Workforce Management Transformation

CHALLENGE

Exent were engaged by a large client operating in the health and human services industry to remediate a project experiencing significant headwinds. The mission was to implement a new workforce management solution into a complex environment, however the inflight internal project team faced numerous issues across governance, planning, vendor management, solution complexity, target state design and internal capability. Issues manufactured in poorly defined project scope, lack of sponsorship, people and productivity gaps, and a sense of internal fatigue and disengagement. The ultimate effects were experienced in project slippage and significant budget overruns.

In supporting a turnaround of the project, the client and Exent explored root causes in executive and team turnover, project governance and control, lack of a clear scope, and suboptimal project delivery capability. It was discovered that the project had been in progress for 12 months without a defined project scope or business requirements defined.

Exent was engaged to review and remediate the project, establish a robust governance structure, and then oversee and support the full implementation of the workforce management solution, and in particular the introduction of a new rostering, time and attendance and award interpretation capabilities in a diverse, regionally dispersed business, deploying into around 4000 staff. Our responsibilities also encompassed integrating the new system with the existing payroll system, addressing data integrity issues, streamlining business processes, and ensuring compliance with the latest industry awards and agreements.

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Exent's assessment revealed the project had been underway for 12 months without a project scope or requirements. 60% of the project's 5-year-budget had been exhausted within the first 12 months, with little to show. Subsequently, Exent was engaged to recover the project.

The shift to the new system necessitated a ground-up configuration of approval lines, schedules, and access profiles for approximately 4,000 employees. Additionally, new Government legislation and industrial relations mandates introduced fresh requirements and modifications in staff record keeping, including the collection of punch data from all non-salary staff. This presented a significant change for the majority of the client's employees, necessitating a comprehensive adaptation strategy.

The project required a high level of confidence in pay rule configuration to mitigate non-compliance risks stemming from correctly interpreted Enterprise Agreements. The internal project team initially pursued a like-for-like implementation approach. However, Exent's review revealed potential pay rule discrepancies, rendering the original approach unsuitable and calling for a complete overhaul.

APPROACH

After conducting a thorough assessment and during the initial planning phase, Exent assembled a team of experts from a variety of disciplines spanning project management, workforce management, sector specialists, business process experts, data specialists, test leads and organisational change leads. This team was involved in replanning and driving a complex, multi-phased implementation of the solution in partnership with the Tier 1 solution vendor. Exent collaborated closely with internal subject matter experts (SMEs) and project resources, along with the vendor's implementation team, as part of a blended 'one team' model.

Emphasising clarity and depth, the project team diligently defined the scope, including clear project deliverables and success criteria. Exent's team collaborated with internal and vendor stakeholders to clearly define requirements. By the time project tasks were planned and assigned, Exent's involvement had significantly increased stakeholder engagement, morale, and confidence, propelling the project forward.

The project also addressed extensive data quality issues through a meticulous cleanup effort of employee and role data. Simultaneously, best practice processes were implemented to set the client up for long-term success.

Exent's project team introduced a governance framework, empowering the client's Executive and Board to make informed decisions regarding various project gateways. This not only expedited the project timeline but also provided assurance that status updates accurately reflected the project's reality.

Throughout all project phases, change management initiatives were deployed to ensure business readiness. These initiatives included training to standardise leave and rostering practices across all business divisions and the establishment of change champions for internal advocacy and adoption.

One notable accomplishment in Exent's Organisational Change Management capability was the creation of heat maps, detailing change impacts from concurrent projects and reform changes on individual role groups within the organisation. This initiative effectively managed test cycles and resource-intensive tasks to minimise change fatigue within the business and maintain high morale within the project team.

Exent's team also focused on enhancing internal capabilities by developing in-house system experts, enabling the client to independently troubleshoot user issues, support staff requests, and realise future system benefits.

Additionally, a governance framework was developed to empower the client to implement controls and mitigate risks once the project returned to business as usual (BAU). This framework included a Transition Model with detailed roles and responsibilities post-transition, and the establishment of a Hyper Care Support model that involved the creation of a call centre and ticketing system.

TESTING APPROACH

To ensure the accuracy and compliance of pay rules, the client engaged a third-party Industrial Relations auditing company to interpret pay rules and produce dependable Pay Rule Specification Documentation.

To expedite Pay Rule Testing without compromising quality, Exent implemented a test automation platform and a tracking dashboard system. This strategic move not only saved substantial time but also fortified compliance with pay rule configurations and new Enterprise Agreements.

To provide comprehensive coverage, 30 test cases per pay rule were created, totalling over 180 pay rules and more than 5,400 test scenarios. Client-internal SMEs meticulously validated these scenarios, addressing edge cases through manual testing and providing comprehensive overviews with parallel test runs.

To maintain accuracy, Exent utilised a tracking dashboard for transparency on test case status, aiming for a 100% pass rate. Data from the dashboard guided decision-making for implementation accuracy and compliance.
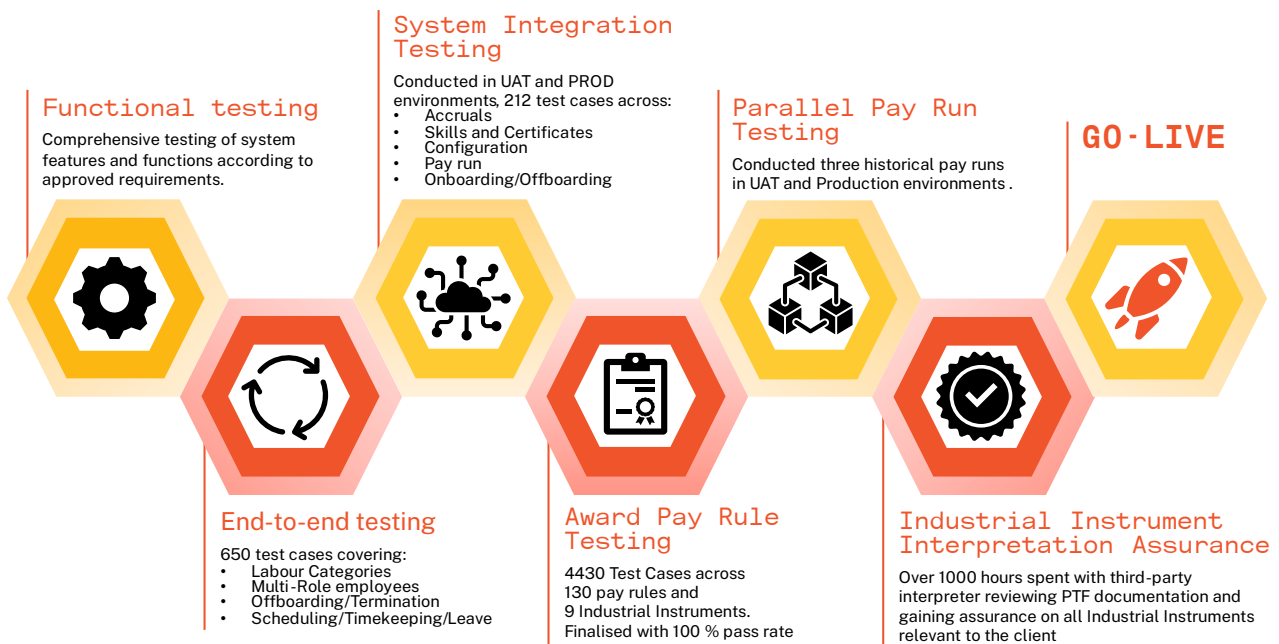
Functional testing

Comprehensive testing of system features and functions according to approved requirements.

System Integration Testing

Conducted in UAT and PROD environments, 212 test cases across:
- Accruals
- Skills and Certificates
- Configuration
- Pay run
- Onboarding/Offboarding

Parallel Pay Run Testing

Conducted three historical pay runs in UAT and Production environments .

GO-LIVE

End-to-end testing

650 test cases covering:
- Labour Categories
- Multi-Role employees
- Offboarding/Termination
- Scheduling/Timekeeping/Leave

Award Pay Rule Testing

4430 Test Cases across 130 pay rules and 9 Industrial Instruments. Finalised with 100 % pass rate

Industrial Instrument Interpretation Assurance

Over 1000 hours spent with third-party interpreter reviewing PTF documentation and gaining assurance on all Industrial Instruments relevant to the client

Figure 1. Testing Summary: Complex Roster Implementation

OUTCOMES

Exent's project support enabled the client to gain a clear understanding of the project's scope and requirements. The project team successfully streamlined the project timeline using a critical path approach, allowing the client to regain control of the project budget, ultimately propelling the project through to a successful phased go-live.

CLEARLY ARTICULATED SCOPE

Exent led the project in articulating the project scope with precision, enabling a focused approach that prioritised the most valuable functions and outcomes. This approach allowed for rigorous planning and costing.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Through clarity in scope and alignment of executive leadership, Exent fostered the reengagement of key stakeholders on the project. This led to improved project execution, a better understanding of the project's value, and increased adoption rates across the organisation.

BUDGET & TIMELINE CERTAINTY

Exent's highly experienced project team supported the client by adhering to the planned timeline and budget. This resulted in elevated project velocity and execution quality, and certainty in planning key change management tasks.

COMPLIANT PAY RULES & FUTURE ENTERPRISE BARGAINING AGREEMENT READINESS

In addition to project management expertise, the Exent team brought subject matter experts to the project, identifying and mitigating potential pay rule discrepancies in the system configuration. This ensured the delivery of a compliant system that shielded the client from potential pay disputes. The corrected current Enterprise Agreement implementation serves as a baseline for reducing effort in reconfiguring and testing any future EBA changes.

"Thanks to Exent's intervention, we have been able to push the project to go-live, a milestone we couldn't have reached with our internal resources alone."

~ *People & Engagement Director*