RMIT UNIVERSITY GAINS ENTERPRISE-WIDE PROJECT VISIBILITY WITH SENSEI AND ALTUS

When the retirement of Microsoft Project Online approached, the project management office at Melbourne's RMIT University saw an opportunity to upgrade its systems to Sensei Project Solutions' preferred platform, Altus. In a project spanning six months, the University has gained upgraded capability and performance while delivering a better-integrated solution meeting the needs of everyone from project managers through to senior executives. The result is an across-the-board improvement in project management, along with executive visibility of the full project portfolio.

The Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT University) is a global university of technology, design and enterprise with more than 104,000 students and over 13,000 staff globally. RMIT University empowers people and communities to adapt and thrive across generations, with education, research and civic engagement that are applied, inclusive, and impactful. It has three substantial campuses in Melbourne, located in the city, Brunswick and Bundoora, along with other Victorian locations. It also has two campuses and an English-language centre in Vietnam, and a research and innovation hub in Spain. In addition, RMIT programs are offered through partners in Singapore, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, India and China, with research and industry partnerships across the globe.

COMPANY NAME
The Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT University)

INDUSTRY
Higher Education

LOCATION
Victoria, Australia | Vietnam | Spain

SITUATION

Director of Portfolio Planning and Delivery, Rhythm Mody, says RMIT University was familiar with and experienced in using Sensei's earlier products based on the Microsoft platform. "However, two catalysts arose; one was Microsoft retiring Project Online, so we had to move to a new tool. The other is that we wanted consolidation to a single solution for portfolio, program and project management, with better data insights across the entire estate."

Like many large and complex organisations, the project investment slate plays a crucial role in advancing development at RMIT University. Mody says there are three broad categories into which project delivery is divided: IT, for technology systems replacements and uplift, business initiatives, supporting educators or the research community and enhancing student experience, and property projects, maintaining and building facilities as part of the University's expansion and growth.
The RMIT University project management community

comprises 60+ practitioners across the enterprise, including project managers, program managers, portfolio managers, PMO staff and coordinators. While the number varies, there are typically around 70 projects underway at any given time, with an equivalent pipeline awaiting commencement in line with the approved investment slate.

Across their full scope of work, Mody says the requirement was for an end-to-end tool for all project management needs. "We wanted to be able to identify, schedule and forward plan resources, track issues and risks, manage dependencies, and deliver insights into performance," he notes. "Also, we were previously working in two different systems. So, there was a level of duplication and workarounds which we sought to eliminate."

SOLUTION

With an existing relationship and working knowledge of Sensei, the RMIT University team knew where to look for a solution flexible enough to be useful for those delivering straightforward projects, and powerful enough to handle complex, multi-year rollouts. "This was an important factor in selecting the Altus platform," confirms Mody. "A key part is we wanted to enable our project managers, who perform advanced tasks - such as estimating effort and using tools like Jira, while still catering for more basic functions without onerous or costly licensing for simpler use cases."

He calls out Sensei's flexible approach to delivery, from a thorough discovery process to the implementation and configuration of Altus. "Deliverables and requirements can change quickly with an initiative of this nature. We chose a time and materials approach because a fixed-price model would have limited flexibility. While this required a high level of trust in our vendor, that trust in Sensei was well placed, with transparency and a clear commitment to creating value."

The result, Mody confirms, is that Altus was delivered on time and budget in a project that spanned some six months. Delivery included integration with RMIT University's Workday financial system and a migration of its legacy project data.

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>
> *Rhythm Mody,*
> *Director of Portfolio Planning and Delivery, RMIT*

BENEFITS REALISED

ENTERPRISE PORTFOLIO VISIBILITY
Single, integrated view from individual projects to full investment portfolio.

UNIFIED AND INTEGRATED PLATFORM
Consolidated systems with financial integration, eliminating duplication and silos.

ADVANCED REPORTING AND INSIGHTS
Real-time, portfolio-level reporting enabling better decision-making at all levels.

HIGH ADOPTION ACROSS TEAMS
Strong uptake driven by alignment to user needs, training and support.

RESULTS AND KEY FACTORS FOR SUCCESS

Key factors for success included market research, involving system users from the start, scheduled 'hypercare' post-implementation, and 'tone from the top'.

Says Mody: "Executive sponsorship was embedded from the outset with every layer of this project having ongoing executive presence, ensuring senior visibility and accountability throughout."

Crucially, he adds that executive interest was not passive. "Benefit ownership was formally assigned as part of the business case, meaning executives had a direct stake in the realisation of outcomes. This reinforced the sense of shared purpose, with teams describing the project as feeling cohesive – working as a single unified effort rather than a collection of silos."

One of the key measures of success with any new platform is user adoption, which Mody rates as high. He explains that this was achieved by bringing project managers along on the journey, and building a solution accurately aligned with their needs.

"We selected pilot projects across the three cohorts – IT, academic and property – demonstrating how Altus could improve delivery and visibility. This fostered excitement that a better solution was coming, supporting a mindset that this was a positive development for improving personal and project performance," he explains.

This was complemented with training workshops, product champions and again, crucially, immediacy of support. "We wanted people who are using Altus in the moment, to get support in the moment, before they get distracted and move on to other tasks," Mody confirms. "And we wanted to create demand, so our people would actively look forward to getting the new product and start using it."

Hypercare, as the name implies, is a short but intensive support period delivered by Sensei immediately after 'go live'. This two-week period stabilised the platform, provided close and immediate support for those who needed it, and resolved minor configuration refinements and reconciliation items.

With a broad smile, Mody confirms that the Altus rollout has proven a success. "The key capability that we're very excited about is reporting at the portfolio level," he confirms. "This was previously lacking, along with integration with our Workday financial system. With all components now in one system, we can see everything in one report, from a single project through to a program of work, and on to the portfolio level, tracking the entire investment."

While implementation is still in its early stages, Mody says executive feedback is consistently positive, particularly for what he describes as a 'single view of the investment slate'. "This gives leaders the ability to move fluidly from portfolio-level oversight down to individual project detail in one connected environment, along with integration with the ERP system for a genuine single pane of glass across all projects."

As a discipline, project management rests on a process of maturation, moving from the basics of planning and resource control to more advanced functions such as predictive scheduling, agile scaling, and strategic portfolio alignment. Though it is early days for RMIT University's Altus platform, Mody is confident it has the right tools for a more efficient and effective PMO: "The implementation is recent and longer-term ROI metrics are still maturing, but we're seeing the results in improved user experience, self-service reporting and even a reduction in Microsoft licensing costs. And we're seeing enterprise-level reporting giving leadership visibility and control they previously lacked," he concludes.

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