we're in a bunker so...but there was a lot of unease over it a lot of which I feel was unwarranted...It was important for me when I came back in the Summer to show and emphasise to the business that we were in control and that the project remained on track...Although there were some hiccups, things were still under control...

Definitely rumblings existed in the business?

Oh definitely...

Did that kind-of coincide with the changes that occurred in the team along the way, such as the hiring of Rory?

Well, Rory brought an expertise to the project in terms of planning and reporting that – I would have felt we had a good project plan in place but when we brought Rory in externally...

You see in this project we as you know didn't have an implementation partner like an IBM or an Accenture so it wasn't a case of giving them our data, they throw it into a box and that spits out our system...

We don't have a project management office here within AGOCORP – or project support...

Who provides the people like yourself then in terms of IT project managers?

Well, the business units primarily with the ICT group giving the IT and technical support...what business units will do is nominate a IT project manager which will be a developmental opportunity for someone as in that person's background will not be as an IT project manager but they're typically supported by an implementation partner which has all that project management expertise...

What we haven't built up is a body of knowledge in IT project management experience – I came from IT governance so I've been involved in dashboarding and we've done something in risk and issue management and that...but there are some gaps and planning, tracking and monitoring and all that...

And that's Rory's strength?

Spot-on yes...

When did planning, tracking and monitoring etc arise as issues? Was it an external review or...

Well (THOUGHTFULLY) – I would think the project board would have been aware of it and recognised it and Lorna would certainly have recognised it...

Was this around the July/August timeframe?

No, earlier than that – I'd say late May – the first Quality assurance review would have mentioned it, then also the internal audit done by our own internal audit group here in the AGOCORP and we would have recognised that even before any of the audits took place...

To be honest John, we knew a year ago that this project would be happening without an implementation partner – that would create challenges, what kind of challenges we didn't know but challenges were going to arise...we knew there would be some gaps and that would happen to cause problems...

In retrospect, would an implementation partner have been more appropriate?

No – I don't believe so...our budget is A Euros – get an implementation partner in and you could almost double it and then you'd have wall-to-wall consultants from Accenture or IBM or whoever it is that you'd go with...

And, of course, they have their own agendas that don't always align with ours so...I would feel a much better solution would be to fill gaps with external expertise as they arise rather than go with the partner in particular for a system like this where most of the functionality is in the business somewhere else...

In terms of the remainder of the team how do you see the BIM and change manager in terms of the team – separate or?

Certainly not, well not separate in terms of the project...for me the biggest issue in this project will be the change management aspect of it – the technical side is already mostly here in the organisation...We've been able to have a change manager on board from day 1 and been able to appraise his performance also...

When you appraise a change manager, what would see the roles as being?

Well, I'm doing a course in project management at the moment – and one of the readings in it around change – I think I even went through it with Fergal mentioned about the fact that change and project managers don't come from an engineering background – they're usually pragmatic people as engineers but for a change manager it has more to do with the soft skills and being positive and upbeat all the time...selling the system...

Given that, how would you appraise Fergal in the role?

Well John, it's been mixed. He's been very good at leading meetings and he had a meeting recently with Freddie and other key people, the line managers who'll be using the system and he's was very upbeat and positive and answered all the questions...

But in general... (RUEFUL SMILE), his general demeanour is too downbeat – Fergal now comes to every second project board and he presents his strategies and what he intends to do..

Any reason in particular why that has happened?

More a recognition that the change management piece is that important in this project...

There was a proposal over the summer and the BIM and change management roles be combined and that one report to the other and then to me as I've had nine direct reports over the course of the project and that's proven to be a challenge and maybe moving down to four would be more realistic and also I suppose not to combine in so much as to have two people at least jointly doing BIM and change management roles and then reporting to me directly...

I think it was felt that the change management needed more handling at the time...I'm glad we didn't go down that road as the BIM role has begun to be problematic...

Problematic in what sense?

Well, there has been an issue I suppose since her appointment in terms of clarity as to her role and her relationship with the project team and whether she should be reporting to me or to Tommy Walsh...Now the BIM role was always planned for but she wasn't appointed until very late...We were flagging it since April and we had a Plan A and a plan B – we had a person in mind who was actually more senior to me – so it wouldn't have been appropriate that she would report to me – she would report directly to Tommy – now she wasn't appointed to we went with Plan B but the reporting line to Tommy stayed intact even though the person was different...that person was told last Friday that she reports directly to me and me alone...

I'm actually due to meet her in 15 minutes – now, the issue really was that person's acceptance of their responsibilities – as in 'there are four things that are yours that you own, manage and accept' and they would refuse and that's what the meeting is about shortly...

How did the reporting became an issue?

Well, more the point of view of my function as a project manager - I have to be able to assign tasks, monitor and track them – if someone doesn't accept me as their direct report, than I can't really assign them tasks...

That lack of clarity is gone now...

How did that affect you? Did you find that you were blindsided on occasion?

Yes, absolutely – that attitude (exhibited by the BIM) in terms of not taking on tasks is in fairness unusual around here as particularly on the projects side but I think culturally in the business, people are usually willing to take on ownership and deliver on tasks...

How would you have seen the BIM and change manager role working together?

Well, I would feel they would have worked well TOGETHER (Speaker's own emphasis) but at times, they weren't fully aware of the priorities of the project and that say the priorities of the project were different to theirs...

That's natural and that's part of my role to instil that in them – we've had a few tough sessions where they've looked for things and I've told them they will have to wait as those things would not be a priority at the moment...

At the project board back in September – it was decided that it was perfectly fair for us to say to the business that we've no system to show you yet but we will when we've completed and ready to do so...we plan to show you on date X which is perfectly acceptable three months before GO-LIVE...

Both the BIM and the Change Manager would not have been completely accepting of that...

Is that due to their particular backgrounds (in the business)?

Yes, I think so...in both cases. I'm no different – you can't help but be conscious of the fact that sometimes you'd have to say No to someone who's your boss or will be your boss when the project is over –you're naturally going to feel that you should be going all out to keep them happy and deliver what they want...

It's much harder to say 'No, I or We can't do that right now because...' it takes a certain skill to be able to do that...

Fergal has accused me, now we get on well, of being like a politician because I answer a question with a answer that doesn't quite give what people want to hear...

But I think you have to do that...we have to make clear that 'we're not forgetting about you, we're prioritising at the moment and we'll come back to you'...I'm not sure what it is (in terms of how the BIM and change manager deal with it); maybe it's a trust issue...

They've come from the engineering and finance backgrounds – they're working with stakeholders who'll they work with or are close to and it's not always possible to reconcile what those stakeholders want with the priorities of the project...

I suppose there is an inherent tension there – as you want people from the engineering and finance gene pools, and you want them to leverage their informal organisational contacts, yet remain loyal to the project (that's true) - how do you manage that tension?

I think it all comes back to character traits that the person needs to have – the traits that a change manager should have – an evangelist, the BIM role – a willingness to take on new challenges – 'I don't get everything you're asking me but I will take it on and learn and deliver', not the opposite of those traits which is what we have...

At the end of the day, you need to resource people from those user communities – that's where the project is going to go and that's the people who will use it and hopefully benefit from it as well...so...

Coming back to UAT and BRT and those issues, you need people purely from the business to do that testing etc – the change manager and BIM ideally they too would come from that area but have those character traits – sometimes they needn't come from the user areas at all if they have those traits so...

Looking back over the project over the last couple of months – what would be the major things that stand out for you; the key events that you've experienced or observed?

Well, the project costing and billing certainly, that was the biggest challenge as it's one of the newest pieces...

The loss of consultants also...

Yes, twice...Oscar Wilde might have something to say about that (LAUGHS) – but it galvanised us in a way and also give us a bit of a shield from the user community...in terms of the user community, the day Fergal walked through the

system demo with the key users, the 7th of September, that was a key day for us and it was like a crosswords....

What it did give you?

It was a key milestone for us...a hugely positive reaction, huge buy in and a reaction along the lines of 'Well, we've seen it now so talk to you again in January!' – the feedback since has been very good and the odd comment on things they don't like...

I mean Fergal would have been saying to me beforehand that they had a few issues and were looking for certain things – but when we met them on the day, there was no problem around the system – a hugely positive reaction....that was a key achievement for us...

In terms of Rory and the refocusing on the plan?

Not so much a refocusing in my view but more so the clarity around where we are and the demonstration that we were in control...The plan up on the board as opposed to being in the heads of people and the communication of that plan to the team and out to the business – Rory was instrumental in all that and also the team leads on the project giving improved weekly updates...

And some communication benefits also?

Absolutely yes...

Would you consider the clarification of roles like the BIM to have been critical?

Well, we're not there yet (LAUGHS), but we're getting there and that will be important...

Looking back over the last few months, would you have any regrets in terms of the project?

(THINKING)... We've haven't really talked about this before...the actual formal approval of the design, the sign-off in May and the two extended sign-offs in June...We should have been clearer about the sign-off process and been clear that 'That's it, we're done'...

Amongst yourselves or the user population at large?

Oh, to the user population at large...

Did you get comments as to that?

We did yes...

In terms of an information vacuum?

No, I think more in terms of who had actual rights to sign-off as per the quality plan on the project...You had key stakeholders in the business stating that they hadn't signed off on anything...You'd tell them 'Well, the quality plan doesn't have you down as a key signatory' (LAUGHS)...

So, there was over the summer, some confusion as regards whether the design phase had formally ended and when the shutters came down. Get a properly documented paper form and get it signed off at the project board and that's it...

You would see uncertainty on that?

Oh, I'd say there still are people out there in the business who think that the design is still open and they can make the changes...

Does it lead to a sense of 'I have a lot of time left to ask for the changes I want'?

Now, we have a strong change process here now...

The change board...

Yes...and also the project board...

Did you see that (sign-off) uncertainty coming through on the change board?

Actually we didn't see that many change requests and we meet on demand say, when a change request is raised...You have myself, Margaret and Patricia from HR, Finance has Aoife and Warren and XX from AGOCORP IE and also we have the design authority John Jakesmith from AGOCORP ICT...

We used to meet once a month but now it's as requests arise...Anyone on the project can raise a change request, normally the HR and Finance get a request from someone in the business or raise it themselves and that feeds back to the board via a change request...

Would you expect more in BRT?

No, absolutely not – that's a risk for us in terms of having a UAT - a change in design is not going to be allowed in BRT...

So, will you stop meeting?

No – but if we have to, we will meet – there was a change request floated last week and I just brought it to the project board first and they said 'No more'...

Have many of them been accepted?

I think out of a total of 13 so far, all bar 3 have been accepted but they're mostly very minor changes...the biggest one involved about a week's development and a week's testing (CONFIRMED AS THE SALARY BAND CHANGES DISCUSSED BY MARGARET BLAIR BY AN OFF-THE RECORD COMMENT MADE BY SOMEONE OTHER THAN THIS INTERVIEWEE).

Thanks again, Thomas

No problem...

(47, 00)

Interviewee: Margaret Blair, HR Manager, NOVOCORP.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

So Margaret, how do you feel things have been going on the implementation since we last met just before testing was due to start?

Certainly on the HR side, we’ve been very happy with how things are going...we’ve seen no major issues since the BLUEPRINTING testing has been progressing- which is encouraging (LAUGHS) – we got what we expected must have done something right along the way!

The next step now which is underway is the cutover and business readiness testing...

So no real issues as such...

No genuinely not at the moment...we’re communicating with staff – we’ve done a lunch and learn that went well. I’ve been at three major team leader meetings and the questions that are being asked seems to indicate that people are engaged in this – some of the engineering managers might have been worried that people would have been a bit scared by this...so that (level of engagement) is good to see...

Among the KAMS?

No, generally the senior management but the users are saying ‘give it to us – we’ll do it’ - I’ve noticed that in the communication phases that we’ve been involved in – people are beginning to say ‘Not this again’ (LAUGHS) so there’s definite almost weariness at this stage...

Looking back over the project, how would you feel it’s been run?

Well, very well overall and very happy with it...again on the HR side, that’s where my observations have been most focused...we were very happy with Thomas and the project team and also, I suppose looking back on it the one place where I would be critical is the communication between the HR and Finance departments...Now, we’ve had a change with Marissa going on maternity leave – another girl has stepped in and she’s always been quite friendly with Rena – they

went on training courses together and also on maternity leave together and so, that relationship has probably helped communication on the project...

Was she chosen deliberately because of that?

No, not really – it just happened like that to be honest...one of the advantages arose though – things seemed more smooth since she went over...

In fairness to Marissa, and I suppose she was very stuck in the processes and as such didn't probably get her head up to engage with what was happening around her – same for finance as well...We were both busy - We didn't all stop occasionally to see was the other side OK and were we on the right road? There is a difference with her involved – if Finance raise an issue, we can see it as an issue whereas before, I felt at times from a HR perspective, we went into a defensive mode a little bit when we didn't need to and I found myself having to undo some of that –(HR) people on the (project) team maybe saying 'We're not doing that – Finance can't be asking for...' and I'd be trying to stress that we are all in this together to get us done – If we'd do this for them, they might do something for us...Now there wasn't a huge amount of that – I'd hate you to go away thinking that but certainly there was a bit of that....

If you were to do it again, you'd probably try and bond the teams together more – they were so driven by deadlines and pressures – that did maybe lead to a view that 'Well, if Finance is falling behind, that's Finance's problem...', whereas if people had got their heads up a bit more, they could have helped each other out a bit...

Speaking of the project, how have you seen Fergal's role evolving?

I think it's evolved a lot – I see him stepping up to the plate a lot more – some of that earlier indecisiveness is gone – mostly due to a lack of business knowledge...

On the Financial/HR side?

More so, on the process side – he was being dragged all over the place by different and competing agendas...Excellent engineer and project manager but lacked that process experience...People took him down paths that he shouldn't have gone down and he let himself fall for that...

Since the BIM has come on board, she has that finance knowledge and she's really driving the finance side...She has the legitimacy and she has the kudos around the place in terms of the past successes on other projects...

She's has turned around things for us and got us a couple of quick wins whereas Fergal wasn't in that space...That wasn't his fault – he didn't have the financial knowledge – if you were doing it again, you would appoint a change manager with

a finance and SAP background – Fergal didn't have that (background) and it took him a good while to get up to a level, and the project suffered as a result...

Would you feel he had a clear role description at the start of the project?

No, I wouldn't feel he understood his role initially nor did he get a clear remit at the beginning...

It was more a question of 'Sure, haven't you managed the construction of one of the biggest utilities in the country, sure won't this be a walk in the park for him...' whereas the skill set required for this (change manager role) is very different...People overestimated his capabilities in terms of that skill set and in fairness to him, he stepped up to the plate now but it took a while for the project...

He had detailed planning skills say in how to take out a boiler and replace it – but he didn't have those broader planning skills around a bigger project like this and the communication piece around it...

He was led a merry dance around the training – he didn't know the right people to ask or talk to – as an organisation we were a little bit naive putting in someone (into the change manager role) who didn't have the experience... for something that's so critical...

Would you think that for the BIM...

Would the project have been delivered on time – no, it wouldn't have been (INTERVIEWEE FINISHED OFF SENTENCE UNPROMPTED).

Fiona is really whipping them into shape and getting things delivered...

Some people have commented that at times the BIM and Change Manager role have been quite separate from the project. Would you feel that's the case?

Yes – they could have been embedded more in what was going on. The BIM is getting in under them a bit more and asking what people are doing...But in this project generally, people were very focused on getting their own bit done and not really getting their heads up and seeing how their work fitted together...It lacked someone to knit things together-now, the job of the Fiona's of this world is to do that and that's the role she's taken now – she doesn't need to know everything about everything but she does need to know that things are being looked after – that someone is dealing with things if need be...

Have the team had enough resource support?

Well, on a project like this, you often say you could have done with more resources but at the same time, you could ask the question of whether they have used all the resources that were made available to them as effectively as possible...I'd say at

least 20% of the resources used on this project were wasted – people engaged in ‘wattless’ energy – running around doing things they don’t need to or trying to reinvent the wheel...Arguing with each other when there was no need to..

I know at this point, people feel that there is a lot of communication in terms of the project – did you feel at any time that there were gaps (in communication)?

No – that’s reasonably OK – I gave Marissa and Martha as much support as possible – I made sure to meet them every fortnight for lunch and ask if they needed anything or if I could talk to someone on their behalf. Now, on the HR side, I would be pretty comfortable (with the communication) at my level...the communication going out to the staff is good –Fergal and I have discussed the fact that it would be helpful to have a Finance person there in terms of the timesheet...they can’t spare a resource at the moment and I appreciate that but...

We were at a team leaders briefing there very recently and we had say 120 -125 team leaders there and I was able to answer all the HR questions, Fergal as well – but there were questions on Finance issues that a finance person would be able to answer – they’re out of that loop at the moment...

Finance and HR are easy hits – we’re batting (as HR) a lot of the questions away – whether we’re giving them the right answer or the answer they want or not...

Whereas you ask Finance and they say ‘We’ll get back to you on that’ – now Fergal follows up on that but at the same time, the timesheet is where the real issue might arise and where the questions are...I’m in a privileged position having been in HR and we’re prepared for it...

From the inside, I can also see where Finance is coming from – but look at it from someone outside’s perspective – how in January will I do my Timesheets and how will I able to buy something? There really the two core things that will change...

I don’t feel we’ve done the preparatory work on it – at the end of the day, they’re the two things we may have issues with...I’ve discussed this with Aoife and also with Fergal – Aoife says ‘I hear what you’re saying – but that the project is behind and that they can’t spare anybody – I’ll do what I have to get this through and take my pain afterwards’....

In terms of the general perception of the project – how do you feel that’s gone?

To be honest, the amount of work that has been put in – I wouldn’t even think that it is on people’s radar...this is just going to happen – no one even realises I’d say that there is 25 of our people over in project HQ working on it...

Is the attitude more than that this system is already in AGOCORP, and this new system only has a few add-ons?

Pretty much, yes...

Will there be much credit for the work?

On our management side, in HR and Aoife the same in Finance, we'd be very clear in terms of praising and recognising the huge efforts and contributions of our staff – we've seen before – I mean in the previous HR SAP project in 2006 – People broke their backs and put in massive effort and when it was all over – it was like 'back to work, put that behind you and get on with it' – there wasn't much recognition...

There was a lot of resentment about that – Aine has just come back from maternity leave and we were just talking about how we both soldiered together on the last project – and we were both saying how we couldn't believe we were getting sucked back into that space again – I was very engaged with this from day but I could feel that myself...but there we are...

What would have been the key things that you felt that have happened over the last few months?

From the HR side, getting the performance management (module) through and then managing to move Orla out of that space where she wasn't going to be an issue – there was a lot of infighting and 'wattless' energy around that, that was difficult to manage at times...ridiculous...

The lunch and learn and getting the system out there – you could see a sense of a light switch going on – the (HR) team could see people beginning to talk about it and also engage with it...really feeling that they're getting to the end of it...

In terms of people seeing the system, could people have seen it a bit earlier?

You'll always have that criticism with a system like this – once people have seen it, they've bought into it...

In fairness, due to the upgrade over the August Bank Holiday weekend, it would have been difficult to show people a system and then say 'That's what it looks in the old system, when we get the upgrade, we'll show you how it looks in the new...' The decision was made to not show the system until September or October and in retrospect I think that was the right call...

The feel I'm getting on 'This is what we're getting – let us get on with it'; I did feel that that issue was there around timesheets but then I was at the meeting with Leona Miles where the managers saw the timesheets and there was again an acceptance of the system more after that – and also, Leona was there and she was able to answer any questions that they had which was a big comfort factor.

The managers who were there could have ended up being a big obstacle to the system but in fairness they were there (at the meetings) and getting it –

They could have benefitted from seeing the timesheets sooner but then again it would have been at a point where the system wasn't finished so...it would be a test system and it could have given them a feel for it so...so that's reasonably OK...

Could you talk a little about your involvement in the change board – how did it come about and what was your experience of it like?

The change board really...(SMILES) positive and negative (experiences) I suppose – there was a lot of conflict around certain things that really were not what the change board was for...

Sounds like an extension of BLUEPRINTING almost?

Yes I was trying to bring in these new codes for grades of employment (Note: this was previously discussed) and I had a good reason for doing so, but I was trying to wrap it into the project...we tried to bring it through as a change request and AGOCORP insisted that it couldn't be done that way – Now, I got it through but I had to change the story....there was a lot of resistance on the AGOCORP side and a lot of 'Wattless energy' expended again...

At some points, it was nearly more a case of 'Will you just let us run our business?'; there was an issue that the way the request was phrased did not mean it qualified as a valid business request for consideration – so I found out what was a valid business request and guess what grounds the grading change went in as....

So, that at times was quite frustrating...there was a lot of politics and the bringing in of senior people from AGOCORP on it...so it was a learning experience – I'm not sure whether the learning experience was a positive one or not...

There were a lot of other requests that we brought through – Sinead Long would bring them to the board and would justify the business case for them and they went through without issue...

Anything that was different to AGOCORP or was specifically about the NOVOCORP business would just be blocked...

Was there someone specific from AGOCORP on the change board?

Yes, "Ruth" was there and she was blocking it...well, a change request that was deemed outside the scope of the project would have to go to an AGOCORP change board which is where they were blocked...Now, my boss was supportive and when I talked to a few people in AGOCORP, they were also supportive but when it went over to the change board, objections were raised...

What was the reason for the objections?

The key reason was that my methodology was flawed...I felt this new grading system would enable greater clarity – you would know who was on a specific salary band and also who was on a certain pension scheme etc...They were basically NO –that information is already there....and I went Yes, but when you go look for information on someone, it is invariably at their salary grade that you look (within NOVOCORP)...

When I negotiated to then was salary (as opposed to grade bands) where salary bands from 25-45, 000, 45-65 etc... I wanted salary bands and a min and a max for each band and that was fine...As far as I'm concerned those salary bands are actually the grading bands that I was looking for...

And they had no problem with that?

As long as I said salary bands, no problem but if I said Grading bands where I could see direct hires or line manager etc, then it was No – that information is in the system and you can extract it into a report – it might be complicated to do so, but you can do it...

Then they said we have bands in some parts of the company already on SAP but they're salary bands not grading bands like say in NETWORKS and ICT...

So, I said, let me have a look at those salary bands and ICT were similar to ours – and they wanted me to use theirs – I said No –their terms and conditions are different – so...and my boss was totally supportive and understood exactly what I wanted and made one or two phone calls...But something that really should not have been a big problem became one...

The learning for me was that I needed to change my agenda – once I began to listen to why I wasn't being allowed to do what I wanted, rather than pushing on, I began to...I didn't get quickly enough that salary bands were a possibility

Once I realised for myself that salary bands enabled me to get what I want and that they would be happy with salary bands, then things became clearer – I changed my business case to make it work...

Maybe others could have used a similar strategy in BLUEPRINTING to get what they wanted?

Well, it was an AGOCORP thing we didn't see coming... They (AGOCORP) had very valid reasons for not wanting it – they just couldn't see the reasons why I might want it...

Just two people locking (horns) - At the end of the day I went over to talk to the person in question and I explained to her what I wanted and she said well, you can

get that via salary grades and I then said – but why should I want to do something in three moves when I can see myself getting it in one...

She just said – well (the data) is in the (system) there – you can't just be writing these (change requests) at the drop of a hat...

I got a sense that it was like 'Just stop causing problems'; in the end I got seven grades – I wanted ten so I had to drop three in terms of compromising...

Would I do it again? Well, yes but maybe different...

So overall the change boards went well?

Overall yes – the composition of the board was fair and requests were dealt with fairly.

I did sit in on a few of the projects board and I thought that they were....you'd see certain change requests being pushed on with people saying 'If you're happy with that, so am I' kind of thing, change requests which could have been discussed more...and then you'd see them discussing things at length which you know you'd be kind of saying 'Move on along'...

When people talk about the project board, people might feel at times that the board should reflect more of a bottom-up process, in that the senior user who should be there to reflect the concerns of the user can often end up representing themselves...Is that fair, do you think?

I think that's a fair point – there was one time that we were looking for something in training on the project board and the ICT guy was adamant that this was not going to happen...that it was not compatible with AGOCORP systems: for me that was not a conversation we should be having at a project board...it really felt that the four days of preparation was wasted. When you think of how on the change board you could encourage say the two girls to bring things forward and you'd get a fair hearing...

If the message is that message, then it needs to be drilled down and the two Sineads would not be happy if they knew what they'd proposed had been dismissed so quickly...

Would you feel that the project board could be more transparent?

No – I don't think so – the decisions have to be made there are that's fine – sometimes those decisions have to be made in private and for confidential reasons...

Sorry, when I say transparent, I mean in terms of who's on it and their contribution etc if you know what I mean?

Well, I've deputised for our head of HR there three times all together and there are senior people there like Tommy and Liam but they don't really know what's going on...They're relying on people like me and Aoife and Warren to tell them what's going on...I mean they're signing off on decisions made a level below them on the project anyway and I would question the big value of them...

Is (the project board) it more of a reassurance process?

No – I don't see it like that – it's more to tell them how things are going and if resources are required maybe...The change board was effective in dealing with issues as they arose...so, I don't know....

I know in terms of HR, you're relatively comfortable with where you are – how do you see the next few months working out? What will be issues for you?

Getting staff in for the training and managing the finance side of things – that's the big thing over the next while – trying to manage both systems for a bit (i.e. AGRESSO and SAP) and also the communication side and what I'm beginning to pick up a bit at the moment is the whole job security thing – people are beginning to ask what this new system means for their job...will I still have a job and what are I going to be doing? Aoife has been doing a lot of work on that...

We need to be careful about headcount – we need to be looking at everyone on a fixed-term contract – anyone who's on a fixed-term contract and who was brought in to backfill people gone on the SAP project...When the project ends, they'll have to be let go...Some people have a problem with that – I personally don't – you came in on a specific purpose or fixed-term, when that's over, that's over – they're not permanent people...

The rolling out of the performance management system as well over the next few month; at some stage there will be a freeze on data so trying to get performance management systems up and running in time for bonuses etc getting paid next January (2011) will be difficult...We have all our HR stuff to do – whether bonuses are paid or not, we still have to have the work done...

In terms of staff reductions, are people beginning to link the new SAP system with a reduction in (staff) numbers?

Well to be honest, I don't see that happening for two-three years...One of the selling points around the SAP (HR) system when it was decided upon in 2005 was that it would reduce headcount – the opposite happened in 2007 when we needed all these extra people on the admin side...that system is now only bedded down 2-3 years later and we can now start looking at headcount...I mean in terms of Finance, it will be at least 18 months before they can look at letting people go...we are not looking at redundancies and that's the message we're trying to give out – it's more redeployment – you will still have a job – your chair in the organisation

may change but there will be a job here for you and that's the message we're trying to get across...

Trying to get a disconnect between the new system and employment?

Absolutely yes...

The Learning and Development module – could you talk a little as to how you feel that will go?

Well, we're piloting the module for the whole group, so we're being let try it out by the centre (AGOCORP corporate)...but it's in our hands whether it's succeeds or fails...If it fails, there will be plenty of people in AGOCORP who'll be laughing at us saying "Ha, knew you'd fail"....

Are they supportive?

Yes –(THOUGHTFUL) they're letting us work away but not get too far ahead...they're supporting us but they're standing well enough back so that if it does fall flat on, then we'll be the ones to pick up the pieces...

But if it all goes well, then they've been there from the beginning, well, that's just my observation (BROAD SMILE), not cynical in any way...

They'll have to go into union negotiation though to enable it to be rolled out across the system but that will be 2012 probably before that will happen...

Why union organisation?

Because of the link to performance management in the organisations – performance management is not done everywhere in the group – it's done here so it wouldn't be a big issue but for say NETWORKS where it would be a big change...

More of a wait and see policy then...

Exactly...

If we were talking next January and if I asked you for three core reasons why the project has been successful, what would you feel would be the reasons?

Well, let me turn that on its head for a minute and consider the vulnerabilities...Definitely "Beechpark" where all the expenses will be processed – they're the weak link but they don't seem to be expressing any urgency...They've only got two people on expenses with no plans to change...

The girls here were very accommodating for members of staff coming down and asking queries so my staff have been used to high expectations around expense

issues – “Beechpark” wouldn’t be aware of how high staff expectations are and as such...

Is “Beechpark” just responsible for processing expenses?

Yes, there is ten staff down there and they process the expenses for the whole of AGOCORP and they’re part of the AGOCORP group.

We’ve had a lot of issues with sickness and attendance in “Beechpark” and we’ll keep on systems switched on until March (2011) so we’ll have a back way in and can fix issues...But if there’s an issue (with expenses), it might be because there will be a backlog in “Beechpark”...People won’t get paid their expenses in time and then....

I’ll be going down to “Beechpark” next week and I thought the last time that I was down that the message had got through...From what I’m hearing that’s not the case so as the penny hasn’t dropped yet, I’ll go down and reassure and also for me to get reassurances that they’ll be able to deal with the volume of expenses, that there will be a contact person who will be available if we have issues, and not e-mail or messages but a person...have they contingency planning in case of a sickness absence etc...

Do you need someone from here to cover for example...the manager in AGOCORP head office and her (in “Beechpark”) aren’t communicating that well from what I can make out...I will be clear though with head office that this is the service level agreement that’s in place...But that’s where I see a problem, a big problem potentially happening...I can just see that manager (in “Beechpark”) saying ‘Well, NOVOCORP will just have to wait...’ We’re going out there (to the users) giving them a really positive message and it could all go belly-up in January (2011) if there is an issue...but that’s where my nervousness resides...

The annual leave in one place, the ability to change the bank accounts, the functionality of the timesheets, the user-friendliness of it and the access to information are all the positives that I can see...

I mean manager should be able to say that we’ve given them a lot of tools with this new system to do their job better – for some; they’ll whinge in so far as they’ll have to do things they haven’t done before, but they’ll have to get on with it as well...

Thanks Margaret.

No problem...

(39, 00)

Interviewee: Fergal Flynn, Change Manager, NOVOCORP Financials and HR SAP Implementation.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

So Fergal, you might just discuss how things have been going on the project since we last met – which I think was at the BLUEPRINTING stage end?

After the BLUEPRINTING phase had ended, we started into system testing and there had been a big build up to that in terms of planning for it and so on and then I went on holidays in July and came back and the big thing that had happened that's really important and worth mentioning was that Rory Harrington had joined the project team and he's made a big difference...

There was a lot of discussion about how much we needed schedules for different things we had to do and the implication being that people would then become available upstairs to help on the communication side- that's what Thomas used to say a lot, not really Lorna Doone...there was a perception that once BLUEPRINTING had finished that we would have a lot of time to do things...

There was always meetings like say about risk say and we'd ask to see a schedule and Thomas would say we have it and he would have a very macro schedule which would lack detail...so that would present difficulties particularly for people like me who are used to working in project environments where you used to working on knowing what you would be doing on a weekly basis, maybe not Monday to Friday but certainly on a weekly basis...

You need to know if tasks overlap and why tasks need to be a certain order –there might be a knock-on effect for example – in fairness when I came back from holidays, Rory was here and we spent about three weeks working on a detailed plan that was a detailed schedule...

That made me pull up my socks - there were certain things that I was involved in and pushing for in terms of communication and training and how much effort was required to keep these engineering managers happy...whereas I felt the priority was really the testing and we had a lot of arguments about that in late July and early August in terms of the resources required for training...

With whom did you have the arguments, if you don't me asking?

Lorna Doone – I actually ended up falling out with her in terms of an e-mail I sent to her – I knew it would wind her up but I wanted to get a reaction as I felt there had been no communication...

Her view said to me and in front of others that Nina, the project secretary and I could train the finance people to use the system...so, I'm going to train 60 accountants in NOVOCORP how to use the new system – 6 accountants were down here on the project for 6 months so...

It was a very strange experience for me as when I worked on other projects, people might argue with you but at least you would feel you'd be listened to...

Lorna and I never really patched it up and we just moved on to be honest...

Now at the moment we have designated team of 5 people doing the training with 4 people from the business and 1 external...

So, you won the argument in certain respects?

Well, I did yes...

How –did that come out of the schedule?

Lorna's argument was that we didn't have the budget for more resources... (in the e-mail I sent her I said that) as a result of budget restrictions that I would have to change my approach to training and she said that I couldn't go beyond my budget and that this training plan had been signed-off at project board level...there were other pressures as more ICT people needed to get involved in development and other tasks...

So, when Lorna took over the weekly meeting from Thomas when he was on holidays, she said that I had too many resources and that they would have to be cut back and this is when I felt I didn't have any! So, I requested a meeting and none happened – I was about to go on three weeks holiday and then I sent an e-mail I shouldn't have...I thought about it for the first two weeks on holiday and I regretted sending it but I needed to get a reaction – and then when I came back...

Lorna had spent three weeks considering her reply and then she responded in writing that she had found another 100, 000 in the budget and she had gone out to tender to get an external training resource...

Had she shown any awareness that she felt that this was the right thing to do?

No – and we have a very difficult relationship now – we used to have a fortnightly meeting on changing the business – that used to be weekly and now she's pulled out of it and we do it now as needed and she meets more with Thomas as the

change and Business implementation issues arise – now when she went on holiday she pushed that back onto Thomas which is fair as he is the project manager...

How would you characterise Thomas and Rory's relationship?

Well, if you know Austin Powers (Note: the film character), he's like Mini-Me – his job is to protect Thomas and look after his master...he's helping Thomas – Thomas doesn't have the background I thought he had in terms of delivering on some of the pieces on the project...

Rory almost acts as a buffer for Thomas?

Yes, they work well together and Rory has done a really good job and as such if someone else had been in that role, it might not have worked out that well...like everyone in the project would view them both as a unit and that works fine – we wouldn't have had a hope in hell of getting it in without Rory coming on board...take for example BRT, which I had communicated to the business as starting in November...

Thomas comes to me and says that has to start in the middle of October yet no-one had told me so the schedule has helped...

It's also brought people together more and get a better understanding of why we need different things, without that, we'd have no chance of getting it...

So Rory joining the team was critical?

Absolutely yes...

Looking back on BLUEPRINTING and how it worked, I know you were involved in it at different levels but how did you feel it went...

Well, I felt the scoping etc all was fine – we were late on a certain number of things and we're seeing the effect of that – it was supposed to finish the LDS on the 28th May and that didn't finish until the 11th of June...so that can't go live now until next February (2011).

But the LDS has some flexibility in terms of when performance management happens in the organisation?

Yes, it does but if we needed to have it in by January next, we would have been pushing it...the project costing and billing was also supposed to have been finished and signed off on the 18th of June but it caused us nothing but problems since...we had a lot of meetings and workshops around the end of May and early June but we closed the doors on the 18th of June and had to get the heads straight into testing...

These workshops were looking at the issues around job numbers and approvals that Mario and Freddie Jameson would have mentioned to me...

Yes – now Lorna said to me that I would have to do the communication (on project costing and billing) to the engineering managers – I was busy on the testing side and said I can't do it by myself and she told me that I had to...

Well, then I said, Leona Miles will have to sit down with me for a week and explain the design to me...give me two weeks to prepare and then I can deliver the communication...She said would not two hours be enough...I said for the kind of questions those managers will ask, I'd look like a laughing stock – I'm prepared to do that but....

When I had come back from holidays, Lorna and I arranged a meeting as we were disagreeing on everything and we wanted to discuss my role – prior to the meeting, I had printed out my role definition and when I met Lorna, she was rewriting it and she said to me that this original role definition document had been written up to get a resource from the business – you were never really intended to do it – but I've been doing this, what you told me to do for six months...now we're changing it...I had been at a remove from things focusing on communication...I have tried to engage upstairs (meaning Thomas and Rory) to get a meeting and it's difficult – I have been trying to facilitate a half-day session with some of these key engineering managers to try and explain the design to them...

I had to justify why in writing to both Thomas and Rory, sent it on a Monday and had a meeting on the Thursday – Thomas hadn't read it so couldn't argue against me when I put forward my case – he said yes, you can have Leona, just pick a day in the diary and work together on it...I talked to Leona and she said Thomas has told me to work on these specific things and nothing else – tried to talk to Thomas and he couldn't talk to me for two days...waited until a meeting and another week had passed – and we discussed it – he said I didn't agree to give you Leona for three days, you can't have her and I said you did and others there agreed. Rory left the meeting so I insisted on minutes being kept...When some others had left, Thomas said I might have agreed to it but you can't have her and I said why not? He said you're always looking for her to do things and she's overworked and I said I'm always looking for things but I never get them and it turned into a big heated argument....

Thomas just cut me off when I suggested anything – focus on the testing and project costing and billing...

Being part of the engineering gene pool, have you got feedback from the engineering managers that they have questions?

Absolutely, I'm going to Christopher's SMT meeting tomorrow (12/10/2010) and there will be lots of questions so...

But eventually I did get after all the arguing some of Leona's time, and then I went in and did all the communication myself...issues and risks were discussed...

So, one step forward and two steps back...

Separately, another external consultant came on board to do another quality assurance...external QA consultant who you may know...

Yes, I have met him before...

I know external QA consultant well from working in project management on past AGOCORP projects and he has an IT background and I met him in the corridor and he asked me what was I doing here? I replied 'I've been asking myself that question for the past six months!' - external QA consultant's view was that engineers and IT projects don't mix (well) - he asked me about the support I was getting from the team and also from the stakeholders in the business like Liam McHale and I said I'm not scheduling them enough but the support is there...external QA consultant pointed this out to the project board and Liam called me in for a chat and put some pressure on Thomas I believe and opened up some of the issues I'd been having...

I realised that I could and should have been involving him more on the communications side - I had a meeting with the business scheduled for the 7th of September and on the 6th the project board met and external QA consultant presented some of the issues...So, Liam was under pressure to put pressure on me and also to get things scheduled in terms of the senior management....

Were you at that project board meeting?

No - I didn't usually attend them although one of external QA consultant's points was that more people should have exposure to the project board so I had attended prior to that and also afterwards...I was under a lot of fire to get stuck in - I said I'd go to the meeting and I was kind-of hoping Liam wouldn't go because if the managers see him, then they will clam up and no issues will get raised by them...

So Liam did agree to come and be more in the background and just a few words at the end...and it was a two-hour meeting and people say to me never schedule a senior manager for a two-hour meeting if they're only going to say something at the end...

About an hour in, he gestured to me to come outside and remarked how well things were going and that he still wanted to say something at the end and that he had texted Tommy Walsh who would also be coming along at the end to show support...they went in at the end and were banging the table as to how important this was and that we had to buy into it and there was good feedback afterwards...

Were there any comments on the communication gap?

No – well at the start, I did explain that I had tried for months to get a meeting and get information and that this would be the first of a number of them – I had met all of the people who would be say more negative in their contributions – Peter, Leo Moriarty, Paul McGrath and Mario...I'd met them all beforehand and talked through the bits they would like and dislike so separately for a half-an-hour for the prior two weeks – took a bit of time but it was worth it...I deliberately tried to manage expectations by stressing the bad bits of what they were going to see so the system they would so would not look so bad by comparison...Also, I emphasised to them that Leona was nervous about this meeting and had been trying to avoid it and as such was worried about what they might ask – so I emphasised to ask me the difficult questions – the guys know and like Leona so they would behave better...

A very good meeting; Thomas said 'Well-done' I had got no support from the project and a lot of other things had fallen back and I needed to catch up...

So that meeting was like your one step forward you mentioned a minute ago?

Yes, Liam also arranged for me to meet an external coach who helped me a great deal and we explored aspects of my personality which I don't mind talking about to be honest...The fact that my relationship with Thomas and also the fact that I was getting such little support from the project meant that I was talking on a lot of the direct micro-tasks myself rather than standing back a bit more...but I felt that there was no-one else to do it...She encouraged me to think strategically and I try and do that a couple of times a week and plan and not go back to my old ways of doing things...She also recommended that I start writing things down which I've begun to do in terms of my communication plan which Thomas and I sat down to work on...

I had all the arguments prepared in advance as I knew he would say No, can't do this, can't so that and I had all the arguments and once I had those...If he said I can't do that, I would just cross out some (aspect of) communication and he'd say you can't do that and I'd say well I can't unless I have X and Liam said if I needed resources to come to him and if I do, he'll come back to you so why don't we just agree to it beforehand now...eventually I agreed a plan with Thomas and I'd get a half-day a week with Leona initially for a few weeks then an hour a few weeks after that...or someone from her side..She's key as she understands the design and what these managers want...

So, when I presented to the guys on Christopher's SMT in September, I laid out my communication plan and asked them to come up with theirs that I could overlay on mine because I would have gaps...Freddie Jameson came up to me afterwards and said 'You sound like you have a plan – you know what you're doing, we'll come up a plan and we'll have to go along with it' and I said yes, that's just it...

So, the following day, I went back to Project HQ and Thomas tells me that we have a problem with project costing and billing in terms of design, testing and

configuration – I would have to change my communication plan to reflect this – and I was presenting to the project board the following day!

We've had a few consultants – He replaced the first – he was unreliable in terms of turning in and he seemed to be handling all the issues together and everything was designed and into configuration and system test together and everything was late...He is gone – did you know that?

No, I didn't...

We finished the system test; He didn't turn up – all of the developments were late; ICT group were saying that there were gaps –it came up in the project board as an issue and he was said to have stress issues and should not be put under pressure...he went home and he came back to work with a new guy that the ICT group had got in from– they worked together for a few days and then he said he was leaving...

The new guy they got in although not considered to be brilliant said none of his designs would work so between him and the ICT group, they stopped all the development as the designs were wrong and they brought in more people and they hope to have all the development in by next Tuesday (19th October).

They had hoped to start integration testing by the 20th September roughly so the project has lost about a month...they started integration testing but you're limited in doing the payroll etc without having project costing and billing working..

Are the general user population aware of this?

Well, some of the more key stakeholders would be aware of issues, the project costing and billing has been the focus of a lot of the planning and scheduling going on over the last few weeks...

Thomas and Lorna went to the project board and explained that there was a problem (with project costing and billing) – we need to increase the size of the team – there's a lot of drains on the team in testing and business implementation and also in data migration...so it was decided that I would have nothing to do with project costing and billing...I would focus on the communication plan that was agreed but I've no resources to deliver it...

This was the communication plan that was received well by the engineering managers?

Yes

How can you communicate?

Yes, it doesn't...Lorna has recommended bringing over someone from her team that is a super-user on timesheets and expenses – I'm familiar with them myself and I can do that but the project board, Lorna and Thomas were saying that I can't be doing that – I've got to plan this and I'm doing too much and there is already an issue with resources...

Lorna has it in her head – now I like her but she doesn't understand the effort required to keep the engineering managers on side...she belittles the effort required...

Being an engineer yourself, is it important that you do the communication?

Well, there is no issue with someone else doing it...at the same time they know I'm over here on the business topping and tailing on the communication...It's just being able to allocate the time and resources for it...The project board have more or less signed off in written documents on the fact that the project costing and billing and system testing is the priority – we can't GO-LIVE without this system working – we may have to sacrifice some of the communication as a result...it makes sense to me...you have to get the system tested and working. If people can't use the system in January (2011) because we haven't communicated or trained them, at least we'll have a system that works in January and so...

Would you have concerns about a communication gap – some people I've talked to have raised concerns about (prior) long windows in communication when they didn't hear anything from the project...?

Well, yes...

It did effect or damage their view of what was happening...

Yes, I understand that...

Do the project board?

Yes, at some level – Thomas couldn't care less...Just last week Aoife Burgess and I got an e-mail from Leo that was almost abusive stating that he had received no information on the purchasing component of the system which for him is key and he's a critical stakeholder...no discussions on this and I sent this to Thomas – he asked me why did I send this to him...I told him that I thought he'd be interested in the views of a senior stakeholder on the purchasing system...Then, I got a phone call that followed up on that...Fergal, I don't need this kind of stuff, don't need this kind of pressure – I said – sorry about that – I won't send them to you anymore and he said Thanks and hung up...

So, where do all these changes leave you in terms of your role?

I haven't given up yet! Freddie Jameson's area – there is a communication gap in his area specifically – when did you met John?

Early July, before you went on holidays...he had a few concerns he did discuss with me...

Right OK – you've met Aoife Burgess...

I have...

Well, Freddie's area – Both Aoife and Tommy Walsh want the finance people to control the finance system and there's a billing capability in NOVOCORP most of which is in Aoife's area – Freddie's area can set up new projects in AGRESSO, bill and generate invoices themselves independently...

They have a variation in terms of their business and customer...

That may be the case – I don't want to get into that – but I had the realisation over the summer that this was going to change and that finance and especially Tommy Walsh would want to take over that (independence in Freddie's area)...Now, if Aoife Burgess is going to take the billing function from Freddie's area, that could mean taking some of Freddie's people with her or taking the functionality – I didn't want Freddie to go to that meeting in September and not be aware that this could be happening...some of those people are on temporary contracts so there could be job losses etc so there's a lot of sensitivity around that...

So I arranged to meet Aoife and she explained the reasons for the change and agreed to meet Freddie to discuss them further...

What were the reasons?

Well... (SIGHING AND THINKING)...

Were they're governance or information control reasons?

Well, governance was part of it – when AGOCORP and NOVOCORP have the same financial system, month end will be driven by AGOCORP – at the moment, Aoife can pick a date she wants for month end or have a two-day month end...come next December, she'll get a calendar from AGOCORP for next year and on that calendar will be for each month the date of AGOCORP's month end, no negotiation...this is what you do...

So with the integration, you've lost some financial independence...

Yes – from Aoife's perspective, I can understand why she would want this change to happen as she has to have all her ducks in a row come next January...she arranged a meeting with Freddie...

I went away whether it was the right thing to do or not but I went to talk to Freddie before Aoife met him – explained to him that he was not going to like what she was going to say to him but to listen to her and if he accepts certain things and asks certain specific questions, he might get something out of it...

Use of the informal organisation was important...

Absolutely, Freddie is in that KAM role, Peter Jackson was before and so was Leo Moriarty so if Liam is there and this (change) is said at the meeting, the three lads would just get up and walk out because I know what they're like, so I had to do it...

Freddie asked me if he should fight the battle and if he had any chance of winning it and I told him no, so he said OK, I'm not going to fight the battle....Aoife was quite clever on it; she had arranged to meet him on a Monday so on the Friday before, she rang me and suggested that I go to the meeting as well...

I went along to the meeting – I was early, Freddie was late and Aoife was nervous, as nervous as I've seen her... Freddie came along and said he didn't like the sound of what she was saying, but that he'd think about it...Aoife called me up afterwards saying that she didn't think it would go that well...

So discussions are progressing on it at the moment and as Freddie's business is going to change, he needs to understand the design better...but for the detailed discussions between us and him – the resources aren't there...I ring Freddie – I want to satisfy Freddie Jameson – if I can keep him happy, I can bring a few others with him – in some respects, you could say this change is the one they're trying to hide if you want to say that...it's the one issue that...

Would Mario's issue with respect to validating expenses also be a (live) issue?

I'll come to that in a second but...there's a bit of history behind that that Mario refuses to accept but we can talk about that in a minute...so the testing is really the priority at the moment...

I rang Freddie to ask him to give us a resource to help with training for three months and he has – that resource can help out Leona and gives Thomas an extra training resource and he/she will go back to Freddie's team as a super user so that will be of benefit as well...the functionality will be removed from Freddie's team but they can understand how it will change their business...

But I still have gaps in other areas – in terms of Aoife's area, Tommy Walsh suggested I get a resource from there, have her spend an hour with Leona and then go back to the business and spend ten hours communicating...I see what he's saying but it's not that straight forward...

Could you use your approach with John as a template for the rest of the KAMS?

Well in Freddie's case, I had a specific person in mind – she would be capable and would not cause fear in the project...it's hard for other parts of the business to give resources and I met a bit of resistance in that...

Cause fear in the project?

Well, someone that they might worry would have to be spoon-fed or someone who would ask too many questions or cause difficulties back to the business...

Mario...17th of May last we had a meeting with the project, Thomas and Lorna and Aoife and Christopher, Mario, Paul McGrath, Leo Moriarty and the purpose of the meeting was to thrash out the key issues around project costing and billing design and get that advanced and the two key areas for discussion were: project management approval of time and expenses and the creation and management of job numbers...

The first, Mario's issue on project manager approval of time and expenses (note: he wanted project manager approval rather than line manager approval) – that was discussed in detail and Thomas asked for everyone to sum up where they were on the issue – it was then put to a show of hands – on behalf of Christopher Lloyd's team, Christopher, Leo Moriarty, Paul McGrath agreed to line manager approval – Mario was not at the meeting – earlier on Christopher had nominated Leo Moriarty and Paul McGrath as his business representatives on the project...

I was the only one against it and that was because of my background in project environments...

You could see the problem?

Yes – I talked to Mario before we went on holidays and he wasn't happy about that but at the same time felt that there might be a way around it....

In all honesty, I'm not sure that his issue is as big as he thinks – also the feedback I'm getting on his approach to it has been very poor...

In terms of....

Well, Mario is under a lot of pressure at the moment – his Facility business unit and GENCOM have merged but not really and completely so when that does happen...Facility does a lot of work with GENCOM but a lot of Facility's normal business (i.e. building power-plants) is beginning to dry up and Christopher launched earlier this year a new matrix structure for Facility which is designed for developing people but would not be compatible with SAP...the way he talks about SAP is a bigger issue – it's always that SAP is a utility system – the head of NOVOCORP insisted that for example he would have to have more speakers from GENCOM at his forthcoming conference– so I think the fact that his area is under threat is making the issue more...

How did the rest of the attendees at that meeting feel about the approval issue?

They have to pick and chose the battles – Paul McGrath say has people in different areas all working under different project managers – same for Leo Moriarty...If project managers were approving, you might get an upstart project manager who's budget is under pressure who starts going 'reject reject' for every expense and timesheet and anarchy would ensue and they won't want that...the project managers or would be project managers or jumped-up upstarts as some people term them...if you reject my timesheet it has to be entered in and approved by someone else otherwise problems ensue...

Also, there was a view in the project that technically it would be very complex to do...Margaret Blair and I went to present at a conference for Leo Moriarty's team leaders 40 or 50 of them a few weeks back for two hours that went well...

Christopher has 100-150 team leaders across the engineering business and we presented to them also – huge interest there – they had to cut the questions off after 35 minutes...a lot of questions, some on the purchasing system – why can't I get a communication on that and on approval of timesheets and expenses on projects and some issues we want to leave until training...

We're stressing that these are information sessions but Margaret and I were happy with their level of interest and awareness as these are the guys who'll be approving the timesheets afterwards one of the guys said to me that he's heard me three times in the last fortnight and wanted no more so....In the other area, I think I'm finished communication there and onto testing...

How would you feel the communication on the project has worked from your perspective – how important a part of your role would you perceive it to be?

Well, I could have played better – I would feel that my role is all about communication – communication with the business in terms of what comes from the project team...the remit was where sometimes it was lacking or out of shape on things – if I had been given all the time and if Leona was presenting, she's doing her job but she can't put herself in their shoes and she might say something that will cause them to go on the offensive – it's more my responsibility to put myself in their shoes and also manage on the training side – but I've got a good training lead resource that's external and he's taking some of those pressures off me...my focus until the end of year is communication – focus on simpler things like lunch and learns and the Intranet updates as the costing and billing information is out there...

There were a couple of things I was happy to leave until September though Lorna was telling me that I should get e-mails out here and there on this and that...and I said No as in June or July there's no urgency whereas now, look at the '100 days to go' article on the Intranet which generated some interest – 100 in the form of a speed sign – I'd say at least 50-60 people have asked me in the corridor here in

AGOCORP or NOVOCORP, how long have you left, so I know what I'll do when there's 50 days to go (LAUGHS)...

A bit of viral marketing – can you measure or get some feedback from the Intranet?

Yes, just waiting for NOVOCORP to appoint their new communications manager and we can go from there...so that was that part of it...

When you look back at things you've been doing or being allowed to do, do you see yourself as a change agent?

Yes to a degree – I spent a lot of time doing things maybe that I shouldn't have done...

Do you see yourself as having changed the user population's attitudes as opposed to change in the project per se?

Well, in terms of the project, the development of a plan (i.e. Rory) has been enormously helpful in so far as I had my plan that I can fit with the project – I didn't spend enough time planning....I still try and get demonstrations – after some presentations, they want to see demos – I got too involved in that – others could have done it – but I could have stepped out of the demos and taken the questions afterwards – but I can sidestep and answer questions in a way that doesn't answer an issue which is important and that skill is hard to just give to someone else...so I would go to the demos but sometimes just answer questions at the end

You mentioned earlier that you felt a bit isolated from the project team?

I'm not a part of it....We as in Fiona and I should have been far more integrated into the team....

Did not just happen over time or?

Well, Fiona up to last Friday was reporting to Tommy Walsh who told her she has to now report to Thomas...

Why is that?

There is a view that Fiona and I should be one team, part of the project team and we do different things but one reports to the other within this team which is part of the project team....

When I ask for things, Thomas says No – when Fiona gets a No, she goes to Tommy Walsh who makes a phone call and then she gets it...

Thomas is good at masking things from the project board... Fiona is going backward but she's able to get Tommy...

You were doing something similar with Liam?

I was able to but Liam has been appointed to be acting Head of HR for the whole of AGOCORP so...

You've lost your champion...

Yes...the issues are in Finance and Tommy is able to steer things more so than Liam. Because of costing and billing, the financial controllers see a big gap between us as in Fiona and I and the project – we needed to put a process on what will be coming in terms of the manual processes (in January) – they went out and got someone because they were so disappointed with the level of support from the project...That's a resource that could be over on the project rather than sitting in the business...

But Thomas and the testing team, their deliverable is get the system working – the change and BIM has been pushed onto the business – Rena from the financial side of the business is on the project team and she's in the testing but needs to be on the data migration side helping deliver a working system...

The move to make Fiona report to Thomas is probably Tommy seeing these issues and deciding to make Thomas responsible individually for the change and implementation plan...

What would that mean for you?

We might get some resources and bring us back into the team a bit more – we have a lot of gaps there John that need to be filled and the external QA consultant commented on it also – people were going to meetings for the sake of it...Rory on a Tuesday has instigated these integration sessions whereby the team comes together to discuss issues and then on Thursdays, there's a change and implementation session where Fiona and I set the agenda...the leads on the project, me, Fiona, Thomas and Rory – you get to set your own agenda – Thomas might cut back time and does that constantly or limits the agenda beforehand – but he gets the comeback from Tommy then if issues that Fiona raises don't get discussed – I used to do the same with Liam but you are conscious of the reporting line as well... minutes are kept and are sent out by Thomas and we go through and Fiona or I send back the real minutes but they're never reissued...

You start to get clever - I started sending out the agendas in advance to the team – each week we were due to have a break-off discussion but Thomas cut that out – so when I sent out the agenda I put down the previously cancelled break-off discussions as the first item – so we argued for the first hour but it had to go down on the minutes...

Thomas is very driven in terms of the system – he's not that into what the business want...

So I was due to meet Christopher Lloyd's SMT so I would put into writing when I would intend to say and he might say no, you can't do that – there are things you wouldn't want to say to the business, now I would have checked his diary beforehand so I'd say well, you're free at 4pm next Tuesday so can you come along to the meeting and explain then?

He didn't have a choice – so he has to go tomorrow – so it will be interesting to see if he turns up...

Would he have been interacting much with the business along?

Earlier yes, he would have been at the early sessions and in NOVOCORP probably once a day but that's all stopped...

In terms of the BIM role, how aware were you of the new role coming on stream?

Well, I only became aware of it in April...

How did you feel about it as implementation was part of the change manager role often?

Lorna Doone sat down with me and described the role and I was comfortable with it as I had enough on my plate with both the communication and training – I wouldn't have had the space for implementation as well – I was curious to see who it would be...I didn't know Fiona at all – I was almost a bit disappointed only in so far as I would have liked someone I knew – but she's been great and we get on well and we almost look out for each other....

Have you mutually benefitted from each other's different backgrounds?

Well, I would feel I've benefitted more than Fiona as I got exposure to the financial side of things and would be more confident conversing with the finance side of the team and also the financial controllers. She doesn't know the NOVOCORP business or the managers but she underestimates how good she is at dealing with people so it's worked well...she has SAP experience and knowledge as well...

And the relationship with Tommy as you with Liam which has helped also?

Yes, for sure...When she joined the business she was the only one reporting outside, that is to Tommy and that was the way it was and she was the real interface between the business and the project

I (would) feel though that it (her role) fell down a bit around that initial time was when HR and Finance teams on the project were doing the testing, they came up with tasks, which they were being told would be part of a list that the BIM role would manage and look after...

Fiona was appointed and told 'here's the list' – and it took her six weeks to get up to speed and prioritise the tasks and start from there...

(INTERVIEW BREAK AS FERGAL HAD A MEETING, RECONVENED 2 HOURS LATER).

Fergal coming back to your role again – when you look at your role and the key differences between your project management and change management experiences...are they profoundly different?

No, get it built and get it tested...in BLUEPRINTING it was minimal development, minimal configuration and changes, some consultation with the business and you're then relying on the team drawn from the business to come through on it...

Would you feel that there was an underestimation or overestimation in terms of how different the NOVOCORP system would be to AGOCORP? That things were over-complicated...

In some cases, we are just topping off what was there anyway – but the original design wasn't there or accessible – we had to go back to the beginning – we literally started from a blank page – why wasn't it written down already?

Knowledge Management Aspects...

Yes I mean we should be able to take an existing system and bring it to any part of the business and do some configuration and then...

Considering the amount of SAP experience in the organisation, and the fact that similar projects had been implemented in the past, did you ever feel able to leverage that experience say of other change managers? Some people say those resources are available readily and others tell me it's not...

"Jake", the change manager for the XYZ project in NETWORKS – I'm actually meeting him today...Now, I met him twice before and we didn't really hit it off but the last time was a bit better – he seemed to not perceive me as being as much of a threat...

The XYZ project had a chequered past and a future also if what people say is true – perhaps he was reluctant to pull back the curtain too much...

Yes – I wasn't really that interested in what he did well or not so well – more how he did things and I was open with him – I said that I was treading water and would start to sink pretty soon and he in fairness talked to me about what he'd done – his more back office roles – he was less like me and more sitting in the office...he operated on the basis of identifying the focal people in the team and they did things for him...

Liam has told me I'm the focal point for all the interactions with the business so it's a very different approach...

Is that a cultural difference between NOVOCORP and NETWORKS?

Well, just a different approach – in Networks, projects are managed differently – “Jake” could have come from anywhere in the business – I was different; I was appointed directly from the business...in hindsight a team with me at the business and “Jake” on the team would be ideal and I would have benefitted from what I've done in terms of the exposure...

When I have used “Jake”'s experiences say in terms of trying to justify more resources on this project, I've been told by Lorna and Thomas ‘don't mind “Jake”, you wouldn't want to do what “Jake” says etc’. So when I say I have less resources than “Jake” has, Lorna told me she talked to people in ICT and they told her I have as much – I ask can I talk to them I'm told no, you can't (EMPHATIC TONE)...I even sent her a follow up e-mail asking her for the contacts in ICT and that I would follow up myself because I need the support, but the answer I get is route them through me and I'll come back to you...

Lorna in fairness is usually good to put you in touch with people but in this case there's probably not someone she can put me in touch with....she probably wanted to force my position on the resource side...

In terms of your views and involvement in testing?

Well, the team upstairs are looking after that and implementing different forms of testing but it's only Finance and HR people are on the team...nobody from the business...

Why not?

Well, we're doing the rounds in terms of whether the testing will be business readiness or user acceptance testing – BRT or UAT...the first few months we heard about UAT and now it's all BRT with as few external testers as possible...Lorna and Thomas have given Fiona who's over BRT a very narrow window and I think they want to keep it as much as possible to the project team...

Is UAT more for engineering and BRT more for finance and HR?

Nobody knows what's going to happen as I was supposed to be starting training for BRT next week and that's been delayed by three weeks...

Could Freddie Jameson's resource be utilised on that BRT?

She'll just be used as say ‘no problems there, all is well’ and that's it...

When will be UAT be held then?

There is no UAT...

No UAT?

No, just BRT but the impression from the ICT group is that you've had people here testing the system from the business from months – you've signed off on the design – in effect you've been doing UAT...but now you have someone like Aoife (Burgess) saying 'hold on, I've four people here in the business who'll be using the system – they've never been on the project' – if there's no UAT, when are they going to test it – they need to be brought on the project to make sure it works...

How did this issue arise?

Fiona has a meeting regularly with the Financial controllers, she, "Lissa" Farrelly and Aoife Burgess would push issues and bring others with them...Fiona was away last week and so I took the meeting. "Lissa" and Aoife were also missing...the first part of the meeting was coincidentally all about BRT – there's definitely an agenda there...

What's the agenda? Are they concerned about users discovering issues?

There is a view that the people on the team represent the business and they've been doing the testing and so the system should be fine...Now, the project is being squeezed also in two directions – there's a SAP upgrade at the end of the month and some ICT resources will be on that and away from the project, also the (national government's) budget coming up – there may be huge changes in that in terms of tax...limited window in December to get those changes through so that's an issue...

I do feel myself that it will be a big issue when the engineering part of the business realise that there will no user testing....it's going to come up – and I only know about it from the meeting last week....the project team will not know what's required with respect to BRT and they're just focused on system and integration testing...

Is Rory working on this in terms of the schedule...?

In the background there's work being done but you should see him and Thomas working on the detail on the schedule – they can see system testing running behind...

What I've noticed and other have said this too is that you can see Rory moving out of that space – he knows that there's a train wreck coming in all the testing and he's leaving that to the testing team and the testing manager is trying to pull him back into that space...

What were the key things you experienced over the last few months?

Definitely the scheduling side was a big difference...and the appointment of the BIM although we could have handled the transition better rather than just dumping a lot of tasks on her...

Do you feel you were perceived differently in your role when she was appointed?

I was very conscious of it but to be honest the BIM role exists only in the financial world – I wasn't attending a lot of meetings or involved too much in that....

I'm still involved a lot on the HR side – Fiona has no involvement on the HR side...

The constant battles in terms of looking for resources and the space I got once the training teams were in place...I'm comfortable with the level of communication...I almost feel that I'm running on fumes now there in terms of trying to close the gaps which I want to still do....I've concentrated on Christopher who has said to me himself that he is key...

He has an IT background also...

He does – he doesn't like the detail though you can use him to get across certain things but not to drive things – he doesn't like to listen but rather likes to tell you what to do – he gets bored if things get repeated so he's not appropriate for every situation....

He and Liam have been important....

What will happen with Liam having left the project?

He needs to be replaced (on the project board) and I will need to bring Christopher into things a bit more...

That's critical for you in terms of access to resources...

Yes – there's not much more I can do in terms of resources – with Thomas, like I have a meeting with him later today and there's something I was supposed to have started last week but now it will be November at the latest...I just can't do certain things...the question will be why not...but I don't have the resources...

But if someone (replaces Liam) on the project board that might change...

I'm managing what I can – the BRT I'm leaving as much of that as possible to Fiona, I'm staying out of it – I need to take up some communication from her and go with communicating with the management...

I'm not going to get wrapped up in that (BRT).

Thanks Fergal, we can leave it there.

OK.

[94. 00]

Interviewee: Rory Harrington, External Project Management Consultant on the SAP HR and Financials project, NOVOCORP International.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

OK, Rory, you might fill me in on your background and how you came to work on the project?

Well, it's really a support role for Thomas, the project manager. How did that come about? Well, I can talk about my role in more detail later...

But I have familiarity with AGOCORP – I worked on many projects including MOIP (Note: the Market Opening SAP implementation undertaken by AGOCORP Group between 2003 and 2004). I have 20 years experience in IT, a decade or more in project and process management...

SAP or?

A lot of SAP but not exclusively – I would have worked before for consultancy firms and helping deliver projects but now am more of an independent provider – I'd independently provide services to a client or to the consultancy firm helping or providing a service to a client. In this case, a consultancy firm brought this opportunity to me – they have a framework agreement with AGOCORP where they provide services...

They approached me and asked if I would be interested in providing project management services support and capability to this project – it was couched literally like that and with no other information really – so I came and met Lorna Doone and had a good chat with her...

So, you came to this with a blank slate?

I did, I had a little knowledge through the contact and I knew some of the players – I had worked with Lorna before and others and Thomas so I had some idea of what they were intending to do...

Now, strictly confidentially, I quickly realised that all was not well with the project – there needed to be a greater focus on planning, governance and reporting...

Would you have had discussions before coming on board with the external quality assurance people (note: the second quality review process had just completed in Early September 2010)?

Well, early on, I did meet with them and was ad-idem with them in terms of what they had observed on lots of things...In fact I'd go so far as to say that I probably gave them a bit of collateral in terms of suggestions...I met Lorna, came on board and the first thing I had to do was to put a project plan in place – you can be at a bit of a disadvantage joining a project late but that can be turned into an advantage in that you can grab the bull by the horns and turn a project into something reasonably good...

I use the word *reasonably good* (to describe the outcomes of the project) because there is a lot of water gone under the bridge already...

So, I went away and conducted a lot of interviews with Thomas, the functional team and the test management and various parties to see where we were to draw up a functional plan that could be put in place that was realistic...

When you say 'Reasonably good' and 'lot of water gone under the bridge', could you elaborate a bit on that?

Well, success is still achievable but let me give you an example and it's a particular hobby horse of mine...

I would have quizzed Thomas as to could I see the sign-offs on the design stage in the documentation...I was told that there was no sign off per se although the design was "signed off" (INTERVIEWEE'S OWN AIR QUOTES)...What I would have been looking for there was either a wet signature or an consensus e-mail...That was water under the bridge...

The design was signed-off but it wasn't and it has had enormous implications for the project down the line...

In terms of people feeling that can argue for design changes later in the day?

Yes, that and someone seeing something late in the day and saying 'Oh, I don't like that – that's not what I agreed or said...'

The project can be exposed in that regard and another example is the fact that SAP is a packaged system that needs to be configured...There was the impression that the configuration stage was completed and that it had been tested etc...

Again, being pedantic I guess, I went looking for confirmation of this, what they document in AGOCORP as CRDs or Configuration Rationale Documents and again,

it wasn't there and now for one of our streams, we have to go back to the beginning and more or less, not completely reconfigure it from scratch – that's the project costing and billing section of the project...It may have been configured – there's no evidence that it was though so...that was hearsay, again more water under the bridge and you have to factor that in terms of planning moving forward...

Speaking confidentially, what did you feel about the roles that people were playing on the project team, the change manager and BIM etc – would you see people were effective in the roles they had?

No, no, absolutely not – in terms of controls, structures, governance, I have to say John – it just was not there....there were attempts at it and everyone had their own view as to what they should be doing...

There was a definite lack of cohesion; I would go so far as to say. A lack of integration in the team and you'd see that at meetings or in meetings that should have been taking place or weren't...

I would put that down to governance – the way in which the project conducted itself was lacking, it was poor and in the particular areas you mentioned, it was poor, it's improving and there's more work involving me ongoing...

But coming back to the original plan – Thomas and I had to come up with a plan at a particular point in time – I wasn't in a Greenfield site situation where I could put in an ideal plan; we had to reflect where we were...put together a project plan and vision...

Did you go backwards from the GO-LIVE?

No, the best thing I felt when I joined the project in July was to go from where we were – I mean there's always a risk with these projects that (in planning) you might take a sledgehammer to crack a nut and then you're finishing in March or April (of 2011) which is no good...So, with these often hard to understand SAP projects, that's in my experience the way to go...

I took a pragmatic view and see how best we can move on from where we are...

Would you have seen the coaching and advisory role as secondary to what you were asked to bring in terms of the project planning?

No, I felt that was very much part of the role... especially as a support to Thomas...Lorna articulated to me strongly that he needed a lot of help in that space and others as well and I'm still doing that...

The plan was broken and we needed to fix the plan but in fairness, I think we turned around the project part of things very quickly – One thing putting in plans but it's another thing putting in mechanisms to track and understanding where we are at a given time...We quickly established a philosophy around RAG reporting approach for each process stream, so Red, Amber or Green...every team had to create a RAG report for their stream largely based on activity incorporated within a baseline Microsoft Project Plan which is done to the day and also we have RAG meetings then every Monday...

We don't use the plan to track resources as resources are fluid in this project so that would be a sledgehammer to crack a nut...We can look at different streams, see where we are and from that produce dashboards that help us maintain an issue and risk register...Those simple tools made a big difference – the team could suddenly see a plan – they could see a way of reporting that could show what was doing...For Thomas, upward reporting also became easier as he now had his dashboard for Lorna and others that he could discuss at the project board...

Did you participate in any of the project boards?

No – but I would input into a lot of the (presentation slide) decks that Thomas would use at the boards...

How do you feel about project boards generally and the value they offer?

Well, there the norm I suppose for a big project like this, you might hear them called an executive committee or a steering committee...but they're essential – you need all those key stakeholders and decision makers together in a room but then again it depends on what you tell them....

Could that have been a problem up to a certain point on this project?

It could have been...people probably weren't telling "porkies" but the board mightn't have been getting the full picture as to what was happening...

How did the board react to your appointment?

I don't honestly know – but the feedback I've been getting is that they feel that they are better informed now in the sense they have a reasonable dashboard and a baseline plan they can look at not that they will as it's 600 lines long...They can see where things are... My involvement on the project board might be useful but might not be fair to others – I'm here to support Thomas and not to undermine him...

Ok – were there any other issues that came out in the coaching?

Well, there were certainly other things we felt we could be doing better as a team...the RAG reporting was great etc but we needed to get some integration

sessions going, at least two a week to try and get the sense of a team as opposed to us all working in silos...we do them on a Tuesday, actually we have one today and we'd be looking at operational-tactical issues in one of the meetings, so everybody needs to be on the same page in terms of integration testing, security and roles, trial conversion with data and BRT, issues that people needed to be aware of...Then on Thursdays, we would have more of a change management and BIM focused meeting which would be more focused back into the business...

More on Fergal and Aoife's roles?

Yes...

Had that been done previously?

No not at all...

Was re-integration hugely important and necessary?

Oh yes, it made a big difference – someone said that they seemed to become as different as night and day.

How did their involvement with the team disintegrate initially?

It never disintegrated because they were never integrated at all in the first place...

Why do you think that was the case?

I want to be kind as well as critical...the critical side I suppose was that the experience of doing that wasn't there...there was no implementation partner say like Accenture, IBM or Cap Gemini...I've been on both sides of the fence as a soldier if you like and OK say what you like about going down the road (of having an implementation partner), at least if they're at the table, things like that (lack of team member integration) will be looked after.

What was the rationale would you believe for this project not to have an implementation partner? Was it a case of this project being perceived as an add-on to what was there already?

Well, that could have been part of it – also AGOCORP have been in the SAP space a long time and they're one of the biggest users of SAP in the country....so they'd be thinking that should be able to paddle their own canoe so to speak in terms of SAP projects without having to engage an external costly implementation partner. Also, what you just said – a sizeable portion of this system was already in play in AGOCORP...

Unfortunately, that (decision not to engage an implementation partner) had an effect and that was one of the reasons I came on board as I could bring some of that external thinking to the project and to be quite honest even though I'm only one individual but I think it's worked well.

But going back to your question – I did do a lot of coaching in terms of test management, in terms of cutover management, business implementation and change management...OK...

Sure...

Engagement across the board as the output of those integration sessions...

Something coming out of those sessions rather you directing the mentoring (and coaching)...

Exactly – in one area, I would have done a fair bit of coaching and mentoring and that was around the structure around cutover planning and management. Even now, Lorna is looking for me to get involved in transition which is different to cutover...I have to be conscious that you can't go around stepping on people's toes...I am cautious as there are sensitivities around the project – with some roles, people aren't either clear as to what they should do or they're very clear as to what their role does not entail them having to do...I can think differently on either score but I have to be cautious...

So almost an over and under-appreciation of their roles?

Yes, absolutely, a good cap and bad cap thing then offline with Thomas and Lorna whereas deficits have arisen and we're trying to solve things without saying too much more (LAUGHS)...

Would you be talking about reporting lines?

Well, let's just say that are certain parts of the project where we haven't covered ourselves in glory yet...a big part of that that's coming at us like a steam train is that we need to be conscious of the change and transition management as we move more into the business. The acceptance and bedding in of the project, the management of the change management aspect of that is just as important as what we're doing here in terms of delivering a system to the user....

How do you feel about the communication around the project and to the users?

When I joined in July, internal team communication was very limited hence we established steps like the integration meetings. It's hard for me to say how things

are going in the big bad business as I'm not really in that – I've heard some good stuff and also some negative stuff but that's all anecdotal as I'm not exposed to it...

There's a burning question there – I'm not sure how effective the communication is due to the people that's delivering it – we need to be more enthusiastic about the project and wrap our arms around the business a bit more...

It's also important not to have mixed messages either – when you're trying and selling the system and you get feedback, instead of batting it away, if you end up bringing it back to the business, then you're passing a parcel over the wall rather than (selling the system)...

Would you feel that some of the problems arise due to people that maybe due to their gene pools or backgrounds, there might be an issue there in terms of being able to separate their loyalties from their roles on the project?

Possibly, certainly in the BIM case, there is an issue there in terms of being part of the business more than the project OK...That is having (an effect) – measures are being taken to address that – there is a fine balance between the business and the project – you have to be both at the same time...

You do want to leverage the informal and keep avenues of communication open even if they might be one-way sometimes as opposed to two-way?

Absolutely – you have to be able to wear the business hat or project hat as the situation arises and be able to size up a situation and we tainted that a bit by putting up our hand and saying 'That's not my job' when we're asking them to do things....To answer your question, yes, it has been a problem and it's too late to fix that now, but we can coach and mentor to manage it.

Should the criteria for selecting people then for these projects be less about background then?

Background is important but more important for me is the capability...

Did they err in this project then on the side of background in terms of picking people as they were concerned as to the user impact and wanted to show that they were considering that?

I don't know the criteria for why people were selected, but you might be right there in what you said...I would feel that I would know the capabilities that a change manager must have in terms of criteria and it should be someone who's enthused, passionate and energetic...

Loyalty to the project?

I would put loyalty to the project *and* (SPEAKERS OWN EMPHASIS) the business as prerequisites. Being able to split yourself – it's a difficult job – whether they have the business or systems knowledge that to me is a secondary consideration to the earlier characteristics...

Would knowledge of SAP not be that important?

To be honest, there is so much SAP knowledge on the project you can find out something if you have to...there may have been a flaw in the selection process but it still can be improved I believe...I'd like to think that – the individuals in that space have to accept their responsibilities...

In terms of the project...

Yes, there will be bumps in the road...they're can't be a "them" and "us" attitude...

Would you feel there is scope for the BIM and change manager roles to be combined?

Oh, they have to be...

Sorry as one person...

Well, I don't really feel that matters as long as they both or that person report along the same stream...at the moment you have the BIM working the angles on the business, business data and some change too and the change manager looking after the communication and the training...there's more than enough work there for two people but one would need to report to the other and that person back into the project...

Would that have helped team integration?

Yes, it would have...but we're seeing the consequences of that "siloeing" now in BRT...we have to try and manage that and make it better...change impact and communication go hand in hand and I did say at the very start that one person should report to the other – didn't say who should report to whom but people decided not to do it...

Any reason why?

Well, there would be some sensitivity around people's roles etc...you know someone asked me on this project – what are the three things that make a project like this work – I gave a glib answer but it was the truest thing I ever said: people, people and people...They design it deliver it and they're the stakeholders...this project has had problems on the people side....You can maybe acquire those over

time – we were able to use methodologies since I came on board, not to blow smoke up my own ass so to speak – we have greater visibility as to where we are at a given time on the project...

Overall, we're not in too bad a place...

What would have happened if you hadn't come on board in terms of the planning etc that you brought? Would they have made it?

Unless by pure luck, so the answer would be No – unless of course they implemented those methodologies themselves...

Was the planning or integration intervention more important, do you think?

Well, the first thing was to get the plan fixed and up and running, then you could stitch integration across the plan...once people understand that they were on the same journey hence the baseline plan and the integration sessions then..Hard to say which comes first...you could argue one should precede the other but...

Probably hard to integrate unless you have a plan to fall-back on?

Correct, you don't have the topics to discuss, so that's had a positive effect – there's definitely further room for improvement but that would be a very long discussion and we're short on time so...

Just have one more question in terms of the decision not to go with UAT – I know there's a cultural reason within AGOCORP why UAT doesn't happen...Is that a good call?

Put it this way, I've never worked on a project anywhere that did not have some formal UAT component. My understanding of BRT here and it could be the same across BRT in AGOCORP projects is that the documentation around BRT was ambiguous..When I worked on MOIP, UAT was subsumed into BRT but it was an active part – maybe it's been the case here since that but there is an emphasis on the readiness aspect of testing, moving away from the more acceptance aspect which can have negative connotations...what they're trying to do is roll acceptance into the integration testing....I've a testing background and there is a philosophy around testing moving from different environments not to bore you now...

No, I have an IT background as well – hence my recognition of the lack of UAT...

Right, OK – initially when they floated UAT as being rolled into and part of BRT, I accepted it in so far as UAT was being subsumed...

Rather than being decried...

Absolutely – but having discussed it in greater detail with certain stakeholders, there is a fear and a political slant depending who you’re talking to...for the Business the concept of acceptance testing is important but for say ICT group it’s more about the readiness testing as acceptance suggests that maybe there’s some comeback on the design...which brings us back to the earlier issue we discussed – where’s the sign off? If the design is signed off and everyone is happy with what’s been delivered, UAT is straight forward, indicative of the test cases scripted in integration testing – the system is passed, it’s accepted – no defects found...As opposed to leaving it as an open book – change this or change that...as opposed to sorry, design is over...

No sign off really has prevented the users having that psychological break...

Absolutely – that’s the fear I would think on the ICT side...

Is the lack of a formal UAT being commented on by the business? Are people wondering why it’s not happening?

I couldn’t say that John – I don’t know – what should be happening is that the function of BRT and how UAT is in there should be being strongly communicated to the business..And if not, that needs to be resolved quickly through the BIM role...she needs to take responsibility for that and BRT generally...

Does the change manager needs to communicate why UAT is not happening also or?

MMMM (REFLECTING) –that’s back to that point earlier (on role difference) – it has to be done, it doesn’t matter whether it’s the BIM or change manager role...

We have redesigned the BRT phase to incorporate some functional testing using the business, so there is some UAT in there...the UA bit is the sensitive bit and it’s not couched like that...Lorna, Thomas and I have put parameters on it and look, it’s been “de-risked” to a certain extent but has it been de-risked fully. Probably not...Is there a view in the business that the testing (as is) is being forced down people’s throats – possibly...

As I said, I’ve never worked on a project without a formal UAT: for me, it’s a surprise but at the same token I can only offer advice and I have to accept what the project has decided and that has to be communicated to the business and also the ICT group have a specific approach and that has to be respected too..

Thanks, Rory

No problem...(45, 30)

Location: Corporate headquarters/ **Date:** 12th October 2010/ **Duration:** 45 mins.

Interviewee: Mitt Ryan, Key Account Manager for GENCOM and Emerging Technologies, NOVOCORP Engineering Solutions.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

So Mitt, you might tell me about you role for the purposes of context...

OK, well I'm the KAM for GENCOM and Emerging technologies so any builds or refurbishments on the GENCOM and the emerging technologies side, I would supply people for that

International Investments (II) if they do any international builds or bids, I supply the people for that also and if others need people for any overhauls or refurbishments we would supply people to that – any emerging technologies like energy storage facilities, carbon solutions, ocean energy, we would also supply engineers for that –they're our main customers and we have been doing II and IG for several years and GENCOM for the last year or so; I have been with NOVOCORP since 1990 and in the was business development manager in the Middle East for a few years some time ago...based in Abu Dhabi working everywhere except Yemen and Iraq...

In terms of Chris Lloyd's team who would you be dealing with?

Mostly with Leo Moriarty, Paul McGrath and Charlie Chambers on the environmental side...

And your views on IT?

Pretty successful here...Since I've been here, we've gone from having a typing pool to PCs for everybody to having Microsoft Office and then moving onto very specific design packages which worked well and we would strive to be at the cutting edge of those...most of the engineers now use AUTOPIPE for modelling existing systems which helps as we plan refurbishments and also we would use GTPRO to enable us to model plant efficiencies in preparing for bids...

The general view of IT implementation – have they been business or user driven?

Well, those specific ones along with MERIDIAN were user driven but MERIDIAN is not used in a seamless disciplined way so the value is limited – changing from one

project to another, MERIDIAN is used differently on different projects so you can't switch easily and also it's used more as a document repository but even then documents are stored in different ways on different projects so it can be hard to find things...

And in terms of AGRESSO, how extensively would you have used it?

Very extensively here – would have started invoicing a few years ago – pulling reports from it to bill – but the client would be looking for more detailed breakdown say on hours and tasks and even holidays so you'd be creating supplementary reports...

So quite limited...

Yes...you'd dump say a time report into EXCEL and working from there...

So, quite labour intensive...

Initially, yes but we got quite good at using pivot tables but you had to be sure and check in case data can dragged and dropped into the wrong cells and your totals would be wrong...

So, more of a necessary evil than a useful system?

More of a necessary level as the reporting- it was quite hard to get information out – you could do it but it could take a bit of time – the user interface wasn't really appropriate...

Did the user have much say in the design and implementation of AGRESSO?

We certainly didn't but maybe Finance might have had – for us, it was a system we were given...

Did the client ever push for a more SAP-Like system for the want of a better phrase?

Well, they got all their reports on paper so they didn't care as long as they could read through them and check what they needed...

Would there be much emotional attachment to AGRESSO?

More emotional detachment – most people want to see the back of it to be honest but SAP might not be much better...

So people would be comfortable with the change?

Well, we have a working billing and reporting system – so we'll have to re-learn that process again in a new system whilst still keeping the client happy and managing their questions...

So, the business case for SAP is not really clear for yourselves...

There is no case for us – even at the workshops it was pretty clear that this is the system you're getting, so live with it...we went to several and we'd express what we had and what the client wanted and they'd say we'll think about it and then the following day we're back to square one – we were getting nothing we wanted and so eventually we blew up...

So as far as you're concerned, you'd see the SAP system as more imposed than having a business case per se?

It's replacing an existing system...so we'll have to learn again...

Is it more beneficial for HR or finance?

Well, we've don't know...we would see it as a central AGOCORP system – we're not really sure how suitable it would be either in terms of our financial processes – they will have to adapt also...

Could you talk a bit more about the BLUEPRINTING phase?

OK, we wanted to get the (new) system to give us the tools we needed to do the business – we felt we were blocked in terms of what we wanted or needed...

How did you approach the process descriptions or BPIDs? Was there a lot of effort there in terms of clarifying the processes?

Well, we would have approached it here with the view that our client has been asking us for certain things for years and we'll push for those in the system – at the end of the day it's their (the customer's) system and telling them to lump it...we're the KAMs and it's our job to make them like it and he probably won't if it doesn't give him the reporting and information he wants...

Who attended the workshops with you?

Well, usually a mixture of engineering managers and the finance people who work with me...at one meeting we had all the KAMS at it but we all wanted different things with the same system – our clients want different things...

How did the interchange work? Did you describe the process in detail to them or?

Well, it begun like that – initially it was more we'll listen to what you have to say and then more – well, this is what SAP is going to do...

What caused that shift?

Well, maybe all that customisation would be too expensive...

Was there enough time to get across what you wanted or would individual or group sessions are better...

No, in the group sessions, everyone had a chance to get their view across and the project team had their own issues as well in trying to manage us and our expectations...

Did the prior XYZ system get mentioned?

No idea about that to be honest – I had no preconceptions about SAP at all to be honest...

Did you get to a point where you felt you had got functionality in the system that there was some flexibility in terms of what the system would be?

No, there was more a feeling at the end of it all that this is the system you're going to have and you'll have to work with it...

Did you feel that you got presented with something finite or concrete and that things were signed off?

No, we presented what we had and then at the end there was a final system which seemed to be what was on offer before we went into the room...we didn't like that obviously and there is a still an underlying feeling around it...Some of us, me included feel we have to cope with it, using EXCEL or some other extra bit onto it..

So you'd feel that it may cost you more in terms of time etc (NODS)...

Initially, there may be a period where it takes more time to get invoices out to the customer or to get them used to the new system but after a while, things should workout...

Did any KAM get what they wanted in the system?

Ask around the KAMS, everyone will have something they don't like the system – we all got on board with the systems we had on the finance and the hr side and now we'll have to change...

Did you expect to get something more out of it?

Well, we thought as we had got in early that we could have got some customisation out of it if some was available...we had as KAMs to compromise with one other and push for a common outcome...

Could you have got that?

Well, yes as a common outcome is what SAP wants... none of us have really got anything we did want...

Could you have handled it better in terms of yourselves and got more out of the system if you wanted or was there so much variation that it wouldn't happen?

(THOUGHTFUL), I don't think we were ever going to be given the opportunity...at least that's the feeling we got at the end of it...we're not going to change the AGOCORP system...

But your businesses are different – is it possible to bring a system like that across?

Well, we're a consultancy business so SAP doesn't seem that appropriate for such a business although plenty of accountancy firms use SAP and they bill all the time so there must be some components or add-ons that you can use to do that – maybe they weren't budgeted for in the business....

In terms of the process (of BLUEPRINTING), how would you have dealt with the business people on the project team like Leona Miles for example...

All, quite good; I would have felt that they would have seen where we were coming from initially and the need to have these (configurations) but as time went on, they seemed to have got disillusioned and more tasked with avoiding configurations and keeping things in budget – that's the impression I got but I didn't talk to them...I don't know...

Were you happy that you got an ending to BLUEPRINTING, that there was no de-facto sign-off?

Well, it definitely ended – there was a definite 'Thanks for your input, we'll take it from here' but there was no de-facto sign-off at all...

Some people have commented on that...

Well, there was none – sign-off means that you've got something you wanted...we hadn't got anything we wanted but you've listened to what we had to say for the two to three days, you've taken on board what we have to say or maybe you haven't and you're going with what you were going to do anyway...

So, definitely over? Oh yes...

On the project side though...

Well, they've signed off on it all-right, they're pushing on with it...

In terms of what's being going on since with all the testing, how has the communication been?

We've been told the project is moving...we've seen a few screenshots but no demos or anything - nowhere near putting in timesheets or me running and end of month invoice run...we got updates as to certain modules as they're working along...there was actually a timesheet demo last week – as far as the expenses and approval and all that, I believe the girls are working on something at the moment.

Has it been a bit of a disadvantage that you haven't seen the system? Or physically get a chance to use it...

Well, it might not have...if someone had done a work-through of everything that all the KAMS were looking for, maybe the system can do most of it and we could have been shown that – that might have helped...

There was never a feeling that people weren't been shown the system deliberately?

No, there wasn't – the feeling was that the system had to be made operational and it had to be left get to that stage...

Generally, how would you feel about the communication on the project – has it been enough or involving the right people and the right fora?

I think so – Fergal and Margaret Blair gave a presentation in a slot at the conference last week – they're using the opportunities that are available to keep the project up front and that it's going on – there's a good scattering people from the business on the project and there is a lot of informal communication which has been good and we're just waiting for the button to be pressed – we're not looking forward to it...

What has been the general KAM view of the project team?

When we see them, we get the sense that they're frustrated by the process – there are people on the project from HR and the Finance and they are fighting for the system to reflect what their (functional) needs are...

I know you know Fergal very well. How do you see his role as change manager changing over the course of the project?

Well, anyone in a role like that – they have to get to know the system...see it working elsewhere and see when it can do....

Customisation is a bad word as it has dollar signs attached to it – configuration is probably better and he's familiar through me of what KAMs need from the system and he's got to try and bring that to the system that's being developed....

In terms of change, would you perceive him as being an effective change agent?

In terms of rolling out the roadmap or the road, talking to the engineering managers, if they need something on the individual training plans or the timesheets, he gets something set up...but he's responding to what the engineering managers feel they need to get from the system and to roll it out with them for the end users...

So in terms of effecting change, you see him trying to effect change in the system to reflect your needs and also in terms of bringing the users with him...How would you see him carrying out those roles?

Well he is (THINKING)...meeting people to find out where the stumbling blocks are and trying to remove them although he's being blocked from doing so – in respect to the business people on the project trying to do that, there are certain things they can do and certain things they can't...

Would the engineering population feel he should have had more power?

Oh definitely (EMPHATIC) although the same could be said for the rest of the business on the project...He's bound to feel frustrated in that as would anyone...

Is it (considered) fair that he is a change manager but has limited scope to change had an impact on how the project is being perceived...

Certainly not fair on the person – and what it can also do is turn people against the project...

Has that happened?

Oh, a little bit...in the customisation we asked for certain things and were told that no, we're not buying those for you so just live with what you have...

Would you have dealt much Fiona McGregor, the BIM?

Not really, just at the BLUEPRINTING workshops...

How do you see the project moving forward from here over the next few months for yourself from Fergal and the project?

Little enough –as long as we get the data across to the system and not lose anything on the way and then onto GO-LIVE...the system will be able to run a lot of reports but we may need to customise those in order to get what the client wants and that will take some time...

In terms of the testing phases what would you be looking for?

Well, getting to be able to get some people here over to process some invoices, to actually do some timesheets, expenses and training plans... get the full gambit in and do a couple of months of shadow invoicing before the system goes live...

Do you have anyone on the project team at the moment?

No – will have to get someone across. I'd much prefer to get someone to be doing mock invoices that we can give to the clients in November and December and manage things that way rather than go live and at the end of January (2011) send them onto the customers and then the trouble will start...

Will you be allowed do that?

I don't know to be honest...or be ready to do that...the impression I get is that there's a lot of work to be done yet so...

Are all the KAMs being vocal on wanting to do this?

Well, we're not in so far as we're more expecting the system to go live and then deal with the issues as they rise...as far as I understand it, there is some testing of subsystems along those lines but they're internal processes not customer facing ones which will be the real test of this system....

Ideally, time would have been budgeted for a kind of customer testing phase?

Oh, yes, definitely...

Has the feedback ever gone to the project team?

I've never heard it...

Is there more even too much of an emphasis on the albeit important system testing etc?

Well, there is a feeling probably in the parent business that customers don't matter whereas for us they're critical...totally customer focused...

The role of the customer had never been other than say BLUEPRINTING discussed...

Well, NETWORKS are probably half our business – GENCOM another 10%, both internal and XXXXXX an external customer 10-15% and they're (all) driving this change...

Our external clients, international another 10-15% - so...

So, that particular KAM (i.e. Peter Jackson) was very vocal...

Yes, about what his client needed and expected from the system...well, any of our internal clients, they're on SAP anyway so they have to work with what comes out of the system...our national client (LAUGHS), they're not going to live with that excuse....

So, you're expecting a difficult early few months next year?

Yes, pretty busy...

In an ideal world, you probably would have liked to have got more out of the BLUEPRINTING phase in terms of more of a compromise...

Well, there was no compromising – if we had got all the configuration we wanted than we could have taken a step back and focused on the client – that didn't happen as we didn't get anything of what we wanted....

That's the general feeling...

What you do think is the feelings of Finance and HR when it came to any compromising?

There has been a lot of segregation around holidays and the like and HR is getting tools that help them...the responsibility for looking after expenses and checking every line of them and the holidays and all that are moving from HR to the engineering managers and they'll have to do it, never having done it before...that's a big change and there are financial things as well...so I would say Finance and HR are fairly happy with this system...(SIGHS)...that's a month's work for some people and HR used to have to input expenses and now you have engineering managers doing it...what's more cost effective really? An engineering manager or a HR employee checking expenses...there's been a shift in work onto the engineering managers and there's nervousness about that and the implications....

Has that been raised much as an issue on project fora?

It's been talked about know the whole issue of (project or line manager) approval of expenses was discussed at a workshop and it came to the project board and a decision was taken, I think it was a split vote on how the approval should work but a decision was made (that it would be the line manager)...

Were there any KAMs at that meeting?

No, I don't think so...

Liam is your senior user on that board?

Sorry...?

Liam McHale...

I don't know about that...

Are project boards understood?

No - there would be a certain amount of suspicion of project boards – I mean they have a mandate from above and it's their job to get people, the users to come along with it (the system)...

So, more of a top-down mechanism rather than bottom-up?

Yes...

Even though the bottom up element is supposed to be an important part...

It's an ELEMENT yes (INTERVIEWEE'S OWN EMPHASIS) – the bottom get's its say or an OPPORTUNITY (AGAIN, INTERVIEWEE'S OWN EMPHASIS) to have its say...

It doesn't necessarily have to be listened to...

Can be cosmetic?

Yes (THOUGHTFUL)...

What benefits can you see from the system?

Benefits – I don't know...one unified system should make things more simple in terms of billing but don't know if it will – I see it more as replacing one system with another and with a transition period in between

More negative rather than positive...

I wouldn't be that negative – just a transition...

Taking HR, Finance and the Engineering populations, the perception in the engineering population would be that the other areas involved in the new system will be seeing more benefits...

Well, every big business like our parent with a working population will have a functioning HR system already...what we've bought in as a stand-alone system which will suit those (functions) more than us...the only way we could benefit would be if they went out and bought those extra parts that we could configure – that would be the only way – I can't think of how else you could do it – you'd be short-changing people's expectations...

Even from a strategic sense, would a compromise on the configuration side encouraged more buy-in from your side?

Well, if they had bought the extra little bolt-ons we needed (as KAMs), we would have been very happy with the new system...it became clear that it wasn't in the budget so configuration would be difficult...

From your own perspective, what would you feel were the key things or events that happened to you over the last couple of months...?

The first key thing was I suppose the (BLUEPRINTING) workshops where we had the chance to get across what was important to us and what we needed from the new system...on the third time, though when it became clear that what we wanted was not going to happen, then...

There were really two key things, one positive being the opportunity to be involved and one negative being told that we can't do any of that....

The rest for me was more the normal typical process of rolling it out...

In terms of testing for the customer...

Well, that would have been helpful even a bit with the system so we're not landing a load of trouble on a client's desk come next January...but that's another thing – the clients are not getting any buy-in in terms of the system...they'll just be seeing new types of invoices coming...

Is there much (client) awareness of a change (in the system) coming?

I'd say the KAMs have mentioned it – a lot of our clients don't like change so they'll be just...

Expecting things to be as before and you to absorb the change...

Yes....

Thanks a lot Mitt...

No problem...

(45, 00)

Location: Corporate headquarters/ **Date:** 27th October 2010/ **Duration:** 31 mins.

Interviewee: Aoife Burgess, Financial Controller, NOVOCORP Engineering Solutions.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

So Aoife, how have things been going on the project since we last met at the end of BLUEPRINTING – what has been your involvement since?

To be honest, not that much as once design was over, they moved more into the testing side of things; we have a BIM now, Fiona, who was reporting to Tommy, but now I believe is reporting to Thomas...

I have business leads working on the testing side so my personal role has diminished quite a bit...

How do you feel the BIM role has worked?

Well, I think – she's reporting now to Thomas rather than Tommy which is probably right as the role should be within the project...she has a good business and financial background and she has SAP knowledge as well, she brings those two things together...

Some people have commented to me that her SAP knowledge in terms of being able to tell people what is possible as in 'you can't have X but you can have Y and Z' has been important as there is not a lot of SAP knowledge on the team...

Very important – I think that role – if you were ask what the fundamental learning point on this project is the lack of SAP knowledge on the project...that's not the project's fault – the project was staffed from the business with very good people but they knew AGRESSO not SAP so it's very hard for them to design a system that they don't know...

How have you perceived other roles on the project?

Grand...

In terms of change management....

Some people had issues on the change side but I knew SAP so I didn't have any questions that other people would have had – so I'm probably not the best person to ask on that...I didn't have any issues on that...

In terms of the testing phases underway, who's involved on your side?

Well, they're done here now, working on month-end but I have about 4 people down there...

Is it difficult managing resources that are needed on the business and on the project?

Yes, it is...but SAP comes first – we do budgets every year – we'll only do SAP once...

How is it worked in terms of the people left in the business?

Well, we can't do month end without them so we bring them back – testing takes a long time – I've worked on SAP projects so I know it takes time to work through a testing script – we've had to drop a few things and we've refocused and done some things more simply...For me to have people in the testing though has two benefits – firstly, they're going to be helping the project through and secondly they're getting exposure to the system which will help them understand it and they like it and those messages are coming back to the business – people down there are engaged and people left behind want to get involved...but things like internal trading are getting more streamlined and easier to manage...

How you thought about rotating staff?

We did – but it doesn't work as you're retraining people on the project then all the time...

Now the testing has gone slowly and maybe not as thoroughly...I would maybe a few doubts around the configuration of certain...there's still some design issues being worked on as it's in November...

Why is design an issue in November?

Well, I don't know...there has been an issue around speed...we had issues with consultants, we're on our third and we had issues as before with a lack of SAP knowledge on the project which does impact on things...

Given the XYZ project was running and finishing near the start of the AGRESSO-SAP changeover, would it have been possible to have some of the intended team shadow their counterparts on XYZ?

(WHISPERING) You couldn't send four accountants off to shadow like that...

Maybe not all four...

XYZ wasn't a financial system – it was a (workflow) system for NETWORKS – what we would have been better doing was swap four AGRESSO accountants with AGOCORP Corporate and got four SAP aware accountants to come work on the project – that would have been far better...what is actually do is that earlier so that the AGOCORP people could see AGRESSO in a couple of month-ends and bring it back to the project...

So, maybe a bit too much AGRESSO and not enough SAP knowledge?

Well, AGRESSO knowledge is not an obstacle but a lot more SAP would have been...about 70/30 or even 65/35...

In terms of the rest (of the project) would you have had many dealings with the Change Board – do you feel it's worked well?

Yes, am on it – though I can't remember the last time we met....Given that (LAUGHS) I'm not sure I'm the right person to ask...if things have been going on, I haven't been involved but it worked well no problems...

In terms of the key things that happened on the project...

Three things really I'd change and that's again getting that knowledge of SAP mix right, I'd also have them here and not in Project HQ and I would have sent anyone without SAP knowledge away for training before the project started...

Why would you have them over here rather in Project HQ?

I would feel there's a disconnect...Everyone is busy –over here you could just pop into someone – physical distance is an issue – there's time involved in going from here to Project HQ...

Does that lead to a lack of visibility in respect to the project and the level of work and effort involved...

Absolutely yes – it's easy to dismiss – but I've worked on SAP projects – I know how hard they work and also how the next two months are going to be so difficult for them...

Is there an attitude perhaps as well (with that distance) that this project is only an extension of what's in AGOCORP already?

Yes – I think that's a very common misconception...people might have started out with that view but this is a fundamentally different business: this is not the same (system) as just what's in (AGOCORP) SAP...

With the distance, it might be easier to say that or come to that misconception...

That might be around but I wouldn't think people are thinking that...I know the system is different and the project team are working very very hard...

Does that distance mean that the communication out of the team is more likely to be formal like e-mails and presentations, not too much informal like a chat in the corridor....?

How big a thing is it...I don't know, a lot of the guys meet some of the project team for lunch as well– but physical distance does create a mental distance – if you had a choice, you'd have them in the same building...

AGOCORP has as history of having projects in Project HQ...

Maybe, it should not be done automatically but a bit more reflexively...

Yes, but the problem can be space – often Project HQ is the only place where you have the space...you have to weigh up the consideration of having them all together in one space or having them separated out...

Is there a danger of distraction if they're in the business?

No – maybe for the first while but after that, it wouldn't be...

The last issue was around SAP training...

Yes, before the project – I've talked to Leona Miles on the project – at this stage, I'd say the level of SAP knowledge is quite high...they've become hugely knowledgeable now on the system...but when you start at zero, it takes a long time to ramp up and then you know it's August...it would be better to have more time to deal with issues as the clock is ticking but it always is on these big projects and you're never sitting with three weeks to go looking for something to do – it's always busy...

Looking back over the BLUEPRINTING phase was that lack of SAP knowledge a negative...

Yes...

Is that when you realised there was an issue?

Yes...

How did that manifest itself?

Sometimes in the design the detail was lacking and SAP is a detailed system and you need to ask questions to get that detail...

Some people have said to me that the "TO BE" BPIDs were quite similar to the "AS IS" BPIDS – nearly more AGRESSO than SAP...

I couldn't answer that as I only read a few BPIDs – the only thing to counteract that was I suppose the remit was to not reinvent the wheel...there seems to be a suggestion that we didn't get the best design we could have got...Is that true? I don't know...

Just some people's comments...I don't know...

I'm not so sure on that bit – we did a very long design phase but we didn't get into the detail as the team were learning the system...then when we got to design, we starting asking the detailed questions and by then things had moved on and the business had changed...I don't think we'll really know until the system goes live...

I sat in on a few workshops where it went on and I'd be saying to myself that this should be over in an hour – when you don't have that expertise on board....

Not to be overly negative now; I think the project is doing fine...

Over the next while, what would be the key things you'll be looking out for? Any slight concerns...

The BIM is in place – and I have interfaces on the project – we're into detail now and that's not my place – BRT has to go well – we have to have a good sense of where the system is...configuration has to be completed and no outstanding design issues and that stop this is it – we're testing it...

Would you have any issues with a lack of a formal UAT phase?

Oh, there has to be....if there isn't its news to me...now, there's a formal BRT phase and we're not allowed call in UAT but to my mind it's UAT – once BRT takes place and that the testing team are happy and it can go to the project board for sign-off...that's how I understand it unless that's changed...

But no real formal UAT phase...

Well, for me there is as I have five people over there (testing on the project), for me BRT is UAT renamed...I don't know why we're shying away from calling this

UAT but it is UAT – it's probably one of the most important things you can do...I don't know why they're rebranding it...

Could there be a perception around the project that UAT is not happening for some reason?

Yes, I think the project would have to be very careful about that... (BRIEF INTERRUPTION WITH A VISITOR)...

It is unusual not to have a UAT phase...

Yes but in my head we are doing it – we have five people down there doing UAT – BRT seems to be broader and that's why we're calling it that, it seems to be...

Amongst the broader user population?

I don't think they'd know what UAT is...maybe I'm wrong on that – my ear to the ground – maybe it's the way the language has gone over the last few years – would they be considered different...?

Well, typically they would be considered separate – but perhaps some (the broad user population) might say they should be separate, some might say that there are people (from the business) over there testing there anyway, so in effect that's UAT...either approach might work...

I don't think we're doing either to be honest – I have five people doing UAT so if they're not doing that but I'd be more concerned about the sign-off on BRT – what inputs from a testing side are they taking to the board to go to sign-off and then GO-LIVE...I'm not privy to that but the condition usually is that GO-LIVE is recommended on the back of sign-off on BRT so I'd like to get a feel for that actual (sign-off) process...

Just one final question – could you talk just a little about the appointment of the BIM just for additional background? Were you involved in that?

I was...I had worked with Fiona before and I knew the job she was in was coming to an end so we had a vacancy here so I got her in here to run the SAP project for me in terms of the engineering...she did that for a short while – it became apparent that we needed a BIM...

Was it not in the original project plan?

Maybe it was...I think there was an issue with a person they had in mind...Tommy said (SMILES) – 'I think Fiona would suit that very well' and thanks very much Aoife...the opportunity came and it was perfect...I was able to replace her...

Say what you like about change but we are implementing a system we are going to use for the next 10-15 years – whatever it takes, how many testers, my best finance managers whatever it takes...

Short-term loss for a long-term gain...

Absolutely, myself included, budgets are over so I've told my staff that November and December for me are SAP and that's it...I just had a meeting with Rita Cantillon, who's in accounts payable and doing cutover lead...of course, things will go wrong – how could they not? How well-trained and prepared will we be?

When those things will go wrong. What will we do? That's really the... (test).

There's one thing I feel probably – I'd wonder a bit about it is the separation of the project and business...the project were on the transaction side whereas there is a whole process around it...both (the transaction and the process) need to be in the project – that's probably why we have Fiona in there....It only became apparent later on...

Maybe in the BRT?

No, you won't as BRT is all about the transactions – so if you raise a purchase order that's a transaction, but will lead to an invoice and a receipt – who's looking after that? The business or the project – that should be up to the project to sort out...who does the goods receipting? I could implement and test the four transactions but how do they work in practice...it's making all those pieces fit...

So more about the rationality of things work in real-life in the business?

More so that you can design the business but how does it work...

The system of events might be off in the system?

No – the system will work but it might just be a set of transactions – who's actually does it in the business?

On the governance side?

The actual carrying out of it- the transactions are very technical (in the system) but the implementation in practice - who's actually doing it?

Like, we're setting up a Purchase Order Bureau in the business (to reflect the system) – how is that going to work – is it a case of that being the concern of the project or maybe that should be the business...that would be a concern, that process understanding..

We'll get through it and manage...

SAP knowledge and experience might help you maybe think about those issues in advance...

Absolutely – if you had AGOCORP SAP people, they would see that and say ‘that will affect that’ or ‘that won’t work’....they would have brought that... (they could say) ‘That’s great in theory, but not in practice’...

Thanks a lot Aoife...

No problem...

(31, 00)

Location: Project HQ / Date: 27th October 2010/ Duration: 42 mins.

Interviewee: Leona Miles, Finance, NOVOCORP Engineering; *appointed as Finance operative on SAP project team.*

<u>Colour Key:</u> Interviewer / Interviewee.

So Leona, you might fill me in on your background and your roles in AGOCORP and NOVOCORP?

Well, I've always worked in Finance – I've years of experience in other companies and in another company, I worked on another IT system which helped me on this before – so I'd seen BPIDS and functional specs before...

Are you an AGOCORP or NOVOCORP employee?

Always NOVOCORP for the last seven years, an accountant in the Engineering side selling intercompany time to internal clients like Networks...

So, working for Peter Jackson and people like that...

Yes, working for people like that, KAMs and putting their month-end (accounts) together...

So, how did you get involved on this project?

Came back from maternity leave and was asked to go on the project so at the moment working on a very interesting part which is project costing and billing – so in our business we set up job numbers and charge time and other things to it...Now, SAP is not really suited to that and that is a big challenge for use here in terms of changing NOVOCORP over to the AGOCORP SAP system...

Paul McGrath was telling me that even his job numbers are different to Peter's etc? Lot of variation...

Absolutely, the BPIDs we did for Project Costing and Billing were very complex so we have to standardise it and our business processes will change – so we're going to have a central accounting team in NOVOCORP so everything will be centralised whereas before everyone on the accounting teams could be doing different things for KAMs...

So, you've been on project since February?

Yes, but my part on project costing and billing didn't really start until May – up to then, I'd be helping out on the BPIDs and as such as you rightly said, there was a lot going on the business...trying to get all the variations in the BPIDs to the TO-BE which is tough and difficult and we had some requirements gathering and conversations in the BLUEPRINTING phase...Part of my job was to get them on the right road to accept this change...

Was that difficult to do, considering all the variations in the business around Job Numbers for the engineering managers to accept this change?

It was, but they had to take a step back and ask themselves why they were doing what they were doing...Are you doing time and materials invoices for Networks and why do you need to have all this information anyway...Both us and the internal customer are going to be on SAP anyway and they (the internal customer) know what SAP can do so they should be able to accept what the new situation...

Were the engineering managers resistant initially?

They were – they were allowed to do their own thing – and Purchase orders was the same – they didn't need to do things in the same way – but SAP is an integrated system and you have to do things in the same way...the only thing I would say is that we had a presentation and I fought for it as much as I could to make it work for them...just recently now...

In the timesheets, they could see that there were things that I had tried to get and for them and after that meeting, then they had a good reaction – the resistance was beginning to shift...

Are you worked for a lot of them?

I'd know all of them and they'd be confident that I'd be on the project...

Do they look at you as an advocate for them?

Well, the view that it is a finance-led project which it is would have been held by them – but I think they began to see that I had fought for them and even Leo who'd usually be quick to put up the defences said after the presentation that he could see that I'd tried to get something for them out of the system....

He's warming a bit to the system?

Well, it wouldn't give them 100% of what they wanted...you have to challenge the system and there was a view that SAP wouldn't give us what we want so...they are very interested in their business – it's not as if they're standing...

Are they afraid of losing their independence?

They are a bit and I think there's more of a fear of being unable to understand the system as they have to in January be able to use it and report to senior management and they would be afraid that they won't be able to do that and also as well there is more visibility in the SAP system – others can see more easily what's involved in a job so they need to be able to use that – that's the main source of resistance – that and the feeling that they can't work the way they used to anymore...They know AGRESSO and it's a very open system as well but they don't know SAP..

Did the perceived lack of success of XYZ play a part in this project? Some of the KAMs are close to NETWORKS so they might have affected their attitude...

Well, yes definitely – it was mentioned at one of the (BLUEPRINTING) meetings and we were asked had we thought about it...very negative from the first meeting...

In terms of where they are now- have they surrounded or accepted it?

I think they're accepting it – they will maybe have complaints with it in January but the last presentation I made, Liam and Tommy came to it and Liam gave a good speech after it stressing that the system was coming and people had to take it on board...which helped...It's either buy into it or...

AGRESSO is being turned off?

Yes...

Would you have been an AGRESSO user before?

Yes, a lot and it did suit the business well – ideally you'd align the processes and then go over to SAP but the more I see of SAP, the more useful I think it will be and better in the longer term...

It has great project capabilities and it would be important to set up a project management group after (implementation) that could look at realising the potential of SAP...

It's not in my scope to do that –people were very stuck in AGRESSO and their spreadsheets with it...

AGRESSO didn't do everything and people added a lot of extra bits and pieces to get the data out – did they have a lot of almost pride...

Yes, Mario certainly did but I'm not a fifty spreadsheet person myself and I would prefer the SAP approach and I think they will as well, when they get used to it...

When you were working on the BLUEPRINTING workshops, how did they work – I know you were aware yourself of the variations within the business – did you manage the KAMs on an individual basis?

Got them together into meetings and we needed a workshop to see the overall view and see what we could do – it would take 2-3 years of meetings to go through and do everything the KAMs would want...we got a TO-BE out of it...

Was there a sign-off or did you show the TO-BE to the KAMS?

Well, Aoife would have signed off on the TO-BE and we would have done a brief demo for them...but with Project Costing and Billing we had a lot of problems with that and a consultant left and then another and now we have two more on this – so we had a lot of problems on this...

Will they have seen the TO-BE on the system as it was signed off?

Well, Aoife would have signed off on the project as it is a finance-led system so...

But they would have seen the demo?

Yes...

What was their reaction like?

Fine – to be honest, I don't think they know enough about SAP to really be able to...Aoife has a SAP background so she was able to make decisions on it...

Was Fergal Flynn at the meetings?

Yes, he was...

How would you feel his contribution was in terms of being a change manager?

I thought he could have been stronger in winning them over as his role was as a change manager...

In what sense, in terms of being stronger on communication or more believing in the system?

He came from an engineering (perspective) all the time – not standing up doing a slideshow at the time – he could have been over telling the KAMs and managers like Peter and Mario how great the system is...getting the word around even when things aren't going well...

Could he have been more enthusiastic and maybe showed more belief on the project with the KAMs?

Yes...

Has that improved?

Not really – I wouldn't think the communication is great informal and formal –if he's confident about it then they'd be confident about it...the job of a change manager as you say on a formal and informal level is to be having those quick 5 minute chats with people in the corridor...the feedback on the business would be that the communication is not that great formally or informally...

In what sense?

Well, they keep on asking for a demo...we did a demo before – they really only wanted to know what was going on...they need to be told what it means for them – they're saying like that engineers won't get access to SAP –he needs to be communicating that they're going to be getting great reports...

There's probably a valid reason in terms of licenses maybe that means they can't all access it...

Yes, licenses – I mean I have "Michelle" up here from the business to do some testing– she wouldn't know what's going on...It's not my place or role to be telling her about licenses...

You would work with Fiona as well...

Yes, she does a good job; to me, she's doing a bit of the change management on the business side...

Some people more on the business didn't seem to realise that the BIM role would be on the project so they got a bit of a surprise when it happened...she seemed then to be doing some change management...Would you agree

Yeah, I would...

What makes her effective?

Well, she just has a good attitude – you have to sell these systems, and make them confident - do you feel they're similar...

I can see that their roles can overlap all-right...

I would think Fergal is more on the fly whereas she's a bit more...

She has SAP knowledge...

Which is important on a project like this – I didn't have any when I joined this project...and it was a massive disadvantage – you're accepting the SAP expert's decisions although you may not understand why...

Makes it hard to answer questions as well...

It does...

Ideally, roles like the change manager should involve system expertise?

Yes – I mean Fergal is able to say 'No, you can't get this but you can get that'...

In terms of the BLUEPRINTING, how were you directly involved?

We did the AS-IS and the TO-BE – we had consultants leaving and so the deadline was a bit rushed...

Did you feel that there was a good process – did people feel say in HR and Finance and Engineering that they had clarity as to what they were and weren't getting?

Well, I don't think the engineering side was as involved in the decision side – they had a lot in terms of requirements but not so much in terms of decisions...

Some of the engineering managers felt that BLUEPRINTING never quite finished?

Well, some of the time we had to go back and forth to try and get answers as to whether they wanted certain things or not as we had the problems with the consultants and then configuration had problems as a consultant hadn't configured things properly...that was totally down to time...

I do feel that they were left out more in the decisions – it could have been done more informally, not necessarily formal...Fergal could have been doing that and maybe he was...

They did feel that they hadn't seen anything and they were anxious to see what they got – it created maybe for some of them there was a fear of the system...

They thought we were just throwing the system (together)...

Much more informal communication would have helped...

Well, when I went in and I was confident in the system – OK, the system's not perfect and there were a few problems but you have to go in and be confident about that – sometimes Fergal's not maybe giving that confidence...

Is there a big difference between the testers from the engineering or finance or HR side of the house?

Well, definitely a great idea to involve testers from the business – we have “Robin” in testing from an agency and it’s not really working out as well...the business people find the problems in the system a lot quicker...

Is it more the business understanding (that he’s lacking)?

Yes – he just doesn’t know the business...

In terms of the testing, how is it going?

Very well – we’re nearly at the end of system testing and then onto integration testing...the form of system testing is almost like integration testing – our integration testing probably won’t be as much – in the system testing we gone through a project from set up all the way through to billing...

You’re not having a specific UAT – would that be something that would be an issue – you partially have that in BRT...

Well, we have three people off from the business who’ve been really doing user acceptance testing...

Do you think it’s important to communicate that even though you don’t have UAT formally, that you are actually doing user testing...

Probably more that they feel that people haven’t come over to do project costing and billing and Finance side...

There is a bit of politics on the side of the project is that some of the NETWORKS KAM area will all be moving to that central billing...some people are happy, other’s not...they might have a concern that they’re not getting a chance to test the system as Project costing and billing is brand new and not in AGOCORP whereas the financial side – most of that is in AGOCORP already...

Is there an impression sometimes that people don’t realise that they’re a lot of new things in this system not just adding a few pieces...

Yes, that can be there – in AGOCORP, I’d say they’d feel that and in NOVOCORP they might know things are there and they do appreciate that things are being done and that this is difficult...

What are the critical things that you feel you’ve gone through the project?

Positive or negative?

Well, both...

Well, the big thing for me is the Project Costing and Billing side of the project which was given to me and only supposed to be a few BPIDS and has turned out to be huge...that was very much underestimated in terms of what was going to be required...

Does the project costing and billing part kind-of reflect what we discussed a minute ago in terms of how the system is seen?

Well, on an IT side, people probably see it as an extra bit but for us it's our business...it's massive

So, overcoming that was a big issue...

Absolutely...

Anything else...

Well, I found going on a project like this without SAP knowledge very stressful – I got some SAP knowledge in the training, some on the operations and FI side but not on the project side of things – I learned a lot and if I worked on another SAP project, I'd be able to see what would and wouldn't work...I'd approach things differently the next time – I just had to accept what they said – I've learned a lot and when I go back to finance, I'll actually be heading up that central accounts team and be reporting to Aoife...

Thanks for that Leona...

You're welcome.

(42, 00)

Location: NOVOCORP HQ / Date: 27th October 2010/ Duration: 48 mins.

Interviewee: Warren Gatling, Financial Performance Manager, NOVOCORP.

<p><u>Colour Key:</u> Interviewer / Interviewee.</p>
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So Warren, could you tell me how things have gone in the project since we last met at the end of the BLUEPRINTING phase?

Well, even throughout the Build phase, we had a few design issues - that I've been involved in and particularly around the issue of centralising accounts payable – we're also been looking at the idea of notional banking – settling accounts across all the business units here which is complex as we're all different statutory entities here so there would be issues around tax etc so they've been a few design changes...

Have they gone to the project board?

Some of them have – some have been neither accepted or rejected but have yet to be decided on – some of been rejected at the project board level which is...

Why did the project board reject it – did they appreciate the value of notional banking?

Oh, they did all-right – I'm not sure - but I think the initial problem was that the amount of time required to make this change was overestimated at 25 days I think and they rejected that as they have to get the system in...They have rowed back a bit from that as they also have found a new way to go the purchasing part of the system and requisitioning which doesn't depart much from what SAP does already...

Now, I was talking to another financial controller in NOVOCORP yesterday and she felt that this proposed new way might have governance consequences in terms of how we had hoped to use it on intranet so...there might be an issue around controlling the system...

At the project board level – notional banking could be done by the end of first quarter 2011 – it wouldn't have to be done straight away but we would actually settle with our other business units notionally every quarter...

So like in terms of you as NOVOCORP doing business with NETWORKS...

Yes, at the moment, we actually write them a cheque... for shared services and payroll costs and they write us a cheque for the jobs we do for them...that will all end – there will be no more cheques and we'll settle them notionally and we'll physically settle it every quarter so that's been pushed back to the end of Q1 – that's been agreed I have Fiona (McGregor) there working on it..But I'd have a bit of a concern about that like 'That's not part of the project...'

Is that coming from Fiona or the project?

Oh, the project... Fiona is very much on board with what needs to be done...this is mainly for transactions between Engineering and NOVOCORP and it kind of reflected what was coming out of the Project Costing and billing side of the project...the idea that you would settle notionally and then physically...

Was it part of the original project scope?

No, it kind of rolled out of Project costing and how transactions were managed there and if you were looking after transactions there (in SAP) that you could look after the banking side as well...this automatic settlement process – the more we looked at it, the more we thought that notional banking would be good...and because we're all different statutory entities we would have to be able to physically settle once a quarter...

Now, the view of the project is that we have a deadline and we can't keep on adding new design items, so we'll get to it by the end of March 2011...

Is the value of this understood at the project team level?

No – it's not crucial – the project will not fail if it doesn't go in but if it doesn't go in, there may be a bit of a mess later on... Fiona is the only one really keeping that ball rolling at the moment for us...

Has Fiona made a big difference?

Yes – she's been very good – she's been taking more of the roles that others should have been doing on the project...

In terms of the change side or?

Not just that – some of Thomas's role and some of Rena's role as well who I thought as head of accounts on the project would be much more business facing...(Her) role didn't work out like that...

She's the missing part of the project for me and she's there on the project and coming back to the business. She's fighting equally both sides and she's got a business bent obviously...

She also has some SAP project expertise...

She does have some SAP – not sure about the SAP project expertise but she's actually used SAP which is a lot more than people on the project or most people here...

How do you feel the project team generally have performed since?

Well, it's funny – I'm not as involved in it so much as I used to be...My team wouldn't have had as much to do with them either...not since the end of the BPIDs and BLUEPRINTING – Fiona we would see...

In terms of Rena, what was her original role on the project?

I don't really know – my understanding would have been that she was doing what Fiona is doing now...but that could be my understanding to be honest...

Is that a commonly held view?

I don't know as I haven't talked to others about it to be honest...I suppose when they were doing the BPIDs there was clarity about what people on the project team were doing – you had people taking creditors, others taking banking, others taking financial reporting and preparing the BPIDS and Design for all those – how I understood the project team roles was that Thomas was overall project manager but then you had Rena heading up the accounting side of the SAP – now, that hasn't panned out as such but Fiona has taken up that role...

So, in an ideal world Fiona, should have been in there from the start?

Yes, definitely...there's a bit of me is that Fiona's personality that is the key or maybe she's better than Rena or maybe Rena didn't have that job anyway...

Was there some ambiguity as per project roles?

Well, I would think so and I would be reasonably senior in the project – like back in March I'd be saying to Lorna Doone, how come Rena isn't doing this or that and she's say that's not part of her role and I wouldn't have realised so that's true...

How would you judge the communication on the project?

(SMILES) – I know hand gestures don't come across that well on the microphone, but so-so – some things were good other's not so good...when you try and get into detail (with people) on the project say on how things work, you don't get the

detail...So, I'd be heavily involved here on the payroll side – I get four different sets of figures on payroll costs from our different sections and they have to total up to what I have in a spreadsheet...and then I sent it back if it's OK and then they slice and dice it in terms of payroll by their own sections etc...

My understanding of SAP is that it will post the four figures to each section and then break it down by department – which is a big change, and I think that's how it's going to work – I'm not sure...

You can say 'Oh, we're moving all our systems across to SAP' but unless you really know how they're going to work – I don't have an answer to specific questions – if I asked the project team, I think I'd get a short throw away answer – I wouldn't get the detail that I'd like...

Would you think having a session post BLUEPRINTING going through the processes would have reassured people?

Yes – I do, one big BPID and one session detailing how these (processes) would work would have been helpful...We had a lot of workshops which were very good, heated at times but we got through a lot of work but how does creditor payments work, how does banking regularly work, you know 2 hour meetings -there was no meeting in my head where even at a relatively high level where we got (a sense of) this is going to work this way or that...There's only so many changes that you have to worry about that in terms of sales, purchases, journals, bank-requisitions, depreciations – that would get you a set of accounts – even to get that...

Is there a feeling or concern of uncertainty in the financial community as to how the system will work?

I suppose there would be a fear that, say come the 1st of January next, I'll ask one of my accountants to do something and he won't know what to do at all...Now, I guess with the training that they're rolling out that that will be a help...

I'm not sure if we have the accountants that would be able to go (figure it out) on their own – I think they're waiting to be shown how to use it – I'm not sure how much of that (fear) is down to the project team – we could be doing more on our side to get involved – I don't have people coming to me asking me how will I do this in January – I would hope they can do it...

In terms of the testing, how were your team involved?

Not at all – we couldn't spare the people here in this department and I would be hopeful that the training would help on that – getting people involved six or seven months beforehand – It's hard to get people interested – they'll worry about that in December – they're busy enough at the moment...what with half-year end budgets but I'd like to see the urgency now with training kicking off in the next weeks...

In terms of the project over the last few months, is there anything that strikes you as being an issue when you look back?

Well, No...one thing I would say is that the project team decided early on to have the system as close to what's AGOCORP has as possible...Things are coming up, like notional banking that you'd say should be in the system...

Is there a possibility that the new system might be a missed opportunity?

Well, when you look at it, people on the project team, say Thomas and Lorna, their focus is on getting it in – it's not that they don't care about the finance side but come January next, they won't be posting a journal – they want to get in as simple a system as possible in and working on January 1st next...from the financial side of things in an ideal world, there are certain things you'd like to see happen...

Would you worry that prior to Fiona's arrival, that there might not have been a lot of financial expertise on the project or would that have made a difference?

It's hard to say that when there's so many meetings with the FCs and when you have so much financial people on the project – there's a set IT formula that is being followed and it's like a train going forward....maybe it's more a combined finance and IT knowledge that you liked to have had more of....

Like the expertise that Fiona brings...

I think so...I'll be interested to see what kind of system we end up with...

How do the financial controller meetings work?

Well, good attendance from people – Fiona has chaired most of them recently...Tommy, Lorna, myself, some of the other financial controllers and also some people on the project – they're quite good meetings...

Is it an opportunity for Fiona to feed into and then back to the project?

Well, often Fiona would be there discussing a current issue on the project and asking them for their views so if a decision was due to be made by the project by say next week...

Trying to get a consensus?

Yes, on a change or deal with an issue that comes up at the FC or project level and she'd report on issues that have been dealt with in the past and there'd be e-mails afterwards...

You find that useful?

Yes...

Does it give you a stake in what's happening?

Well, it does as it reflects how well Fiona works on driving and keeping together the financial side of the project – should I say the accounting side of the project...

On the change management side, would you have had many dealings with Fergal?

I would have had – a bit more now recently with the training coming on...my interactions would be more with Fiona....If at least in my head, if Fiona had been involved in this from day 1, we would have had a system she would have shaped the system more and we would have got more of a (financial) system...

Does she have elements of a change manager in what she does?

Yes – I can see that...

Is she more of a change manager on the financial side than Fergal has been?

I don't know...I'm not sure...

I suppose there are some views on the BIM role – the change manager role was always there and then the BIM role which was always intended and that wasn't clear...so the BIM role was seen by some as a reaction to the change role?

OK, well my comments on that would be the same as to what I said for Rena earlier...The walls here are very light (LAUGHS)...

There were some views expressed as to the desire for the system to be seen earlier?

Yes – I would agree with that – the BPIDs although they have process maps, they can be very light on detail as in 'A journal will be posted' – that's not really of any value...

Your views on the BLUEPRINTING phase – did you find it (a) useful and positive experience?

(SMILES AND THEN LAUGHS) We might have discussed this before when we last met – I found it a very negative experience – I found the meetings very difficult – the project team were very defensive on what they had done on the BPIDs...they seemed to take questions personally and you were shouted down which was of no use to anyone as they (the project team) got no value out of us being there...In many cases, I was the most senior person there and if they were willing to shout

me down, then people more junior to me weren't going to speak up...that didn't work well but some workshops worked very well...

As a high-level (undertaking) and the topics that were to be discussed it worked reasonably well...

So, your views haven't changed on that?

No...

Was it a case (in some of the meetings) that they had a view in their heads of how the system was going to work and that their duty was to defend that?

Yes – I would agree with that – if we end up putting into a system that's so closely aligned with AGOCORP, why go through four months of design if you're going to replicate a system anyway? If we were to do something similar again, I don't know if I would do it that way again...with all the pre and post BPIDs – if someone just said here's the AGOCORP system and here's the new system with the odd few new things – was there a need to spend all that time and effort on the AS-IS if the TO-BE was set...

If that's the case, was BLUEPRINTING a way of increasing commitment?

I would have thought that if people had worked on other projects, people would know that here's what the old system is and here's what the new system is with the new systems changes understood. There's been a lot of arsing around – maybe more time for other parts might have been better...

Like 2 months for design and then more time for design and testing?

Yes, more time for design and testing, but it's hard to know but we'll see when it falls out – if the system is 90% the same as AGOCORP did we need all the effort of the eight months if it's the same...

But would you see the BPID drafting exercise as being worthwhile?

Yes, but like from a time and cost basis – if this project is costing us Z Euros and an A of that is payroll costs than you'd have to wonder...But we'll see –maybe we might know more the next time we meet (LAUGHS)....We are being pushed by ICT to adopt a system that so like the AGOCORP...as far as I understand it...

The different functionality you talk about, maybe AGOCORP would want something like that in the future anyway?

You could be right there – maybe AGOCORP aren't using it to its fullest potential...maybe the system will and probably will be changing anyway...it's hard to know whether this is a new system or a changeover – is there a big difference between the two?

Well, changeover from one system to another would be considered different from implementing a new ab-initio system...

The interesting thing we could see on this project is maybe is that this is more of a system that's being developed from the beginning rather than a change over – that's something you might get a sense of from talking to other people – maybe we have a critical flaw in how we've approached all this...

Should integration sometimes fall-out of the system rather than being the rationale of the system?

I agree, but that needs to be clear from day 1 that you're looking to go past what the parent has...

Maybe it's more in the case of this system that the decision is coming more out of the parent rather than say yourselves and that you don't have that say...

Yes, that's true...

Although the LDS module being incorporated by HR in your SAP system is totally new...maybe if you had followed the approach taken by HR...

Yes – well, the notional banking that we talked about earlier might end-up being something like that – AGOCORP (unlike NOVOCORP) is one single statutory entity with one bank account...that's not the worst in the world...

If you were to look back over the last few months, what would be the four or five big things that happened on the project?

For me the appointment of Fiona has been critical in trying to get things done on the project and understanding also what's happening.

Also, getting my Business implementation leads involved on the project has been key in terms of getting them in touch with how SAP works and how they should be involved...

Fiona has been great in terms of even improving our understanding of what was happening – as well as having my guys on the project...

Anything negative?

Well, other people will probably say we needed more time and more BPIDs, but I would feel as we discussed earlier the time spent on the BPIDs – even now, we're putting new BPIDs together in terms of accounts payable which are at a different level to what was done before – the Jury is out on all that...

The BPIDs process is demanding...

Well, it is in terms of time and also the balance of work between my guys here and the project, my guys here are doing their day job and then they're working late to work on the BPIDs for the SAP project...

The issue I would have personally is that being replicated on the project team? – I don't know – I don't know how much work people are doing on the project team, maybe they're doing lots of hours but my guys have been told here that they can't any holidays until next March as there's so much work to do here and also because of SAP...When one of the higher people on the project comes back from holidays, it's hard to keep people happy on the side....

The project is very keen to look for more people on the business – one thing that would strike me is that if they need that many people, what are they doing and also as well, you have a situation where if they could tell me with a bit of notice that they need people, then I was be able to have one of my guys manage that and it would be OK as I would have my budgets and audit prep done and you can have him for September. The next thing then is that they call me and say that they need him straight away for cut-over testing and for this and that and if you can't tell me in advance I have to get him drop certain things...

Issues around resource management?

Yes, I suppose I'm a fairly square accountant and I like to know at least a few months in advance maybe a year what's happening...maybe that's just me...it's hard to have four accountants who work longer hours and we don't have the same capacity as say other departments so that can be hard...

Just to finish up, can you talk a little about you role on the change board?

Yes, well it's moved to an ad-hoc level now...so, it still works fine we get proposals we decide on them and go to the project board – the project board also cite some of these issues and we're an extra cog in the wheel...I know on some other projects – issues that go through change boards don't go through project boards...any requests we reject go to the project board as rejected requests...

Have the project board turned back any rejected requests?

Well, there was one, coming back to the purchasing orders we talked about earlier...that came to the change board that they wanted an extra feature and it

included 25 days extra work that wasn't budgeted for....John Jakesmith who proposed the change wasn't at that meeting and as such I had talked to him and I said he didn't feel it would take 25 days – now that request was sent onto the project board and it was rejected at 25 days – I was quite unhappy as how did it get to the project board at 25 days without being discussed and agreed at change board level in the first place – so there was a lot of too-ing and fro-ing about that and eventually it ended up coming back to a financial controllers meeting with Tommy and Lorna telling us that we had to find a different way of doing it...whether we get the 25 days or some other way, we have to get it done so go back and sort it out kind of thing...

So much more of an ad-hoc approach...

Yes – we have a meeting called say with four or five issues but it's probably down to once a month – so...

Thanks again Warren.

No problem...

(48, 00)

Location: Project HQ/ Date: 10th November 2010/ Duration: 50 mins.

Interviewee: Rita Cantillon, Accounts Payable, Finance, NOVOCORP Engineering; *appointed as Cut-over and Transition lead in Accounts Payable and Purchase Orders for SAP project.*

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

So Rita, you might fill me in on your background and your roles in AGOCORP and NOVOCORP?

I started in NOVOCORP in 1998 – I’ve gone from AP to Creditors, Accounts Receivable, back to AP through working on many different finance projects at some level. Back now to being head of AP and now cutover lead for the AP and PO components of the SAP implementation...

Having been here 13 years, how would you characterise IT in your time here?

Well, I was here when AGRESSO was implemented – our implementation capability is great given that we have the AGOCORP and NOVOCORP (history) behind us...We had a meeting yesterday and Thomas made the point that we didn’t need an implementation partner. In some respects they might have been good but they also tend to enforce their views on you so...it was more a recognition meeting that we’re nearly there...

In terms of usability...

Well, system usability I suppose you mean (Yes) – well that depends on the system and the user – I mean some people have problems with CITRIX for example and others don’t, but generally systems here are good and have been implemented well...

Could you talk a little about the implementation of AGRESSO?

God, that’s going back a while...

Were people hopeful that AGRESSO would be useful – the issues around business being so different in NOVOCORP applied too back then...

Yes, they did as we’re a very different business to AGOCORP –at that time we had another accounting system called CODA which was like green letters and numbers on a black screen – we had the chance back then around 1998 to go with SAP

which was being introduced in AGOCORP HQ – but we decided at the time to go with AGRESSO at the managerial level...

How was it decided?

I wasn't involved at senior management level or in the decision making back then but my understanding was that it was decided on the basis of cost but more so, on the billing side because we're such a fundamentally different business...

AGOCORP have a billing system but it's used to bill customers that they supply our service with...our billing system has to be able to manage different job numbers, different costs, international clients in different countries, working with financial institutions like the World Bank, all these different tax arrangements, totally different...and SAP as we're experiencing now (LAUGHS) isn't flexible enough to deal with everything our business needs...

At the time, AGRESSO was quite popular – it was being used by local city corporations and county councils and was considered at the time to be quite robust and almost cutting edge – it seemed really tailored to what we needed at the time...

How did AGOCORP feel about it? I know you were perceived if you like as the black sheep almost if that's not too strong a word...

Well, I was very junior back then but we almost felt different and they looked on us as being different...we were the black sheep...But the time our managing director was X who's now head of AGOCORP was in charge of NOVOCORP and was very pro-NOVOCORP so it would be hard to believe that AGOCORP would have let us go with AGRESSO if they were that opposed to it...

OK...

While we were and are different, we still would be very much we'll do things if AGOCORP say it's OK....

But at the time, the business case for AGRESSO made sense...

It did as it suited our needs...

But the rest of AGOCORP continued and implemented SAP and added existing systems like say NETWORKS adding XYZ...

Yes, and we stayed separate from that...

When did people if they did at all start realising the AGRESSO wasn't actually what they had hoped for?

The problems started to emerge as the business grew – we had 4 in Finance when I started, now there's 32...The volume of transactions just grew and the system wasn't able to cope and the support wasn't there...the company who were supporting the system, I think they're more or less gone now, weren't able to...everything (in the system) really just fall back...I think we had two system upgrades, the second upgrade didn't quite come through...

Was AGRESSO off the shelf?

Well, it was adapted to our needs somewhat- it is adaptable like you can change the appearance of it for example...or menu options...that was more tailored as opposed to the functionality...

You couldn't just give them the job codes...

Well – not exactly- they were good though at making the system like CODA which was DOS-based, I mean you had codes in CODA like for DHL, that was PH1...Every code in AGRESSO for a vendor had to be numeric but they tailored the search screens so you could out in the old CODA codes and then get the new AGRESSO equivalent....you could cross-reference and as some of it was historic and you had to migrate data across and you could change codes etc....We had a guy here helping us tailor it and that was helpful...

There were issues though with data accuracy?

Yes, there was – it was, put it this way, too easy to interfere with the data – I might say want to run a general ledger for some month for one of the thirteen business here in NOVOCORP that we do accounts for...You'd get the report back but the figure might not make sense or what I'm looking for...someone else on the team could do the same thing and get a different figure – it came down to issues around controls and access – it caused problems and I would go to "Lionel", a former installation firm employee who's an employee now and he is the AGRESSO helpdesk...

A lot of employees to manage...

Yes – a lot of different employees would use AGRESSO – everyone uses it at least for timesheets...he's a very busy man...

When the data got extracted, you would need something else to be manipulating the data...

We could use ACCELERATOR as the main reporting tool – which was in effect an add-on to EXCEL – AGRESSO was purely financial, an accounting tool – engineers

wouldn't usually be going deep into AGRESSO – they had ACCESS databases built-on or they would get the reports from finance...the average engineer didn't want to know about AGRESSO...

So, the main benefit for them was the ability to set up and manage jobs (in ways) that satisfied the different needs of the customer...

Absolutely and the variation was huge – what someone wanted in one section say was different to what someone wanted in another...for the debtors, we had a report to spit that out per KAM – for AGOCORP Networks – you might have initially a request to show how much NETWORKS owes NOVOCORP – we'd have 8 different accounts – as NETWORKS might have eight different projects ongoing at the time, so then you end up having one KAM then as he's owed money going back by NETWORKS showing up on another's debtor list as he was then KAM for NETWORKS...he then would have requested a list of jobs (as the preferred report structure) as he didn't want to look at BCG's debts...

As far as the finance department is concerned NETWORKS owed us X amount which we would agree on and then settle – how each job or project was involved wasn't as important to us....

So, the key impact will be on yourselves as you use it as a department more than anyone...

Yes – we have to produce the same figures regardless...

But the adaptation will be more on the engineer side...

Yes, probably...

So what do you see as the main benefit of SAP for yourselves?

Well, for us – a big benefit will be controls – I've been involved in the set up of the new PQ bureau...at the moment a purchase order is done outside AGRESSO on an on-line system or portal...Now, this will all be done in SAP with proper approval and tracking etc...In SAP once the purchase is ordered it becomes live in the system – in AGRESSO used to enter the purchases retrospectively when goods are receipted...

So, that will be better but there will be war in the business as SAP is very rigid and unforgiving but in the long-run it will be better for us (Finance) – if something is inputted into SAP right, it will come out right...for us at the moment, month-end is a disaster in trying to get and check everything out of EXCEL – it will be much better...

How did you get involved in the project?

Because I'm here so long and have an opinion whether people want to hear about it or not...I've a lot of experiences and was here when AGRESSO was implemented and there's not too many of us left – we were kind-of super users as those who came in later were ever trained to use the part of AGRESSO that they would use – we were trained to be able to use all of it...we'd be able to change things...

When did you get involved?

In the BPIDs – I was approving or disapproving rather than writing them! But I would have gone to a lot of the workshops...

How did you feel they went – I know for finance, a lot of the functionality was going to be similar to what was already in AGOCORP...?

Yes, MMMM (THINKING), well I did feel in relation to most of what AGOCORP had already that (the attitude was) this is the way it's going to be – the TO-BE is non-negotiable...something that is really wrong or we need to change tell me now so we can put in a workaround if we can – otherwise it will be what we have in AGOCORP...

The one place where I felt there could be some play (i.e. scope) was in the area of project billing. In relation to inputs and reporting – the billing side they didn't have so we could have maybe told them more rather than ask them – the other ones was them pretty much telling us what this was going to be and then was this going to fit...They were good and informative sessions...

Had you used SAP before?

No, had seen it...

Did you feel that inhibited you in any way?

Not really, for me a big hobby horse of mine was to push for someone totally external, outside of AGOCORP completely who would be a super-user of SAP, come in and train us so we could get the most out of the system...I have a few friends who use SAP in AGOCORP and their consensus is that they don't use it to its full potential – you get trained up on the bit that you use...

I know AGRESSO completely - I'm nervous about SAP as I know so little about it – I would like to know more than just that...also with AGRESSO if there was something we needed to change we could – with SAP, that will all be centralised and formal...the nervousness for me in having our own staff train us...

Fiona has raised that in integration testing in that AGOCORP test cases are being used in NOVOCORP...

Yes, we're very different – we're not civil servants like AGOCORP – how they do work is very different – in AGOCORP it can be more 'That's not my Job' whereas here we take on what we're asked...

Although AGOCORP have entered a more competitive world?

Yes, absolutely and they're looking to us a lot more as to how to be competitive...

Have you had much involvement in the testing?

No, not really – I mean Rena who I know well has asked me many times but I just don't have the scope...I have a lot to focus on now with the cutover lead role and the new PO office and also the fact that AP is leaving here...we have so many different businesses that we make payments to – we have PO in one section and we also have invoice processing or IP here in another section – but that's all changing – IP is going to "Paris" and also PO is going to "Caroline" in head office...

Why is that?

In NOVOCORP, AP is one – but in AGOCORP its split into IP and PO – as that's the case, we have to split too, hence IP outside just like in AGOCORP and PO to head office –just like AGOCORP does it and do it well...AP here does it for the sections– AGOCORP pay everything from one bank account – we have to be responsible for NOVOCORP, the Investments, AGOCORP subsidiaries which have different bank accounts and currencies etc....

We have to make sure that IP and AP in AGOCORP know what's coming at them so I can't be getting involved in BRT at the moment...in the UK, we engage in market trades as in selling or buying on the open market...the turnarounds on those are very tight – if we don't pay those, then we can be identified on those markets as defaulters and letters of credit can ensue so it has to be exact and working – it can't just be 'all-right' – I'd love to be involved in the testing but just can't at the moment...

Could you talk a little about the cutover process and the cutover leads generally?

Well, I'm the cutover lead on AP and PO for all of NOVOCORP –there's another cutover lead in Investments, I believe and also "Robbie" who's doing critical payments, documenting everything for us...NOVOCORP's central cutover lead is "Lisa" and her main concerns are the same for me with a bit more on balance sheet codes and data migration...

What does the role entail?

I've never done a role like this before-it's massive – I would know a bit about other businesses here but they have their own FCs and invoicing etc even though we look after their AP for them, but in my role looking at the PO – we're shutting down the PO system on them so we'd need to be sure that we're catering for their needs – we're not transferring Pos over to the new system – there's no supplier balances being carried so we're trying to minimise the number of open Purchase orders and any internal Pos are going to be notionally settled...

So, you're not transferring across data and POs?

No, that's not happening, that's not being allowed – so we've done up a cutover plan that we got approval for a while back but we're starting it this week...so from this Friday (12/11/2010) that's the deadline for setting up a new supplier and then the following Friday (19/11/2010) is the deadline for any new purchase orders...

Can you order anything after that?

Oh, you can but in a much more controlled fashion...we have 220 people in NOVOCORP who could order – they're requisitioners basically – we want to minimise the amount of open purchase orders that we'll be bringing across to SAP...In essence, we do a last payment run in November officially and probably another one in December – but the week beginning Monday the 13th of December, we expect to be going around chasing any open POs –talking to the requisitioners to see have they received the goods – if they have, then work towards goods receipting them so they can be closed as POs – so taking as many open POs off the list for the first of January- we hope to have only about 100 open POs to transfer across to the new SAP system...We won't be able to do anything with AGRESSO from the First of January next –we need to be able to see stuff from an accounts perspective but we can't do anything with the data....

So there's a big push now to try and make people aware of these deadlines and that any POs raised after the 19th will have to go through procurement...

So, Fergal's been involved in that....

He has – I've been driving him mad about it! I've done Intranet news items on it – 200 plus requisitioners is a lot of people to reach and there's so many businesses affected by it and people are off-site....

Is the view in Finance still strongly accepting with respect to the system...?

Well yes – we're the ones that will be using it the most so we have to be accepting of it and engage with it....

And HR will be looking forward to the LDS module?

Yes...

How about the engineering community?

Well, I don't know-now, the finance side we'd be the bane of their lives anyway...so (the new system) is probably another stick to beat us with....

It's a strange situation for them as it's a financials and hr project yet in numeric terms; the vast majority of users are going to be engineers. Some of them have even said that they felt the title was unfair...

Yes, absolutely – they are completely left out in the cold – they're the main users and they do the input but we have to account for the output...They probably feel that this is another restriction being placed on them...I can see where they're coming from on that...

In terms of the new system, is there any feeling abroad that this system might mean a dilution of independence in that it involves integration with the mother ship so to speak...or was that always going to happen anyway?

MMMM (THINKING) – I think it was always going to happen anyway... we did call AGOCORP the mother-ship but we didn't really exclude them – they more excluded us I think...no matter what we did, it had to be mirrored and mapped onto them and we had to get the OK...

We would always be brand-conscious – I mean you say you work for AGOCORP not NOVOCORP – more people have heard of NOVOCORP internationally than nationally anyway....

I think it's more them in AGOCORP saying 'that crowd over in NOVOCORP', more on their side than ours...

Has the relationship dynamic changed?

Oh, I think it has...

They might see you more as an asset than before?

Yes, the merging of GENCOM has brought us closer – the fact that there is generation here makes us seem to them to more like them...They probably wondered what we were doing over here with all our architects and engineers – they didn't understand but as I said before, the culture over here is very different, always has been...people from AGOCORP who are seconded over here can't believe how laid back AGOCORP is in comparison to here...

In terms of how the project is being run, how do you feel the project team has done over the last few months...?

Well, communication has been poor – checking it off a task list doesn't mean people will actually know about things...The project team were locked away in a room, told to come up with a system and then us as the end users coming in on the back-leg helping out with integration and the testing side...my name has been assigned to tasks that I don't know about – communication has been poor in that way and I suppose they've been busy...

There was a big push back in the BLUEPRINTING phase around communication which you might have been told about (the communication had momentum there all-right) and then once the design had been done – we were going to workshops and there was a lot of back and forth about approving BPIDs so as to allow the project to get busy and then they went away and we didn't hear anything...

So there was a bit of a communication vacuum?

There was – should we be doing something? You're busy doing your own job anyway....

Was that a mistake do you think?

That was a big mistake – I mean you go over like I did say in August and they're testing and you say have you tested the Vodafone (i.e. mobile phone provider) invoices? We got about 800 of those a month...so we get an upload from Vodafone in the form of a spreadsheet that we can just load up into AGRESSO – we don't get 800 individual bills...Now AGOCORP get an upload too from Vodafone but they use SAP, a completely different system...different technical and information requirements for SAP than we have...For example, I got an e-mail asking me about the format of the Vodafone spreadsheet – but shouldn't we have tested these already?

Is it (the formerly AGRESSO spreadsheet) going to be loaded with that of AGOCORP?

We don't know – has anybody thought of getting in touch with Vodafone and telling them that they need to map our customer groups to theirs and load it that way...AGOCORP pay Vodafone through overheads – we don't, we pay through projects and job numbers as (paying for the phone) is part of billing out for time...

The AGOCORP upload might not be sufficient for our needs – there's a bit of a panic – that should have been thought about in BPID stage as far as I'm concerned –have we going to do this but that should have been communicated long ago...

At the end of the BPID phase, when people saw the TO-BE there was some people felt a lack of closure, not an information vacuum..., show people what was going to happen and so people are not surprised...

Yes, sure...but when say the processes for AGOCORP and NOVOCORP have to marry, there should have been implementation testing and BRT done and thought about and played with a lot earlier than 39 days than GO-LIVE....

Was BLUEPRINTING too-long?

Don't think so...initially I was involved on the Debtors side as that's where I would have come from...but then got involved in the AP side – the BLUEPRINTING sessions were I think on in July as I was going on holidays, and I said whatever you do, don't have the workshops when I'm away..It was decided when I was away that AP and IP were going to shared services....regardless of thinking about like we discussed a minute ago the very different ways in which AGOCORP and NOVOCORP do things – the BPIDs are approved outside my knowledge yet I'm then in August trying to make sure AP and IP can do what we need...But it's on a task list so... (LAUGHS)...

In terms of the project team, how effective have you seen their roles? Looking (firstly) say at Fergal Flynn?

MMMM (THINKING) –It's been good – it's hard on our side because there are different businesses all wanting different things...on the finance side we'd be happy that we know what's going on....

Is that more the BIM with respect to the FCs with her liaising with them...

I don't think so – in fairness Fiona was thrown in at the deep end – she was originally intended to be my boss in a governance role and then when we had this vacuum back in August...All of a sudden she was appointed the BIM and I was appointed transition and cutover manager and a bit of panic was setting in...

Were you aware that there was going to a BIM role on the project?

No....

Did it come as a surprise generally across the business?

I don't know – I know Thomas was working in a role that had business in it...I think I can recall that from a meeting some time back....

People weren't worried about that role?

No, I'd say Fiona was worried as she had a lot of work to do! (LAUGHS)...

In term of Rena and Leona, the financial people on the project, how did you see their involvement and what they've been doing and effectiveness?

They've done a good Job – I haven't seen too much of Project Costing and Billing...Rena and "Roisin" who worked on the PO system initially here is also on the project – Rena would know well with what AGRESSO offers and what we would need and want from the new system...

So overall, communication would be an issue for you...

Absolutely...

And the information gaps and people's roles

Well, more 'what do you need or want me to do' and when....

So, better information and greater clarity of roles...

Yes – the project team can't assume that if they need someone from the business that putting their name down on a project list makes it so...That's where someone like the BIM has a job to do – there was an information vacuum and she was given a big long list of tasks to divvy out and she divided out AP and PO to me...

It seemed like an afterthought – the business leads should have been identified at the outset of the project and brought in a lot even monthly and had some input and understanding – not just brought in at the end....

If you were to identify key events that you felt happened on the project, what would you identify...?

Good or bad?

Neither or both really?

Well the workshops were good – they served really only an informational purpose only though as it was more them telling us rather than the other way around...although the brainstorming and discussion side of things is good...

The AP workshop never happened and that was a big issue for me as I was left to pick up the pieces...

Not to be negative – the project was good and people worked very hard but there was too much of a separation between the project and the business and that led to a few issues...

Going forward, what challenges and issues would you see?

Well hopefully, UAT will go well....

There is no formal UAT phase as such...

That's right...

It will be more wrapped into BRT – would it be better to have a distinct UAT phase or does it matter?

It would be no harm but again it's not going to happen – getting people to use it, accept it and be positive about it...

Managing the PO side of things...

That will be tricky – as I'll be setting up the new PO bureau – we'll be working on transitioning across to the new way of doing things once cutover is done, so managing all that...

Thanks for that Rita...

You're welcome.

(50, 00)

Location: AGOCORP HQ / Date: 10th November 2010/ Duration: 60 mins.

Interviewee: John Jakesmith, Chief SAP Technical Architect and acting Chief Technology Officer, ICT Department, AGOCORP.

<u>Colour Key:</u> Interviewer / Interviewee.

So John, just for the sake of context, you might describe your role a little bit, your current job title, responsibilities...

Been in AGOCORP for nearly 30 years – worked on the administrative side first – started off working in the department that cut people off for unpaid bills – worst and toughest job I’ve ever had – studied accountancy at night time and qualified around 1988 and have had a lots of roles since...I had a mathematical background originally and had an interest in IT so I was involved in IT roles in HR and accountancy separate to the IT function here...from 1988 to 1998-99 – for example I lead the installation of an ORACLE database in Asia and also worked in Africa as AGOCORP had some IT consultancy operations out there...Also, around that time I was one of the top ORACLE programmers and also SQL in AGOCORP. I trained in relational databases so I think relationally for want of a better word...

Around 1998, I was scheduled to go on another consultancy project and as I was waiting around for a few months to go...the project for the SAP project, the big SAP project, the original one asked me to go on the project to help on the finance side...I didn’t mind as I was very keen to work on any SAP project in any shape or form and it was only supposed to be for a few months...

As luck would have it, I ruptured my Achilles tendon around the same time so that ended the thought of going abroad so I ended up full-time on the financial side of the project working on the GL, Journal and data migration side...I started on the financial side – I learned a lot about ERP systems at the time – initially we brought in finance and materials together...

And added Personal and HR then afterwards...

That’s right...after that initial ERP implementation, the SAP system became the responsibility of the ICT group and then I moved over officially with the system to the ICT group...

I would have been the planning and technology manager if you like, without the title though, as SAP expanded – we had one SAP system then (in 2000), now we have 18...the biggest chunk if you like was all the various MOIP implementations about seven or so which happened around 2003 to 2004...so I had a good background in utilities management, finance and deregulation....then, I finally got a role in the form of chief SAP technical architect about 3 years ago...then I embraced the chief technology officer role also when my former boss moved onto the electric cars department...

So, what has been your involvement in the recent XYZ and NOVOCORP SAP implementations?

More Seanie McMurry really....when I had my single SAP role, I had a kind-of strategic role outside the project advising – like a trouble shooter as in what's the best way of doing this and who do I need to contact to get this done...I'd have more of an active role within the NOVOCORP project, in a not quite resolved way maybe not as strategic but more about solutions to specific problems around knowledge...

I'd have someone reporting for me rather than to me and he has provided solutions on the project...so that's a quick overview of my thirty years in AGOCORP up to now (LAUGHS)...

Could we talk a little about the IT relationship between AGOCORP and NOVOCORP and maybe how the relationship has changed over time...and the attitudes in AGOCORP with respect to NOVOCORP...?

Good question – I haven't been party to the some of the 'Them Vs Us' attitudes that you are probably referring to...NOVOCORP wanting to do their own thing etc etc...Certainly in the good economic times, NOVOCORP was a growing business at the time but wouldn't have been as big as some other core business units overall...NOVOCORP at the time we introduced SAP decided to go with AGRESSO in 1998 which suited their business as being small and every other part of the business went with SAP...

What was the view of their decision at the time? Was there acceptance or surprise?

That's difficult to say as the project was sponsored by the then finance director who also sponsored the AGRESSO project...The project manager was also the project manager for the SAP project, a brilliant guy who possibly had the view that adding NOVOCORP which was different to the scope of an already difficult project was only going to add risk in terms of delivery...

The legacy systems that SAP was replacing in AGOCORP, the WALKER system didn't exist in NOVOCORP so there were no dependencies there...

Maybe if we had a different finance director...the thought now of having a single integrated financial system is considered a given now...at the time, one of the biggest drivers for AGOCORP to change from WALKER to SAP was the concern around Y2K issues...

In the late 1980s and early 90s, AGOCORP took the decision to go with WALKER, which was a accounting costing and finance system – at the time SAP was an immature system; WALKER was a mainframe system and went down the mainframe route more whereas SAP went the client server route and then experienced exponential growth in the 1990s...

So the choice that AGOCORP had made in WALKER – AGOCORP picked the right vendor at the time but WALKER stayed still but it was stuck more in the mainframe – people started to replace it – we weren't the only ones in that space...ORACLE was and is close to SAP and is equally popular in the US – SAP is more popular in Europe...

There were good strategic reasons then for AGOCORP and NOVOCORP to go their separate ways system wise?

Agreed – also WALKER was only a financial system – that was another factor which was that the materials system was separate and the original scope of the SAP project changed to have a materials component as well...we had a materials system we had a VAX based system...it was easier to include materials there and then as an add-on – you know the classic modular approach that an ERP offers...that was decided fairly early in the process, I'd say about a month into the 14 month implementation process...so we went live with both Finance and Materials at the same time...

Was it a case at the time that maybe as AGOCORP or NOVOCORP had never had SAP that the advantages of integrated systems like SAP might not have been clear...?

Yes – you may have got the feeling that from the point of view of NOVOCORP (they feel) that (corporate) IT isn't listening to us and that you have the IT people saying that the (NOVOCORP) business people don't listen to us...It's actually a wider issue than that, forget the idea of AGOCORP IT vs. NOVOCORP IT and the feeling that (NOVOCORP), that AGOCORP are trying to force SAP a costly system on us (in NOVOCORP) and we're a smaller more flexible cost-sensitive business...we don't want that- is that OK?

Yes indeed...

The core reason for providing and installing an integrated package is that in order to maximise the benefits of shared services, that it is necessary to break down departmental barriers...from a business perspective, talking about how expensive the implementation is, is missing the point...if you'd had a finance manager at the

time who pushed SAP at that time (when NOVOCORP went on AGRESSO), then that would have been that...it's a significant challenge to implement something over something that's already there and has a process layer as well...

Was AGRESSO understood as a system here over in AGOCORP?

Well, we had a very mature SAP system and a support as well...AGRESSO (on the other hand) had more of a third party support and their support costs as well were low though we had a back-up as well..Now, most people here in the ICT group wouldn't have any understanding of AGRESSO and there would be views on it and my view would possibly be a little different...

I would look on AGRESSO as a flexible compact system with an EXCEL front-end and which was fairly usable once you had set up your business processes around it...but equally it lacked a significant level of financial control...

Now, it suited NOVOCORP in going their own way in some regards, separate AP and AR functions, a separate maintenance function...they would have made a call at the time...you'd be reminded of some of the logos of other companies like SEAGATE which say 'one system, one process, one company' – you start off in most organisations with one single unified process namely a set of chartered accounts...

Now, straight away, NOVOCORP and AGOCORP went away and had separate chartered accounts...and they were merged together at a high batch sheet level with an EXCEL system and interfaces and all that...but the point wasn't so much that the accounts or systems were different it was that the business processes became different at the top – it may have been facilitated at the time because of the culture...

That's a key difficulty now when you're trying to map different processes onto a single system as per this implementation?

Absolutely, I couldn't agree more – you've seen it yourself...Some of it is good – at the end of the day we are one company so I would change the project (title) from being an IT implementation to more of a process implementation...

The idea in SAP that you post a penny journal you have to debit or credit – in AGRESSO you don't, the trial balances don't have to balance per se – there are different tolerances and why was that so? Why was AGRESSO more open?

They had a legal entity with different department codes – it is not as rigid or as tightly organised as SAP which is quite Germanic...

That's my perception – there were massive changes brought about around the time of market opening and deregulation – I believe MOIP at the time was the biggest IT project ever undertaken in Ireland except for I just heard that Kerry Group are implementing SAP...Might be a bit bigger (LAUGHS)...

From an AGOCORP accounts perspective, I would have worked with Tommy Walsh when he used to run the Invoice processing and Accounts payable function here and he would be keen to do the right thing and to be progressive...

As a former AGOCORP employee, he can see the benefits of an integrated system like SAP and also...

Yes, integrated processes – now, AGOCORP is not quite mature as a company in that the end-to-end business process layer might not be...As SAP might say it is that you have a 'procure to pay' management layer and so on...

We're still siloed but better in terms of integration and reduction of costs etc...We do have departments but we don't have say a process owner where there is someone who has responsibility for a process and who can reduce costs etc...

That's the way the organisation will probably go...

You can see in terms of the new PO office that there is that movement going in NOVOCORP as the result of the implementation?

Spot on...if you take where Tommy worked previously – he would have had 15-20 people in AP when he took over and they were manually inputting invoices etc...As a result of the ERP processes, there's probably about 2-3 people there now so he would see a 500% decrease in staffing costs as a result of these process changes...

That was enabled by having a centralised SAP system and automating former manual processes – like the manual green forms for invoices they were manual – that was all out on the web which automatically created an invoice within SAP – all the bills coming in on Vodafone and even from AGOCORP (SMILES)...They were all automated – no manual intervention with an approval stage which was done more by exception than by the norm...

Having worked on a lot of different SAP projects, how would you compare this project with ones you've worked on in the past?

Challenge No.1 – we run it as an internal project without an external systems implementer...

Like an Accenture type implementation partner...

Exactly...

Was that mainly a cost decision?

Yes and also the fact that it was felt that we were just implementing a system already in AGOCORP and also the fact that we had a few add-ons for which we could source external expertise...

That approach has worked well enough to a point but not having a system implementer has posed its own challenges – you may not have the project management experience for example...

I would think the project has been well-run and had been able to match external and internal skills when needed...

(Secondly) if you take it from a project point of view, it's had challenges and will continue to do so like every project...comparing it to MOIP which was a very big project that was run excellently...it had huge challenges but the budget was astronomical –there was 58 different nationalities working on it at one stage!

A massive project with a huge budget and this project is smaller obviously... what arose in this project was I suppose the fact that 80% of this was in AGOCORP already but even if there were concerns raised in BLUEPRINTING and early design phases, when it come to testing, we had a 90% success rate...Why is that? Because we've done it before...not creating something...

Some of the other projects have been more challenging due to the complexity of the system in terms of extending the utility...

And IR issues also?

Yes, IR issues but more so the testing phase of these projects – it's hard to come up with test cases when you've never done the work before and also the fact that if the tests fail which they can, you then have a six month delay...

That's what makes more confident in this project that we'll meet the deadline of the First of January next (i.e. that test cases are known and the complexity is less).

So as far as this project has gone, considering we have 80% already in the organisation, it's been OK (SPEAKER'S OWN EMPHASIS).

What's stopped it being better?

I would say Top-class if we go live and users are using it effectively by the end of January next...I want to be careful how I phrase this – the outcome would be a huge feature of whether it's good or not – at the moment, where we have the planning, what's getting done – that all looks OK...looks fine...is it brilliant – am I certain that we'll have no problems? No – but when you interview people again at a later stage, then you'll see...I'm just being guarded at this stage – one of my people reporting to me calls me cautious... (LAUGHS)...I am cautious...

Do you think there are enough informal networks say on this project to try and tap into all the SAP expertise on the project?

That's an interesting point –now in terms of SAP expertise, Seanie McMurry has really stepped up to the plate in terms of providing resources on the project that are really good resources and which can tackle specific trouble points...any time and place where you can add resources that help the project, that's always welcome but there's a cost associated with that of course but it would be of benefit..

In terms of sweating the (SAP knowledge) asset, that's where it gets interesting...We're looking to implement a system with certain functionality – we (on the project) don't have specific experience of it and we have 70% of the knowledge – how do we get the 30%? Do we bring in an external consultant to help us on that 30%?

Now, you're right to say that we have lots of experience but in terms of being able to sweat the asset, we need something more...

You're actually trying to put in something that's different – with respect to what we know and our understanding of it from what we've garnered from different sources etc...

Now, we can involve "Richie" here from AGOCORP on the project – he can help solve problems...he's my report...

If you ask me – are we leveraging the skills of our people? I'd say yes – but we're not probably leveraging the full benefits, cost (savings) and otherwise of the SAP system...I'd say No – we may need some external assistance on that...when we've got that in the past, it's worked well and we've had no problems...so in sweating the asset that's how it works...

I suppose in some respects, I'm taking about not just say SAP experience but general experience in projects like this where you would have had roles as per PRINCE2 which is followed on projects here, like say XYZ...Can you see the project management, change management or BIM expertise being passed on or lessons being learnt? People have had differing views as to the effectiveness of these roles...

With respect to the BIM role yes I can see some of that past expertise being utilised – with respect to change management, we actually here haven't had too many projects that have involved change management initiatives...for example we have no specific training function here in AGOCORP...when a new person arrives in, they can't come to us for training...we don't have it...this is possibly something you've seen somewhere else – knowledge in AGOCORP is very individualised and there is no real formal approach to knowledge management (KM) *per se*...When a

person moves into a role, they acquire the knowledge maybe easily but we don't have formal knowledge management practices...

Do you have a formal KM strategy?

No – but speaking of initiatives outside this project, given the scarcity of resources including funding in the current economic climate that we're in...we've just recently completed a recent upgrade in August last – so as to be able to take advantage of what was happening in NOVOCORP and you can't really do anything effectively when you're upgrading a system...all you're doing is adding risk – so there's been a bottleneck on changes and we have a corporate demand to reduce costs...

We have to compete for resources internally – I met HR recently, about 3-4 weeks ago to discuss some of some initiatives in the HR space around cutting costs and how that relates to the overall AGOCORP strategy, (the meeting was with) two people who report to Liam McHale (then acting HR Director of AGOCORP)...

We've had a few initiatives identified out of that meeting, 13 or so strategies or approaches that we need to progress to further leverage the value from the ERP system which we could be doing more on...some of these initiatives are related to what's going on in the NOVOCORP project at the moment..

Do you mean like the LDS solution that NOVOCORP are going to be trying out on the implementation?

(SMILES) Yes, exactly – that's the value of the NOVOCORP implementation....some of the difficulties we have had as discussed has been in adding these new things – some of the LDS features we hadn't been utilising fully and it had also improved significantly in the most recent (SAP) upgrade...we had just done it – by NOVOCORP going to run the LDS linking to training and development – AGOCORP can see how they could leverage the value of something like this like NOVOCORP are doing (in this current implementation)...that was one of the initiatives discussed...

Would that approach (where NOVOCORP try an element of SAP un or under-utilised in AGOCORP) be something that AGOCORP would encourage as a strategy?

Oh obviously we do and there's cost pressures here – I'm sure they're in universities too...There's probably around four or five objectives, one of which is to raise revenue – that's quite hard to do from an (IT) systems perspective (LAUGHS)...most of them are efficiencies...

NOVOCORP though could be a source of extra income...

Well, yes and the ERP scalability should come into that in terms of allowing NOVOCORP to scale-up quickly – it can be hard to scale down!

How would you describe how the change board has worked?

Fine – well I’m not part of the change board per se – I’m a design person who feeds into the change board more so (OK, my misunderstanding...sorry)...I am responsible in terms of how the change board works in signing off on design requests and (judging) formally or informally whether a proposed change would negatively impact the current (ERP) environment and if it did why it would be worth doing...is something going to cost us in the long term...so I’ve had some dealings with them but my phone is not always ringing, nothing like that...

More of an ad-hoc...

Yes –(my) interactions on the design side were more towards the beginning of the year – at this stage most of the transports have gone across and as such but Thomas mightn’t like to hear this but I suppose if there was a business requirement and the level of risk was low then I would propose maybe (to go with it)....

So, you’d have a set of criteria in your own head as to what you might change or...

Yes – I was involved in some decisions in design on the HR side and also on the financial side and am still involved in project costing and billing...I haven’t asked to see everything and Thomas would typically come to me directly – but I don’t mind people coming to me directly (either)...but Thomas might say sort these issues out and others will come directly to me...

Has a change request ever surprised you or encouraged you to reassess the project in any way?

Yes sure...

Could you give me an example?

Well, foreign currency...

In terms of NOVOCORP paying or being paid in foreign currency?

No, more of a system issue where in AGOCORP all our currency settings on SAP are in Euro...in this implementation we were taking on 56 new legal entities some of which operated in Sterling, but SAP is a multi—currency system so no problem – all multi-nationals who use SAP would have multiple-currencies so the (SAP) system can handle it...

But the problem was more on the reporting side in that you had different currencies maybe on the same report...

OK, so maybe same amount in Sterling and Euros on the one report?

Yes exactly – now SAP has a set of reporting options which were previously unknown to us and difficult to unravel which provide the functionality we're looking for...one happened by default..Foreign currency evaluation – on the P and L side they average out all their (foreign currency) balances at the end of the month...

That was a significant concern for us as SAP doesn't do it like that...it values the cost in P and L at whether the currency rates were on the days the transactions took place...this was a good lesson for me...

I went back to the project and said SAP doesn't work like that...SAP works by transaction rate not by end of month...so Sorry about that but can you guess how it was resolved?

No...

It actually turned out that from a legal perspective, SAP was actually correct and the reason NOVOCORP couldn't do it was for system reasons...so I didn't know that myself (LAUGHS) but the solution was we will do it the legally correct SAP way from now on...

There were slightly different issues on the balance sheet side but we got those resolved...that's a case in point where issues we don't expect in terms of learning...

So people are gaining from the experience?

Yes, there's a significant innovation gain throughout the rest of AGOCORP with respect to the kinds of processes that NOVOCORP are implementing...NOVOCORP may have gained from our 12 years of having had SAP here in AGOCORP but we have gained from them as well – there's three main ones – there's the HR LDS, the foreign currency issue and the time recording and that can give us in IT a better end-to-end process where we can bring them to the rest of the businesses...

So, some trailblazing going on in terms of what NOVOCORP are doing?

Spot on yes...

(BRIEF INTERRUPTION AS JOHN'S MANAGER BRIEFLY CALLS IN TO ORGANISE A LATER MEETING).

In terms of the BIM and change manager roles, how effective do you feel they've been?

I'm honestly not qualified to answer that as I've been dealing with more design and point solutions as they have arisen...through Aoife Burgess, I've had dealings

with Fiona McGregor who I think the world of – I think she's been an excellent BIM, a big asset to the project...now, Fergal as change manager – I've had a few dealings with him in so far as he's asked me a few questions from time to time – but I've stayed out of that change management space...

My first dealings with the whole NOVOCORP project was back towards the end of last year when I presented to their different teams as to what SAP would mean for them...

Part of the formal mobilisation phase as they call it...

Yes – I authored at the time a document outlining where I felt a SAP implementation might have problems in NOVOCORP...you might have seen it...

No (Note: this was requested afterwards through NOVOCORP but refused on the grounds of containing sensitive financial data)...Did that help plant a seed?

Oh it did – in terms of change management though that was about my only interaction – I had some conversations with Fiona as to the differences in chartered accounts and also I talked to Aoife Burgess about how she could discuss with NETWORKS as to how to automate some more of the billing...

In terms of communication which is an important part of the change manager's role – how would you feel that's gone on the project?

Not really qualified to say really as I'm not (part of the target audience)...but I do get the reports and updates that he sends everybody...

In terms of NOVOCORP and the different functions, the HR function, I suppose what they're doing is innovative (with the LDS) but of all the functions they seemed to have engaged differently and have been more prepared. Is that the result of taking on board your original message or was it something else?

Who have you been talking to? (LAUGHS)...Well, first of all their representatives on the project have all been really excellent top class, Martha and Marissa and now a new girl as Martha is on maternity leave...They're very progressive and it's not for nothing that the work they've done on the LDS will serve AGOCORP well into the future...

They had a significant advantage in that they (after the P and HR project) were already on SAP, getting paid on SAP...So from a technical standpoint, it was more for them a case of changing the people around and the codes they used.

P and HR was only implemented in 2007 so it wasn't a mature system and another lady had moved over from AGOCORP and she had seen that system long before NOVOCORP were using it so...

(BRIEF INTERRUPTION AS JOHN'S COLLEAGUE BRIEFLY CALLS IN TO PASS ON A MESSAGE).

Are you involved in any of the IT Governance councils?

I am indeed...

Just for the sake of additional information, could you elaborate on them?

Sure – well there's three levels, at the top level there's the IT leadership council which provides direction on major IT issues and policies and meets once a quarter...the IT technical council, which I run in my half-role as CTO and which involves people from across all the different businesses...As the IT leadership council involves very senior people, it can be difficult to schedule meetings...the issues at either of these meetings tend to be across the business...so on the technical council the NOVOCORP SAP project would get discussed but not so managed...at the leadership council meetings, you would have dashboarding of IT usage, cost and system dependencies..

And then you have the IT Business council...which because of all the recent re-organisation has been difficult to manage...at the technical council level the discussions have been more around the policy in terms of systems across the different business units...

The approval for the NOVOCORP SAP implementation didn't come from these councils maybe from the individual NOVOCORP business council which is where I'd imagine that's where it came from...

So, there's no (top-down) IT decisions say made at these governance councils?

Well, say taking a purely governance view – first of all you would have the business case and then you have a business sponsors and users (for a system)...

At the moment, I'm involved in a business case for further automation of the invoice processing stage – that's going up through the manager of the AP function through the finance manager than up to the manager of services than it will probably stop there – at that level as it would not need to go further and a decision can be made to go with it there...

Looking at the (NOVOCORP) SAP upgrade (as in implementation), given that the system has cost so much in terms of functionality – the cost was so high it would have to be signed off by the (AGOCORP Group) Director of Finance and the Chief Executive...Now the councils would have been aware of it and given the cost of it, it had to go through all these councils as well...

I would have discussed it with NETWORKS and GENCOM at technical council level and stated (LAUGHS) that this was too big for us (as in the AGOCORP ICT group) to take on (LAUGHS) and then it would have gone on up to the leadership council who would have supported it...and then onwards (to senior level)...

The governance councils fulfil an important role but there would be no signing off say on business cases at these councils...

What would the major events that you've experienced on the project?

Well, there have been more challenges really – the surprises and learning outcomes on the project – I would have expected those to be honest...a big challenge was the realisation that we had an exposure on the Project Costing and Billing side – in that we had issues accessing suitable external resources though on record, we seem to have struck it lucky on our third attempt – sometimes, there's a lot to be said for having internal resources even though there is an associated cost...the way IT is going, ultimately globally going the outsourcing route...

I suppose the process context knowledge and social capital side can be important...

Yes, that (challenge) was an interesting one...I didn't anticipate that...

The second thing was that the people are that are on it are good – I have a lot of time for the people on it though they do get nervous about certain things and at certain times but it's been a good developmental opportunity for them...

Some people have said that the criteria for being included on the project was more personal development rather than having had the experience and more of a balance might have been better...

I think that's a fair point (to make), but you can't fault Tommy or Lorna for coming with the resources either...

Without some opportunities, you can't get the experience either...

Yes, like certain people on the project got too excited about certain things – some had worked on projects before, other's hadn't...it's very different to a day-to-day operational role – on a project there's more peaks and troughs and deadlines etc...If you've been on projects before, you'd expect that and I would certainly expect that (about people on the team)...

Some of the issues that arose we predicted, others we didn't like that foreign currency issue...some pleasant surprises like the thing I couldn't get working now doesn't matter or I can do it right totally differently! (LAUGHS)...

The major thing I would take out of it is the time I've had for the people working on the project and there is an attitude there for resolving problems – we've gone through the mill and we've had a few issues but we've had a pro-active attitude...if you think it's (the project) never going to happen...I think that we're in a good place now considering all that...

You'd have taken this November last January?

I would have yes...For me and I think the project manager has identified this as well as the biggest risk is the business acceptance side – that's probably why when

you asked me earlier how things were going, I said OK – I’m happy we are (in this position) in November but January and February will be challenging no matter what happens as it’s GO-LIVE...but the major thing I take from it is the people

Thanks so much for your time John.

No problem.

(60, 00)

Location: AGOCORP HQ/ Date: 10th November 2010/ Duration: 40 mins.

Interviewee: Seanie McMurry, Software Manager, ICT Department, AGOCORP.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.
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So Seanie, just for the sake of context, you might describe your role a little bit, your current job title, responsibilities...

Well, started as a clerical officer back in the 80s, joined the ICT group in 1991 and worked on many different projects and now am software manager and my job is to support existing software and also upgrades and also assist in the implementation of new software – so we have 140 staff all together full-time and another 80 partner staff which come in from companies with which we have framework arrangements (*i.e. MCCC who have provided the SAP external consultants on the current SAP implementation*) – whereby we have an agreement to use their skills and some of them are around the place...

So I've worked on some of the big projects: XYYY, NUG and Mobile for NETWORKS and am/was on the project boards (as senior supplier) for both XYZ and the current AGRESSO-SAP implementation...

Could you talk a little about the IS relationship that exists between AGOCORP and NOVOCORP? NOVOCORP would look on the parent as an IT service provider...

Right, there's a couple of different perspectives to it I suppose in that here we have firstly we have IT ops which is one part of the organisation here and it supplies the (IT infrastructural) wires and the boxes...NOVOCORP – the relationship I see is primarily in that space – it's a bit distorted at the moment because of the ongoing SAP implementation, but typically only about 10% of our revenue would come from NOVOCORP...we would take about 10% from GENCOM which as they're together – that's in total about 15-20% of all our revenues, so they're in third place after customer billing and NETWORKS...

In terms of SAP footprint – they won't use the asset management or the work flow capital management parts – they will use the finance and the HR aspects and they're becoming more integrated by moving over to SAP...We would also do a little bit of data warehousing for a particular part of NOVOCORP but overall not a huge amount...

We also do a bit of web applications for GENCOM– we also have made a lot of progress in managing the specific bespoke third-party systems that they have – so we have a defined GENCOM competence centre here that just minds and looks after those specific systems...our goal would be able to classify costs of services we supply – bidding costs, support or development costs whereas before it would have been a lot more unstructured...

You have no dedicated NOVOCORP team in the same way as GENCOM?

No – we don't have that volume of work in the same way as GENCOM...When the SAP implementation in NOVOCORP is completed, it will be brought back under the ABCD control here which was the original SAP implementation...and to which we've added NUG, XYZ and the P and HR system also...

The level of integration between AGOCORP and NOVOCORP would have been quite low...

To be honest we had an interface between ABCD and AGRESSO and that was about it on that – but we also had the common Iodestar implementation for the national market that we did for NOVOCORP, GENCOM and supply...NOVOCORP and the others in fairness probably, all wanted their own systems and as such, there was a fair bit of pushing and cajoling along the way and eventually corporate big brother had to put their foot down and say you're all going on the same system...

There has been a tendency (for NOVOCORP) to see themselves as being separate and independent on an IT level...

Would that be a commonly held view?

Well, they did do their own thing...they had their own web development team...

But that's changing?

Oh absolutely...

What's driving that, do you think?

The integration...well senior management want to do it and they want to make best use of all the assets that we have...but an integration like this is never going to happen unless senior people are going to be pushing for it...it's a corporate decision...I'm sure Lorna can feel you in more on that...

In terms of Lorna, do you feel her coming over to AGOCORP to NOVOCORP was important in terms of the governance structures she brought with her...try and make how IT was done in NOVOCORP more controlled and less independent?

Well everywhere in AGOCORP is like that under the surface...

NOVOCORP weren't exceptional...

Well, they were in so far as they were able to go away and get their own systems, they could opt out of SAP and use AGRESSO, whereas everyone else went on SAP...Now, the role of the BP and IT manager that Lorna carries out is a really key role as is the implementation of the governance – she's a strong advocate of governance and she has their managerial support – if she didn't have the support of the managing director and his replacement, she'd just be blowing in the wind and it's the same across all the other business units...

The BP-IT manager is present across all AGOCORP business units?

Yes in supply and NETWORKS and there was one separately in NOVOCORP and GENCOM but that's merged, but again it ('s success) depends on the support of senior management and there are different (levels of support) as the businesses are different – in NOVOCORP, governance has the commitment and is maybe stricter than in other business units but that's a project environment...in NETWORKS which is an asset management environment, you have three very separate business lines and the role of the BP-IT manager there is to keep them all moving together in the same line so to speak...

In terms of AGRESSO, would you have had any exposure?

I would have known that it was there but that's about it...

NOVOCORP looked after it themselves...it didn't matter to you except from the point of transition, changeover and moving across...

Well yes, as far as AGRESSO goes, I would be completely agnostic about it to be honest...

Would you have been aware of the business case for SAP?

Well, being on the project board, you would have to be...I know it needed an upgrade and it was out of support....

Look, SAP is an expensive system and AGOCORP will want to sweat that asset has much as they can – why would you want to be spending time billing each other when you have this integrated asset which can give you integration across all that...

In terms of SAP, did you have any involvement in the original project?

No, I was working on a different market opening project at the time, but just going back in time, you had in order (the following):

In 1999 we had the original SAP project or ABCD, then we followed that in 2004 or 2005, I can never remember with XXYY which stands for which related to the deregulation of the market – so XXYY involved the splitting of our customer system into separate systems which was a regulatory requirement...the networks system manages all the retail accounts so it holds a record of all the xxxxx – so if a customer switches...the winning provider provides the details of the xxxxx to networks who have to let the former provider know so all these details are routed through the networks system...

The actual deregulation began back in YYYY but this system (split) was designed to facilitate the mass movement of customers if you like...

That was followed then in 2007 by the originally called HR implementation – that got delayed so it became the P and HR system...so then NETWORKS were bringing in the NUG system which manages all the assets that are built so their lifecycle can be managed...

This is different to XYZ?

Yes, there like two halves of the same system – NETWORKS if you like did the last bit first – that's where the best business case lay – NUG helps manage the assets once they're built but XYZ is more for the work involved in scheduling and planning for the building of the assets – so if you wanted to build a ZZZZZ it allows you to integrate with the procurement, selling etc and other systems necessary for the building to happen...

Ok, I see, hence the integrated in the title...you were on the project board for XYZ?

(LAUGHS) Well, I wasn't originally...but that project had a few problems so the project board was extended...

So you were the second senior supplier on it?

Well, Christopher Lloyd who was now in NOVOCORP was my boss back then and he was originally on it...since most of the delivery on the software side was coming out of here, I joined on it....

So on XXYY, I was technical delivery lead and then on NUG –I was IT lead in the program and we did a mobile project too allowing meters to be serviced and people to send them back remotely through the mobile device not through paper...

As we were going we were preparing all the time so on XXYY, I was preparing at the end for NUG and so on...then about three years I came back from NUG and moved into this software role...

The issues in XYZ were then the cause for the delay for NOVOCORP's SAP implementation...

Yes, XYZ ran over and missed its slot and also as well NOVOCORP's optimum time for delivery was the start of the financial year – you couldn't start it mid-year as that could create issues...

So essentially a delay (on XYZ) meant you lost a year...

Exactly...

When you look back at XYZ when would say are the big differences between XYZ and the current project?

Well, very early on in XYZ, the project board wasn't that active or questioning – the attendance was poor and also the reporting to the board was poor and issues weren't being highlighted...

On the project team side?

Yes...the project board began to get active; I think it would be in July 2008 that problems arose that entailed Christopher and I getting involved...

Similar project methodologies and structures were used on XYZ as are used by this (current) project?

Yes – look, there's a fairly comprehensive "lessons learnt" done on XYZ – one of the biggest issues was that the design was never really settled on...

Do you see issues like that recurring at all on this project?

Well, a big issue on this project is the fact that you have a project manager with nine (I think) direct reports, which is way too many and three or four functional leads – who's the referee – who manages and sorts out the rows? We ended up in a situation where the project manager is involved at such a level of detail which to some degree a function of his own inexperience and that's had issues...

Did the planning suffer as a result?

It did and we had a point of crisis in the summer and we had help on the planning side which put a structure...

Rory joining the team.... Yes and the issues were flagged early on...

That issue was flagged?

Well, it was identified as a risk but the project board did what it did (and) didn't make the decision – they didn't bite the bullet on it...why have three functional leads when you should only have one...look at any project here that's been successful – you have a strong functional, technical and business lead...

In this project you had three functional leads – one of whom went on maternity leave so it was easier to move her across and then you had a technical lead – we felt the testing manager should report to the project manager but we'll wait and see at the end of the project how that goes...I think it works well at the moment...

The role of change manager and BIM has been confused...let's just say....so that learning that's been there on other projects hasn't been taken on board....

OK, there was a view that we had done this before, it shouldn't be that hard and it's important to give people a developmental opportunity...

(LAUGHS) but did we really have to give seven people a developmental opportunity at the same time in different roles?

My insight says No (LAUGHS) – the positive is those people have learned a lot...I suppose from our perspective, we didn't expect to be going in so deep on the testing planning side – we didn't expect to be helping allocate and say 'Mary's testing this next week' – that's something we need detail on but that's the functional lead's responsibility....

We felt that the functional leads were too concerned with what they wanted from the system as opposed to say delivering on the planning side...

Is that a project management issue or is it down to a lack of SAP expertise?

Well, there's a couple of things there right – certainly around project management – we lack a project management competence here – we put people in and support them with people who've done it before – we could have a template in terms of specific roles and also the number of leads and their responsibilities...

Ideally even from optics, it would have been better to have had a project manager from the business rather than someone from AGOCORP IT – (as people might say) 'They're doing it to us again...'.....Now the likelihood is that NOVOCORP are only ever going to do a project like this once...but we need to be able to draw on and this is something we need to consider developing and that is a project manager competence not just for managing projects but also to create a pool of expertise that we could draw on for different projects and move them around....

I would also question the criteria for choosing the functional leads – they may have picked people who know the business but I'm not sure if they're really good

managers in being able to manage time and people and be able to understand the critical path and manage uncertainty...

At least in XYZ, the project board though jittery enough were always focused on the problem – is this really a problem, what do we have to do to solve it...

On the NOVOCORP project board, everything was a problem...which is probably due to a lack of experience...Thomas ended up managing them as much as anything – now the project board are there for support, for clear thinking and it needs to be more clinical in understanding the real problem....

Have you heard about people on this project reaching out to people from different projects that have gone on in the past in AGOCORP?

Well, I know there was some contact with others...

The change manager for XYZ?

Yes, and he's also IT applications manager for NETWORKS which are engaged in a project of work so he's managing transition and there's a few industrial relations issues as well...they are fundamentally changing the business – they're moving away from the local guys scheduling the work to it all being done centrally and they can see everything – like he did six jobs this day last week, only four today and that has lead to huge change so there's a huge amount of experience there...

Should there have been or be maybe a more formal mentoring process for people on projects like this?

Yes well – there was one particular functional lead who I felt was floundering and I got them to talk with "Grainne" here who's very open and experienced – I got the OK from Lorna on this...that person might have only met Grainne two or three times so...

It's their (as in the functional lead) responsibility to initiate that contact and manage that...

Yes, it is...not a project manager's role but a lead role...we fell down by not explaining that the lead roles needed managers...now, there were other projects that those people had worked on and concerns were raised about them then and they weren't acted upon...

And they were still co-opted on this without remedial action...

Yes (SIGHS)...

So having criteria around being able to take the informal and formal...

Yes – able to be managers – you can be expert at certain things but that doesn't make you a manager – (being selected for the project team) seems to depend on who's in charge of a business section at a particular moment in time....we have it here (in AGOCORP) all the time...You have people who fall into roles on projects who aren't team leads – technically they can be very good but get them to manage and prioritise and plan, then they can't do it....it's a different set of skills that are required...

You as a project manager, OK, you will check up on things and follow up but at the same time, you need to be able to delegate tasks and trust people underneath to do tasks...

And not too many of them either!

Yeah, that's true...

Looking back over the project, from your own perspective, what would you see as the key events that you saw or experienced?

Well, definitely getting the plan was key...getting Billy on board...

Had you worked with Rory before?

Not closely – he worked on XYY before...on a particular piece not a big piece...

How that came about was we were asked to add more resources to the project – for me that's like throwing water into a swamp – we need to know why, how many, for how long, months, years? This is all cost...we didn't get the answers we needed – it was frustrating that people weren't getting what was missing (i.e. the plan)...

In these kinds of projects generally, is a call for extra resources often a cry for help?

Oh, absolutely and try and get them to quantify what they need...It's no use coming to me and saying 'I need Williard' – Why do you need Williard? I heard he's good – but that's not why you need him (LAUGHS)...what you need is the right guy and why he's going in there...it took us a long time to quantify what the problem was...and only then did the realisation arrive we didn't have the full plan and the list management....

Is that possibly down to too many reports on the project?

Well, also the realisation that you have to have a (task) list and be able to manage that list as well...so you can prioritise and where you need to put the resources...

You don't want to hear – "We know we're in trouble but we don't know where...", so getting that plan there was crucial and also as well it showed that the project

was actually doing fairly well...there was a couple of key areas that needed to be watched like particularly, project costing and billing and that's a challenge given the personalities in there (SMILES)...

Natural levels of resistance possibly and also a lot of variation in the process...

Well, managing projects is about managing people so our director made a remark recently that all projects are about tension – the tension between getting things done and people looking for resources – that's a good tension – one part of the business pressuring the other and in doing so, helping to deliver the best possible solution for the business...Project costing and billing was unlucky – we had issues with consultants and the first guy had issues with ash clouds, the second guy in hindsight you would not have let him near the place...now we have two guys done there and it's getting done...In fairness also, the project was quite harsh on itself say in terms of (identified) risks, you raise a risk but the scoring was...

Excessively red?

Yeah – a bit of high scores on the impacts...

Is that inexperience?

Well, it's possibly being conservative in terms of the actions of people not just the project manager – there were other people on the project roles inputting into the risk assessment process – that was an issue early on in the project board with roles getting a little cloudier..

In terms of raising risks?

More people on the project board saying 'That should be higher'...it comes back to the context in terms of what's important or unimportant...

They were right to raise the issues as risks but would the performance of the portal (as in point of entry into the SAP system) was the No.1 risk...how that happened I don't know – that was in hand and planned as they were upgrades going on – OK there was a risk but there was strong mitigating factors against it...it was more of a 1 as opposed to a 5, I would feel but then you're back to taking more of a high-level perspective on certain things...

Thanks so much for your time Seanie.

No problem.

(40, 00)

Location: Project HQ / Date: 10th November 2010/ Duration: 41 mins.

Interviewee: Fiona McGregor, *Business Implementation Manager for Financials-HR AGRESSO-SAP project*, NOVOCORP Engineering.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.
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Fiona, the last time we talked in early September the project was involved in testing – how have things gone in your role since?

Well my role has changed – there was a lot of ambiguity around my role – some people seemed to think that my role involved doing whatever it was they didn't want to do or there was a gap so my name popped off at very meeting...

It kicked off at an NOVOCORP Financial Controller meeting where it all came to a point where they argued about what my role was in front of me (LAUGHS)....Tommy wasn't there that day but all the rest were there...

Some people thought my role was to document processes...Lorna said my responsibility was for cutover...another FC said I should be doing processes, another FC thought I shouldn't...so...

What did you see yourself as doing?

Well, I couldn't do it all – I started off with an EXCEL spreadsheet of tasks and I started doing what I thought I should be doing anyway on the project – a lot of project work where I leveraged what I knew about SAP from my time in (AGOCORP) contracts as people on the project were just getting to know SAP...I ended up doing more (there) than I should...and Data migration which I shouldn't have been on – but the (migration) team had no finance experience so they needed help mapping (data across)...Also, the functional team were busy working on the design so they weren't available...there was a gap that I filled...if I hadn't worked on SAP and I was a normal BIM that wouldn't be happening...

Lorna and I were supposed to finalise my role in a meeting with Tommy...I was getting concerned about all of these tasks and I arranged a meeting with Tommy (after the FC meeting that turned into an argument) and I got clarity on what I should and shouldn't be doing...Tommy told me that I reported to him and that my responsibilities were...(X) and if people thought differently that was fine...just do what (I) say and people should take on their roles and stop delegating out to me – why should I even be doing processes as I'm not even in the business...

Was that formally stated for the rest of the project and the other FCs?

I'm not sure if he...I think he sent out an e-mail listing what I was doing and he probably briefed everyone else and probably started to call people in...

So, I was officially down to look after Cutover and BRT – I didn't realise at the time that Cutover consisted of two dress rehearsals; DR1 and DR2 as we call them but that DR1 clashed with BRT...The cutover leads do their own sections but I have to co-ordinate that and have meetings and people want to dip-in and see how it's going etc (ROLLS EYES UP TO HEAVEN)...We have to get their lists first before they (FCs) can see it...So I have a two hour meeting to get done with the cutover leads this afternoon – they're all Finance – HR are looking after their own – some of their functionality doesn't come on line until next June so they're operating to a different timetable.

But BRT starts on the 22nd of November as does DR1 so I have to push that on – transition is going on too at the same time – so we have a transition focus group composed of Finance and one (I think) HR managers...there to discuss any issues that arise...

No engineering or KAM?

No, they may have a separate group...they, we wouldn't want them to be there as we wouldn't be able to progress out of the meeting – we might be discussing problems with the PO side of things – and then we need to action items that came up – and then go to the change board if necessary...

I had concerns doing all those three roles but particularly doing all three at the same time!

In an ideal world...

One person wouldn't be doing all three – I mean BRT outlining is fine but what value can I bring to BRT... I know nothing about scenarios and so...I've got some test cases and scenarios from the integration testing so I will have to edit those – but everything else is starting – I would hope to pass on some of the day-to-day running of BRT to some of the other functional leads but Thomas hasn't told them yet...I won't be able to do it and I won't add value...

We had a conference yesterday with the group finance director and a lot of the financial senior people –Seanie and John Jakesmith and Liam McHale who's in HR and on the board...

Yesterday was all about Transition, BRT and Cutover – that's a lot for one person and not too much responsibility for the rest of the project...

Is it back to your SAP experience being called upon?

Well, we should be past that now – I knew SAP in a surface way and the team should have passed me out in terms of SAP knowledge over the last while – I'd be out of touch as to what they're doing on a day by day basis...I presume all we asked for is there and done in integration testing...

What's your reporting structure now then?

Well, I report to Thomas now within the project...

How that did happen?

Well at the end of the meeting that we talked about Tommy came back and said that he had bad news for me: I was no longer reporting to him but rather to Thomas...

I was a bit put out at the time as relations between me and Thomas and the other functional leads like Rena and Rory weren't great...HR wasn't an issue as they were out of that...

Why was that?

Well again back to the issue of me as the BIM being asked to take on a lot of their tasks...and I was struggling to say that it's not a business issue and not a project issue – all these tasks were flying out to the business so it became almost a case of the project on one side and me and the business as the problem on the other side...

What was the rationale for changing the project reporting structure? Was it a case of trying to bring you more into the project?

It was maybe too to get Tommy out of it – it was splitting responsibility onto him and he's not part of the project really so...I wasn't initially happy about it but I asked him if he would clarify that Thomas would now be responsible for me and all that I was doing...not all uploaded onto me...

Has the level of work being passed onto you changed?

I'm not hearing as much about 'that's a business issue' at meetings anymore and I asked Thomas to facilitate the functional leads getting involved in BRT and he said OK but I don't think he's talked to them yet...I don't feel under as much responsibility as not everything is on the business and I was in that space so in that sense...

I had to fight a lot with the project in terms of 'Well, you can't just assign that... (to the business)', you need to check with the business- for a few weeks it was tough but things have improved so working into BRT now as the next thing...

Do you think the project would have benefitted from clearer demarcation between what was the business and what was the project, if you know what I mean in terms of issues or had some criteria?

They didn't have criteria as such – they needed to understand that the business issues was their issues...they were clear in so far as they were doing the testing and the design – it's your responsibility to clear up issues coming from the business...instead of saying that we need to go to the business to resolve it...

That was coming from Rory and Thomas?

Yes – both Fergal and I fought for about six weeks to get information out of the business –they said they were too busy doing the integration testing and when something came out in the Project costing and billing...

As in screenshots?

Yes – when they came out (i.e. the communication), it was very good and everyone was patting themselves on the back but it was very hard to get it out of them...they saw their role (on the project) as the design and testing side and it was mine and Fergal's role to communicate and deal with the business...

That was difficult without the information (to communicate)?

Well, we needed to have something...

And Fergal would feel the same?

Yes – and then there was a suggestion (from the project) that I present Project costing and billing but I wouldn't know enough on that....their focus was on the design and the testing side and for a time, their sole focus was to produce a system that would work when you pushed the red button...no it's more now the system has to work – not necessarily what the business want or expect...they've kind-of rolled back a bit on that (view) now and are more considering the business...

Has Rory helped Thomas in that regard to open up?

MMMM (Thinking); I don't really know – things are more open now...

Is Rory more supporting Thomas on the planning side or would he have seen the need for (more material for) communication...

More so on the planning side...more meeting deadlines (on his side)...the only people that were keen to communicate back to the project were me and Fergal...

Did you see others like Leona Miles communicating informally back to the business?

No...

There was a big information gap...

Yes, transferring what the project had done across to the business wasn't happening...

Has that improved?

Yes – I raised an issue saying that there were design issues outstanding – they said that there was a workshop and we dealt with that –but the business doesn't know say how intercompany business will work...They need to be told...The biggest lesson here I think if we were doing it again would be in the design phase we did some workshops but nothing ever went back as to what's happening...there was three months with no contact with the project and Fergal in fairness was trying to manage that and I had been able to manage it on the Finance side meeting the FCs every two weeks and telling them 'It's working fine' and then those meetings moved to a weekly basis over the last month or so...

Tried to fill them in on what was happening and what decisions have been made – Just reassuring them – I had nothing to show them...They would be fairly well informed as far as the business goes...

Did you ever involve Lorna to try and lever them (the project) a little bit?

Well – the best way I found was to bring it up as an issue for the project board – I would have talked to Tommy about it and he would have said it to Lorna...

Was she supportive?

She would have been; she'd defend Thomas as well – when times were bad, I wouldn't have been totally frank with Lorna and I did raise the point that it was hard to get information to communicate – she would have said 'Oh, they're very busy with integration testing at the moment' – when deadlines were met – they were behind time for a while but when deadlines were achieved, then things got a bit more relaxed and then it was easier to get information...

They turned their back a bit on the users...

If Fergal and I hadn't been on from the business...with my SAP background...I was able to fight a bit for things...say certain things that shouldn't go through without FC approval – I would have insisted that they went to the FCs – someone else was there – they would have gone through...

Same for Fergal – the communication wouldn't have happened except for him plugging away all the time...In the end we (became) a kind of tag-team...if there were other people doing these roles, maybe from NOVOCORP...another finance manager might not have been able...

Due to your SAP background?

Well, yes, but I came from a tough business within AGOCORP that had closed...I got used to digging in my heels a bit – others might have struggled...

How has Fergal managed the change manager role since we last took?

I think Fergal has done a really good job – like when I first started on the project there was lot of people badmouthing him...but recently more people have been saying 'He's doing really well'; he took a lot of hits when the project stopped communicating – in fairness he never ratted anyone out or blamed anyone on the project – he met a lot of managers and gave them confidence...If he hadn't done that there would be war as they would have got nothing...

In people's heads in transition, I'm doing the lists but Fergal is making sure people are happy, I'm doing more what people are doing whereas he's more focused on whether people like it or not...

Do you think his job has made more difficult as a change manager in terms of the difficulty in getting inputs to communicate?

I think so – Fergal got very little support on this project....

Is that understood by the business at large?

It wasn't initially as I'd say people at the start just that he wasn't very good...whereas now they're probably beginning to realise that once he got any bit of information he was able to give lunch-and-learns...HR in fairness did include him and gave him information to go with – he was able to communicate that – they did support him...

He got a lot of the blame but none of the support – I would not have liked his job...

Some of the engineering managers have said to me that it's difficult to be a change manager if you haven't the authority to implement change so to speak...

I can...(see that)...He used to get overruled at meetings an awful lot early on not so much recently as he been busy and not attending meetings...

Was his lack of SAP knowledge an issue?

I'm not sure if any change manager would know the system they're going into...nobody on the project knew SAP bar two people...the design was nearly done before they knew SAP – They went on a training course when design was over...That (issue) wasn't just restricted to Fergal – if more people on the project knew SAP, than that would have made his life a lot easier...he would have had people to ask questions of and also he would have learned things quicker...

Fergal used a lot of people in AGOCORP to get information rather than people on the project...

In terms of communication with the Finance side...

Well, I know Aoife and I still meet Tommy every two weeks...

Oh, formally or informally...

Informally...(in terms of finance), the one day I took off since the start of the project was the day that Lorna and Thomas decided to present the BRT schedule and structure to the FCs – which was unfortunate as I am responsible for BRT...so they came back from that saying that they (the FCs) had agreed to X and Y which I disagreed with some of it as I can see in BRT how certain things won't work so...but sometimes things get presented in an IT way and you need to translate the finance side across – I might have to edit it or explain it...

Would you still have more interaction with Rena and Leona?

Rena would see her role as building and testing and she would pass on a lot to me – I work fairly well with her but she needs to be worked around at times and her first reaction when you want to do something is 'That can't be done'...As a functional lead, she's often minded a bit –our deadlines don't matter and no-one else would get the same consideration...a few people have said that...

Why is that?

No one knows...

And Leona?

Leona is a team member rather than say a functional lead...she has a very big section and she probably should have been more involved in the transition side of things...only one person was put on the new really new part of the project, project costing and billing...That was an issue...they know have three people and another from the business who does all the timesheets...that part was underestimated...

You're going to be very busy obviously over the next while – what if any are your views on a lack of a UAT phase in the testing?

We will have UAT not formal UAT though...

Why not?

My understanding is that there are political reasons why we can't call it that on the AGOCORP side although we do have users testing within BRT...

I can understand that – it's a little unusual...

My understanding is that NOVOCORP IT wanted UAT and BRT but then with AGOCORP it became BRT but with the first week of BRT being functional testing...

Since you've been on the project what would have been the key events that you've experienced?

Probably the translation of the project message into the business message was the key – without that things would have happened and decisions would have been made that would not have been good...

Although I probably shouldn't have been involved in data migration, it was important I was because we would have been way behind otherwise...

But there was nobody there – I filled a gap that needed to be filled though it did push back stuff I had been working on...

The change in whom you reported to – would you see that as being significant in terms of bringing you back into the project?

MMMM (THINKING) I suppose I was in (the project) anyway...

Is it more a "paper" reporting exercise?

Well, there now is one person responsible for the business on the project and not separate people responsible for the project and the business...I can go to Thomas now and my problem is now his problem whereas before it was my problem...

And in the time ahead – have you any other concerns?

Cutover and Transition will be fine as we have the time...BRT is my big worry as I have to get time from the functional team – they have to tell me what test sets to include and in a forum for people to come over and test the system...People from the business were picked for BRT at the meeting with the FCs that I missed...they were all accountants but accountants won't be doing these functions – the PO

bureau will be doing the POs, sales invoices by the billing team, an accountant might do assets and all the key GO-LIVE processes won't be done by accountants...

A lot of those shared services like POs will be in Aoife's team so she agreed to send some billing people over...

Maybe a bit of misunderstanding of what BRT is – BRT is designed to test whether we are ready – you can't ask people who won't be doing the processes as to whether we're ready or not...that won't help...

I'm not sure if the functional or project team have got that – I'm meeting Aoife in the morning to go through what they're going to be testing and cutover and integration the morning to go through what they're going to be testing and cutover and integration sessions after that (LAUGHS) so I've very little time – I can do some at a high level and I don't want to re-invent the wheel if the test cases are there already...

That's great - Thanks Fiona.

No bother...

(41, 00)

Interviewee: Christopher Lloyd, Engineering Manager, NOVOCORP.

<u>Colour Key:</u> Interviewer / Interviewee.

So Christopher, how do you feel the implementation has gone since we last met around the testing and training?

Well, the last time we chatted I'd say I was a bit worried about the training, how it was going to be done and who was going to do it; also the level of change for people and they're interlinked...it probably took a long time to get the training material together and most of the December doing the training...

For me, I had used the expenses and timesheets on SAP back when I worked in AGOCORP so I was quite familiar with it...

Did it (the new SAP system) seem different to what you'd been used to?

No, not really – the whole navigation side of things had improved quite a bit...that was the area I concentrated on but as the timesheets are so important, I was anxious to see the engineers getting on board with it...Now, it's gone live already this week so it is really by the end of this week that we'll know how things have gone really and the inputs here have been different with extended leave (due to the Christmas holidays)...

I took the initiative to do my own timesheets in the new system over the few days and tried to encourage people to use the same...I also used the HR part of the SAP system the first couple of days (i.e. for objective setting) and it's actually very good...There is a degree of it in another system I would have been used...but before the information was spread out over lots of different systems..You're also able to find and pick out good information on staff helping you to understand the details and background for people...The qualifications and skills people have.... I'm just back here a year and a bit and I don't know all the 530 people – I find that very good and we used to have different directories for phones and e-mails all that...

What was your involvement on the training side?

Well, my role was to manage the engineering managers in terms of them getting involved in the training...They had to organise the training for their own staff and ensure that anyone who missed training had a very good excuse not to...

What was the level of training take up according to the KAMs?

When I came back from Christmas, we had one guy who missed training due to the terrible weather which didn't have much of an effect actually...Fergal Flynn was organising additional training for him...but not several which indicates very good take-up...The Lunch and Learn sessions held over a week were very well-attended and very helpful and each member of the project board like myself introduced one and sat in on one...but the level of take-up was very significant...My overall impression is that I have a level of satisfaction that I would not have had in previous ones...

Why do you think?

Well, the involvement of key figures...I had an advantage of coming over here having been in ITS and been involved in some of these projects before, I knew where the issues might be, lack of interest and lack of involvement in the design phase – some of my senior managers actually probably had too much involvement and one or two would have preferred a bit more interaction in the overall design where it affected them...that would have been a source of dissatisfaction at the time but that group because of their intense interest in it have utilised it from the beginning...

Freddie Jameson's group and NETWORKS?

Yes, that would be it...

In terms of the training, what were the general comments and feedback?

Well, the one thing I felt was there was a lot of videos with voiceovers – it would have been nice to have had a system to play around with a bit...some of the people would have preferred that but the understanding was that the type of system wasn't available...

Was there demand for that?

There was particularly among senior management who had been (subject to a lot of) emphasis to get involved and get up and running on the system...Kick the tyres and do all the stuff – learning outcome for future projects...you have to be careful with these systems as you train people too early then they forget it...The super-users we had now were excellent – couldn't fault them...there's always a few problems that you come up against and little ways and tweaks around it...There

are twenty super-users who've been listed and identified, all from different areas of the business and I can call them if I have a problem...We need to get them back to their day jobs and we have to be sure that people don't get too dependent on them...Just last week for example when I was doing the objective setting on the HR system for my direct reports – in SAP you should be able to send these individual objective reports collectively (rather than individual e-mails) and when I went to do these reports there was a data cleansing issue as I had two people down as my reports who're not and a couple of other people missing so the reports had to go out individually but I could do that because I had a super-user up sitting beside me...Just ticking a little box, which they showed us in training but you might not remember it...That's working well...

So you have the formal and informal side of the training?

Yes – and the data cleansing still needs to be done and that'll be a help too...

So, positive so far?

Well, Fergal Flynn has had no major feedback and I've no-one ringing me like I had in XYZ giving out which is a good thing, but those (XYZ) issues have been sorted and we've moved on...Management meeting tomorrow will possibly raise a few issues but we'll see...

The XYZ experiences some of our KAMs had...

Yes, there was a big fear I had – that's why I kept on top of it...

How did you manage to do it?

Well, we initially said and kept on hammering on that this system was coming in and we had to do it...my impression always with XYZ was that people had not engaged fully with it at all and there was even an attitude (with XYZ) that it wasn't going to work anyway and we'll just go back to what we had before...so we had to be very clear on that...I came from the ITS side in HQ and I felt I had a bit of a credibility problem with XYZ – I had to emphasise that this (XYZ) is what happens when you don't engage early...Some of them did and these managers wanted a lot of engagement early so if things went to the wire, that they had their opportunity....

The XYZ doubt was there...

But there was a doubt that XYZ would ever come in – also as well the system for XYZ wasn't as mature as this one either...the main system is in AGOCORP for 11-12 years...Most of the SAP modules have been in AGOCORP for years and have been used by a lot of people...XYZ was connecting to all the existing SAP systems so it was new in that sense.

The big issue for this project was really getting rid of the old system and moving people across to a new system with new terminology...

When people look back over this project in the future, what do you think will be key things people will remember?

Well, it will be interesting from a finance and my team point of view, it will be interesting to see the kind of reports that we'll be able to run...From a finance point of view, it's very important to be able to separate billable from non-billable time..From a HR point of view, it has huge potential, I mean it was difficult for me because of all the different systems to count how many people were actually in my organisation...Last December, I got a number for the year and it is hard to pin it down as people leave or move to another part of the business...Finance and HR would give you different figures as they both used different systems but that will be changed now – the number of people working in the organisation and having a figure for that is very important especially in the climate we're in now...we don't want too many certainly nor too few...the personal development plans in May or so will be good if its anything like the objective setting...

That was always a manual process, I believe with a lot of EXCEL?

It was and also I'm looking forward to getting in behind the numbers if you like. .this year I spent a lot of time on the budget and trying to understand it on a detailed level – to try and understand the business...Like last year, I wanted to see how much we were spending on taxis or flights between here and the UK, Europe and wherever, who's going and when....if people were planning ahead and saving money rather than booking late and being expensive...this separation of billable and non-billable time is really crucial for us....Also, you have the electronic payroll slips and expenses – all that getting rid of paper is a very positive thing...

The finance people would come into me and ask how much expenses my section has put in for and I'd ask them could they not find that out? I'd then be giving them a rough figure whereas now I can give them an accurate figure from the system, no problems at all...

Some people have commented on the naming of the project...Financials and HR – they often said that they couldn't see the benefits that say the Financials and HR functions will get here...

Yes, well when I first come over here what struck was the influence and power of the finance and HR departments were far stronger here than I'd ever seen them in any other part of AGOCORP that I had worked in....

Why was that?

Just the way it is...

Now, maybe certain business managers had not been taking on as much of the financial and HR responsibilities as they should and so you ended up with that situation, I don't know...the engineering managers, if I have a HR problem; I'll just ring someone in HR to sort it out...

Delegating...

Yes, there's something in that space...also, when I went through the budget with them, a lot of them couldn't understand why I wanted to go through it in such depth and also some of them didn't really understand what's going on...It became clear to me that some of them didn't know a lot and others more...So, much so, that I've asked Tommy to come to my engineering meeting tomorrow to present on the finances of the company...and things like the credit rating...the KAMS understood the money to a certain extent – the engineering managers didn't feel they needed to as they had no P and L account...Here's what we produce and here's the output with respect to the finance function...

Could the system encourage greater financial literacy?

It may help on that...What I saw when I first came over was this idea that if you wanted to recruit, HR would look after that and if you had a staff or HR issue, HR would look after that...so calling it a Financials and HR project probably reinforced that...

OK...

This is really a SAP business system...it's not an engineering system...The engineering function is quite sensitive as to its position with respect to the business and that has to be managed also...

The engineering function might actually see tangible benefits further down the line with respect to the system...

Well, it's too early to say but I expect that we should be able to get information more easily without the army of people we have doing it now...

In terms of the matrix structure that you have at the moment, I know the new system will compel the reporting to be to the line manager...How is that being received?

Well, that's true and for example Mitt Ryan will have to come in under Mario and then under me in the new system...But that was always going to an issue that was going to have to be managed...

AGRESSO would have had a similar structure but it was managed more informally?

Yes, it was...that's something we have to work around...People have to adapt to it...someone has to sign your work sheet and it is going to be difficult if you're in dual roles, like the other change manager will have his objectives set by him but they have to be approved by Fergal...When you're moving on to different projects, it will be difficult...We have a design specification now and we're not going to undo it now...

AGOCORP though have done that a lot in the past, reconfiguring systems and if you have to upgrade anything, you have to retrace back and it becomes very expensive...

Those come up in BLUEPRINTING as well as the issue with Job Numbers?

There were issues there but all the original specifications are in the system as far as I'm aware – there were very few changes made to the original specification...

You might take a little bit about your involvement with the project board?

Well, I got involved with the project board for this project as Liam moved on...I suppose I became the senior business user, with the senior HR user and Tommy the senior Financial user...It was interesting as I felt it got me and my people a lot closer to the project...

It's not your first time on a project board?

No, Not at all....

How would you compare the dynamic on this project board with others you've been on?

On XYZ, I was the senior IT supplier in my old role in AGOCORP and then when I moved across here, I became one of the senior business users on it. I thought the board was structured and run well and followed the PRINCE2 methodology well...

The key issues that came up at the project board were really the key issues which were raised and handled appropriately...some project boards almost end up project managing the project rather than the project managers themselves and the meetings then go on for three-four hours...

How did the ITS and Project Manager side of the Board work?

Worked well, I thought...Seanie used to report to me in my prior role so I suppose I had an advantage over most people in that I could see the business and IT side and knew the people on it very well and where they were coming from...I would have known Thomas very well and got to know Fergal Flynn and the biggest challenge

for him was to move away from managing a project to doing the change management side and managing people rather than construction...

I had a few sessions in the middle and at the end to try and get that across to him the human dimensions of the role (he had)...

That was more when you joined the project board?

Well, yes and I can see as well the issues that were arising whereas before it would have been harder for me to see them...and also arranging for him to get access to people...

He did feel that he had access issues sometimes?

Yes, I hope he helped him on that – when I was on the board, as it was geared to my people in the business, I could get more into that space and see things...

On balance, how would you describe the change role?

I'd say that (SIGHS) I'm the type of person who would have involved people a lot earlier and lined them up a lot earlier and also there can be an issue with the level at which a person is at and also how deferential they might be to people not at their level...You can go the formal routes but you also need an informal route to go...You need social awareness, drive and enthusiasm to go that informal route and I think Fergal will have learned a lot from the process...

In terms of SAP experience looking back was that an issue?

People in the business knew AGRESSO – They needed to know how these processes would look like in SAP and that experience (Like through Fiona joining the project half or a third way through) Yes, the project was unusual in that you had people like Thomas not from the business and Fergal who hadn't done those kind of roles before...but had taken on projects before...And there was no implementation partner...

In terms of the need for developing people, did they maybe sacrifice experience?

To be honest, it was hard to see where they were going to get the people with the necessary experience– ideally you'd look for an engineer in the business who knew all the processes and who also had this level of project experience...I mean Fergal is in a much stronger position now than he would have been before...That's the value (for him) and it would have been better if he had a mentor there at the start...

There was a lot of SAP experience in the organisation but he seemed to be a bit inhibited...

Well, you would be if you didn't know the system, it's not a great place to be...but you have to start somewhere...

How would he feel himself you think about the process?

It's too early to debrief him – at times; it seemed that the project couldn't be finished soon enough for him...I wouldn't say he enjoyed the project as much as he enjoyed others...Also, I would say he would need to maybe with the benefit of hindsight (identify) what he would have done differently, what resources he could have called on, what resources he needed but couldn't get and did he look to the right people for advice...The other project being delayed, I don't think that was a big issue – if you don't have the right background in the business and don't know the main players, he needed a mentor and he should have asked for support a bit sooner as well. He seemed to be a lot of trouble early on...He also didn't know who the key stakeholders were...he could go into a meeting with Liam's team and there would be a lot of managers there, but there might be only two of them that had a real interest in this and these key people, the people who're affected most...how do I get close to him and convince them... (like) the project board might say this in a top-down way but you could come to them (a bit differently)...

In terms of the role, there has been a view that he was marginalised which made it difficult for him to manage change and also the overlap with the BIM role which perhaps wasn't explained as well as it could have been?

Marginalised – how should I react to that one (SAID IN A THOUGHTFUL FASHION)...Well, the IT bit would have been owned by the IT people and the HR and Finance side owned by different (people), so what does he know...The BIM role could have been communicated better...

I suppose there was a view that he was there to make changes that the business would like whereas they (the project) saw him more as an evangelist...

I'm not sure he knew exactly what he should be doing...

Did he sell it?

I'd say he struggled...Now, he was dealing with people who he knew better than I knew them – he worked with them, now some of them are very strong personalities and also there a level above them – but that's psychologically what he should be stepping to (that level)...That was expected of him in terms of him making the next step...People get tested out on projects like this....Those lads were getting cheesed off at the end as they felt they were being not involved or informed enough...But that's easy to do if you know how to manage change – you have them brought in from day 1 and keep them involved....

But to be honest, that's.....we have another project underway here to do with strategy development, nothing at all to do with IT now and the communication was pretty poor on that now, too.

The mindset that's developed here is an independent mindset whereas in AGOCORP that's such a big organisation and they're always changing and change is hard in a big organisation like that, so it's their bread and butter if you like....

Lessons for the manager and the process in change?

Absolutely... I think they (both) need to be well-defined...

Was it well resourced and supported?

That's hard to say – did he seek support and early enough? You have to cotton on to the key players, you have to talk to the right people, I don't think he did...

In terms of the design sign-off and the summer time and the information gaps that arose, were you aware of any feedback or resistance on that?

Well the whole design needed to be socialised a lot more and there was resistance on that and that was mainly from people who did not get involved early enough and then felt disengaged...

The project or the change manager's responsibility?

Probably a bit of both to be honest...

In terms of your own experiences and involvement on the project, what would be the key events that you experienced?

Well, for me getting on the project board was really significant for me as it enabled me to see what was happening and also bring in the business a bit as well...

Was it important for the project board as well?

Yes I would think so as I could bring the IT and the business backgrounds to it...

When did you officially join it?

Last October it would have been and that was a crucial time for the project to be honest and I could begin to see the resistance emerging...

Another thing we did which was very important was the (steering) group we put together with senior managers from the business and that was rolled out across the business afterwards...The other thing was always making it known in January that this was going live and we would be using it...Making it known and getting

across that this was a business project that affected the engineering community and not just a project for them...Getting comfortable with the notion of the system and we kept it high on the agenda all the time....

When you compare this to other SAP projects you've worked on the business what would be your views?

Well, this project had a very defined timeframe (within the business year) which everyone bought into and anyone who was wavering was brought on board very quickly...

On a negative side, bringing the people who'll be the users on board a lot earlier than they were and having them involved would be better...that all came through at the end then and that could have been articulated much earlier....

In terms of the super-users and the training, how does it compare?

Well, the huge effort on the super-users worked well...

Has that been a common feature of all the (SAP) projects you've worked on or has it been more ad-hoc?

I wouldn't say it was ad-hoc but it was better defined on this project...

Were you involved on the transition or cutover side at all?

No, that didn't appear on my radar at all...

That's great, Christopher, Thanks.

No problem John.

(48, 00)

Location: NOVOCORP HQ / Date: 10th January 2011/ Duration: 29 mins.

Interviewee: Tina Murray, Accountant, Financial Performance, NOVOCORP.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.
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So Tina, we might begin by you giving me an overview of your role and responsibilities?

OK – I'm in NOVOCORP three years this year – when I came into NOVOCORP I was involved in consolidating the group NOVOCORP (accounts)...A lot of our AP and AR receiving was done by the engineering finance team and they wanted to pass that back to us and to be honest we felt that was better...The centre (for Group accounting) was quite small (in number) and the engineering finance staff were quite as skilled in the processes – that all come back to us and I was in charge of the central function – I would be responsible for setting up new suppliers and also requisition purchasing order forms...we try and do most of our invoices at the start of the year...so from that we then do recharges back to the engineering function as necessary at certain intervals during the year...

What do you mean by recharges?

When we take the cost that we should not say for HR and engineering....HR organise say training that should be paid by the HR function but we end up paying for it so we end up recharging back to them so eventually we end up with only the costs that really relate to us, if that makes sense...sitting in the costs...

No, that makes sense...

Warren does all the payroll for confidential reasons – we also do all the month ends and do the accruals and may have to do all the journals – reviewing all the income statement and send them onto individual managers in the different areas so they can query expenses...

So, the role of technology for you would be very important...

Absolutely...

Would you have used AGRESSO FOR most of your day to day activities?

Well, for anything major that had to be posted into an account – we used to have an EXCEL spreadsheet with a database that we could do most of that through – hopefully SAP will enable us to do something similar...I didn't get anything on AGRESSO – no training that is so anything I was posting to AGRESSO I was doing manually over and over and if there were things you were doing regularly so on a monthly basis, it made more sense to do those through EXCEL - it was a lot faster...

Our AR side can be quite manual – all our invoices were done through EXCEL and the journals manually into AGRESSO at the end of the month...

That all will be automated by SAP?

Yes – all our payroll costs, rent etc and IT costs, they all were charged centrally to us from other parts of NOVOCORP but gets recharged back to AGOCORP...but that was the big issue for us at the end of every month – every sale that AGOCORP took from us had to show up as a purchase for them and the same across every part of the (AGOCORP) business...If the internal balances didn't balance, then we had a problem...You have to be done to zero for consolidation purposes at that took a lot of time at the end of the day...it's all internal...

And you had AGRESSO and SAP which only made a difficult process even more complicated...

Yes – they had to raise manual invoices for us but they themselves (AGOCORP) had a totally different process...under SAP, there will be a recharge system which means that you mightn't need to have to raise invoices any more – We haven't used that yet but that would be a much better way...it will be one of the biggest things we would hope to see in the new system...

So, from your perspective, you would welcome the SAP system?

Well, (LAUGHS), let's get over the first three months and we'll see...

The SAP system should cut down on all that manual intervention?

Yes absolutely...

How did you find AGRESSO – had you used before? Did you find it user-friendly?

I'd never used it before – but I found it OK once I got used to it...after a while though you'd see things in terms of access and what you could do that you shouldn't be able to do in a proper accounting system...

Some people have commented to me that the same data could be different – as in the same data might produce different reports, issues with the veracity of the data...

Yes, that could be true - we had an issue recently with a trial balance for a subsidiary of NOVOCORP – there were different numbers as we were losing access to use certain data....things like that should never happen in a proper accounting system...

So, data migration and cleansing were very important activities in terms of moving from AGRESSO to SAP?

Oh yes, a lot of data cleansing had to be done as we knew what we owed or were owed by other parts of AGOCORP but what numbers AGRESSO gave us were not correct...

When did you first hear about the SAP project or become aware of it?

SAP is part of costs and we saw it in the budgets and it was delayed; we always knew it was coming...

So, when did you first get involved – did you have anything to do with the BLUEPRINTING phase with the AS-IS etc?

Yes, I had a bit of involvement in that back in First quarter last year...

How did you find that part of the process?

A bit head-wrecking to be honest in terms of going through the processes...some of the descriptions of how things were done in terms of the processes (*i.e. the AS-IS*), you'd wonder at times was this how the processes actually worked and how come this hadn't been made available to us when we started working here!

Did you get involved in the workshops?

No, not at that time...

Any particular reason why not? – would you like to have been involved?

It was more a timing issue – others were involved in it so...

What the general feeling around those sessions, in terms of how useful they were or...?

It was useful but there were suggestions that I made at the time in terms of some of the things as the AS-IS that you wouldn't want carried over to SAP but SAP too has its own standards as well...there was about a 100 (BPIDs) or so and people

were rushing to get them in so there was probably less time to review than you would have... (preferred)...

Was there a bit of leeway around what AGOCORP and the project team were coming out with as the TO-BEs?

Well, I wasn't involved enough to say really...

Possibly the structures in AGOCORP SAP in being rigid might not be a bad thing in some respect...

Well, in terms of control as opposed to AGRESSO certainly....I know things were discussed and debated as you'd hear about them...but decisions had to be made...

Did you feel that that part of the process was closed off?

Yes – well, you could see by the timeframe and schedule, you were wondering if they were going to meet the deadline (for design) but they did and you did feel that things were closed off...

How did you view the communication on the project?

Enough for me to be honest...Informally as to where I sit I hear a lot enough...Warren was getting probably a lot of formal communication and he didn't probably want to overwhelm us with information either as we were doing other things but at my level, I would feel I knew enough about the project...when you had other stuff that you have to concentrate on...

In terms of the training, when did you see yourself as being involved from an early stage?

Yes – no one on the (financial performance) team would use AGRESSO as much as I would...

And, in terms of the data migration and the cleansing?

The same really as no-one would know the detail in our accounts like I would so, so I always expected to be involved...

How did you find that process (data cleansing)?

There was a few of the team...."Sarah" helped me out on the external suppliers for validating them (as AGOCORP had to do that) and that was a fairly messy process...Also for AP, I was working on that and we knew that had to be all done before...data migration...

How did you actually do it?

Well, we'd run all the reports in AGRESSO and go through the data – we'd tag the data and we knew what all our figures should be like...we had a few old balances that had been there for years and they had to be taken out and there was a certain amount of clear-ups that weren't that much (in financial terms) and could be written off...

There were in AP, about 70 balances that could be removed...there were old suppliers who had become inactive and now had to be reactivated so we had to go through that process...that was not straightforward...you had to contact the AGRESSO helpdesk internally so you could get the permission to remove or change certain data so the whole data cleansing was a very head-wrecking process...

So, all the data gone over to SAP is sanitised data, so to speak?

Our TB isn't perfect as we would need more of these rules in AGRESSO to be lifted – se we're still using the data from AGRESSO but doing our internal adjustments and we're bringing our own FC signed off data into an EXCEL spreadsheet...lifting those roles can cause problems with our BCS side of things...

So, AGRESSO hasn't been turned off per-se?

No, we still are using it in terms of the accounts for the (2010 year) data – you can only post to December 31st – nothing else after that...

How did you feel the training process go?

Well (SIGHS) – some of the training that I felt we should have been on, we weren't on and we probably needed to be...some of that was probably done to Paul – he got a list of training and put names against it and probably didn't realise that people like me needed to be on certain things...that was a bit of a misunderstanding - so we realised in December that we needed to send me on another training course...

The training sessions I was at with other financial staff – they were all fine...I suppose I would have preferred at that stage in December to be actually working on a test system...the real test of the training I suppose will be when we do it for real...December and the year-end and the clean up was still going on...so the timing...

But, in fairness I have really only used the PO and Invoice side of it and I did that myself following the training manual at home and it worked, which was great...I'm also hoping that they will provide us which they said they would with additional training and that would be a huge help...maybe one or two more workshops around February timeframe...

No as well, there are the super-users and the people in AGOCORP we can call on and we have the manuals as well.

How the recharging and the internal company trading side will work out will be interesting to see as that will be quite technical...I don't have a clue technically how it's done even though I was on the training sessions...But I can always call up someone and ask them in AGOCORP...

Was the training sufficiently detailed and targeted then?

No, the training was fine in terms of the detail and there were different areas that you were concentrated on in terms of what you would use the system for and in that sense some sessions were better than others?

In what sense – content or how they were lead?

Well, in a couple of sessions, there were issues with the system and it went down and then it was slow...there was some data migration and testing on the system at the same time and what should have taken you till midday testing took us until 4pm...This is not ideal when people are taking (the time away) to do it...

That session (on recharging) I would probably follow from my manual...the one I found hardest was the intercompany trading one...

Like NOVOCORP and AGOCORP Networks doing business together?

Yes, exactly, that would be a large part of our work and that's one where we would be concerned about but we'll get the hang of it....

I know this is a Financials and HR system but what would the view outside finance would you think on the HR and Engineering side?

Well, like everything it will be a matter of getting used to it...some of the reporting I would have done from AGRESSO would have been going to the engineering managers so I would SAP being more beneficial there in terms of better reporting as AGRESSO was limited in terms of what you could collate under cost centres etc...SAP would hopefully allow us to do more with that...there is stuff on the HR side, the holidays will be integrated with your timesheets so that should be helpful...most of the people are deal with are in Finance...We just now it has to be done and maybe engineering might feel different – they mostly though won't be too affected by it...

Generally your overall impression of the project has been that it's well-run?

Yes, the communication is good – sometimes it's not easy when people are asking you how data cleansing is going all the time (LAUGHS) but it's all necessary...They got all the business areas involved – we had to get involved in data cleansing and migration and we were the ones who are going to be affected by it....to be honest we always wanted to do it (data cleansing) but we had an opportunity know that SAP was coming...I had done a bit when I moved into the role about 18 months ago but it was good to do it a bit more...

That's great, Tina. Thanks.

No problem.

(29, 00)

Location: NOVOCORP HQ / Date: 10th January 2011/ Duration: 34 mins.

Interviewee: Warren Gatling, Financial Performance Manager, NOVOCORP.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.
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So Warren, could you tell me how things have gone since we last met during the training and testing phases around the 27th of October? It's been a busy two months with selecting people for training and the issues around notional banking and issues like that...

We have kind-of moved past those issues and have got more into the up and running of the system and meetings around 'well, this part of the system is up and running and tested, and maybe this part isn't', so getting as much of the system up and running as possible...what will fall into the scope of the project which will entail what's happening from January to March at the moment...and also the setting up of the transition focus group of which I'm also a member...

(In terms of the system itself), the management accounting side of things won't really be done until the 10th of February and we will be able to come up with the final trail balances for 2011 to be transferred across into SAP...that's the plan...

Is the cutover and transition focus group the same?

Yes, they are- I'm the financial performance representative on it and you have say the usual meeting people: Aoife, Lorna, Thomas and Fergal...Rena and also the HR people – Margaret Blair and another girl and chaired by Rory who I haven't seen before so I guess this is his first line of work...

Are there engineers (on it)?

Aoife and "Pat O'Donovan" who's brought in to smooth over the transition, a short-term contractor...the purpose of the meetings is to get and give updates on how the transition is going in the different sections of the business...percentage completions, what's left on the task lists and any issues that have arisen...

How often do you meet?

Twice a week – which was the way it started before Christmas...

In a standard meeting format...

As in minutes kept etc?

Yes.

Minutes are kept and there's follow up e-mails with the minutes and task lists etc...Strict agendas and Rory's quite structured in the way he does things...

In our weekly FC meeting that we have on Thursdays, Lorna and Thomas would come to that as well and there's a fair amount of overlap between the transition meetings and that but that's not necessarily a bad thing to be honest...

Would the transition group meetings give you a good feel as to where things are on the system with respect to the other sections (like HR and engineering)?

Well, I would feel I know enough about them anyway to be honest...Over the last few months in terms of timesheets and reporting on jobs and holidays, I've got a good feel on the impact this new system will have on the engineers...

How did you feel the training went overall?

Pretty well, as far as I could see as I was pretty concerned about it beforehand as it was getting late in the day...

It has to be met on both sides – what I was saying to my team when they were going for training is that you should be able everything you were able to do on the old system on the new system – if you can't, you have to ask...I emphasised that as did the other sections, I believe...

It was a collaborative process....as opposed to (them saying) 'This is how you do these time sheets' –Tina, I'm sure will have talked to you about this...

Could you talk about the training process?

First we met the training consultant and also Fergal who discussed what the training involved and how long it would be and we then worked centrally to identify and provide resources for the training side and then when people went on it, Tina particularly came back saying she could do with more training and we were able to facilitate that but it was still done by the project team...

(The training) seemed to work...the training team did well but giving the training over to the people being trained was the right approach...the training team put together the training and scheduled it and then if more training was needed, they were able to provide more...

There were adequate resources and follow-up...no issues on that side?

No – there was laminated job cards which would describe the steps involved say in posting to the general ledger – there's little videos provided that pop-up and there's someone in HR talking you through the process. Today, for example, I went to post a requisition and didn't have a clue as to how to do it...Someone said to me that there had a link sent on to everyone with a video as to how to do it...(LAUGHS) I must go back and do that requisition!

I sat through an hour (of training) where I found out how to log-on, how to enter your holidays...how to do this or do that...I might have benefitted from more specific training, though in fairness I could have missed the management approval training process, so I won't blame anyone on the project team for that...I have a simulation to go back to...

Would you be happy that you get that informal training if you want?

Well, yes – there is Fiona, who's here all the time and I can go up now and roar at her (LAUGHS) but in a good way and she can help me informally if I need to know how to do something...

The last time we talked, you had some issues around the change management and the communication side of the project...

That's got a lot better...

How would you describe that (improvement)?

It could be...well, Fergal Flynn is in charge of it – he seems to have hit his stride and maybe this is the part of the project that suits him best...I'm definitely seeing a lot more of him than I used to...

Do you feel that you would have benefitted from seeing him a bit more around the business?

Well, I would feel that but maybe just I needed to get more communication from him and to see him a bit more...that's hard to know...

Put this another way – whether the communication at that level as in what's happening in the development of the system might not have been at his level...as a change manager he's certainly communicated well in terms of the training side of things...

Would it be fair to say that the role got more effective as time went on?

I think so, yes...

I'd be a lot more relaxed now as to what everybody is doing in the system...is everything in the system that I would liked to have had – No...I think there's going to be problems as with everything when the system starts getting used...

I think those problems will fall into two boxes – first of all, this is the way the system is and we'll have to find a way around it or the second way, is that is the way the system is because we set it up wrong...

Not jumping the gun, does that mean you have concerns as to the BRT?

No, not really – more so in the development side of things, where you have things that were rejected along the way in terms of the original design or rejected by the project board and other things like the notional banking or settlement process that's now been pushed back into Q1 – I still think it should have been part of the design....

It will be interesting the next time we talk as to whether the development to enable that notional settlement has been done as it really has to be done in terms of Q2 – as all our accounts have to be paid-up and notionally settled around June of this year....if that hasn't happened...it will be interesting if that happens...

Would it be a big regret for you if it didn't happen or will it happen?

I hope it will happen...but if it doesn't....I don't think regret is the right word – it would be more 'not surprised' I think (LAUGHS)...

You mentioned before when we had last discussed this issue, that you didn't feel that notional banking didn't have a lot of momentum associated with it other than inside the finance group – that it was looked as an add-on?

Yes – I haven't heard a word about it since to be honest. They (the project team) just will probably look on it as an add-on...

What is their issue with it?

Probably that it's just more work – that's it's a pain in the ass for them to be honest – the system is hard enough to get up and running without having to add more...

Would there be a concern maybe on their side that more add-ons could come their way – that the flood gates might open?

That could be an issue for them...They'll continue to say that it wasn't part of the project – the project board has asked for me so we'll do it after...but that 'after' could be...

Is there much support from the other FCs and Tommy Walsh for it?

There is a realisation that it has to be done – but at the same time, I'm not pushing it overly as there's a limit as to how involved I can be on it now...it's more of an IT issue now in terms of getting it developed...if they can't do it until a particular time...there's not much I can do – I'm not beating a drum on it – but Fiona was aware of it and she's on the project team...

There were a couple of other things that have to be done but wouldn't be done through the project (team) per se but fall back into the IT (function on a corporate level)...Things that would I have expected to be done that have kind-of fallen into no-man's land unfortunately – but that's the swings and roundabouts (of an implementation)...

What's been the general feeling around the system?

So far pretty good, I think...People have been able to raise POs and enter timesheets though no payments have been made (on the POs) as the vendors (as in suppliers of purchasable items) are still being approved for the system...

Probably too early in the year for people to have expenses?

Well, I think people have tried to post expenses, probably left over from 2010...maybe not the right way to do it...

Looking back on the projects more in a complete way, how would you appraise the project in your own words?

Well, we talked about this before but I'm still unsure about – there is probably two ways to do a project (like this)...one where you're changing over from an old system and one where you have an entirely new system...did we fall more into the latter if we were already taking the AGOCORP system, why did we spend 4 months on AS-IS and TO-BE? Just talking now about the financial side of things, not the project costing and billing stuff...

Maybe we did – I don't know...

Not to put words into your mouth, did the BLUEPRINTING phase have more of a political motivation, in order to make people feel that they were involved?

It could be, I don't know – I've never worked on a system as big as this so that's hard to say but if we have 80-90% of an existing system, there was a lot of extra cost there but maybe we needed to do those things...

It's not a complaint – it's better to have overdone the system (rather than have underdone it)...Exactly, but when you get to a point where it could have cost Z Euros less to have done something else or did it could Y Euros too much...

We spent X Euros on it – did we get value for money – did we get the best system, an average system, what did we get for it...??

And that X Euros, is that all NOVOCORP money?

Yes, it's the sum cost of the time of all the NOVOCORP and AGOCORP people working on the project plus the IT development costs within AGOCORP and the rental costs of the project HQ which is owned by AGOCORP and all the external consultancy....But all the money comes out of the NOVOCORP budget...

In terms of how the project was run, were there any additional issues? I know that you felt for example the BIM role was critical...

Yes, the BIM role – you wouldn't wait until half-way through to appoint a role like that – you'd do it from the start and also the composition of the project team...

In terms of SAP expertise or experience or?

Yes – but also a bit of get-up and go...the project team did a good job but an overriding thing was that we didn't see enough of them...

We met a lot at the earlier (BLUEPRINTING) workshops and that was very much a 'them vs. Us' situation whereby it was a more a case of this was the system we were getting...I think I might have said it to you at the time that I found that whole process very difficult and again if you're going to take mostly an existing system, is that all that time and effort necessary?

In general, the project team, the project board and the change board (aka design authority) and now the transition focus group – you can see a defined project methodology going through it (all)...

The PRINCE2 approach...

Yes, that's it – I'll have to read that book some day so I get to know my next project role...You get an e-mail congratulating you on becoming a member of the transition group and stuff like that (LAUGHS)...

But you found those roles useful and helpful...

Oh, I did – I'm just being a bit facetious – whether you or anyone on the project team followed the methodology into the bowels and details absolutely to the same degree and effort, I don't know but as an approach, it worked quite well...

How did you feel the communication went which I suppose comes back to our earlier discussion on the change management side?

It got better....there was a lot of communication at the start....with all the workshops and meetings, a dip in the middle where they was a lot of testing and the project team were learning the system in order to be able to test it etc...and then there was more in terms of the training...

Which communication (approaches) did you find most useful? I know there were meetings and presentations and 'lunch and learns'...Did people use the INTRANET to find out about the project?

Generally here, my team would have found the lunch and learns and the team leader meetings the most useful – but there was different communication at different levels...I would have been going to different team leader meetings and then say Tina Murray, she wouldn't have heard much about it until she went on the training side...."Sarah" who works for me would have been the team leader for all the migration stuff and Tina was involved and then would have got more into it as the training went on...

There was a lot of communication going on over the last couple of months as the project got all over the place in terms of being busy...So I'd be a lot happier with that now...

What for you would the key success indicators for this system?

Well, we're probably going to leave February front-end and go on through until March...January is our end-of-year for 2010 and we also have an audit in January so we never do month-ends in January so a free pass there...So this year Group Finance have exempted us from having to do a February month-end and as such we have to post a budgetary figure and they can use for their reporting packs...

If we have a system that actually in March – we'll be three months in so we have to have a month-end...I expect it to go pretty fine – that will be the big for me 'Does the system work...?'...

We'll be able to do the POs and manage accounts, that's 90% correct that the system along with the training people have had...I'm not too worried about posting a journal, doing a PO or a timesheet – that stuff to me seems to be fairly straightforward – there may be funny things with doing these things...

(Not so much) that whether you can post a journal, but more so will all the posted journals go to the right place with stuff on the right lines – will all the figures be correct...

The next month or two will tell a lot?

We'll get a good sense of where we are even earlier I'd say in maybe February as we'll do a lot of the reporting then anyway so....One concern I would have I suppose would be around the SAP system – I can just click on it and it opens from my CITRIX on my PC...You don't have to log-in....

But you'll probably have different rights than someone else because its network linked through the PC...

Yes – just like opening OUTLOOK as opposed to Lotus Notes where you need to have a password and User ID...But at my PC, you can access my bank details, payroll records etc , whatever about the

No-one locks the PC here – seems to be a security concern...

Did you raise it as an issue in the focus group?

Was it...It was more I think in the FC meeting that I...No, it was in training when we were doing logging-in that I raised it – because I can edit my Bank account – in theory someone could tamper with that....that's the only issue (on the security side) that I've seen so far...

Better lock that PC!

Yes (LAUGHS)

Thanks again Warren.

No problem...

(34, 00)

Interviewee: Robert Hoffman, External Training Consultant on the SAP HR and Financials project, NOVOCORP International.

<u>Colour Key:</u> Interviewer / Interviewee.

OK, Robert, you might fill me in on your background and how you came to work on the project?

I've been working on SAP since 1998 and had a teaching background and worked on website design and have been involved in consultancy ever since...I specialised in the Financial module of SAP – as you know SAP is very modular and like LEGO you can build up the system with bits and pieces – I'm self-employed as a contractor and I came here to work with Fergal, the change manager on training needs analyses...he had someone here working on it but I don't think he had been entirely satisfied with the outcome and had gone to market looking for a another resource – they interviewed a few people including myself – I would be very strong on the financial controls side and also know the project and sales systems modular side of SAP very well also and I think that suited what was required...

Initially I did a sense check on that TNA back in August...

What did you find?

Well, the outputs were fine but consultants if they're honest will bring less experienced staff with them on projects for the learning opportunity so what the previous consultants had done was to propose a time period for the training and the metrics they used were based on internal staff and they estimated I felt too much time – for each hour they would be training the staff, they would need 8 hours worth of development (i.e. of the training materials) which I openly laughed at...

Would that be high by industry norms?

Well for internal staff but it depends on the staff you get also...the people they gave me here were actually very good – they couldn't get someone to help out on the project costing and billing side so I got someone in who I know...The training window was quite narrow so it had to be done very quickly – mostly accountants and someone from procurement...

What was your overall impression of the project when you initially did the TNA, considering you had worked on many SAP projects before?

Well, that was back in August when I did the TNA – I got the sense that the project was at a tipping point – that it could go one way or another...that had left the training late and Fergal though not trained in SAP is a good manager and probably when he felt he was being sold something he didn't want (by the prior training consultant) looked for (another view)...I gave him a realistic picture of what was possible in terms of training given the timeframe that was available...I gave him four or five different scenarios – I went away on holidays and when I came back he told me there was a delay in getting the people but he got them and it was clear training was being taken seriously...

Very often, training is at the fag-end of a project – it gets pushed to the end and forgotten about – and our GO-LIVE as trainers is always earlier than everyone else's...to get everybody and they have been supportive on that...

We do have a few issues with the training environment in terms of availability...

Do you mean facilities or the shell (SAP) system?

No, the system...we need it ready before everyone else – we need the system to be ready to train before the GO-LIVE...but when you talk to AGOCORP, the IT group and I explained to them what I wanted...They had never done it like that...What they would do is give a back-up for training and as the system is (being progressed) write-over that back-up on a weekly basis....

I see...

That's fine but there's lots of developments still going on – we need to have a few system copies in a separate environment to development so we're not interfering and vice-versa...one copy that can play with during training, one after in the full safe knowledge that nothing is impacted...

They agreed to that strategy but didn't really deliver on it until the last minute where I said that I would have to pull the training as I couldn't send in employees to get trained without a (proper) training system...

I did throw a bit of a hissy fit – we did get a training client – not exactly what I would like – there are some understandable cost constraints in the current climate, also some of the system functionality will be done through a portal – unfortunately they couldn't get the portal working from a testing point of view so...All the timesheets and expenses and the HR module is all through the portal so...

The new LDS module...

We were planning to train forty or fifty super-users and they deliver the training themselves to the business...

We ended up using a simulation tool called CAPTIVATE from Adobe (note: to mimic how the SAP portal might work) which was the cheapest option but ended up working quite well...it would have been better to have had the portal...

How did you find the people you had on the training?

Well, it was mainly finance staff as we were training on the finance and the controls within that – but they were all IT-literate, bought into the training very quickly and there was no 'The old system was better than this system'...The engineering population too was very IT literate...

Some of them would have had SAP experience which may have been a help...

Actually, with SAP, it's often not as each SAP implementation is different and each client has unique ways of using SAP and the way you know may not be the way you should do it on this implemented system – there's ways that AGOCORP would have used SAP that NOVOCORP won't be using so...

How did you find the reaction of the engineering staff in terms of the system? – it might be easier for the finance and HR staff to buy into the system because of the benefits but for some of the engineering staff it may be seen as more of an admin cost...

On the timesheets side, they seemed to be fine with that as they were doing that online anyway in the old system...

In terms of the expenses I could see a difference – most of them before were filling out their expenses going to someone in HR who then input them into SAP for head office...so the new system should empower them to do that themselves and they should get reimbursed faster...The LDS in HR they also do off-line before so it should not be too much of a burden on them...

In terms of the project structure – having worked on other many SAP projects – what was your view?

Well – it's different here in not having an implementation partner and having all internal staff which is a good thing – not having an implementation partner means though that you don't get that external view – someone can say if you have an issue 'Well I've seen it handled this way somewhere else' – you don't get that...they brought guys in from AGOCORP but they have one view...

Has that been somewhat of a negative in your view?

Yes, it has – more so in how things are done in SAP – like in most SAP implementations, when you raise a purchase order you list the value and quantity and here in AGOCORP they reverse that – AGOCORP don't have an invoice and good receipted account system so when the goods come in – you receipt them, you have the invoice and you have the PO – they all match – OK, you can pay the supplier...

Now, here you can't do that because of the order of these fields – an integration partner would probably have spotted that and advised against going that route...

We also brought in someone else who you may have met (**No**) who is doing the mapping for the procurement and he's seen that but he hasn't won that argument either...

It can be difficult coming into a project from the outside but how do you feel the team have done in terms of their roles?

(REFLECTIVE PAUSE) To be brutally honest, not very well...I'm assuming this is all confidential (**Absolutely**) Quite a few times I've felt that Fergal has been treated badly and it's hard to be a change manager communicating change when it hasn't been communicated to him...there was a quite a bit of head in the sand in the project also – that everything was going to be OK...rather than...

Has Fergal marginalised by the project team?

I felt too that Fergal was being used as a bit of a public whipping boy on the project – that was something I was very conscious of and was determined for that not to happen in terms of the training...

When did this become apparent to you – straight away when you joined full-time in September?

No, the realisation hit home when I went to a few meetings and it was obvious...they were telling him to do communications and do presentations yet were not communicating him or the other way around...

Why is that do you think?

I think it's down to a lack of confidence in certain people on the project...not being able to see that certain things can't be done...I've seen minutes of meetings outlining actions and decisions that have been made and I know they haven't...Even in my training area, from a bigger picture...looking at what they've gone live with now and some of the questions I've been asked – 'What's going on with ticking this box here?' I'd say 'Well, that's how SAP should work' and the answer you get is No – ours doesn't work like that...

It's a little bit – I'm being brutally honest – there are some design issues that really concern me about the system in terms of the finance side...that will come back to bite...

Could you elaborate on those?

Well, the finance system part is going live and (data) is being moved across into it...As you're probably aware, the finance users won't really attack the system in anger until month-end as in the end of January 2011...at the moment they're closing off old stuff...

Sure...

A lack of BRT testing is the problem – it was a bit of a joke to be honest with you – a graveyard for good ideas is what I would I think I said about it to Fergal – I can be completely honest with you – I'm leaving the project in two weeks...People have said that would do things and they haven't...

A lack of time for testing or a lack of quality testing?

A bit of both to be honest with you; some of the stuff I've been asked by the people who set up the system is a bit of worrying I have to say – certain things have been set up and done that....I'm not 100% certain it will work but I'm 100% certain they can find a workaround although it may lead to a lot of gnashing of teeth...

Personally, I'm a bit of an SAP purist and I believe certain things in SAP should be done in the right way...you can always use workarounds and gaffer tape if you like as Finance is fairly easy to fix (in SAP)...You can move a posted journal from where it is to where it should be...

Prevention is better than the cure?

Exactly – why use a bucket when you can fix the drip...

In terms of the testing generally, what did you feel about the decision not to have UAT?

Very odd...

What was the justification?

Well, they were quite defensive about it when we were discussing the BRT – the arguments and discussions around it were over at that stage...and that was the (way) AGOCORP were doing it...

What was the rationale?

Time – they ran out of time – we had a couple of sessions where the system just doesn't working and they had to be abandoned...but in fairness that was more to do with the building of the test client – we were supposed to be removed from the (path) of the transport client but I don't think....as a professional trainer, it's not the best place to be, standing in front of a big class of people giving over their time to training and the system isn't working...

What was the reason for that (the system problems)?

Well, trying to put this nicely - I'm not sure if they took it seriously – our approach was different to what they had done before...we had agreed to do something different and they seemed to not take it seriously – a fair amount of blame was thrown my way about it but I made sure it didn't stick...the process (of using a test client) is a process I've used many times in other places and is a process I know that works...a decision seems to have been made on a technical basis that the process involved too much effort so at times we'd have training clients taken down and training courses..

We had transports missing in terms of data – it seemed to be a configuration issue – to be honest I didn't really care – I just wanted the system to be working....

How did you feel the users' attitude was in relation to the system?

Very positive, especially on the finance side – It's a win for them a SAP system...the sticky side was the procurement problem but they had seen it...They know they can gets things fixed – we had a few issues that we were able to resolve quickly and that gave people confidence – when we weren't able to solve problems, we got or arranged for workarounds to be put in place...

What was the attitude in terms of the parent to workarounds?

They'll just see it as the way it is...it is an engineering company and they're used to finding workarounds to problems and moving on to the next problem...though as I said earlier at times there would be a better SAP way of doing something...

What I would say is that everywhere I've worked before the finance department set the culture of the organisation –when I worked for the BBC, you had accountants who'd say to you 'I make TV programmes..', when I worked in a quarry, they swore a lot – in an engineering environment they solve problems...

What did you feel about the level of SAP knowledge on the project – Did you feel it was sufficient?

Yes and No – in some areas of the project more so than others...but I have worked in technical roles as well so I know people can get a bit precious about stuff like that...

In terms of the project management role, how did you see it working out?

Honestly, I don't want to comment on that...

In terms of the BIM and change management roles, how did they combine?

Coming back to what I said earlier, I did genuinely feel very sorry for Fergal – it was a held up as a bit of a whipping boy in places...

Did the BIM and change manager roles defend each other?

Well, I was reporting directly to him – it was hard for him as he was out of the loop...it was more (him being told) 'Be positive all the time'...you did have negative people (in the business) and you'll have people like that everywhere but sometimes, they're negative for a reason and they have a concern...not that they're naturally miserable...but I felt his concerns weren't being listened to and that it was more (for the team) a case of 'It will work', the head in the sand that we discussed earlier...

There's a very formal plan now that Rory was involved in? You probably joined the project around the same time – how instrumental has he been in terms of getting the plan back on track?

He just joined about two weeks before I did – I haven't had much dealings with Rory except on the training side but he would probably say that the plan has been fluid – that he's been changing it as it's been going along...(how instrumental he's been) is something you'd need to ask Fergal...He's certainly helped the project but

I haven't seen enough of him - I've interacted with him on the plan and I've seen it on a wall...I wouldn't have said it was particularly good or bad – it was a role that someone has to do on a project and he's done it fine...

Looking back over the project, what would have been the key things or events you would have felt have happened for you?

Well, for me the big thing was the argument over the training client...insisting that they create a sandbox client that people could use – they didn't want to do it but they did it...same for the SAP portal – that's left them with something quite nice that they can use...

Using the internal people for training was great – I felt sorry that we didn't get someone internal for the Project Costing and billing – that we had to bring an external guy "Sam" into do it and he's left now with all the knowledge and experience...Getting someone internal who could have done it would have allowed that golden opportunity for learning to stay within the business...as we did for the finance and the other sides...All from the finance side (the super-users) were trained by me, went to the project and got some additional insights on the system and then went back to the business to deliver the training but it's all kept in house...The super-user for the project costing and billing was an external person and he learned a lot about NOVOCORP etc, but then left...

So in terms of the training – just so I've understood the sequence, you have BRT and no (official UAT), then you are in doing the TNA and from that you revamp the training schedule...

Yes...

Then you progress onto super-user training etc...

The super-users come from all the HR, Finance, the key user in the portal who entered the timesheets and expenses, to be honest that wasn't that complicated..I trained them up on SAP and then you have "Sam" who knows the general accounting side but not how the actual business charges customers etc – you needed people on the business to help on that...

So you really looked after the Super-user training?

Yes and then I oversaw those (super-users) as they did the end-user training..."Rosa", I took her through the GL process in SAP and she brought the business knowledge to it went back to her colleagues to deliver the end-user training...first couple of sessions, I did with them...until they were confident enough to do it themselves – I've actually not delivered that much training myself...

But you enabled it?

Yes – I wanted to do that (the training) but Fergal wanted me to manage it so as to allow the knowledge to stay in the business....It's a good idea to be honest... (Was that supported?) Well, I think they felt that had missed a trick (*as in retaining expertise*) on the Project Costing and Billing side...As you're probably that side of things has been a bit of a big miss and they've gone through a few external consultants and the last guy that seems to be working out – they've hit gold...the previous guy I met seemed to be a little out of his depth...

Hard to maintain people?

A bit of a problem – that's why we struggled to recruit an external person on the training side...He know project costing very well and got through the training very quickly but if we had been more organised and had someone from the business embedded (with him) earlier, we could have retained that (knowledge) in the business as we were able to do with the finance people...who'll be back in the business...actually some of back there already and they'll be able to answer any questions people might have..

I've heard that's begun to happen...one last question, had you any involvement in the transition side?

No, as I'm running to schedule some workshops for the HR staff and trying to get everything ready for the LDS side of things, and have been also tying off some additional training that's going to happen for the finance side in terms of reporting...we did some before GO-LIVE but we decided to hold-off until we could print off reports with some real numbers...

Is this for the project managers?

Yes, but the engineering project managers will need to undergo specific training to try and get as much out of the system...

Was there some issue as to reporting weekly rather than monthly?

Yes, I'll be looking at that – I have about 150 slides for the Project Costing and Billing training and I have to cut that down to a smaller amount – that training will have to take place as I've said to Fergal with or without me..

Thanks, Robert...

No problem...

(38 -00)

Interviewee: Charlie Chambers, Key Account Manager for Environmental Services, NOVOCORP.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

So Charlie, you might tell me about you role for the purposes of context...

OK, well I'm the KAM for the environmental services – joined AGOCORP in 1978 and worked in civil engineering on projects – and now lead the environmental group which is quite specialised – we have about 16 people working for us, half engineers and half environmental background and we're the smallest team of all the engineering divisions under Chris Lloyd.. provide services on environmental projects mainly to AGOCORP, NETWORKS and customer supply on legislation and management...We support mainly projects and supporting wind, ocean and thermal projects that are planned for overseas – we do all the permitting and all the environmental impact assessments for all those...we have more routine work on the other side reporting to our own national Environmental Protection Agency and carbon foot printing and all that – that carbon foot printing is voluntary and part of the corporate sustainability strategy whereas we have to have environmental management systems so we can track performance of our facilities for statutory reasons. Most of the work is supporting AGOCORP and about a quarter of our work is external and overseas – we can do a bit of engineering on the hydrology side...

How have you viewed IT in your time here?

A mixed bag really, you have most of the IT here coming centrally...the problem we had all the time was buying specialised engineering software...the procurement and governance systems make it difficult for us to buy the specialised software we need...

In terms of say a Wave modelling system?

Exactly, but not just systems but also data – we got a lot of external data coming into us as we also do the geographical information systems – last week we got a memory stick of geographical data came in – getting past the security was very difficult – it's always seen as an exception but for us that should be everyday...

We don't have a protocol; maybe we should sit down and write down one that would give us steps we could follow through in order to actually bring in data or purchase a system...

The IT supports the utility systems first and these kind of (engineering) systems second...When we (in NOVOCORP) were hived off first as an engineering consultancy from AGOCORP, we developed a separate IT function and then were able to purchase our own cheaper HR and Finance systems like AGRESSO which were cheaper and reflected what we wanted from them...

That was why the original SAP implementation in AGOCORP did not come across to yourselves...

Yes, exactly...

When did the corporate IT function begin to exert more control?

About 2005, 5/6 years ago, I'd say...Well really sometime more between 2000 and 2005...

How did people feel about that at the time?

People resented it – there were other systems and procedures and approval systems apart from IT altogether...IT was just one in a series of new systems and changes....

We were back into the old ways which some of us earlier guys would recall from being in AGOCORP...The younger guys who we'd recruited had never seen this before so they had some resistance there...We were an independent consultancy and we had systems that suited us...

Did that resistance continue with time or has it abated?

Oh, it's abated but we're now more of an internal provider of services than an independent consultancy...that part of our business has declined considerably...

It's probably hard to say but what kind of split would you have percentage wise on the provider/consultancy side?

If you take all of NOVOCORP and then NOVOCORP engineering solutions which supports NETWORKS – Nearly all of their business is internal and across the board in NOVOCORP the percentage of internal business is increasing...

How do people feel about that generally?

Most people accept that but some people resent it – they don't have the freedom they used to have...there was a lot of delegation in the past, a lot of freedom to do a project anyway you liked within reason – there were very few systems you had to follow...

What generally has been the view on the SAP implementation?

First of all, it has worked well....Initially as this is a core system we were all a bit afraid that it might go the way of other IT systems you hear about..

Internally or Generally?

Just generally...

There had been quite a few SAP implementations within AGOCORP and even recently in NETWORKS with XYZ – Were people aware of these implementations?

Well. People knew that there had been a few problems with XYZ – it was clear that it needed to be taken seriously and needed proper resources and a proper team...

Most people would agree with that needed to happen...but some people felt that we overdid it in respect of when we do things here; we don't tend to do things by half! (LAUGHS)...In terms of the accounts and HR side they really needed to get involved as they were the main affected parties but at the same time, did the rollout and the people being involved...Fergal was our link to the project but him and other people coming so often to tell us about it, some people would say...

So the quantity of communication was a bit excessive?

Exactly yes – and even some of the super-users involved in the training side of things felt that the training was a bit over the top...in the engineering community – the super-user in our group that was the reaction...

When I heard this I explored that further with Fergal and he gave me a counter-example of someone who was not that IT literate who needed all the training but our super-user when he came to give us our training, Fergal supported him and he had come to my team three times during the year and at that stage, people we're saying 'Not again as this (system) is just timesheets and expenses... a few screens to be clicked through';

Did those feelings increase hostility or resistance to the system or is that too strong?

Well, I can only echo the views of my own small group but there was a minority there who felt that and there was a general feeling that it was just the way AGOCORP do things – they like to throw a big team and resources (at a system)...

What was the general view in your group as to how the project team worked?

That went well – the reaction to them and what I saw, I would feel that part went well...the couple of times people were brought from the team by Fergal – they all seemed to be well on top of things...

On the change management side?

It went well – for me I suppose it's not that big a deal – it boils down to a few things – performance management, purchasing, timesheets and expenses...a few steps for each and all the action videos there on the website there really excellent...from our perspective...from the financial and HR side, it's important stuff and its critical to do that on the project and they done that well – but for us it doesn't seem like...I suppose if you're implementing a new strategy you'd need a lot of change management, for us this is just a few new processes..this is very little change relative to us here where you jumping around different projects...

Did you feel they were able to differentiate between the impact of the system on different users?

That's basically the same point I'm saying – for 99% of the engineers it was too much – I don't want it too strongly – if you're working for AGOCORP, that's the systems so that's OK – if you're one of our consultants working abroad and operating in a cost conscious environment and you're looking at the costs of this and the time required...

The opportunity costs associated with it?

Exactly... (You might say) could we not have kept the old system for the old projects – people here are used to switching around systems...

Would you feel that the business case is not that convincing – I get that impression...?

No – I wouldn't see the need for it but then if I was the chief executive I would see the need for it...

Did you ever get a feel that the system might have benefits?

Well, we were never shown those and we still can be (shown those)....I suppose most of the benefits will be seen centrally and maybe more so on the Finance and HR sides here...There may not be as much benefit for the engineers but we could have been told about the efficiencies that could be in it...

They could have done more on it...

Yes that's it...we have a lot of internal and external (pressures) to be commercial – I don't see any of our competitors in either the consulting or environmental energy services having SAP either...

Now, there may be other big companies all around Europe who are like us – about half roughly keep their engineering in-house...and the other half externals...This externalised company – I'd like to know how many of these actually use SAP...

So more an AGOCORP decision rather than one you would have (made)?

Yes – but it's hard to argue with that as AGOCORP is our main client...I suppose (what I'm saying) it's not a major complaint but when we were hived out to be separate we were left off to have whatever systems we wanted...

Did you feel at the time that you would come back to AGOCORP?

No, we were never coming back and that was that...we went through that period and as the push began to come back, a lot of our old managers left – they didn't really have any interest in going back towards AGOCORP and they were replaced by AGOCORP people...

Like Tommy Walsh and Lorna Doone and people like that...

Exactly...

Could we take a little about your input into the design phase?

Very little – I got more communication and briefings and we had an opportunity to give input – there was one particular example when there were issues around the Purchasing system and we raised a few concerns and that worked well...I haven't used the new purchasing system myself but some on my team have used it...

They were listened to and taken on board?

Yes, they were- that worked well...

And in terms of the training what was your criteria for the super-user?

Well, I picked one guy here who was IT literate and some people had missed the training and the main issue was the job numbers and the overhead job numbers – that's still an issue...

Do you mean the old job numbers and the new equivalent job numbers in SAP?

That's it...we have our own discretionary budget with one single job number per engineering group...now, you entered that job number which was a specific number for each group every time you used this budget for training or some special report etc...Now, that number is the same no matter what you use it for and that's a matter of concern and that's still under consideration as to how that will work...some engineering managers are very keen to break it down....

Were people aware of this in the design phase?

I raised it in a one-to-one not a group setting as far as I can remember – I'm not sure who (I raised it) with but I was happy with one – other groups I believe had ten different job numbers so that was an issue for them...

(BRIEF INTERRUPTION AND MOVED MEETING ROOM).

You're one of many KAMs – what views have they had and have you seen their attitudes have changed?

Well, one thing – us and other areas didn't need as much involvement as Assets and NETWORK area...we have only a few jobs but they're big – in those areas, there seems to be a lot of small jobs...I think somebody said one time to me that at any given moment we're doing approximately 600 jobs for NETWORKS...(LAUGHS)...All to be invoiced separately and all that...

How did they feel about the process?

Fine, as far as I know – they have issues like sub-codes and customers wanting certain things – we have standard systems but talking to Freddie, he was very conscious of that and got involved and this issue with the sub-codes he seems to have resolved it...

What's your general impression of the project and the system so far and going forward?

Well, so far it's gone well...I don't know would have changed much in relation to the projects but I would have one...the reporting to the project manager is important to us – I'm not sure has this been fully resolved and I still have to see that approval process working...

Like what Mario has talked to me about in terms of the matrix organisational structure...

Yes, you have a (line) manager who signs-off on what you do but you also have a project manager who manages the project and there are people from all over the engineering business working for him or her...there is a potential delay and the project manager might be waiting for the information (from the line manager) to be collated and sent to him...We did some work with Atkins some time back and they had an excellent engineering consultancy system where timesheets went in on a Friday and every project manager got a report on the following Tuesday..Now we're told we'll get a report to the project manager once a month...for many projects once a month will be fine...

But will the new system not allow project managers to actually create their own reports?

Yes, exactly and that will be key for us...

A key measure of success?

Exactly, though my understanding though is that really invoices won't run until March as in a regular run...bit concerned about that but we can do it manually – there's a bit of a gap...

At the beginning, there was a suggestion that invoices could be sent directly to the client (bypassing the project manager)...I said no way that should happen – they have to be approved...

That maybe reflected the different business mindsets from a semi-state utility to a consultancy?

Exactly, yes...and the thinking of a utility as opposed to a consultancy...

You've had concerns about the project management side – do you broadly see the system as a help or a hindrance?

Well, neither a help or a hindrance, just neutral....

So, to summarise ideally you would have had tailored communication and training and also more assurance on issues like the project management side and also in the business case, back early on prior to the BLUEPRINTING, the mobilisation phase?

Exactly yes, that's good – there are the real key things...overall it's worked well for us though it's fairly neutral...

The real sea-change is for those on the finance and HR side...

Yes, I would think so...

Thanks Charlie...

No problem...

(43, 00)

Location: NOVOCORP HQ / Date: 31ST January 2011/ Duration: 65 mins.

Interviewee: Fergal Flynn, Change Manager, NOVOCORP Financials and HR SAP Implementation.

<u>Colour Key:</u> Interviewer / Interviewee.

So Fergal, you might just discuss how things have been going in the last three months since we last discussed which would involve the training phase...How Robert Hoffman was involved and how that all went...

Well, the training we were focused on was mostly financial training around August, September and October (2010)... Robert was key to that in terms of having done training like that beforehand...

I probably made a mistake initially in that I asked Robert to step back a bit from the training and then ended up trying to involve him more...

And you interviewed Robert initially?

I did yes – we had tried to recruit (a trainer) during the summer – the interviews didn't go that well – either suitable but unavailable or just not suitable – we got a few more CVs in and interviewed Robert; myself, Lorna and HR and we offered him the contract...

In fairness he was the right person for the role even though he wasn't available until August (2010) – I was probably getting too involved in the training side and moving Robert away from the training...

Did you feel that you got in the way of Robert, not give him space to do his job?

Yes – in hindsight, I would have been better standing back from it a little bit more - I suppose I was caught as I had to report to the project and I was caught between Thomas and the project and the reporting I had to do on the training every week...the only way to stay in control of that was to get involved in the training...I also didn't introduce Robert early enough to the key players in here so when it meant getting something organised, if I arranged the meeting say with the FCs, they'd accept it, if Robert did they'd be less likely to do things like that.

The training in November went well with the exception of the HR training of the super-users and the mass users which didn't go as well as we would have

liked...Some of that was done to the fact that Robert – this may have been a mistake on my part – didn't have the HR knowledge nor did he try and acquire it so that was a bit difficult and we had a gap there but we filled it...

Then we had a few issues in terms of not getting the support of the project in terms with some technical issues...

Robert mentioned this to me – the test system went down during training..

We were training 20 out of 40 super-users the first day – and we had no system...That had a massive negative effect on one particular group whose confidence in the system plummeted as a result...

Was that something that spread throughout the user population?

Well, we knew these (test system) problems were coming so we were able to manage it in the business – particularly the expectations of the HR population but we had to cancel training for 320 users...

It had a knock-on effect on the project board ('s view of the project)...

What did you think Robert's view of the project was when he arrived in comparison to the many other SAP projects he's worked on?

Well, I like Robert and I get on with him, but his views are quite fixed in terms of how things should be done and we don't always agree...He sometimes felt that if things weren't done in a very specific way, that things weren't going to work at all...he probably didn't have a good impression when he arrived but I think that (impression) improved...He had to get to the higher gear that we were at so...

He also arrived relatively late on the project as well...

Yes – probably too late...Thomas, I and other people on the project have the attitude of trying to make the best of it in terms of delivery on the project – things might not be perfect but you try and make the best of it...He arrived with a defined role as training manager and that was all he would do...He only really got stuck in when he was landed in it and he really didn't have a choice...

When you had the (system) problems?

Yes – when he got stuck in, it was fine and it was just a pity that we didn't see more of that say two months previously...

How would you describe his relationship with other members of the project team?

Very turbulent...Thomas and others just didn't want to deal with him...

Why was that?

Well, he had a certain approach to how things should be done and he rubbed people up the wrong way as well...and they rubbed him up the wrong way....Thomas was quite cute in how he was able to put me between him and Robert...Sometimes I wouldn't be able to go to a meeting and offer Robert in my place but Thomas would step in and say – that's ok, you didn't have to go to the meeting anyway...

He mentioned he felt at times that he felt intentionally left out of the loop?

Well, Thomas could not have both of us at the same time in a meeting, only one because he knew we would be singing from the same hymn sheet...I probably wanted less conflict than Robert and Thomas was able to use that...but we were able to use it...when I get more based here, Thomas had no choice but to (communicate more with me)

When did you move back?

Around the last two weeks really in November was the key time and more so from early December...and then all the time in early January...

Was it beneficial for you to be here?

Well, naturally I would be more comfortable here but at the same time I was here quite a bit – meetings here most days – park the car here every day and walk up to project HQ... but there were quite a few issues around training so I was in project HQ quite a bit and I'd always go to the meetings to get a more complete picture of how things were progressing as Thomas might only tell you certain things that may suit him for me to know so....

I felt at a particular time that I was – I'd be talking to Tommy or Lorna up here and be getting a different stream of information than Thomas would seem to be giving me...Now that could be done to how that was done – so I would often prefer to see Rena and Leona and Martha so I can understand what they're doing...

Would you feel that there was an understanding on Tommy and Lorna and others' parts that the information they were getting had multiple versions or were they accepting of what Thomas was saying?

Well, I don't know about Lorna but I do know that Tommy and Rory Byrne have questioned a number of things...

So you were giving them more of a rounded perspective?

A bit yes - well Thomas is good at what he does and he has to manage the project and it's probably not as sinister as it seems – I think it more comes back to the actual project being driven more by ITS (Corporate) rather than NOVOCORP...

The central ICT function like Eoghan Barrett?

Yes – I probably fell out with Lorna probably over that and she in fairness was caught in the middle and I had to deal with Thomas and we (Lorna and I) had different views on that...

In terms of looking for resources?

Yes – what resources are available – what's the priority – like the test system for training, we were told for six weeks that the training system was going to be available day to day...and then a day before training is due to begin, we're told by ITS that the system won't be available – we ask why and we're told it's because Rory didn't come back from holidays and that no-one else can fix it...Why Not? Fergal, Thomas told me, don't ask that question and please leave the room...Anytime there was an issue, they didn't want people asking questions in that space...

What was the corporate attitude to the project? Did they see the SAP implementation as different?

Well, there was more an arrogance there as they had done big SAP projects before and as such...they themselves in the duration of this project have probably realised they have quite a few gaps themselves in terms of having lost people through retirements...There's a lot of experience they've lost...One of the guys from ITS turned around and said to me that he was embarrassed with regards to the level of service we were providing...

Thomas is doing his best just to cover that up – there are big gaps there and it's more a concern for the longer term...

Is it a knowledge or a resource gap?

More of a resource gap, I mean I was talking to Martha last week and they've seen a defect in their workflow process (in the new system)...but that's because they have nobody in ITS who can deal with it and they've even said in ITS that they can't so she's relying on the SAP implementation partner that they got it from the outside to try and solve it in the few days that he has left...

So, HR have their own external resource...

Yes, to help on the new LDS part – in fairness HR get on with it, they were well-prepared and they had all the BPIDs done and as such...but they're suffering from issues now as finance has taken the priority all along...A lot of what we've released so far on HR is things that have been there already...so...

n terms of them being trailblazers for the whole organisation for the new LDS module, did they get much support from the project?

Well, they went ahead under their own steam. The GO-LIVE for the new HR side went from 1st of January to the 21st of February (2011)...Would it matter greatly if it went back to the 21st of March or April...I don't think so...If we missed the rest of the HR stuff that had been already been in AGOCORP and actually did go live on the 1st of January, well again that would have been OK although politically it might have been hard to manage...

But if we missed the deadline for the Finance side, the effect would be catastrophic and so that was always the focus...

Was there a sense that AGOCORP saw value in the LDS?

Yes, it is there but whether it's there in January and February and March, it won't make a great difference...If the Finance deadline was missed then the AGOCORP Chief Executive would have been told about it and we would have missed a full year and we would have to wait until to GO-LIVE until next year...

Were the HR (dept in NOVOCORP) frustrated by that?

Well, they've drove it and they carried it and got support too from the project...

Over the last few months, what would you feel are the key things that have happened for you – you seem to be more relaxed in terms of where things are?

Yes, I am – towards that November end, I did a lot of planning around the communication side and a lot of breakfast briefings – they went down well...the training helped the communication – things shouldn't have been close as they were but we did lose a week with the training and as such people were concerned as to whether we would make it so from that perspective Christmas week involved a lot of training – we had 860 plus people trained – caught up with the people we missed..Trained the finance side and feedback on that was good...

I moved into the communication side on the transition group and I suppose what got me more into a comfortable place was that the transition plan which was talked about and planned for, for months...on the business implementation side...

I got involved in that and Rory and Fiona who were working on the plan didn't want to get involved on the communication side so I stepped into that...

Didn't want to or couldn't?

Well, it was not Rory's role and Fiona, I think she had enough to do and it wasn't really her thing to be honest...she didn't want the exposure...

If you were to ask people in late December or early January...who was the BIM or project manager, they'd probably say me as they were saying me all the time...

That kind-of happened organically rather than deliberately?

Yes, it did but to a certain extent it was a little to do with Chris Lloyd as well...I found it difficult to see where I fitted into the team and he helped me with that and also in terms of how to manage certain situations and meetings...he would introduce me at meetings and I would present and then Rory and Fiona could answer the questions....also we arranged meetings for users and their managers so they could see it wasn't just us and the project team and the managers...Rory Byrne who's moved into Liam's old role and he was great to fit me in and advise me as to some of the key messages to communicate across...he's very busy...

His involvement was important?

Losing Liam was a bit of the blow...but Rory came in...

They would probably have different styles – Liam seemed to take more of an approach of grabbing the project by the scruff of the neck, so to speak (in terms of communication)...

Yes – Liam's view was always that it was my role to be the face of the project and Chris Lloyd and himself were always there to support me if the need arose...To be honest, I struggled with that (being the face of the project) last summer but looking back on it, I've got more comfortable in that role now...

Do you think Chris Lloyd being on the project board (as a replacement for Liam) benefitted you and the project in some respects as he was probably closer to the users than Liam would have been in terms of his role...?

To a certain degree yes, Chris would be more in touch with what the engineering managers whereas from Liam's perspective, why would he need to know what their roles entailed (?)...Chris does really want to understand and he has the IT background and he wants to see the project work...

He has prior SAP experience on the XYZ project board?

He does and I find him informally when we have meetings very good to talk to – he wants to know what's happening but doesn't get involved which I like..He might suggest a few things..and engineering that the former HR manager now is managing is a strange (part of the) organisation...You have a SMT meeting and Aoife is there and says nothing and doesn't want to step on my toes and vice-versa– you have Vincent Flynn who's there to cause trouble which is good in the sense that things will get discussed – you have Chris Lloyd who doesn't want trouble but gets all the headaches and the heartaches from most of the staff...another guy is there representing HR and he's no staff or direction or input

that he can offer...It's a strange meeting – some issues will create an adversarial reaction and some issue maybe Chris and Aoife would prefer I didn't raise...I would usually meet Chris before the SMT meetings and discuss in advance what might come up...

I met Ryan much earlier on in the project – what's his view now on SAP?

Well, you can rely on Ryan for two things – he will not make a decision if there's another senior manager in the room and also he will tow the company line on things – if he has an issue he often would go to Tommy directly...

He had some interesting views on how IT was done in the business – that it was often delivered without user involvement and support...Would he feel differently about this implementation?

Not sure if he would – he would be supportive and like a lot of the engineering managers he's probably a bit surprised as to how well it's gone up to now...he asks awkward questions and you have to be prepared for that...it's not to shot down things – he wouldn't abandon the company or the system – he's been useful and been pulled in different directions as well..He has different businesses now to look after...The first meeting I went to on Ryan's SMT was supposed to last 5 minutes presentation and 15 minutes questions and I think it was an hour and 15 minutes before I got out of there...

They proceeded to tear me apart, piece by piece...

Was that down to their concerns about support as a lot of them are based overseas?

For some, a lot of them aren't even on the Irish payroll so they won't be on SAP anyway bar their records as such...you're on the UK or International payroll – they're paid through different ways and they will be part of the system but that's a while away in the future...

In terms of the project looking back – what were the major positives and negatives for you?

Not planning enough, not early enough – assuming that I could pull on resources when I went for them, they weren't there on the project and then the issues around the important things at the end of the project and the realisation that without these things being managed the project wouldn't be delivered...in late summer...

What caused that crisis point?

We underestimated the time required for the financial testing and also for project costing and billing...if I could go back to last January, I would have prior to that for two months brought in an external consultant for the project costing and billing... We were always on the back foot on that – I'm still trying to fill out the roles that people will have outside finance on the project costing and billing system so I can put together training and get on with it...But we'll be under pressure to make that March month-end (the first real month end post-SAP implementation)...

I got that (roles described) this morning – and I only got that when I sat down with Thomas to emphasise the importance of that...

In terms of the management successes on the project, what would you identify?

Well, I think everybody got stuck in from the project team and on the business – the finance, HR and engineering sides...

Did you feel that there was good synergy and interfacing between the different divisions?

Well, engineering was to be fair a bit decoupled from the project, which was after all a Financials and HR project...I'm not saying necessarily that should change but some people should have been involved (on engineering) for the sake of being involved without say having too much influence – we earned from that and also from the PO meeting we had with the managers at the end of November...This is definitely worth mentioning (to you) as there had been a lot of issues and concerns raised about the proposed purchasing system and we arranged a meeting and things didn't seem to be going down too well with myself, another consultant who was working with Aoife – we had an agenda together and we got hammered for an hour and three quarters by all the engineering managers and Ryan English and Chris Lloyd were there....

Aoife was stunned afterwards and she said to me "What's just happened? You expected this?" and I said I did because we left them out; we didn't talk to them... She asked me how come I hadn't talked to them and I told her she and the project said to me that they didn't want to talk to them last summer and she said No and I said you did, you said that there were only engineers and that this was a financials and HR project – She laughed and said 'You're right, I did and I was wrong', so we spent the next 80 minutes with them trying to get a feel for what all their issues were and then arranged a meeting the following with them...

That came around and I brought a lot more of the project team with me and made a bit of a joke of that at the start...

Safety in numbers almost...

Exactly; we're still battered and bruised so we have a few more (people with us today)– we identified some of the key people, got them Leo into a room and then

managed their concerns in advance and the meeting went well with the rest of the people...

I know Leo Moriarty had concerns about the purchasing system. He and others also had concerns as to the signing-off of an employee's expenses...line manager Vs. Project manager...Did that ever really get resolved as an issue?

The system that was available from AGOCORP didn't suit that – our first consultant told us he could do that for us (project manager approval rather than line manager approval) and he probably could but it was too far away from the original system so was not going to happen...

Some of the lads got it into their heads though that this was decided by Finance and HR and if they had been more involved they would have realised it would be difficult to do no matter what Finance and HR wanted or didn't want....It can be done like that (project manager approval) but at the same time how we integrate with both AGOCORP and GENCOM is very different to us and so it would be important to be close to how they do it...the level of testing as well...we didn't get the time-sheet working until the end of November – there wouldn't have been the time to do it anyway...

We had a meeting on the 17th of May to decide that issue (of who actually approves – line or project manager). Lorna, Aoife, Chris Lloyd, Myself, Rena, Leona and two representatives for Chris Lloyd's SMT were there, namely Paul McGrath and Mitt Ryan who had other issues with what was being discussed...We had an open vote and one person voted against having the line manager approval...

Who was that?

Me! I voted against it because of my background as a project manager where the project manager is the king, they pick the people on the project. They actually sign-off on everything...The line manager doesn't really matter in that environment at all...There are 600 plus engineers and that's we work...

What's being rolled out now is that the line manager approves your timesheet and expenses – they approve it but then they won't know as to whether I worked for a certain project for ten and twenty hours...Then at the end of the month, a cost report is generated and it goes to the project manager who has to approve them or not - you go through it and you approve and accept but then you see a time you can't approve...You can't bill the customer – so you'll have to take that time (as in pay for it from a project budget)..I can give out to you and tell you not to do it (as your line manager) but the project manager will have to resolve it...

At the same time, the department I come from, that PM approval process will work OK, but not if you're talking about HV or NETWORKS as if you were to ask people about project managers there in those sections, most people will say they don't act like project managers and they're not experienced *enough to take on the*

role...I can see why we shouldn't implement it but we're not helping those parts of the business that want to contain costs.

Are there governance consequences in terms of an issue like that?

The governance consequences will be there but they'll be retrospective...what I bill my client, I have to be able to stand over – but if someone bills two hours on the project, then it's not going to be about governance – what am I going to do with that time...

Quite a few people have remarked to me that the business case was unclear or that they didn't see it discussed...Would that view have changed?

Well, you would have people who would see some potential benefits in the system in terms of trying to actually develop things...like Freddie who I've talked to about developing some of those project managers we talked about a minute before...It's a great way to embed the system...There are some managers who look on it as a way of increasing the visibility of their data...I think in terms of the business case, people would see the project as Tommy's project and so wouldn't challenge him on it....there is quite a lot of uncertainty with respect to the new strategy that our CEO is discussing this morning as well...People are thinking about this new strategy – engineering might be almost forgotten if that's the case...people are able to do their timesheets and expenses and the feedback has been good so trying to keep that going...

Overall, in terms of the effectiveness of the project team what would you feel?

It worked well, I felt up until about mid-summer whereby the team kind-of fell apart I felt, the project board, Lorna and Thomas realised we needed resources and we got some and then we had project costing and billing...it started to be more about that (issue) is the business's responsibility, not the project's role...and that would be the BIM's responsibility so we had a couple of months of waiting for the BIM role to be filled and then...

She gets presented with a long task list...

Yes, and she's playing catch up – even now what she's focused on is data migration, not really a BIM task...She's doing it because the project didn't know what to do...

When the project became over-burdened, it became a bigger issue as more and more tasks came back to the (BIM)...

Was that a case of the project lacking a clear understanding of the BIM role which made it more likely to push tasks away?

Well the HR (side of the project) didn't do it – anything they gave (to the BIM) was done in a way that considered governance and other issues like that...the finance team just pushed it and that was gone...Rena and Fiona never hit it off and Rena wouldn't really deal much with her...

Why was that?

Well, Fiona had only come to NOVOCORP in the last while and she wouldn't have known Rena or any of the others...Fiona would be involved with Aoife and the finance people on the project would be a bit scared of Aoife so that didn't help Fiona either...

Did that improve?

No – Fiona has had to fight a lot of battles with respect to resources and she had Leona's ear and she was close to Aoife...Her role now in data migration – if you go back and read the PID, data migration was part of Rena's role...

I know you've said a few times that the change management job-spec was a bit unclear- do you still feel that in retrospect?

I wouldn't be that critical of the job spec that I agreed with Lorna back around the design phase...that's why I suppose I'd be more critical of myself there...I did presume that if I needed support from the project that I would have got it rather than as it turned out having to agree everything with them months in advance in order to be sure of getting it...I got great support from the project around Christmas time but that's because they didn't want to get up in front of the room and they were happy to support me in terms of that...

I would have defined a schedule a lot early, literally done nothing until September and communicated then...done nothing for the first six months...

Why do you see that?

I only wanted to communicate with the engineers unless I had a timesheet...The project would say to me communicate and I would say give me the timesheet and they'd say it's not ready, you can't have that and then they would say show them something else and I was like No – you can't. The engineers will be doing their timesheets every day; that's what they want to see...how do they enter their holiday leave or change the bank details...they're nice things to see but you won't be using them all the time...

That feedback was coming from the business as well; "Where's my system...?"

Yes – they were saying that were grown-ups and they wanted to see the system and be let get on with it...The system isn't that complex – we made it more complex probably because that's what we felt we needed but mostly it's not a mind boggling system at all...

I know you mentioned before that you felt the roles of the BIM and change manager dovetailed well and overlapped a bit...Did that continue?

Well, we did get more separate as it became clear that Fiona would end up focusing on the BIM Finance tasks if you like and I then started to take on some of the other BIM tasks before Christmas in terms of the managers...which Fiona hadn't time to do or didn't feel were that important...

Was her relationship with Aoife important, do you think?

Yes, as without that relationship, the feedback as to the issues we were having wouldn't have been worked through...when we couldn't do the training for the 350 people that I talked about earlier, I was told not to e-mail anyone about it and that I should just change it, whereas Fiona went to Aoife and then it went to Tommy and then I was cornered by Tommy who asked me 'How come this training has been delayed?', and I said the system isn't working and he asked me why not and I said I can't tell you and he asked me why? And I said I'd be stepping on toes if I did and to ask Thomas....and I know Tommy raised it at a project board meeting and then it all came out...

As the ITS were represented there as the senior supplier...

Yes – ideally what you would have and this is nothing against Thomas – you'd have him maybe as the ITS representative on the project and Lorna or John Maloney (her replacement) as the project manager...the ownership (of the project) has to be back here in the business (as in NOVOCORP)...Thomas seems to have been told by Lorna in the summer that he was only going to get so much more resources – anything else he needed had to come from the business...and we'd struggle through...Tommy did say that he underbid the project by 2 euros when we chatted informally in November...

So, overall you would feel you learnt a lot on the project...

I did but I wouldn't feel it's helped me career-wise...

Why do you say that?

Well, I don't know where I'll be going next...I looked on this role as a way of getting out of where I was...informally Chris Lloyd had said to me in conversations that there's demand for resources in where I was before...

Mario and Liam convinced me to do this and that it would enable me to get of where I was and never look back...recent conversations with Chris Lloyd have been

more promising but...I'm not sure how I'm perceived in the business to be honest. In some respects the engineering community might say that I've been talking about something for the last year and whether the system has really delivered or not, it's hard to tell...but they might not understand that I didn't have the support...

Were they clear about your role as change manager?

They're clever enough to understand the role of a change manager in terms of...

Sorry, not in terms of the role, but what you actually were trying to do on the ground?

Maybe – I think more in the August to November timeframe where I tried to make clearer what I could or couldn't do...

Would change managers on other AGOCORP projects have had similar experiences....I know you talked to a change manager in NETWORKS?

Very different role – how Liam would have described my role and how he would do it would be totally different...He would disapprove of how I would have carried out the role...He would be more in the background and he would not attend meetings – he would have people there representing him presenting...

They have a different role – NETWORKS have business implementation champions say that present and are primed to give out information by him. But I was told that I had to be the face of the project and my role had to be an engineer...He is much more in the background...

What did he learn the most from the XYZ project?

He taught me a lot about project scheduling and how to plan etc...I could never get to the point where I could get to discussing XYZ – I always felt that it was a NO-GO area...in terms of learning from previous mistakes, I learnt nothing like that...To establish a rapport with him, for him to open up and share, I had to hold back and be more naive...so he wouldn't feel I was a threat....I wouldn't suggest but would let him suggest...

Were you able to chat with John Jakesmith at all?

I had a few conversations with him and he had good advice in terms of focusing on certain key things and then one day I was chatting to him and Lorna came in...the next day I got a phone call from Lorna asking me why I was talking to him...John is too busy, he's for IT issues only....Thomas said something similar to me and in fairness they were probably right in terms of he should focus on the IT side of things only...I also met another change manager before he retired and that too was useful...

He had worked on the original large-scale SAP implementation?

Well, on the P and HR – we would be different but he's retired now...Liam has set up an external person, not the original guy we discussed before – she was not really about change management per se but more about interacting with more senior managers and got me to deal with Chris Lloyd and how to get more out of it...My confidence was quite low in August to October and it was a help to me in terms of presenting...I went through my issues and she helped me to put together a detailed plan for my own communications – only for that I don't know if I could have made it to be honest... I talked to a friend of mine before Christmas a colleague of mine – I felt that I was getting knocked and I was taking it a lot more badly than I thought...

Did Thomas and the project team know about this?

Well, they knew that Liam had arranged for me to meet an external person and as often as I wanted...and I did find it useful...

Being a project manager by background, the skill-set for a change manager is a bit different possibly?

To a point, I would agree with that, but I was still managing dealing with clients and when I was managing the project, that was there in terms of managing the super-users, some were very fearful towards having to be the trainers of this system so I really tried to take that on board.

Great, Fergal. Thanks again.

OK.

(65 – 00)

Interviewee: Thomas Mulcahy, Project Manager (SAP HR and Financials), NOVOCORP International.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

OK, Thomas, in terms of the project – when you look back what would you done differently?

Well, (ADJUSTING HIS SEAT TO GESTURE TO THE SCHEDULE ON THE BOARD BEHIND HIM), looking back over the phases...One thing we're not good at generally in AGOCORP and when you look at the lessons learnt from other projects is having a real sign-off procedure, with wet signatures as they say...closing off phases...

For everybody's benefit?

Absolutely...we still have some parts of the system that we're working on and people are saying (in the business): 'I didn't sign off on that'...

Looking at the deadline there, the 28th of May (2010), there were two areas that slipped, one part of HR, two weeks in that case and one week in project costing and billing...Even so, the fact that we didn't get that sign off in terms of 'I'm happy, that's done'...

On the delayed parts or the whole system?

Well, the whole system really...but in HR, people were generally happy there so for sign-off...but more so in project costing and billing where you had one key stakeholder that you were trying to keep informed and into July and August they were saying they never signed off on the system...but by then it was too late and we had to move on...We also lost external consultants and now we have another who's top-notch...

He looked over the design and was happy with 95% of it but was clear that the design as it was, was not SAP standard and also that despite what the last guy said, A did not lead to B which did not lead to C...

So, we revisited that slightly – there was a lot of fire-fighting around that...

That third person was critical to get then...

Well, I was focusing on keeping that prior guy whereas we were fortunate enough to get a real expert that enabled us to have a much smoother and less stressful process and transition to production...

From my perspective, I would be much stronger on (HANDS ME A DOCUMENT) – “Sign that!” ...and things can move on...

With clear communication on that to the entire business?

Yes, but that communication has to happen earlier than telling people that sign-off has happened in an e-mail..It will be signed off at the end of May and you need to contribute before that...

The workshops went well – and the involvement of the business was excellent – we have a weight restriction here in some of the rooms (as the building is a listed building) and we had to limit the number of people here as it would get packed...

Their contributions ensured that we would have a good quality design which we did and the quality of the system documentation according to feedback from the users in the business is also very high...and then we could have signed off on that and moved onto the next phase which would be the readiness phase...

In terms of the information vacuum that people referred to post-BLUEPRINTING...

Well, I don't think that – I think that was more of a cultural thing where you had certain stakeholders in the business who should have been told that the time had passed and that the design was set and that needed to be done...

Do you mean the key account (engineering) managers by any chance?

No, not especially – not really – they've been very positive – more people in the finance community...the KAMs have been – that was a risk always...we have a business focus group with them and I've attended three of those...the feedback has been very positive...We had an advantage I suppose in that the roll-out of the XYZ was not smooth and it asked a lot of them and gave them little...In our case, we got their input – maybe not as much as they would have liked and also the fact that there was no perception that the system was designed in a vacuum – I never felt that was the case...They have got to see and use the system and as such the timesheets, the expenses, the purchasing and the project systems – the feedback has been very positive – there is still some work to be done – we have to get the levels of access to the system sorted for the different users but that is only right and proper...

They won't be actually billing anyone until the end of March so that's the time when we need the system to be up and running for them...

The acid test I think Warren called it....

That's right – purchasing which was important to them and which they needed to be able to do from the first week in January, they have done and so that's been good...

In terms of the external people on the project, people like Rory and Robert, how would you assess their contribution...how important have they been?

This project is unusual as for usually a project this size we'd have an implementation partner – we don't have a dedicated project management office or resource in AGOCORP or NOVOCORP – in the absence of having (project management and training) processes that we can pull off the shelf....

The contribution of Rory has been enormous – he brought the planning, reporting and tracking skills that really have been essential...it's been a huge assistance to me – I'm the escalating role, and have other jobs like reporting to the project board and managing the overall process...so having that discipline around RAG reporting and dashboarding has been a huge help...

We don't have a dedicated (IT) training group in AGOCORP other than very specific training in NETWORKS...we don't have any internal training preparation and delivery function internally and that's a real skills gap that we've recognised... This system is really an extension of the ABCD system but John there was no training documentation for that system, we had to start from scratch and also we would have hoped to in the budget to have identified a strong internal resource to deliver the training and keep all that knowledge in-house...Robert has left and all the knowledge about the system and processes that he has learnt has also gone with him...

And you had another training consultant other than Robert that left as well?

Yes, he did and he left on the 23rd December...

The same issue applied to him as applied to Robert in terms of the possible knowledge lost?

Yes – but on the project team we did try to have three or four internal people with the external staff so some knowledge was retained in the business...

What views did Robert and Rory have of the project when they joined, do you think?

(LAUGHS) I don't know...taking Robert first – he came in to do a standard training job – nice chunky piece of work but manageable – he was clear as to the resourcing and environments that he required...and I think he managed that well...

He had a few issues around testing environment availability...

Well, as you know John – my role as a project manager is to try and balance time, cost and availability...I had to balance the cost against the quality of the training...we were looking at 10 people using a system in training and then in production for a few weeks...it did not warrant huge investment in getting a test system up and running for the couple of weeks when we had a training or production system that we could use as well...It's very (IT) resource intensive...

To create a copy of the system, the storage costs alone, 9 Terra bytes is what our project system required which I think stored centrally here costs about 60,000 Euros for a year....that's because of all the different copies we had...not ideal but we had to try and find a different solution...

The feedback on the training was very good – the training team were very good and I can clearly remember when the super-users had concerns about going back into the business and delivering the training a day beforehand so there was a bit of a "moment" there but then once they got into delivering the training, it went fine...we were asking people to train others in SAP and SAP sometimes is not that user-friendly...so....

Who were the internal people?

Well, we had 40 users and then they go out and train the 8 or 900 or so users on the HR and Timesheets and Expenses and then we had 10 Finance super-users who had to train 60 users...

So you had a training ratio of 1:20 and 1:6 respectively?

Yes, and this would have been considered quite good...

When Chris Lloyd replaced Liam on the project board, did you notice any qualitative difference say with Chris arguably being closer to the users?

Chris is definitely closer to the users and he is always very positive...his contribution was helpful in terms of e-mails, 'hand grenades' telling the managers you know to get into the system and get on with it – all those things are helpful...

So, losing Liam was not disruptive?

No, we didn't really lose him – he was off the project board but he was supportive in terms of key communication and if there was an important meeting, he would attend it...

And you had continuity with another senior manager replacing him in the business and still being on the project board ensured some continuity....

Yes it did...

In terms of the relationship of the project with the central ITS group, how did you see that evolving over the project...I know that there were some resource issues with people retiring etc...

Yes, well there are (resource issues) but at the same time, we did try and request resources well in advance – in fairness John, most of the requests went in a while ago as this (implementation) was due to start a year earlier than it did and got delayed...we tried to estimate as best we can...there is the finance SAP support centre, one for HR and then you have the bases and then you have all the other competency centre and supports...about 25 people from the central ITS group would have been involved at different times on the project...

Out of a total of...?

A total of....?

Sorry, the entire ITS Group?

Oh roughly about 200 people...that 25 people would in and out though at *different* times and as such we would have initially requested say maybe half a dozen core people and then over time as certain needs arose, asked for certain specific resources...

What were the issues?

The half-a dozen were fine – the others are needed for a few weeks here and there – they were really helpful in terms of providing supports from the competency centre when called upon to do so... Particularly around the area of testing, where there would maybe be not too much experience within NOVOCORP, who would lean on IT in AGOCORP for that expertise, more so than NETWORKS or customer supply who might supply the project expertise other than the IT. Whereas for this project, AGOCORP would have supplied more including myself, more than they usually would...

So probably not since MOIP has so much central SAP resources worked on a given project?

Yes, probably...every-time we looked for resources in ITS, we got them and I'm not just saying that as I come out of there....

Would you feel that you leveraging all that SAP expertise sufficiently?

(THINKING) That's a difficult one..There is certainly a lot of SAP expertise internally and looking at this project...roughly 80% of this implementation is what's already here and the other 20% the LDS and Project Costing and Billing aren't in the existing system so they couldn't be done internally anyway...

The expertise we have here particularly in the enterprise architecture side with John Jakesmith and others - they're not officially or directly on the project but they offered advice and helped us – but they don't report to me and it's hard to schedule time with me as they're formally part of what we do...It's hard to see where we had unused resources that you could call on...I came from IT governance and I would know what we have on an IT side and I don't see any additional resources we could have called on...

But there are things from an IT perspective that you're missing?

Yes definitely but hopefully a project like this will bring that back a bit...and help us develop it....there's two inputs to an IT project like this usually – you have an implementation partner whose business model is based on reuse – In MOIP when they came, they used slides from a specific project like it in Toronto – next one they did, they used our slides probably...

The "You Pay, We Learn approach..."

Yes, that's it...it works and they bring the processes in and move on...if you've someone to lean on you're not developing a competence in that area – we did in training on this project...also another input you'd typically have is that you'd have a project manager from the functional side of the business...as soon as the project is over they should go back to the business...We haven't developed a competence around the project management side of things where you developing a base like they're able to do in NOVOCORP on the engineering side in GENCOM.

Maybe the criteria for involving an implementation partner might need to alter to reflect different projects...

Absolutely the scale (of a project)...

But your approach to the project – self-reliance with the use of external contractors on demand may be a paradigm for the future?

Yes, I think so...with an implementation partner you get the kitchen sink and they mirror and shadow every person on the project...looking at figures there the other day, we've had 53 people working on the project overall...if we had 30 people, the implementation partner will probably bring 30 as well...at least 10 would be on their first engagement and you'd have to take the cost for those as well...Even when I was trying to recruit the specific SAP expertise for the HR piece and had three companies we were looking at – one specific implementation partner would insist on taking three people – these two are experts and this guy hasn't a clue but he's going to learn and you're going to pay for him...There was no budging on that...I think our approach where you fill gaps externally as you need to is a better model...

That has to be formalised though as a paradigm....

Absolutely, if you think about the reuse model and the knowledge management involved, the codification approach is what the implementation partner would use – they're not creating things nor are they often subject matter experts – in the XYZ project which was brand new, they possibly made a mistake (in terms of the choice of partner)...we have to look at that model – like smart metering and smart vehicles etc.

Thanks again, Thomas

No problem...

(28, 30)

Location: Project HQ / **Date:** 12th October 2010/ **Duration:** 45.5 mins.

Interviewee: Rory Harrington, External Project Management Consultant on the SAP HR and Financials project, NOVOCORP International.

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.

OK, Rory, you might fill me in on things that have happened since we last met on the project?

Well, the training went well...it was received well and I think there would have been some concern at the beginning with regards to the delivery but I think that was realised quite early and dealt with – all the super-users that came across from the business all did an excellent job...they were well-received...

Did we complete everything from a training perspective – No, there's still a delta as in incomplete training in this the transition phase particularly around intercompany (trading) and also project costing and billing and as such, that's due to be scheduled very soon so...

Why was that? Was it logistical reasons?

There were logistical reasons and also it probably felt safe that we knew it term of GO-LIVE, we knew it was appropriate now to planning financial training as they're coming to the end of their financial year and they have audits to work through also...so the timing now is probably more appropriate...could training have been slicker in terms of preparation, sandboxes and planning? Yes, it could but it was OK....

Did ITS deliver?

They did – they may need to become a bit more flexible maybe in terms of their use of resources and environments – there are a lot of different environments and as such I would feel that they're all there and needed for a reason but the ITS group get wrapped in constraints like SAP upgrades and updates and parallel systems whereby resources were needed, and that even affected the project which is another issue that we can discuss...With upgrades and updates in SAP, the environment becomes unavailable and in our case it moved up our GO-LIVE date and the date was reset 17th December...Because of the constraints we were facing in terms of restrictions in environments coming from AGOCORP, and what that meant for transports and training environments and that forced our hand and

really impacted on our schedule...people made it work ago and it put a lot of pressure on Cutover and dress-rehearsals – it worked but we made it work...

Are they known (those updates) in advance?

Well, I have to say that it kind-of came up in a meeting with ITS as in ‘these are constraints are going to be in place...’; it never come up on a project board level or on a risk register....so when people were asking ‘When are we going to GO-LIVE?’, they all thought the 31st of December but at the same time the 17th might not be that different but it’s still two weeks, even including Christmas – you’d work it if you had to – I’ve had to, before...two weeks is still a lot but how it didn’t appear (on the radar) before...I don’t know...

Does it reflect perhaps a bit of decoupling between the business and the ITS group?

It may do – I don’t believe that it’s deliberate – there may be a lack of sharpness there with respect to how they communicate with the business and they’re also were under a lot of pressure with respect to the economic situation and the upgrades etc...We should have known about it and flagged it to be honest...

How would you appraise Robert’s contribution?

It was important from the point of view of bringing that training expertise to the project which wasn’t there – that’s not meant to be derogatory about the team but more an AGOCORP issue really...In the scheme of things, we did achieve a lot – we did need external resources on the project – in my area, the training side and also spanning the change management/BIM space...and maybe data management all needed external expertise...a lack of experience in that space...

Robert did offer something important and he’s a very professional guy and he needed to be willing to be able to adapt a bit more though to the environment he was put into, to be frank...You have to be willing to work with what you have...I found he did whinge a bit...

Did he have an idealised view of what the process should be like?

A bit, yes...very often the answer (if you look for a resource) is ‘No’, but you have to deliver anyway so...I do think though his contribution was effective...

That change management and BIM space that you said could have benefitted from some external expertise – could you elaborate a little on that?

Well, the change management throughout the project was very down, very flat and monotone (SMILES) –it was only towards the end that it started to become upbeat – it took a long time but the level of integration meetings which we had and a few quiet chats to try and up the energy a little bit...

There was a lack of energy there...

A bit yes...now change management is such a difficult thing...you need a certain kind of personality but in fairness, Fergal has played a blinder and integration is a different stage where you have something to go and talk about and he knows these people...He can clearly get things across to them...earlier on when you have less to show, you need to show a certain spark and a certain enthusiasm, you need to be a certain kind of individual...now, it's worked out well and Fergal is playing a stormer in that transition space...

That might reflect his project management side...

Probably yes – more of a fact than a criticism...it would have been a risk on our risk register and we would have been aware of it...

And the BIM?

(STRONG SIGHES)...Well, there were some similar issues there in terms of say the levels of energy and more so the levels of acceptance...

In what respect?

Well, acceptance as to what the role of a BIM is composed of...There are elements of change management in that role also...I would have said that in the context of being that liaison with the business for the project, that you needed to be all things to the business, not necessarily to the project...if the business came to you with something, you had to take that on and get it done through the project all-right...90% of the time, we would hear 'That's not my responsibility and I'll pass it on to (the business)', where it might get forgotten about...Well, not forgotten about as we tracked everything...But I don't feel that role was very successful...

In comparison to the change management role?

Well, I'm not going to compare the two but that BIM role needs to be much stronger than it was...that's a very tactical kind of role and it involves getting the business to do things the project needs to get done and also getting stuff back to the project that the business needs to get known about..Look, I just felt that there was a lack of experience and dynamism, maybe a lack of realisation as to what a big project like this entails...

Did she end-up facing back more towards the business or the project?

MMMM (THINKING), more towards the business. Having said that, I have to very blunt – I didn't see that (role) working out in that integrated space – coming to the table with ideas and enthusiasm...There was probably a bit of naivety in terms of how the project scoped out those roles and I think I may have said that to you before...They needed to be scoped – BIM and Change management could be scoped together under change management with pillars...I often said to Lorna and Thomas that these roles should be one many times...Even so, if the attitude at times had been better than the roles could have been more effective – I don't mean that negatively towards the individuals, I just feel that in the context of the (work) streams...In the BIM role, that particular person is good when they're corralled into doing a task but not if something should be seen or gets added to the task...When this person got involved for example in the transition management with me, subsequently we just get on with the transactional data migration and she's still just focusing on that...

That data migration aspects – would they be a key role of a BIM?

Yes, so far in a corralled way, now the transition management side is also very important, really key for a BIM – Now, when the lads asked me to stay on after Christmas and work on a transition plan, I took that on with the BIM and that was a torturous process to get that thing up and running...There was a flexibility it needed that made it difficult – its working well – but that's gone back to the project manager role and away from the BIM, which in an ideal world wouldn't happen...

How have you seen that project management role evolving since you joined the team?

(THINKING) – That's a very good question – I would probably feel that Thomas has gained and benefitted in that space since I joined in July – fresh with ideas, not new for me, but new for Thomas – there's a new sharpness in terms of delivery but there's still some sharpening to be done and sometimes there's a reversion back to the old ways...

The old ways? In terms of being reactive or?

No, not that but more sometimes being a bit blasé – as in 'We'll get to that in a minute'...and sometimes there's a sharpness that needs to be "Sh*t, I have a delivery date and I have to go with this..."...

Well, we managed to achieve our goals, at one stage that was looking unlikely – we were really staring down the barrel of a gun...but we stuck with the structures, the planning, the meeting and from that point of view, that's paramount in

achieving what you want to achieve – it's achieving the currency of the plan – so you know where you are when you need to know or when you're asked...In AGOCORP, there's (often) a 'We'll be alright' without the evidence to substantiate it which we'll talk about in a second....we've been bitten by that badly across the project...

I'd like to think Thomas has progressed but he needs to work a few more big projects like this and even then, that probably won't be enough...I don't tick all the boxes but making the effort to tick the boxes, that's the key...

Did it make a difference that he came from the Parent rather than NOVOCORP at all?

That's a good question and I haven't thought about it in that way...He was seconded to NOVOCORP...

He's from the ICS group and did that help in terms of accessing resources?

Yes, it did – it's probably one of his first PM roles so he would have extended himself in that space...to be honest, I don't see it making that much of a difference...

Can we come back to that evidence issue you mentioned a minute ago about being bitten...?

Yes, this was something we may have discussed before...and that's the issue around sign-off and the whole governance of that...Signing-off on different phases, wet signatures though they don't have to be "wets" per se...You can't just have an e-mail saying...Oh, that's grand and that's it...it might be but that needs to be communicated...I had difficulty getting that from the guys on design and integration and testing...There was gate closure to a point....

At the end, I wouldn't say I gave up but at the same time they probably got tired of me saying it to them...They probably said 'Rory, your point is well-made and we've taken it on board, now let's move on...(LAUGHS)' and I said 'That's fine'...

Now in the different phases of data migration, we would I feel too have benefited from having those phases constituted as sign-offs...rather than 'we're alright' and we got bitten on vendor master...

Which is?

That's the vendor master data – where all the validated vendors are included...when we went live, there was a big issue around vendor details being missing or no longer approved or the bank details were wrong, so you ended up having certain users post GO-LIVE who couldn't make purchase orders as there was an issue with their vendors...There was a huge hassle – and of course the question was asked: how did this happen? Who signed off on it? And I definitely am not a told you so kind of person but we weren't able to show sign-off for that data migration...It was being done professionally and technically correct but there was no sign-off in the business, saying we've checked this (data) in these environments on such a date and they're fine..Nothing like that...Now, anecdotally we could say we had e-mails and we could say we did this, this, and this...but it became tough...

Whereas if we had the sign-off the business we could say there was a sign-off even if the data was wrong, there is a problem, that's acknowledged but now we will fix it...Whereas we wasted time and effort running around trying to find evidence of having done it..rather than going to fix the data...

Where did that (sign-off) pressure come from?

That came from the board...this hadn't proliferated totally out to the business...it was always planned that transition and transaction data management would be later but we were doing it then anyway...so I sat down with the team and said 'Lads, we will use the following process and we're going to have junctures where we have sign-offs around input files (of raw unclean AGRESSO data), output files (cleaned validated vendor data for SAP transports) and reconciled files and that's happening as we speak...Fiona is managing that process 100% at the moment and the data has to be fully loaded by March 11th...

For the first end-of month...

Yes, you've got it...

Looking back retrospectively over this and other SAP projects you've worked on, how do they compare?

It's been a good project – the one thing I would put out would be the SI or system integrator or implementation partner and bringing in expertise as required...

Is that a sustainable paradigm for projects?

That depends – in an ideal world you'd plan it like that – that's OK for business as usual work and some projects of a certain size might fit into that, an add-on, an

upgrade...but if you're talking about a large user community of say 800 plus users and a budget of X million Euros, it's a big risk...

The difference I saw on this project and it was interesting personally for me to try and coax people along to behave like say an implementation partner was actually here...if you had a partner here, that would just be happening on the ground as they're deadline, time driven...without any baggage or much handholding although they do that in bringing them all along...

The (project) guys might admit themselves that (it led to) a lot of responsibility being foisted upon him that they probably had never experienced before...is something like that sustainable, I think from the broad AGOCORP perspective, they'd need to shift perspective a fair bit...

Do you mean having a PM and Knowledge Management centre of competence?

Yes, that's what I mean and also being able to use the expertise – they have a very experienced SAP competence centre and very good tactical people but when it comes to a project, can they really bring that to bear...I don't know...I don't think that...Thankfully for me and for them, I could straighten the line and it's not perfect...

In terms of getting the planning straightened out, in an ideal world that would be done far sooner...

I agree John – we wouldn't have found ourselves (then) in the position we were in last September (2010)...

Quite a bit of planning drift over the summer...

There was and with me coming on the project in July, it was a bit frantic putting some shape on it but you're right with respect to really planning was something back in BLUEPRINTING, we'd should have been preparing and organising...we got there though...it takes people time to adapt to new things and not just my way but I suppose a way of doing things that would work in terms of processes...They were probably thinking 'Here comes Rory with another acronym for us....(LAUGHS)',

Not having an implementation partner and also the lack of competency centres and stronger governance were the big issues for you..

Yes...

In terms of how (project team) roles were allocated?

Well, that was very difficult to do because of the (non implementation partner) approach they decided to take...there was quite (SMILES), well the way the roles were allocated – they were certain people that you couldn't engage with directly in some respects, say a public-sector mentality in terms of doing only certain things...and projects like these have a harshness, there are long hours and you do whatever it takes to get it over the line, implementation partner or not and I came from that (implementation partner) background...

Whether it should be like that or not, probably it shouldn't, but 99% of the time it's like that...I could be frustrated by but had to adjust to the culture of 'I can only work three days a week' or 'It will wait till tomorrow' – I think the project was severely hampered that way...there is a discipline and an aggressiveness that you need on these kinds of projects...

And enthusiasm?

Yes, I don't know what kind of R and R as in Rewards and Recognition that apply to people from the business on the project...Certainly that cultural thing of hard hours and work needs a certain individual...That can be hard to do (for the people involved)...

I suppose one more thing that would be important is that we also needed some additional resources on the testing side...we needed more in that space...We didn't get (those resources) in the end and Thomas and I got stuck into it in the end...We had some external help but not influential but more an extra pair of hands...It should have been someone coming in as 'I am the test manager...'; The ITS group just didn't deliver in that space at all...

Why was that? Was it a resource issue?

Well, I would think it's more their way of doing things –Like what we talked about earlier in with respect to the gates etc, if they're doing this (SAP implementations) for 11 years, then it should be second nature in terms of rigour and steps...

Like an “off-the shelf” approach?

Exactly, what they did probably would work for the smaller type projects with fewer test cases but when you hundreds of thousands of test cases, then I mean you’ll need something else...

In terms of a lack of a formal UAT, some people have commented on that; do you feel that it damaged the project in any way?

Well, that’s a door that I would have banged on a lot as well...and again it was more ‘Move on Rory, point taken...’...Some people thought there was a separate UAT phase and others than thought that it was part of BRT and the whole thing got muddled...

That’s where I suppose a testing manager would come in and clarify and control...

Absolutely, but in previous projects I’ve worked on in AGOCORP the UAT formally became part of the BRT... (There and then or after the fact?) More so after the fact, but in this project that didn’t formally seem to happen: that’s actually a very good point and I’m sorry I didn’t bring it up...that manifested itself in a lack of a credible testing management approach...

Did the lack of a UAT materialise at any way in the use of the system?

Not yet, but it could and I suppose you’re running the gauntlet not having a formal UAT – but I would like to think that the quality of the integration testing was good and that probably would have mitigated against not having the formal UAT – but to me it’s alien not to have a formal UAT...

Is there a political danger in not having a formal UAT –the user population might not be familiar with the (testing) terminology but they might see it in a negative light...

That could be true...Like Lorna Doone was looking for acceptance – kind of alluding back to the sign-off issue we discussed earlier...From a (testing) methodology side, the ITS group were pushing a testing approach that maybe NOVOCORP did not understand fully – more a case of ‘This is how we (AGOCORP) do it’ and ‘This is what we happened’ – but definitely a formal UAT would have been better...

Thanks, Rory

No problem...

(46, 00)

Location: Project HQ / Date: 1st February 2011/ Duration: 34 mins.

Interviewee: Rena Carmody, Finance, NOVOCORP Engineering; *appointed as Finance Functional Lead on SAP project team.*

Colour Key: Interviewer / Interviewee.
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So Rena, you might fill me in on your background and your roles in AGOCORP and NOVOCORP?

Well, I started in 1998 in NOVOCORP and I worked on the finance side of the Engineering and I also worked on the earlier banking project – I had originally been scheduled to work on the SAP project but that was delayed for a year so then I worked on the banking project, then started working on the SAP project back in December 2009 but came over here in February really full-time...

What was your original role on the project?

I was always finance function lead and my role was really about finance and wasn't scoped out all that well...

Was that an issue for you?

It was as the project went on...Everything that was just finance was thrown at my door...I and another lady who worked on the purchasing side started early and then it was probably March before everyone got on board...January and February were slow months and I was given three papers to write, one was the enterprise model for SAP; I had never used SAP before so felt that was a bit ridiculous and we didn't really get any training as such so...Also as the FCs were busy with their end-of-month accounts, we weren't really able to talk to anyone; we could have been up and running sooner...John Jakesmith ended up doing the enterprise model in the end...Thomas had never worked on SAP either so he couldn't help there...There was an expectation from the IT side that you would just do a task if you were given it...

You mean the central IT function?

Well, Lorna and Thomas...Your name is against that task so go away and do it...

But the expertise in AGOCORP...

We were able to call on that but the FCs in AGOCORP were busy as I said and John Jakesmith was available time to time but there was quite a big deal made of the

fact that this was the first AGOCORP SAP project without an implementation partner but we really felt that and it put a lot of pressure on the finance function...We got some SAP training but that was a week after the design was finished which was crazy...looking back at the project, to have only two people out of 30 with SAP knowledge which was a bit mad...We got a SAP consultant and you probably know there were a few issues around that (Yes)...

We might have saved some money by not having an external partner but we definitely felt the lack of SAP knowledge...

So you must have welcomed the arrival of Fiona McGregor on the project...

Don't really want to get into that but she had little to do with the project and also she arrived quite late onto the project...around June...

Were you always aware the BIM role was coming?

No, it totally came out of the blue...and I don't think it worked out that well..

In what sense?

Well, the SAP knowledge she had was more in her old (AGOCORP contracts) which was a different (system) and she didn't try and learn about the finance system...Also, when she came on board, we were kind of cut-off from the business – everything had to go through her...She was reporting to Tommy and she wasn't sitting with us, she was over in the business yet she was creating a lot of issues that weren't really issues...

How did you communicate?

We had a weekly meeting – the communication wasn't great; she (the BIM) would go and come back to the business and it would come then through Thomas or Lorna...There were things that were decided in the business that weren't communicated to us...unless we overheard someone talking about it or someone might call and say "Did you not know about X?" like the move of AP function for example...We were working through AP processes and it had been decided for a month or so that this was happening...Tommy would probably say himself that it didn't help that we were over here rather than in the business.

Why was it (that you were then here)?

Well, there is a school of thought and I suppose it did happen as well, that keeping the project team close together is good for making more of a project and team spirit...If you're over there you'd be getting called on from the business as well to do things so it's 50-50...

Would you communicate regularly with the project manager?

We had a weekly meeting and I think until about August, the communication was poor – it was more about why have you not made your deadlines, you have to and if you don't, you'll have to work later, work weekends etc, quite aggressive, rather than asking if you've any issues...I found having a project manager who doesn't know finance to be a big drawback...He would say that (managing) a project is about three things, managing your scope, time and quality...time and scope can't change so you'll have to reduce your quality...

For an accountant, that's not really an option – you have to have correct accounts and we did spend a lot of time fighting against that, during the year...

Were you involved in the BLUEPRINTING phase?

Yes, I was for all of it...

Could you take a little about the workshops...?

They worked very well; we had an external girl who was very good and who helped us on the process, we did the AS-IS for the processes in AGRESSO and then a man from finance and a lady from purchasing from the AGOCORP SAP competency centre would create the SAP TO-BE (equivalents).

So the design phase from say the middle of February to the end of May (2010) was mainly workshops...I think we ended up with 76 BPIDs and we then asked the business to come to the workshops and sign-off on the (AS-IS) processes and that went well..

Was there much compromise or was it the AGOCORP processes (that were agreed)?

There was what would you call it, a default that we would use the AGOCORP process always if possible...the budgets and resources that were on the project, you would have no choice but to do it...

I think when we had done the BPIDS, we had a list of 50 developments as in things that were in NOVOCORP that weren't in AGOCORP...that was knocked down to 12...where possible adopt AGOCORP – it was probably right as you can't cater for everybody and just because we've always done things a certain way in NOVOCORP doesn't mean we should always do it like that...

Was there much resistance from the business?

A bit, but I would have expected more – I suppose if I had been there as the business, I would have resisted more...

Why was that the case (that the resistance was low)?

I don't know...Aoife Burgess is a strong personality and she made a lot of decisions and people would have gone along with them as she was their boss...People often didn't turn up or read the BPIDs and they were maybe more focused on the day job so this (the workshops) were maybe more of an inconvenience...

The system had been live now for a few weeks and there's been a few issues but not say that many so maybe they were right...

In terms of the ending of the BLUEPRINTING, some people felt that there was a lack of a clear ending...

There was a clear ending I felt, like once the design phases were written there was data migration papers to be done and the planning missed out some milestones like that so for example the functional team were involved in data migration paper writing but that only became clear to us with two weeks to go in May so that became pressurised..

In terms of the business how would you feel the communication was?

In the BLUEPRINTING, I felt it was good – once Fiona came on board the communication kind-of stopped and I would if I needed to, contact the business directly...

What kind of reaction was the business having to the project?

Well, nothing really bar annoyance as I was usually ringing them up to ask them to do something or make a decision...

In terms of the other roles on the project, we've talked about the BIM role, how did you feel the change management aspect of the project was managed?

Well, in the transition it was very good but up to then it had been quite poor and I suppose that's what we talked about before; Fergal Flynn is an engineer not an accountant, he doesn't know finance...in the data migration side, there was no-one you knew finance. (They would say) 'I don't understand' and then ask you to explain or communicate with people...I felt everything came back to the finance functional team which was under-resourced...you really needed finance and accountants on the data migration and the change management side and the data migration, that's been proven as it hasn't gone that well...

In terms of the change manager and communication and the other attributes (they are expected to possess)...

Well, for me the change manager role was designed for the engineers and managing the timesheet and expenses side...we only had Leona Miles, the one resource and she was back and forth to the business...the business would send us a resource for a week or two and Fergal would always be looking for Leona to present to the business and looking for communication whereas the system wasn't even tested yet...But he would say the engineers are looking to see the system and he had been stronger, he could have made it clear that they would have to wait...

That (issue) went to the project board and it was decided that the engineers would have to wait...the engineers were probably promised a lot on this project and as such I think Fergal spent a lot of time hitting his head off a brick wall..

In what sense?

He wanted Leona to come over to present and we needed her to be here testing and configuring (LAUGHS)...You know...

Would you feel he was quite hamstrung as opposed to being ineffective?

Yes, given the knowledge he had...the role was a bit bizarre – he was sitting downstairs – I don't know if his role was made clear...Since GO-LIVE he's understood how the timesheets work – I don't know if he did before hand...He seemed to go the business for queries to bring back to Leona....She'd tried to answer them but it didn't make sense...

Did the BIM and the Change Manager role overlap slightly?

They did, yes – I would see the BIM more the finance side and the change manager more on the engineering side of things...

Going to the project manager, what were your views on that role?

MMMM (THINKING) up to August the project management side was about milestones and issues and it was ridiculous and eventually after asking for resources, we got one...We had a QA with the external QA, you might be aware of that (Yes) and things improved after that...We used to have a meeting every Monday morning and that changed to much more frequent than it went too far, about four meetings a week...

Did you impress on the external QA those issues?

Yes...

So it was a big turning point for you?

Yes, it was and in fairness to the external QA, he listened to those issues and they were acted upon...

Did Thomas coming from AGOCORP rather than NOVOCORP make any difference?

No, more that he was an IT person...There was also a bit of a divide that emerged on the project, you know with people from NOVOCORP expected to work longer hours and weekends and sacrifice holidays whereas those in AGOCORP weren't...The meetings with Lorna and the IT - (she) seemed to take IT's side...

In terms of the external people on the project, how did you feel about Rory Harrington and Robert Hoffmann's involvement?

Well for Rory, there were two people on the project management side and yet we couldn't get a resource on the finance side...Even now, we've let a lot of finance people go and Rory's still here...The external QA said to me that Rory would help me in terms of doing things – I think I ended up doing more non-finance tasks in the testing and eventually I had to push back on to the testing manager...

Did you think his involvement was important?

It did help yes...

And Robert?

To be honest, I didn't really have any interaction with him...the training seems to have gone well...

Have you had much feedback from the business on the value of the super-users?

Well, it's probably too early – probably the end of March with the month-ends will give us a better idea...The business probably isn't that aware of the super-users yet – they tend to ring me at the moment if they have any questions...

Overall, if you were sum to up your involvement in the project, positive or negative?

Well, satisfaction that it went live but I have a bad feeling about it and I did say it to Tommy Walsh with respect to the personal effort and commitment involved over the last year...Now, it's gone live and people are giving out about stuff...

What was his reaction?

He didn't say much really – probably a bit surprised...The business isn't aware of the sacrifices and efforts that we've put in....

As a finance person you would have used AGRESSO and seen the benefits of changing over to SAP?

I would have used AGRESSO a lot and I liked it actually...It's quite good for project stuff that AGOCORP don't have and SAP is quite rigid...

Did you have to customise the data?

Not really – you could take a day's training course in ACCELERATOR and then write your own reports – in SAP you won't be able to do that – an IT person will have to do it....

So, on the negative side of the project, the workload, the lack of resources...

Yes, and also the lack of support of the business.

Did the support diminish with the onset of the BIM role?

It was a negative role and focused on the negativity in the business rather than the functional team's issues...I still feel that.

Were you able to use Fiona to get things done through Tommy?

Yes, we did but the communication was quite negative a lot of the time...we needed things from the business...data was coming back from the business and wasn't right and we were blamed for it and things like that...

In terms of the transition stage of the project, you felt the change management role was more effective...

I did; Fergal was brilliant and really got involved...

What are you focusing on?

Well, the data migration is really the responsibility of one person in addition to Fiona on the team...In September, Fiona took a step back from that and was then appointed transition manager...so all along and I said it to Thomas, that there was an issue with who was responsible for data migration...When Rory Harrington joined, we were told it was Fiona's responsibility and then it became the other lady's and I don't think she knew about it before...if you had an accountant minding that space, you would have (managed that)...

The issue with the vendors arose also...

Before Christmas, there was a call to sign-off on the vendor file and then when they checked it there was loads of mistakes and then they wouldn't sign-off so that's the issue (that's being looked at)...

What will be next stage for you?

On the project until the end of February.

How do you see the rest of the project playing out?

Well, now that the audits are finished, the financial people will start getting into the system a bit more and so far the purchasing and timesheet side had worked fine 5 weeks in...so...

So in terms of the transition and the important month-end coming up in March, how will that be change managed?

Fergal won't be in that space and it would be ridiculous to expect him to communicate around month-end as he's not an accountant...

Would you have a concern around that?

I would yes...on the banking project we had all the time to present and communicate...we're only fire-fighting...Robert has left but there's still training that needs to be done for the accountants – I've been asking about that and I believe it's coming...There needs to be more communication on the month-end...

Any other key events that you would identify...

Well the QA was very important...

And the involvement of Rory Harrington...

Well, I'd say that improved things by about 20%...

Just going back to the BLUEPRINTING side of things you said that you felt that phase could have been better...

Well, I was given a design deadline of the 18th of May and told to go away and do BPIDs not knowing what to do....We still hadn't a solution to the FX issue at the end and they didn't know and then The external QA was able to point us in this direction...

Would you feel you wrote a lot of the BPIDs in a vacuum?

If I had got training and if I would have been able to sit and shadow people in GENCOM who were using SAP and be able to see the processes...we knew how to raise a sales order in AGRESSO and if we could have seen that in SAP, then that would have helped (in the BPIDs).

Thanks for that Rena...

You're welcome.

(34, 00)

Interviewee: Thomas Mulcahy, Business Relationship manager interfacing between AGOCORP and AGOCORP Networks, *Formerly* Project Manager (SAP HR and Financials), NOVOCORP.

<u>Colour Key:</u> Interviewer / Interviewee.

OK, Thomas, How do you feel things have gone since we last talked – the project is officially over?

Well, we had a project board close-out meeting back in June (2011) actually – and where there were some outstanding items we found owners for those in both NOVOCORP and AGOCORP and one in AGOCORP ITS had to change a business process that effects NOVOCORP and AGOCORP NETWORKS...

Is this related to the Project Costing and Billing piece?

Yes – when we invoice another part of AGOCORP, how they, say NETWORKS actually process those invoices was beyond the scope of our project...how that works – there is a new initiative is underway now to simplify those processes...

Is this related to the job number issues that the engineering managers would have discussed?

Yes – and this is part of all the organisation now being on the same system and trying to leverage some benefits out of that not just for engineering but for everyone....In my new role, I am responsible for the IT relationship between AGOCORP and NETWORKS, so I'm responsible for NETWORKS as a customer...think of the invoices we send them every month...there's an army of people that go through the data and we have to be asking whether we need that level of detail or awareness and as such whether we need all those people...

There was a lot of manual intervention I believe in that system, Freddie told me...

There is but at the end of the day, there's a customer of ours looking for a lot of detail...we have to ask ourselves and this is coming from director level (as in directors of subsidiaries) whether we need to be going through that data and saying 'There's 5 cents that shouldn't be there etc'....

You've had a bit of time since the project finished and this is our last interview, what would be your overall views on the project and the key things that happened...your own views?

Well, to take it chronologically and look from my perspective – I had to learn to delegate more and particularly in design, delegating and trusting my functional leads to come up with the design and to deal with the issues but to be there to support them and guide them but that they had to own the design – we're here now months later and I've moved back and there the people who had to live with the processes they designed...

There was a lot of people on the project who were new to roles like this and there was a good personality mix on the project but also the monitoring, planning, tracking and reporting...To be able to see where we are on the project...in relation to the timescale...There was a lot of doubt initially whether we would achieve the deadline which was ambitious and we did...I learnt a lot of techniques like Current Value tracking which I would not have had access to before and that will be very beneficial to me on a course that I was doing...

Rory's detailed planning and tracking when he came on board – he gave us an important contribution on that and...

Would you like to have had him sooner?

Maybe, yes I would...He came on board in August (2010) and the design was over at that stage – we're still waiting to hear our final lessons learnt report on the project but the transition from design to testing took longer and wasn't as smooth as we'd like...when we came into test execution we had to have a reality check as if we were to test everything we could, we would still be testing....And then onto training side of things...

When Ian came on board...

We didn't really leverage a huge amount off that to be honest...one way or another...OK...In some ways at the time, we had a high percentage of NOVOCORP finance people on the project....and their job had to go on...it would have been far better to have had more people on the business training on the project – there's a trade-off and the external people all left in January and took their knowledge with them and also we had finance people as super-users who were excellent back in the business but had to be let go, so....The BIM resource was also very tight as well..

In terms of availability or resources?

Well, tight in terms of the availability of the right people – when we had people in roles and they were delivering to the business, we often found that the quality of the deliverables was not what we needed...it was poor – the right resource...

Does that reflect some limitations in the BIM role?

Yes, it does – there was a limitation in the availability of people to do those roles also...in fairness to her, the quality of the materials she was getting from the business was not great but a stronger person would have been able to say that it was wrong and the communication and the ownership of that wasn't there...

Was that role clear?

Well, if you go back to the PID, where all these roles would have been approved by the project board, take the change manager role – now that was felt to be a key role as this was more of a change project with 80% of this new system already in AGOCORP...The BIM role was another role we saw as very important...

Lorna and I and Tommy and Liam and Rory off the project board – we spent a lot of time very early on defining those roles – I don't think we could have been more explicit – then later on in the project when it became clear that Fergal needed more support, Liam a busy man, got him one-to-one support from the summer on...In fairness to Fergal, he grew into that and got more effective as time went on...

The BIM role was also discussed at project board level and we considered different people and I know at times it can be a weakness if roles are not clearly defined and sometimes it can be advantageous to leave some flexibility as some people can adapt and stretch beyond where the role would be and that can be a good thing...

In the BIM role, we really felt we had that nailed in terms of the responsibilities even down to a very low level but the execution of that wasn't great...the person who took on that role – it was made clear to them that they didn't have the time to fulfil the 5 high level tasks that had been allocated to them and so some of the tasks would have to be reallocated back to the business...

This is the current incumbent you're referring to?

Yes, the feedback from her was that she was unable to fulfil all these tasks and take the transition management – Rory and I were asked to manage the transition – Rory and I were then on the project longer than we thought...

So, training, business implementation, transition and data migration...

Yes, well I'd include or would like to see (business) benefits realisation in there as well. We've talked before about some of the ICS Group failings and the role of the project manager seems to end once the system, the asset is delivered...not when the asset had been used to deliver the benefits which is different....I don't know if anyone in the business is taking that on – I knew Tommy Walsh said he would look at the system a year in and see what benefits and with structures changing...

Paul Tobin did mention that he had moved on from finance performance which might be the logical home for that...

Yes, he has...that would have been a clear one for the BIM and they should be in that space but they've moved on to something totally different – I don't know exactly what...but in fairness to that person, they made it clear that they didn't feel they were capable of fulfilling those 4 or 5 roles...and the focus then became on the data migration only...

So, just the one role...

Yes, which was a problem – for me even last November, one of the highest risks for me was the problems with the Business Implementation....As a learning outcome for me, people have said to me and it was said to me before the project as well to be careful with respect to the data migration – it is a difficult task and it ended up being more complicated and more time-consuming than we would have expected...But it was one of many difficult tasks on the project and people did attack other roles on the project and got through them so....

Would you feel that at times that the criteria for selecting people may be problematic?

Yes, there is – its often down to who's available – we have a limited pool of expertise to draw on and in some cases like the training for example, you have to go outside which ends up being more costly and expensive...remember no implementation partner – these gaps are filled...if you have a difficulty, you're shadowed and you get support and push...it would have been Z million rather than X million...that's what it would have meant and we're proud that we got it done without it...for a lot of people on the project, this was a developmental opportunity whereby I had a chance to be a project manager on my first major project and a lot of others including Fiona, Fergal and others were being team leaders for the first time...

Balancing developmental opportunity and experience could be a possibility?

Yes – the opportunities were excellent – some people rose to the challenge, some didn't and some didn't at all...Rory was great for me and he freed me up to do other things and maybe a few other roles on the project would have benefitted from something similar...We did struggle through (LAUGHS) –sometimes, you wonder if you had got over the line with no issues, we would have spent way too much money on it!! But if the wrong people are in the wrong positions, and they're suffering from stress or openly saying they're not up to it, we need to get them support quicker...

A lot of the improvements that you brought through the project – did most of those get driven by the external quality reviews or were you aware of these issues and were holding your hands up yourselves?

(LAUGHS) No, we would have pushed for them ourselves and I would feel pretty strongly about that...the quality reviews provide an opportunity for us to take time out and see where we are... the first was quite scientific and detailed whereas the other two facilitated a more high-level discussion – he did say at one stage that we (the project team) were glum and down and they replied immediately and said they weren't...that they felt that they had a good spirit – maybe he talked to the wrong people at the wrong time...It's an example of the team being able to use external feedback and use it to improve...

Did you get something out of them?

Well, the first one was very early but I got some input from him in refining project principles that was useful in crafting the PID and that I leaned on again and again as time went on...With respect to the other reviews, we did feel that they were replaying back what we said or what we knew already – we didn't feel that they offered anything different...they did make us gel closer together – that could have been his motive – he gave us A, B and C and the later reviews were different – that would be different to someone internal doing reviews where people might not be as honest and also there may be baggage there...

In terms of the Cutover and transition, could you talk a little about those?

Sure, well the cutover had really two parts – a business and a technical part...the technical part went fine and we had no issues as that was just taken over by the ICS group here who've done that many times. That was fantastic...

It was complex as there were a lot of constraints on the system due to financial changes that were going in – the contrast between them having done this way before and us mostly doing it for the first time...on the business side it was mostly about data migration and trying to get that right... (SIGHS)...it was a difficult

process to get right and there was a lot of ill-feeling generated between the project and the business at the time...

Why?

Due to the poor quality of the deliverables we were getting from the business...

Relating back to what we discussed on the BIM role?

Yes, it does...in fairness, the financial managers were putting undue pressure on the BIM role – in fairness to the engineering lads, they got on with it and their feedback has been positive and I tried to make myself available to them...

Now, you're dealing with the KAMs a lot now – did you know that you would be in the role you're in now?

No idea – I don't think I knew anybody in that role to be honest but in a long career in AGOCORP, you have to build relationships, that's really core, otherwise you'll be off in a dark room on your own doing something specialised...(LAUGHS)....you'll have nothing...Freddie and Leo responded to me that they did feel the XYZ was foisted upon them...they wouldn't always feel we were listening to them or we were and weren't taking on board what they were saying...but they did appreciate that someone had been appointed into a change manager role and that they were from the engineering area...When Fergal and I convened the business focus groups...we met a number of times...with representatives of Christopher Lloyd's team, Leo and Peter Jackson and people like that...

So, you felt that there was pushback on the financial side?

Well, Rory and I were tasked to manage that – Fiona felt uncomfortable asking people to do things, people who could be her line manager when the project was over and they were giving out to her quite a bit as to what she was asking them to do and why hadn't the project done this or that before etc...So, I had to deal directly with that with very strong support from the project board – the financial staff had to put in long hours and do it again and again until they got it right...

In terms of the HR aspect of the system?

Well, the first part of it had to go-live in January, the first part of the performance management which is objective setting, part 2 would be mid-year evaluation and then part 3 would be evaluation... that worked from day 1 and that was important normally in terms of the setting of bonuses...Now, bonuses are off the table for the foreseeable future, if they're not gone, they're reduced...so getting buy-in on that was difficult and as such...The newer parts of the HR module have been well-

received and the rest of the organisation have shown a strong interest in leveraging off it...

Just have a couple more questions – could you in your own words clarify the history and outcome of project costing and billing as there seems to me to be ambiguity on that...

That was always the problem with it – we never were really clear as to what was involved...It shouldn't be as complex and I believe the tasks that are underway now will reduce the complexity of it a good degree...

Fundamentally, this is about 800 people in NOVOCORP who work on projects for customers, many of whom are internal...Depending on the customer and the project, the project will be set up (to be costed) in three ways: time and materials, fixed cost or periodic where we get paid once a quarter and the detail doesn't matter...So really where the detail matters is in the time and materials, where you have to facilitate two separate things – timesheets where people can enter time as its part of the cost and also give people the ability to purchase materials using a purchasing system the cost of which must be booked to the project – that's the cost collection side of things....the system provides those facilities...

Now, once the costs are collected, different parts of the business charge different rates, have different operating margins that vary and so different parts of the business will charge different rates for the same things and for different people and so on...

That doesn't sound too bad (BROAD SMILE)...But then you have to (be able) to gather up all those individuals, their rates, the hours they worked, and any expenses they incurred and cost for the materials they purchased, put them all into an invoice – just think about that for a minute, approximately 2,700-3000 invoices a month get sent out...the amount of back-up detail is just mad – all the timesheet, expenses and purchases sheets attached to the invoices and the internal customer going through them and saying that 'I don't remember John working those two hours; I'm not going to pay for those...'....

If you had an external customer or supplier – you wouldn't have any of that – these are practices that have been allowed to develop over time...

And they've really been customer-driven rather than process-driven....responding to customer demands...

Absolutely...but to be honest I'm never heard a customer look for that (level of detail)...certainly at the more senior levels in those internal customers, like FCs and above – they'd be looking for things to be simplified but that message didn't get through in time...

Funnily enough, when GENCOM was integrated into NOVOCORP or whatever way you want to describe it, there were no issues (around billing) and as a former internal customer of NOVOCORP that was considered to be demanding, the integration was smooth...You know, when I first went to NOVOCORP HQ I became surprised as to how resistant people actually were to change which in AGOCORP is just constant....

Is that possibly due to the employee demographic – you have a lot of longer term employees who are used to certain processes?

Well, you come over to AGOCORP –most people here have twenty year plus experience and I think we adapt far quicker over here to be honest...

Whose responsibility is project costing and billing now?

Well, it's fallen into the Finance efficiency initiative now that is being initiated – our group financial controller has described a lot of our business as 'wooden dollars' – where money is moved around in internal trading but actually is not real money and does not actually add value to the organisation as opposed to just moving money around here...

But that's common across the whole organisation – not just this project?

Yes, but nowhere nearly as much as it is between NOVOCORP and the other business units – I know the area that I am in now – one of the things we're looking at is how ITS can simplify how we charge NETWORKS...

Would it be far to say that one of the indirect benefits of this project is that it's brought this complexity to light or were senior management in AGOCORP always aware of it?

I don't think they were aware that this level of complexity existed...we have with this project managed to take some of this complexity away but we're not there yet...we've managed with this system to take some of the army of people at our end of the equation by simplifying the process and the next step is to deal with the armies in the other business units looking all the time for more and more information and then creating more and more complexity...

Probably the biggest benefit of this system is that we've created one single integrated system- everybody is now in SAP – the HR group can leverage off it and so can the future finance project...

But the business realisation activities have not been given to anyone yet?

No – that would be important to drive forward the advantages of an integrated system...

And also make a business case stronger which may benefit future projects as for some people, the business case on this implementation was not clear...

Absolutely...

Thanks again, Thomas

No problem...

(49, 00)

Interviewee: Fergal Flynn, *Former* Change Manager, NOVOCORP Financials and HR SAP Implementation.

<p><u>Colour Key:</u> Interviewer / Interviewee.</p>
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So Fergal, you might just discuss how things went on the project before the role actually ended...

Well, as you probably know John, there were some outstanding issues on the engineering side when the GO-LIVE had settled down so Christopher Lloyd, Lorna Doone who then moved on and was replaced, the man who replaced Aoife, Freddie and I...we agreed terms of reference for my new kind of role and then went out to the business to see what the problems were...and then I put together a practical list of things that could be dealt with on the table...put a cost and time duration on this...there was view of some that there some issues if fixed could actually (in a knock-on) way fix others, there were some that could be dealt with a change request but also others that would need defined ICT group support and some things that could take two years...

There was view by some like Mario who kept on saying there's a module that you can just plug in and that will solve the problem....I made sure to get down on paper that there is no module – if you need these things done it will take six months work and will involve this much ICT resources and you need the test system etc....

So, I put that up in front of Freddie and Francis Lomax and (their reaction) was 'Oh, that's dead...'...I knew that by putting it down on paper that I had dealt with it clearly – I didn't have a relationship as per the project or with Lorna so I wasn't trying to defend the role or the project – I was able to say that this was the case...Lorna was very supportive of me and there was no hang-ups from the project....

We ended up with about four key change requests and some of them are ongoing, some of them are on the shelf as ICT don't have the resources to deal with them right now...

Were these issues coming back to the design problems in the project?

Yes, well these issues were there two months into the project; two months post GO-LIVE and they're all back to engineering related issues – some of which we weren't able to deal with due to updates etc....

So, the feedback from Christopher Lloyd was very positive...

Do you regret those issues maybe that weren't really part of your role per se?

I do regret not doing more to close them off at the time both in design and after...but the support from the project wasn't there...I also regretted not getting involved more in (the project)...With Rory coming on the project...he was doing all the project management stuff and actually with my background, I was comfortable with that and had done a lot of that planning out down on paper myself primarily as at the time, I was uncomfortable with the level of engagement of management...

I didn't want to seem that I was looking for glory and I also had the belief that the project were going to be there to support and I struggled when they weren't there to support me...

When they focused on the design side?

I'd be at the project board and get support say for using Rena in training, get outside the meeting and I'd be told 'You're not to talk to Rena on that'...I really struggled with that...

I was going into (project board) meetings knowing that the outcome would be...

Was that down to resources?

I don't think so – I thought that maybe we were trying to push certain messages on the project board and that Lorna Doone was behind that but she wasn't...

Looking back over the project, a couple of things struck me. One thing that struck me was the mini-integration of GENCOM had been problematic...was that a missed opportunity for you in terms of getting support?

I left it too late though I was able to call upon them at the end...though I was told early on that the support would be there but it wasn't...One thing I was also conscious of was that my line manager was Tommy not Lorna...

Things were clear with Tommy but I feel that I should have gone to Lorna and gone around him but I didn't feel I could do that...and also someone else said it to me recently that I should have but that the project would not have benefitted as a result...

You were worried about the integrity of the team...

Yes – Rory brought great structure on the planning side but a lot of that I suppose I felt that came out of suggestions I had made before but...When I talked to Terence (external quality review), he had asked about that...

I was asked to develop the schedules for the training as Tommy didn't know how to do it and I asked for Rena and he couldn't provide her to me...

Did he delegate a lot?

Well, that implies that he didn't put a lot of a work in on the project...

I didn't mean it like that – did that (delegation) happen as maybe role demarcation wasn't clear?

I felt it was more that he didn't listen – you'd have a meeting with him and if you raised something, he'd say 'We're not discussing that here' – that happened a lot in the September/October (2010) timeframe where we ended up having a lot of extra meetings then outside of the (prior ones)....you look at the person beside you (additional colleague there other than Tommy or Rory) at the end of the meeting and you'd know that they felt that they'd been pushed into something...

And your relationship with the BIM, Fiona – was that always a source of strength for you throughout the project...?

We worked well – what didn't work well was that I would try and see the impact on the entire business whereas she would focus on finance which was probably more important...she ended up taking on a large part of data migration which is largely all she did up till the end of January....that's all she did...

Tommy did say that she had five roles and that data migration was 1 of the 5?

That does sound like to me that she's being scapegoated there... and that's what she was asked to do....she would have raised issues and told not to worry about them – she's quite close to Aoife and they worked together on that side of things (data migration).. We got on very well but we were both outside the project looking in and we did support each other – we (felt) we belonged to the finance and the engineering side of the business probably more than we belonged to the project...One of the options I could have taken was to have got involved more in the testing although it wasn't part of my role so I had some understanding of how things were instead of wasting the three months over the summer....

We talked before about Rory's impact on the project – How about Robert's impact?

Well, he brought a professionalism around the training to the project, he brought a certain mentality that I hadn't managed (to do) before then...in terms of being able to tell people what to do and not doing it myself...

He could be very straight with people and would pull them up although the people we had on the project from the business on the finance side were very good...Some people we were concerned about in terms of the training...He probably is too nice to have maybe dealt with those people in terms of their approach to training....She was very direct...

Good cap, bad cop almost...

Yes, they played off each other very well and also I mean that Robert would have emphasised to them to know their audience and you have someone from the business going in beforehand and identifying the (potentially difficult) people in the audience...watch out for him say and Fran would be able to manage that – In fairness Robert was good at managing that and advising (on that)...

What would you feel you learnt most in the project?

Well, definitely have to write things done more...I used the project as an excuse not to write things down and if I did I would have been able to follow and track things...I've also and its even something I've noticed in the last few months, I've got more confident in dealing with people at a senior management level...like Freddie is almost a peer, but say the Liam and the Chris Lloyd, I've got more comfortable...it's been a matter of confidence really...I felt I had a good sense of how things were going to go with regards to the staff and how they'd react to it...

The system has gone in some ways in a positive sense as I'd expected it to go – I should have been more confident and clear with my dealings with management that this is what I expected to happen and I regret the fact that I lost the relationship with Lorna that I had early on...

What caused that?

Me probably internalising things too much until they got to the point where things exploded...

Did you feel she was getting frustrated with you at times and maybe would have expected you to maybe reach out to senior management a bit more?

Yes, I would think so...but also she expected me to engage on a different level with the senior management that I expected or had the confidence to do...I think she also expected more productivity and as such maybe she wasn't aware that

sometimes I was getting different instructions from the project...I didn't like the idea of having the role as unclear as it initially was...although we did make it clearer afterwards as the project went along...The times I was in meetings with Tommy and Lorna, I could have driven the meetings a bit more, I could have got my points across...my points were being diluted in one of the ways (through the team) and then through Lorna, it was always too late so in the last few months, though, I see Lorna in a different light...

Part of that is getting confidence in myself out of the project...

The financial integration that has resulted though has been considered to be successful so you would take some pride in that?

I would...

But there are personal things that you have learned from...?

Yes...

One of the things that struck me as an external person is that given the amount of SAP knowledge on a project, that there could have been more scaffolding around the knowledge management side...you had John Jakesmith...

Yes, but he was one step removed from the project really even though he gave good help...We don't really have a KM strategy per se – I don't think Lorna would say we have one...

A wise-man's council to call on?

I did talk to him but I had to do it in a way that was me needing his help rather than being a threat to him whereas what you're saying there is more someone there to give good advice and that you could go to...

I suppose even at the high level, if you had that KM strategy that it would be more legitimate for you to go and ask and people may be more incentivised to assist you?

Yes, right...one thing I would say is that is an issue right through the organisation...There's a project management office in NOVOCORP that's dramatically different in really managing knowledge – effective lessons learnt...

But not a corporate policy?

No – but an indication that it does work...something that could be expanded throughout the organisation if there was the will to do it...if you'd said that to me a few years ago, I wouldn't have had a clue but I would say now is to start like that – and there are others like NETWORKS and Projects and GENCOM and Projects, so

I'm working on a project now in a totally different part of the business where I have a framework (from that) that I can get up and running quick – and a part of the business too where they're not used to big projects so...I can see that informal mentoring part working in other areas...

Thanks Fergal, we can leave it there. Thanks so much for all your time

OK. Good Luck with everything...

(28 – 00)

Interviewee: Warren Gatling, Finance Manager, NOVOCORP (Note: Warren had just moved into a new role for this last interview).

<u>Colour Key:</u> Interviewer / Interviewee.

So Warren, I have some very specific questions on the system implementation since we last met in February...I know you slightly moved out of the pure financial performance role you formerly occupied...Has the SAP system provided the benefits on the financial side?

Well, I would say that there's been more of a focus on getting the new system up and running to the level that the old system had been at...it's probably too early to tell on the financial side whether the new system has delivered though it may be different say on the HR side...

What I have heard a lot of is that 'I can't do this report on the system or...' rather than 'This system works so much better than the last one...'...As a manager, I'm not using the system as much but that's what you hear around the place with respect to the new system...the focus seems to be on getting it back to the level the old system was it...

I would say overall it's more of a rewarding system for AGOCORP than NOVOCORP – we've now moved onto a new more integrated group-wide project known as the Finance efficiency project whereby all financial (data and activities) will be integrated back into HQ and leaving the minimum amount of financial people in the business...

Is that driven more by costs than integration of financial data or vice-versa...or even a bit of both?

Well, a bit of both – which of the two (cost cutting or financial efficiency) is the weightier, I don't really know (SMILES)....it's about an improved quality of financial performance for a reduced cost...Probably the latter to be honest – you might get quality (outcome) too in terms of having people doing different things in different parts of the business, but now that we're all SAP...

If we hadn't implemented SAP we would have had to do it anyway as part of this Finance efficiency project...We would have had to do SAP plus Finance efficiency project otherwise which would have been very difficult...

Were people broadly aware that this Finance efficiency project was coming?

I think it came up half-way through the SAP project – we changed Finance director (corporately) half-way through last year as well...so it's hard to know whether the (NOVOCORP) SAP project was a part of this Finance efficiency project and that it had been planned all along or whether the SAP project was going to happen anyway and happened to fit with the rolling out of the Finance efficiency project....

In hindsight, it seems to have always been planed...Anyway its better practice to have everybody and everything on the same system....

What changes have you seen in the finance section? Structurally or in terms of numbers?

Well, there has been a lot of reorganisation and restructuring in Finance anyway so it's hard to tell...Some of the finance activities have gone back into shared services. Even if that hadn't happened, I'm not so sure that you would have seen a huge amount of reduction in headcount – I mean my area had been reorganised to take in some people who would have been in another area and we will be split again into trading which will be lead by Lorna Doone and the general operations engineering side....

If you'd talk to Lorna and Tommy, they would probably tell you we have...We have really spent up to 2 or 3 months ago (our time) trying to work out how to work the system....

How did the transition focus group process work out?

Well, in retrospect this was done as if the system was more of an IT than a finance project...the testing phase and data migration, where you get data from the old system and put it across into the new system but in the right places seemed to be more of an afterthought in so far as the project were concerned; they didn't seem to be thinking too much about it....not the responsibility of the project (seemed to be their attitude)...

Is that a reflection of the BIM role (as this role was given responsibility for data migration)?

Fiona's role – No – I think the role became the role that all other tasks seemed to fall into...I think it goes back a lot further than that (data migration), back to what are we trying to do here? Is it an IT system or a Finance system...both Thomas and Lorna had strong IT backgrounds and the project always had a strong IT bent rather than Finance...When people realised then that the job of work required (on the finance side) was as much as it was, the work that was intended for the BIM role grew to a level that they didn't expect or that any of us thought it would be and so when things just got more and more and more and things didn't seem to be going as well for Fiona with respect to the rest of the project then....

The project manager had his hands up saying 'Why aren't you doing it right?' whereas my view would be that was something that was bad planning on behalf on the project....

Given that Fiona was the financially literate one, you could say that she was asked to take on a lot of the financial tasks that then turned out to be critical?

I would agree with that completely – throughout the project, anytime there was an issue around the finance side of things, we might raise it and there was no never on the project's side – there's a word I'm looking for here....Gravitas as the importance of the issue...Now, if I sat down with Lorna and said to her what I said to you on the data migration side, she and I would disagree totally, I would say...she sits beside me and we'd often have chats about it but we wouldn't agree on that at all....Knowing that you were coming in, I did a bit of thinking on the good and bad of the project and 8 months gone – that was something that was a major flaw in the process....then it became a huge issue then towards the end...

So the HR and IT scope for the project were fine but the finance scope could definitely have been better?

I think that's fair to be honest...

I know there wasn't a UAT phase as such but how did the testing work out generally?

The whole planning and responsibility around the testing – that was all a bit muddy to be honest and although here seemed to be initial UAT or whatever you want to call it back in August (2010), it didn't seem to at a level that you can use as a springboard for future testing...when we went to do it in October up to January there seemed to be a lot of work involved...whether we redid the tests in August or whether there was a lot to be done because the work involved was more than people had (planned for)...

In terms of how it worked, with Fiona and the accountants below here, it worked quite well – they all had to report to her for the migration and testing – but to get to the point where we understood what the BIM should be doing or what part of the role was the responsibility (of people), that all took time...Project team were wondering how come things were taking so long; there was more messing about it and instead of people admitting there were issues, trying to fix them and move on as quickly as possible....

Probably had the same mistakes recurring then...

Yes – you probably had more of people making sure that people knew that the testing was not part of the project and if that went wrong, the project couldn't be criticised for allowing that to happen...I didn't care about who was to blame – I just wanted to get the testing done and make sure that the system was working..

There were a lot of meetings where you had people saying 'Is Fiona taking full responsibility for that...'...stuff like that but as for the accountants reporting to Fiona that seemed to go well...

So your view would be that Fiona ended up taking blame for tasks that were outside her role?

Well, my view would be that Fiona's (working) reputation in general suffered unfairly – she did a really good job but the job she was meant to do wasn't scoped properly...

In terms of the rest of the project and those around it, how would you feel they have performed around the project?

Starting with Fergal, I'm not sure what I said to you before but you'd asked me half-way through the project what he actually did, I would have said that I didn't know and then as the project moved on and particularly in terms of the communication around the transition focus group, I thought he did really well – he was excellent...his management of that was very good – all the tools like the job cards – he was all over (the building) here going to the meetings and people might not be able to use the system because of what he did, but he did that part very well...that kind of balanced out what I'd felt about him earlier on...but then it's my first big project like this and also he would have spent a lot of time planning this and putting it together so I suppose that's something I've learnt – not all project team members need to be operating at a high-level all the time – they all fulfil different roles at different times...

Would you feel that his reputation, maybe that's too strong a term to use was restored by the end of the project...I know you mentioned earlier that Fiona's had been damaged?

I think by the end that his reputation had been restored...I suppose not a lot of the finance staff would have seen him in action before that so...I would have a lot of time for him after that...

The same with Thomas – that's probably not quite fair – his role more flat-lined across the whole project...Both Lorna and him did their best to keep to the IT scope of the project whether it be to the detriment of the business, sorry not the detriment but whether in the long-term, changing from the scope was right or wrong...

Put it this way...given the scope of the implementation they were asked to do, they did it very well...you could give out at the time about say why they didn't seem to be taking data migration seriously? It can be easy to be critical at the time but from their perspective, they were given an IT project to be delivered at a given time and come hell or high water, they were going to do it....

I could be critical over the overall project and what I would liked added to it...
But you can't criticise them for what they did in terms of the scope that they were given...

Comes back to that original point about scope though....

Yes – now, there could have been a point that Lorna and Thomas in data migration and testing, could have out their hands up and said 'This should have been part of the original project...'...We can take it on board now but there will a delay in delivering the system...If they had said that at the time, it might have helped in clearing things up and stopped the messing around that was going on about it...

I know you hinted before that, the HR department has had a bit a first-mover advantage in bringing in with the system new processes and has really benefitted from the system...Given the Finance efficiency project and the fact that the notional banking didn't go through, would you look on this system as being a bit of a missed opportunity from a finance perspective...?

Well, without naming things that I'd have liked to have had in the system, that yes, it possibly was...

Some things weren't in the scope – some things took six months that shouldn't have taken up that much time...

When you look at the time spent on Project Costing and Billing, there is a good chance with respect to how we invoice each other, that we could eventually move to a point whereby we wouldn't invoice NETWORKS or vice-versa job by job or day by day but rather...we could go the route of agreeing a fee like say A million Euros for services that we will supply NETWORKS, that's what we expect to charge this year...you could charge for anything extra outside that – then you won't need the Project Costing and billing system like we have – you'll need a different system for that then....With hindsight we may have spent a lot of time on a system that may not be what you need in the future...

And NETWORKS will be changing too as the new (financial) priorities kick-in as well...

Yes... the one thing I would say that in AGOCORP things change quickly and 3-4 years is a long time...if the project costing and billing system works well for those 3-4 years then it will be worth the time and effort...But we put in the National Irish Bank system changes a while back, and that became more or less defunct as more and more payments came out of a single centralised account...the BANKING system was a big project but it's not used as much as it was before...

So in hindsight, I am agreeing with you that there are things that we could have done or that we did do that maybe we shouldn't but whether that was a planning thing or not, I don't know...

In your new role, do you see future system developments that could be worthwhile?

I haven't really had a chance yet but the BCS system that we use to collate all our financial data for the HQ, that's likely to become defunct in the next 2-3 years...something like that...it's not very flexible if companies move around so we may need to look at something else as well as given that as part of the Finance efficiency project we'll be changing our reports...If we had thought about that at the time...we could have brought that into the SAP system...

As a final question, what would you do differently if in your old or new role you were involved in the development of a new system again?

Well, I would have got involved a lot more at the initial scoping stages – we've talked a lot about scoping already and I would also have involved the people who would end up using the system a bit more – A greater SAP experience level on the project team would have been preferable given that we had hundreds maybe thousands of people in AGOCORP with SAP experience...We may have then asked some of those questions as to whether we needed to design the system more around us? Did we need to do that? Could we have taken the project codes we had in AGOCORP and copied those across?

Coming back to Project Costing and Billing...is it a bit of a right answer to the wring question?

Yes. Should we have gone with the system we already had or should we have taken the current SAP system and should we have changed our way of life here to adapt to the current SAP system we had? I think we tried to take the current system SAP we had and make it like the old (AGRESSO) system we had and then we also changed how we did things to reflect the existing SAP system – we kind-of fell in between two stools...It probably cost us time and money – slight tweaks to the AGOCORP system...

Would that have made the change management dimension of the project harder?

It would but there are certain things that are different, like how we do FX etc – how do you make the changes but keep the existing SAP system – that was the difficult one...

Thanks again Warren and for all your time and help.

No problem...all the best...

(27, 00)