

The Quick Win Team

Interview with Juanita Lohmeyer, TELUS Communications



Juanita Lohmeyer is a founding member and manager of the TELUS Quick Win Team. She has worked in business support and business operations at TELUS over the past four years. Prior to joining TELUS, Lohmeyer worked in Europe for T-Mobile. Lohmeyer may be reached at Juanita.Lohmeyer@TELUS.COM.

TELUS is a leading national telecommunications company in Canada, with \$8.4 billion of annual revenue and 10.4 million customer connections, including 4.7 million wireless subscribers, 4.6 million wireline network access lines and 1.05 million Internet subscribers. The company's strategic intent is to unleash the power of the Internet to deliver the best solutions to Canadians at home, in the workplace, and on the move. TELUS provides customers with a wide range of wireline and wireless communications products and services including data, Internet protocol (IP), voice, entertainment and video services. The company has deployed unique business solutions through an organization called the "Quick Win" team. Juanita Lohmeyer, a founding member and manager of the TELUS Quick Win Team, discussed how Quick Win has been a key enabler of organizational transformation with William Ulrich, the president of Tactical Strategy Group.



William Ulrich is president of Tactical Strategy Group and a management consultant. He serves as co-chair of the Business Architecture Conference and is co-chair of the OMG Architecture-Driven Modernization Task Force. Ulrich may be reached at tsginc@cruzio.com.

Ulrich: Can you describe the Quick Win Team at TELUS?

Lohmeyer: Quick Win is an innovative new team that was founded within TELUS Network Operations (TNO) and has now expanded across TELUS business units. By partnering with frontline business team members, Quick Win leverages technology to drive a can-do culture, transform the business, and develop leaders. Quick Win supports transformation by collaboratively solving current business problems, while exposing opportunities to grow.

ness knowledge and bolstering the business operations knowledge management processes. Finally, Quick Win applies technology at the speed and level of understanding of the business.

Ulrich: What prompted the founding of the Quick Win Team?

Lohmeyer: The Quick Win Team, founded by Richard Bridges, began in support of a TELUS operational efficiency program and a desire to quickly bring about business improvements. Quick Win is based on a series of small projects that deliver profound improvements to the TELUS business community from an operational improvement perspective. Quick Win originally began with two people who focused on automating frontline user activities in operational areas. The team grew from a two-person team to 17 people after one year.

Ulrich: What is the main focus of the Quick Win Team?

Lohmeyer: Quick Win focuses on immediate tangible business value that fuels passionate business engagement. Another key focus is on recapturing lost or missing busi-

The team has now grown to over 70 people who continue to provide continuous process improvement programs across TELUS.

Ulrich: Is there an early project that is a good example of how the Quick Win Team got started?

Lohmeyer: The first project that comes to mind was the NOVA project in the service prequalification area. NOVA was a pre-qualification request tracking tool that provided productivity benefits to customer-facing users by combining phone, fax, email and post communications. Once NOVA was built, we amalgamated this solution with more comprehensive solutions into the PSI system, which services a broader group of users. This is an example of how Quick Win solutions continue to evolve and are not left to wither. Quick Win delivers continuous evolution as business requirements mature.

Ulrich: What is unique about the Quick Win approach?

Lohmeyer: First, Quick Win supports transformation by collaboratively solving current business problems, while exposing opportunities for growth. In addition, the Quick Win team explores the business by partnering with frontline team members to identify issues. Solutions are then developed using agile methodologies to alleviate pain points, and iterated to become strategic enablers. Delivery of value is rapid because Quick Win has a mandate to deliver all solutions within two days, two weeks, or two months.

Most important is the fact that Quick Win is very value-driven and ROI focused. This includes operational savings, cost deferral, service benefits and revenue enhancement. It is very important that Quick Win demonstrates quantifiable value.

Ulrich: Can you give me an example of how a system was deployed to support operational efficiency?

Lohmeyer: The Q Tool or “Q” is an end-to-end voice and mass market workflow tool. Q was initially deployed in the NSF Voice Service Delivery where it automates activation of orders for voice fulfillment, fulfills service requests, selects inventory, activates delivery and generally does much of the work previously done by users. Q is now used by other areas including Assignment, Planning & Engineering, CSD Managers, Activations, Centrex, Business Solutions and Consumer Solutions. It provides a good example of how the team is able to amalgamate many smaller functions into a suite of tools.

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There were substantial savings from an operational perspective based on these deployments. Important to mention also are the benefits that come to users, who are now able to participate in more complex decisions. Many mundane tasks have been automated so that the users can concentrate on more involved work. As the user base expands, so do the benefits.

Ulrich: Can you give me an example of how a system was deployed to facilitate the revenue side of the business?

Lohmeyer: PSI allows our sales team members to focus on their true work: selling products and services to the customer. Since PSI acts as a single portal for all types of sales, sales team members do not have to worry about using multiple systems, order formats, and workflows.

Instead, PSI makes all order workflow act as a black box to sales.

Sales team members can now create orders for any product, requiring only knowledge of the product line; the logistics of order workflow is left to the business operations. Most importantly, order statuses are provided to explain to the customer what is happening, and allowing for the sales team member to escalate an order if it is necessary to service the customer well.

Ulrich: What approaches have been used to understand, streamline and automate business processes?

Lohmeyer: While examining various business process improvement scenarios geared at readying TELUS for future large-scale change requirements,

TELUS determined that large-scale transformational projects would be needed to effect desired changes. The Quick Win team determined that Quick Win solutions can drive small changes that can be accomplished in a short period of time, yet still offer profound improvements to the business. Quick Win also found that it could facilitate cultural changes related to these requirements by engaging frontline users in change initiatives to build acceptance within this community over a period of time.

A specific example involves the FOX system, which is a central workflow system that provides visibility across end-to-end business processes as the business closes process gaps one by one. It enables the fulfillment of our data orders through demand build. Because FOX allows for instantaneous process change, the business is able to take ownership and reconstruct processes on the fly to either fix processes or align processes with new

strategies. This sort of nimbleness is almost unheard of in the telecom industry.

Continuous improvement is supported by metrics, which are now starting to be measured in FOX to allow business operations to identify bottlenecks in the process. As these bottlenecks are alleviated, and processes are aligned between teams and across operational regions, FOX is the key to making sure that the process changes are not limited to outdated systems that were designed at a time when the business was in a very different environment.

The riddance of these limitations allows TELUS to move forward as a market leader and to focus on meeting customer needs and reducing turnaround time for the customer.

frontline's ownership of the business renews strategic advantages in the level of collaboration, operational agility and market leadership attitudes. The Quick Win approach has focused on the transformational journey.

Renewed collaboration and agility allows TELUS to attack the market in new ways. For example, Quick Win solutions across the company are becoming key components in fulfilling labor intensive contract promises seemingly overnight. In winning several recent corporate contracts, TELUS had to migrate thousands of lines to utilize the TELUS network. Quick Win, in partnership with the engaged business, was instrumental in automating such processes so that the migrations could happen efficiently at low cost.

Ulrich: Are there unique technological aspects to Quick Win Team deployments?

Lohmeyer: We have found that technology can be a fantastic learning enabler and a tool for supporting the process of change to inspire new attitudes, but the technology needs to be developed in partnership with the business user to provide maximum impact and benefit. However, our focus is not on enhancing technology, but on the capability of people to leverage technology. This is radically different from more traditional approaches that organizations often take to transform their business.

Ulrich: Have business processes been consolidated across functional areas or business units as a result of Quick Win initiatives?

Lohmeyer: FOX and PSI are both good examples of how smaller solutions broaden over time and cross user and functional areas. As smaller solutions solve immediate challenges and as pain points disappear, the business is able to see what the root issues truly are and identify ways to fix those problems. The business is then able to remove operational silos or walls and work as a team to attack the market, thanks to the visibility and flexibility afforded by the partnership's technology solutions.

Ulrich: Has Quick Win effectively been able to enable transformation within the business?

Lohmeyer: Quick Win is enabling a culture of continual improvement and cross-functional teamwork. Correspondingly, the

Continuous improvement is supported by metrics that allow business operations to identify and alleviate process bottlenecks.

The flexibility of this team's approach is allowing TELUS to respond to a dynamic competitive environment efficiently and effectively, while improving the customer's experience. Faster turnaround time and having more information at hand to explain specific situations is resulting in healthier and happier consumer and business customer relationships.

As TELUS seeks to be the world's number one telecom carrier, it needs technology to continually improve operations. The frontline's knowledge and input is the most necessary component to ensuring that Quick Win solutions actually solve real problems. As Quick Win's partnership with the frontline alleviates pain points, the frontline realizes that it is the best candidate to fix issues across operational silos. As a result, the business starts to proactively identify problems, process gaps and inefficiencies to become the key driver to request and create change.

Ulrich: How do the Quick Win solution deployments integrate with other Quick Win solutions?

Lohmeyer: There has been a significant rollup and integration strategy that has resulted in an evolving Quick Win solutions architecture. This archi-

ture is characterized by many of the original point solutions being rolled up into more functionally comprehensive applications that service a broader cross-section of business users. This convergence strategy was planned and has been ongoing.

For example, while new Quick Win tools were being deployed between 2003 and 2005, 54 Quick Win solutions were being decommissioned or were being collapsed into more comprehensive solutions. This integrated architecture is emerging as a much more strategic set of solutions that broaden the business benefits to a larger cross-section of users.

Ulrich: Are these tactical projects or do they offer more strategic value to TELUS?

Lohmeyer: While many of our solutions begin as tactical projects that provide immediate value for frontline users, these

solutions mature over time into more strategic capabilities. Q, as I mentioned earlier, is playing a role in our “new stack,” which is our target architecture. So there is a combination of projects that deliver immediate benefits through automation. Over time these projects are amalgamated into more strategic projects or they are used as key learnings upon which we can build even more strategic solutions. As a result, Quick Win is being called into more strategic projects to support small portions of bigger, more strategic initiatives.

Ulrich: So how do Quick Win solutions integrate with back-end information architectures?

Lohmeyer: Efforts are underway to retool the underlying application architecture and the Q Tool is playing a role within the “new stack” architecture as it evolves. Q will have a formal role in the strategic IS architecture that is currently emerging. Q is being used as a transition vehicle as other systems come online and as a way to document and understand how the process flows. Eventual migration of Q functionality into the new stack architecture will occur through incremental migration of core legacy capabilities into the new stack. Q is expected to continue to be a part of the new stack architecture until that occurs.

Ulrich: What types of return on investment, from a business perspective, has the Quick Win approach achieved?

Lohmeyer: Quick Win has delivered a five-to-one return on investment (ROI). In 2005, Quick Win delivered \$12 million in tangible benefits while enabling the frontline to take ownership of its business. This figure represents an actual budgetary reduction due to lower operational costs as well as cost avoidance. In addition, operational reinvestments allow for using savings from efficiency gains and applying those savings to

related resources to new initiatives or to work that formerly would not have been possible. In addition, the team has been able to sustain these savings year over year.

Ulrich: Have you been able to validate these returns?

Lohmeyer: We begin by working with frontline user teams and business managers to come up with reasonable estimates as to what benefits we would expect from a given Quick Win solution. When the solution is significantly rolled out, we examine related returns to determine user time savings and discuss how these savings will be validated. Finally, we validate these returns directly with the business and gain concurrence from the user community that savings were indeed attained. We also work with the business to track sustainable value over time.

Ulrich: Quick Win won an international business award. Can you tell us about that?

Lohmeyer: The TELUS Quick Win team was a joint-winner of the 2006 Stevie International Business Award for “Best Support Team.” We were awarded this as a result of the overall business value we delivered to the business community and for the fact that Quick Win is a recognized - Leadership Development program within TELUS.

For example, Quick Win team alumni have been accepted into prestigious MBA programs and have moved into leadership positions within TELUS and other organizations. Over three years, 18 team members have graduated to positions of influence throughout TELUS.

Ulrich: How has the Quick Win Team grown and changed since its founding?

Lohmeyer: Multiple Quick Win teams have

been deployed across functional and regional boundaries and also within the IS organization. Quick Win has also evolved from a collaborative perspective as it now coordinates closely with IS architecture teams and through working with business primes. Relationships have also expanded with internal partners across Canada. We now have virtual and physical Quick Win teams across multiple Canadian provinces.

Ulrich: How do the various teams coordinate their efforts across geographic and organizational boundaries?

Lohmeyer: There is a balance of structure that has been put in place without suffocating the innovative and entrepreneurial concept of Quick Win. We introduced knowledge management that allows for the sharing of innovative ideas across teams as we continue to grow. We also have a foundations team that produces and shares common capital funding models and common, robust architectural infrastructures. This facilitates the concept of reuse across Quick Win solutions. There is also a high degree of sharing across teams that report up to different areas. Finally, we work collectively to ensure that there is an agreed upon branding for Quick Win teams across the enterprise.

Ulrich: What do you envision as far as the future of Quick Win?

Lohmeyer: We have come a long way since our inception. The team continues to grow both geographically and from a capabilities perspective. Process innovations and knowledge management continue to be a major focus going forward. We will continue to seek to determine how to enable the business and prepare for upcoming stages of business and technological change with an eye towards future change requirements.