



CASE STUDY

The Learning Enrichment Foundation

› TRANSFORMING IT SERVICES FOR COMMUNITY IMPACT:

How The Learning Enrichment
Foundation Modernized
with ITIL 4 and PRINCE2



INTRODUCTION

The Learning Enrichment Foundation (LEF) is a Toronto-based, non-profit organization dedicated to community empowerment.

Its mission, since 1978, is to “provide integrated and holistic community-responsive initiatives that enable individuals and families to become valued contributors to their community’s social and economic development”.

In practice, this covers a range of services including childcare (e.g., licenced childcare centres), education, financial assistance, employment support, youth and senior citizens’ programmes and helping people access food banks.

The shift to digital services across private and public sector organizations – especially since the changes created by the COVID-19 pandemic – has equally affected the non-profit sector, therefore elevating the importance of IT services within the LEF and the need to modernise its operations and approach to delivering IT and digital services.

As part of this transformation, the organization’s adoption of ITIL 4 and PRINCE2 Project Management best practices demonstrated how these approaches are equally applicable to the needs of a smaller organization as to larger national and multinational enterprises.

CHALLENGES

When Luis Allegretti, senior manager IT, joined the LEF four years ago he identified “massive technical debt” based on several unfinished projects including the website, customer relationship management (CRM) and enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems.

The consequences of the technical debt included:

- › **Slow(er) feature development:**
the teams spent more time working around outdated or fragile components instead of building new capabilities.
- › **Extended testing cycles:**
regression issues were common, requiring extra quality assurance (QA) effort before release.
- › **Inconsistent user experience:**
patchwork caused uneven performance. Functionality across different parts of the platforms was vastly dissimilar.
- › **Opportunity cost:**
strategic initiatives were delayed (or abandoned) because resources were tied up in technical clean-up.
- › **Frustration and burnout:**
constantly working around system limitations had eroded motivation, creativity and credibility at LEF.

At the time, IT services were outsourced to a managed service provider along with nominating informal, designated individuals within the organization to handle specific IT issues, such as resolving a printer problem. However, the internal IT organization did not own the necessary processes.

Fragmented communication and outdated ticketing systems resulted in slow response times and a lack of visibility and satisfaction for both users and IT staff.

An agile problem

An agile approach was applied across all projects and tasks within the IT function, covering both front-end and back-end development. Not limited to a single application or team, the intent was to make agile the standard delivery method for the entire IT portfolio by blending elements of a traditional with an agile approach.

The idea was to improve responsiveness, collaboration and delivery speed across all IT initiatives. However, while IT teams adapted to agile ceremonies and terminology, non-IT stakeholders struggled with the new ways of working. The unfamiliar jargon, frequent meetings (daily stand-ups, sprint planning, retrospectives) and a perceived lack of tangible results led to confusion and disengagement outside the IT sphere.

As the organization – particularly given its non-profit, government-facing status – works primarily in a Waterfall fashion, agile practices conflicted with this. The result was long project delays, loss or lateness of features and escalating costs. These existing issues, plus the rush to take services online during the pandemic, caught the organization off-guard according to Luis Allegretti (Senior Manager of IT at LEF at the time of transformation).

This directly affected the ability of the LEF to deliver services effectively – such as having a user-friendly parent portal for the organization’s child care centres or a way to automate the existing manual approach to onboard a new client – and deliver a digital experience that fully represented the organization. Ultimately, this impacted the LEF’s image among the community, despite its well-established reputation.

OBJECTIVES

The principal objectives for the organization were:

- › To gain the benefits from introducing standardised, best practice approaches and to ensure the methods would fit the culture of the organization and avoid any perception of being rigid.
- › To build trust with stakeholders.
- › To implement a new ticketing system – Tikit from Cireson.
- › To create a formal IT policy designed to guide employees and the IT department in using information technology securely. The policy would emphasise protecting sensitive data and outline threats like loss, theft, copyright violations, malware and compliance risks, it would aim to maximise data protection and minimise operational risk.

This transformation would involve buy-in from the IT team and the executive branch of the organization.

SOLUTION

The LEF chose to implement Cireson's Tikit system – internally branded as LEFy – because of its ability to integrate with Microsoft Teams. Employees at the LEF were already accustomed to communicating via MS Teams and the new system would allow them to create tickets directly from messages and integrate with AI in a faster and user-friendly way.

Adopting the ITIL 4 guiding principles of start where you are and optimise and automate allowed the LEF IT team to determine how to best automate using the existing platform(s) instead of trying to recreate everything as new.

In turn, the organization adopted various practices from ITIL 4 and PRINCE2 Project Management. This initially involved training and certification for the IT team and a focus on specific ITIL 4 concepts, practices and the PRINCE2 Project Management method:

› Addressing technical debt

Knowledge from the ITIL 4: High-velocity IT module enabled the team to combine various approaches – including agile and DevOps – to address the technical debt in the organization. The implementation was pragmatic and organic, adopting a particular approach such as DevOps where it made sense and tracking the success factors outlined in the high-velocity IT guidance.

› Managing and documenting service requests

With a multitude of requirements in the organization, the ITIL 4 service request management practice was needed to address them in a timely way. The aim was to manage and document service requests to ensure accountability from the IT team.

› Managing incidents

The previously-outsourced system support and troubleshooting functions had created a lack of understanding within the LEF IT team when a system went down. Therefore, the ITIL 4 incident management practice was necessary to enable better management of incidents, including necessary escalation and documentation.

› Responding to events

The ITIL 4 monitoring and event management practice was used to define thresholds, observe and respond to events before they become an issue.

› A commitment to delivery

Adopting the ITIL 4 service desk practice was about making a commitment to the organization: to start projects the IT team was confident it could finish or be able to highlight the need for additional, external support.

› Developing a structured project plan

Using the PRINCE2 Project Management method plus the Project Libre software application provided the LEF IT team with a structured project plan, focused on development and stakeholder engagement alongside an agile approach.

This improved the team's project management practice. Managing in stages and with processes led to better results, record keeping and continuous improvement based on feeding lessons learned into future projects.

For example, the LEF IT team followed PRINCE2 Project Management's manage by exception principle, which gives the project manager and the project team sufficient autonomy, while keeping the executive team within reach; meanwhile monitoring progress and communicating relevant updates to stakeholders, as the project achieved its different stages.

PRINCE2 Project Management approaches were critical to the roll-out strategy of the new system, including product demonstrations for internal stakeholders, feedback surveys to check the solution met user needs and creation of a user-friendly story to show users how to create tickets using the LEFy system.

Using the latest version of PRINCE2 Project Management, with its focus on areas such as people and sustainability, aligned well with the organization's culture and approach to change.

RESULTS

Efficiency:

- › Successfully embedding best practice into daily workflows and a more structured approach to resolving technical issues, based on a culture of continual improvement while documenting, adapting and innovating processes.
- › Streamlined operations: the new ticketing system made it more transparent for staff to submit a ticket; automation of registration and access to services - i.e., onboarding - for newcomers to the organization was now possible in minutes (previously it was a manual process that took days to complete).
- › AI chatbot integrated into the support system to respond to frequently-asked questions, delivering faster answers to users.
- › The team resolves about seven tickets per day, with an average resolution time of less than a day (instead of days/ weeks previously). Greater accountability among the team receives positive feedback from users.

User experience:

- › Registration of parents for childcare now operates more naturally on the website and allows parents to change and update information, pay online either in part or in full, plus receive payment reminders. Cybersecurity is in place to protect financial transactions
- › Significant improvements to communication between staff and the IT team through the MS Teams interface, including instant messaging.
- › Increased user satisfaction.

Governance and visibility:

- › Actionable metrics for executive leadership: reporting the number of cases handled monthly and using trend data to identify any areas needing greater resources.
- › LEF won the Best ITSM Process category in the Cireson ITSM Awards. Cireson said: "The IT team at the Learning Enrichment Foundation (LEF) undertook a full transformation of its service management strategy to streamline support and increase visibility. They paired a strategic rollout, which prioritised stakeholder feedback and user onboarding, with the adoption of ITIL best practice to improve communication, reduce resolution times and foster a culture of continuous improvement. By integrating a structured yet user-friendly system, LEF increased visibility, efficiency and user satisfaction – demonstrating how a nonprofit can successfully transform IT operations to better support organizational goals and community impact."



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“This transformation has not only enhanced our IT service delivery but also strengthened our ability to fulfil our mission in a dynamic and evolving environment.”

“The LEF has demonstrated how ITSM can be a powerful enabler of organizational success. An organization is never too small or too big to put processes in place to effectively do the best tech stack management.”

“A critical aspect of our digital transformation was the organization retaining its identity. Adopting ITIL 4 and PRINCE2 Project Management to fit with our culture and pace meant that we were focused on the journey and this contributed to the transformation’s success.”

Luis Allegretti, senior manager IT, The Learning Enrichment Foundation



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