

Helping a university press align two key teams

The scope

Conduct a review of the current structures around digital innovation and product management, following a period of rapid growth, including:

- Understanding the working cultures, skill sets, and organisational structures of two teams that were adjacent in purpose but occasionally at odds in practice
- Uncovering underlying assumptions and overlaps in responsibilities of the teams, and their impact on productivity, morale, and organisational goals
- Enabling team members to express their concerns and hear from others with differing views within a constructive setting
- Working with the teams to pave the way for a common understanding of how to deliver the press's mission

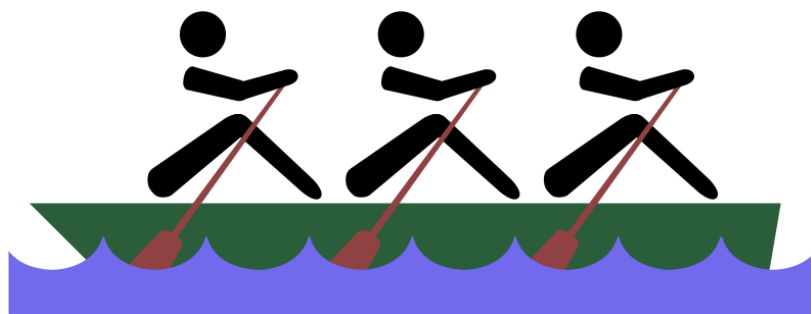
What we did

Whole-system discovery

We first conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with senior stakeholders at the press to gain an understanding of their perspectives, concerns, and needs. This was followed by workshops for each team to discuss their successes, challenges, gaps, and perceptions of the situation. Having established the key issues, we consulted with a select group of external experts – product and technology leaders from other companies – to explore a range of possible options for interventions.

Co-creating a better way to work together

We shared our findings with both teams at a workshop, where we invited their input on how to work together to address pain points, and improve governance and accountability.



We facilitated a series of structured exercises in which we created and refined a common understanding of how the teams should work together and co-created proposed new workflows and

governance mechanisms, agreed on areas of responsibility as well as where training opportunities should be offered. Finally, we presented these proposals and our recommendations to the Managing Director.

Our findings and recommendations

Our analysis revealed that both teams had much to offer the organisation in terms of their knowledge, work ethic, external relationships, and effectiveness. However, they needed clarification about each team's ownership, responsibilities, and priorities. Many of the apparent differences in perspective were due to governance issues, with the teams having different views of how decisions were supposed to be made. Our recommendations therefore focused on ways for them to develop a common understanding of the organisation's mission and objectives; clearer remits for decision making groups, proposals for better alignment of working practices and communication; opportunities for continuous process improvement; potential changes to some job titles; and the building of cross-functional teams.