

Case Study: Enabling the Success of a Major Corporate Initiative

Background

Executives at a biotech company believed major advancements in medical treatments could result from the study of DNA, and that an understanding of how genetic variability contributes to a patient's response to therapies was critical to their mission of delivering the right drug to the right patient. However, the company lacked the infrastructure to efficiently collect and store DNA samples for study. The company adopted the ambitious goal of collecting DNA in 90% of their clinical trials within nine months. S&A was engaged to co-lead the effort with the initiative executive sponsor, a VP who led a 300-person drug development organization.

Planning

S&A began by working with the executive sponsor to form a "goal team" made up of senior managers from stakeholder functions and facilitating planning sessions to:

- Define the problem and ensure a clear, reasonable scope;
- Determine optimal approaches, milestones, activities, sequence, and participants;
- Create a clear cross-functional project plan to enable participants to coordinate effectively; and
- Form sub-teams, each with responsibility for a critical area, and ensure their activities were aligned with the overall project plan.

Execution

First, the teams assessed the current state and conducted targeted research to address strategic questions in areas such as regulation, legal, and operations. Then, solutions were developed in each area, including:

- Global clinical trial processes and roles for DNA collection;
- Systems and tools for sample management;
- Legal documents including protocols, consent forms, and patient privacy commitments;
- Oversight mechanisms; and
- Communications and training across all internal and external audiences.

S&A's role was to facilitate the development of solutions, ensure clear proposals and rationale, and actively manage scope and issue resolution. S&A also drove the change management efforts, ensuring appropriate involvement and coordination of participants and communication with stakeholders. Lastly, S&A facilitated roll-out activities, playing a decreasing role over time, before transitioning project outputs to the client for ongoing management and continuous improvement.

Results

S&A's efforts allowed the company to achieve its goal (on-time and on-budget) while optimizing the involvement and effort from senior executives. The company is now actively collecting DNA, its knowledge base on this topic was dramatically increased, and the infrastructure is in place for ongoing success.

Case Snapshot

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| Client: | Executive leader of a large drug development organization |
| Need: | Establish new cross-functional capability but lacked internal resources and skills to manage the complex project |
| Project: | Engaged S&A to co-lead the project and manage the internal project teams |
| Impact: | Goal was met on-time and on-budget with optimal use of senior executives' time |

Client Feedback

The executive sponsor gave S&A an "exceeded expectations" rating and said *"I hired you because this was a complex project and I knew your team would figure out how to get it done. I needed this to proceed successfully with minimal oversight from me and we did not have the internal personnel to do this. Your team succeeded in driving the project forward, anticipating issues, facilitating resolution, involving me as necessary, and achieving the goal 100%. You are real pros."*