



This is an interview with Sophie and Amanda from the County Court of Victoria. It captures their experiences in designing, building, implementing and now running their Project Management Framework. It is a long journey that requires a steadfast drive and continuing support from leaders. We were keen to draw out some of the elements that were critical to their success.

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**Level35: Can you please tell us what your roles are at the County Court?**

**Sophie Binks:** I am currently Acting Director of the Strategy, Analytics and Program Delivery Team which is responsible for providing strategic advisory, planning and project delivery services to the Chief Judge and the Court. This incorporates assisting to articulate the Chief Judge's strategic direction of the Court, coordinating the Court's planning cycle (including applications for funding), providing data modelling, business intelligence and analytics to support evidence-based decision making, providing statutory reporting on the Court's activity and delivery of key projects in accordance with the Court's Strategic Plan.

**Amanda Ahmed:** I'm a Program Officer in the Strategy, Analytics and Program Delivery Team and I report directly to Sophie. My role provides guidance and support to court staff regarding the Court's project management process, including the use of the Zeno Project Management tool, the Court's Operational Project Management Framework and the Court's suite of Project Management templates. I also lead the Zeno Champions Working Group, which includes champions from each of our teams. I am responsible for preparing and updating project documentation, monitoring and reporting on project status, contributing to risk and issue management, establishing and maintaining relationships of influence with stakeholders, coordinating meetings and activities, and organising resources.

**Level35: What problems were you trying to solve?**

**Sophie:** We were looking for a more diverse set of reports from projects through to portfolios which would provide dashboards with clear visuals and provide greater transparency for all projects. We also wanted to improve project status reporting and provide our project leads with the tools to better support them with delivery at all stages of their projects.

**Amanda:** We needed more efficient and accurate reporting capabilities for projects at the Court, especially at the portfolio level. Prior to using Zeno.PM, I was running a Project Dashboard Report in Excel which relied on PMs sending their updates to me and I would cut and paste them into one spreadsheet – this was not an efficient process, especially as the number of projects grew and the driver for updates was coming from our team rather than being the responsibility of the PMs.

**Level35: What were some of the existing issues you were facing with project delivery, reporting, etc.**

**Sophie:** There was no centralised project management tool to capture all project information and there was no streamlined reporting capability to provide clear oversight for all projects. As such, there was a tendency towards a more siloed approach to project work, as well as at times a duplication of work.

**Amanda:** There were no project status reports, only the Project Dashboard Report (as previously mentioned). I used to send out fortnightly reminders to staff and follow up projects which had not been updated. This was a very time consuming and inefficient process.

**Level35: What was the level of PM maturity, and were you also working with 'citizen' PMs?**

At the time of implementing Zeno.PM, the Court did not have a dedicated PMO so the level of PM maturity was not high. We also had varied levels of project complexity, with our complex projects being led by experienced PMs who were often sourced externally specifically for these roles. The Court's operational staff also lead projects as part of their operational role. It is this group who we are investing in to develop and mature so they are set up to succeed in delivering their projects.

**Level35: Why now, and what made the organisation want to embark on this journey?**

**Sophie:** We identified the risk of not having an enterprise project management tool and assessed that implementing a tool would mitigate and reduce several project related risks and issues, and provide benefits through centralising all project information, providing multiple features to support project delivery, increasing time to deliver projects and effectively report on project status and health.

**Level35: What factors were important to ensure success?**

**Sophie and Amanda:** Planning the implementation of Zeno.PM, especially the staff consultation and readiness, and working collaboratively with Level35 were integral to the success. Internal stakeholder consultation was extremely important to ensure we obtained their buy-in, feedback and support. We established a Champions Working Group with Team Champions representing all areas of the Court's Administration.

The Team Champions were selected and trained in project management and Zeno.PM to support their teams with general enquiries in these areas. They provide an important role in terms of supporting project managers, sharing information and uplifting project management maturity at the Court.

In addition, we designed a new and simplified operational project management framework in consultation with staff. This is tailored to the Court to assist operational staff in how to run a successful project from start to finish. It is easy to utilise and includes clear and engaging visuals, process flow charts, links to all required project management documentation, and contains an FAQ. We aligned this to the Zeno.PM project management tool to simplify and create efficiencies.

We also created a Project Management Hub on the Court's intranet which functions as a one stop shop for all PM needs. Anyone can use it and it caters for all levels of project management experience. All the Project Management Framework documentation is available here, as well as project management templates, Zeno.PM user guides, Project Status Report requirements including due dates, and a project guide. All this documentation is aligned to the work stages of Zeno so the user can clearly identify what needs to be completed at each of these stages. We also established a Microsoft Teams Channel to stimulate collaboration in the project space.

Our CEO supported and advocated the use of the Zeno.PM project management tool and mandated fortnightly project status reporting for all projects in the Court's Strategic Plan.

### **Level35: Did you have to change direction/scope as you went, and why?**

**Sophie:** Definitely! Initially, the project management framework was based on the Victorian Government's Project Management Excellence, which at the time was based on having an enterprise PMO to provide project management oversight and control stage gates. This tended to be focussed on complex projects with high risk and budgets. However, this didn't translate to the majority of the Court's projects. Users were struggling to connect the project work they were doing to the previous complex framework. In order to get more buy-in we had to listen to the users and find out what was working for them and what was not. As a result, we created an operational project management framework which stripped back all the project management jargon, is much easier for new project managers to use and more aligned with our operations. We tailored the project stages to Zeno.PM so there was alignment with the framework and the software, thereby creating a much easier to follow experience for the user.

**Amanda:** We appointed Team Champions to foster greater engagement with project managers. Under the previous project management framework, there were no Team Champions and we felt they were really important to ensure there were multiple subject matter experts in this space. The Team Champions are the first port of call within their teams for any project management questions/enquiries which can be pursued further with the Zeno.PM administrator if required. We have created three tiers of subject matter experts – Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced – so they do not feel like they need to know everything about project management and Zeno.PM when they commence.

### **Level35: What were the key take-outs you have from this experience?**

**Sophie and Amanda:** There were heaps of key take-outs!

**Sophie:** Most importantly, listen to your key stakeholders in order to get their buy-in.

Keep looking at ways to make this process more engaging, for example, different forms of communications other than emails. We created a dedicated Project Management Microsoft Teams Channel to stimulate collaboration in the project space. This includes an engaging feedback forum, tip of the day posts, reminders for project status report deadlines, key announcements, and so on. Also, get buy in from stakeholders who are influencers and early adopters as staff will follow them as they won't want to miss out on what's happening.

**Amanda:** People are busy and there is a lot of information overload out there, so keep things simple and information centralised! For example, the Project Management Hub intranet page is the one stop shop for everything staff need to

know about project management at the Court. All the documentation is clear and easy to follow for those new to project management. I branded key pieces of documentation with coloured backgrounds which were visually engaging and mirrored the Zeno.PM work stages making it easier to follow for the user.

**Level35: From the above, what do you see as the critical success factors/measures for this?**

**Sophie and Amanda:** The establishment of a regular project dashboard reporting regime to the Executive Leadership Team and Chief Judge, which aligns to the Court's Strategic Plan.

The establishment of Programs and Portfolios for each of the Divisions at the Court. This groups all the projects that each member of the Executive Leadership Team is responsible for. This centralises all their projects and provides a suite of reports that can be generated at a click of a button, from project status reports to program and portfolio dashboard reports.

Clearer oversight of project risks and issues with easy to generate reports.

**Level35: How are you keeping things on track and the benefits locked in?**

**Sophie:** A portfolio report of the Court's major projects under the Court's Strategic Plan is generated every fortnight and circulated to the Executive Leadership Team. This report is important as it ensures oversight and transparency of all strategic projects currently being undertaken at the Court.

**Amanda:** The Team Champions Working Group was established with its primary purpose being to provide a forum for the sharing of information, feedback and questions about Zeno.PM and project management. They are also required to communicate with PMs in their teams any relevant information discussed at the Working Group meeting.

Regular updates on the Teams Feedback Forum, which are informal, engaging using GIFs and images.

Ensuring all documentation – guides, templates, quick links – on the PM hub are kept up to date.

**Level35: What's next ...?**

**Sophie and Amanda:** Implement a monthly Risks and Issues Forum with all project leads and key stakeholders. The goal is to get the right people together regularly to ensure they are across the Red and Amber project risks and issues, and to provide support to mitigate risks and resolve issues.

Hold Introductory Financial Sessions for PMs with funded projects to utilise the financial features in Zeno.PM and ensure PMs know how to actively manage their project's expenditure against the budget.

Establish a Project Management Newsletter with Zeno.PM tips, highlighting a user's experience in project management and using Zeno.