Alliance Software Leadership Retreat 2016

Agenda

Day	Time	Duration	Focus (Leader)
Day 1			
Tuesday	10:00 - 11:30	90 mins	• Segue (Ben) • Review previous year (Ben / Andrea) • Team health building (Andrea) • SWOT/Issues List (Scott) • V/TO (through one-year plan) (Ben)
	11:30 - 11:45	15 mins (Morning Tea)	
	11:45 - 12:45	60 mins	
	12:45 - 1:45	60 mins (Lunch)	
	1:45 - 3:15	90 mins	
	3:15 - 3:30	15 mins (Afternoon Tea)	
	3:30 - 5:30	120 mins	
Day 2			
Wednesday	9:00 - 11:00	120 mins	• Residual V/TO if required (Ben) • Quarterly Rock Review (Alex) • Tackle key issues (Alex / Levi) • Next steps (Ben) • Conclude (Ben)
	11:00 - 11:15	15 mins (Morning Tea)	
	11:15 - 12:30	75 mins	
	12:30 - 1:30	60 mins (Lunch)	
	1:30 - 3:00	90 mins	
	3:00 - 3:15	15 mins (Afternoon Tea)	

	3:15 - 4:45	90 mins	

General Preparation
- Review the Vision / Traction Organiser or V/TO:
    - https://alliancesoftware.atlassian.net/wiki/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=14549015
- Think about your goals for the next financial year.

Day 1

Segue (Ben)

Each member of the leadership team shares three things:
(1) the organization's three greatest accomplishments in the previous year,
(2) his or her one greatest personal accomplishment for the year, and
(3) his or her expectations for the two-day annual planning session.

Allocated Time: 20 - 30 mins.

Preparation (all members) - consider your list of the above.

Traction Review (Ben)

A reminder that we're new at this and go through what the key elements of traction are, where we're up to and what we hope to cover off.

Preparation (Ben) - review traction elements & assess our progress.

Allocated Time: 30 mins

Review Previous Year (Ben)

Review Previous Years Goals (Non Financial)
Not possible this year (but we'll be there next year), instead a substitute will be from Ben:
- General Achievements
    - Focused on custom software development
    - Bought on a sales person
    - Replaced Steve (largely with Alex)
    - Two largest contracts to date - Plexus & Typsy rolled out
    - Learned the value of UX / UI
- Systemisation Improvements
    - Moved to Traction
        - Got serious
        - Focus on profitability
        - Created this leadership team
        - Established Regular problem solving rhythms
    - TT

- - - Finished off Scheduling
    - Checklists
    - 5 minute billing
    - Billing improvements (layout, quality checks)
    - Staff Productivity reporting
    - Stretch back just prior - Xero & slack integration
  - Standardisation
    - React
    - GitLab
- People Changes
  - Added: Venkatesh, Brett, Vitaly, Callum, Fang, Antonio, Manasi, Victor, Scott, Resmi
  - Lost: Yuki, Steve, Jeremy
  - Turned over: Louis, Zawar

Allocated Time: 10 - 15 mins

Preparation (Ben) - Extract list of business improvements

Review Previous Years Financial Numbers

Not possible to review against budget as we don't have one (coming next year!) but as a substitute we will consider:
- Year P&L
- Year Balance Sheet
- Staff Profitability (TBC)
- Project Profitability (TBC)

Allocated Time: 10 - 15 mins

Preparation (Andrea) - Prepare 2016 P&L & Balance Sheet
Preparation (Ben) - Prepare 2016 Staff & Project Profitability Numbers

Review Last Quarter's Rocks

A read through the rock list and a yes / no for achievement
https://alliancesoftware.atlassian.net/wiki/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=13565976

Estimated Time: 10 - 15 mins

Team Building Exercise - One Thing (Andrea)

Each member of the team receives feedback from the others on his or her single greatest strength or most admirable ability and his or her biggest weakness or hindrance to the success of the company. The exercise is done out in the open, with the entire leadership team present.

After everyone has received the feedback from their team members, each then must choose one thing he or she will commit to doing differently in the coming year based on the feedback. It's short, simple, very powerful, and effective, and it leads to great insights with improved openness and honesty on the team.

Preparation: Nothing mandatory (can do the thinking on the day)

Allocated Time: 90 mins

SWOT / Issues List (Scott)

Provide an opportunity for everyone to share what they believe the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats are.

Preparation: Nothing mandatory (can do the thinking on the day)

Allocated Time: 60 mins

Strengths

- Great people (low turnover)
- Strong leaders
- Good reputation within existing customer base
- Strong cash position
- Strong community within the business
- Ambitious - looking to grow
- History / Longevity
- Maturing process / traction
- Flexible working culture
- Focused on clients & responsive to their needs
- Low overheads (Good & low cost administration)
- We're nimble - we are willing to and able to pivot (don't have bureaucratic inertia)
- Strong tech focus (largely an engineering driven company)
- Strong tech skills

Weaknesses

- High proportion of junior developers
- Don't have great wages
- Often focused on clients at the expense of profitability
- Ad hoc processes
- Poorly defined processes for delivering projects
- Poor testing and quality control covered up by initially good development
- Mediocre information sharing
- Too reliant on key personnel
- Poor training and development
- Poor career development
- Not famous / unknown / poor brand profile
- Lack of long term (strategic) direction
- Low profitability / low margin / charge too little
- Lacking professional polish

- Inability to predict future work and schedule new work
- Poor at making / keeping promises around project delivery schedules
- Internal task allocation for staff is broken
- PM's / AM's lack sufficient tools to streamline their work
- Low overheads (which hide other problems)
- Poor methods of rolling out change through the company
- Ill defined communication structure - leadership to staff - knowing who to speak to relies on experience (e.g. it's ill defined)
- UX has an unclear position in the business
- Location of the office
- Slow in terms of delivery of projects
- Lack of agreement on an economic model / business engine

Opportunities

- Become a high profile brand in Melbourne
- SAAS - change the way we sell our projects (sell the delivery of a service rather than the development of software and get an ongoing return).
- Speculative projects
- Establish a reputation for delivery of great business process improvement software
- Become a desirable place to work
- Gain industry award recognition
- Network within the startup community
- New Technology - augmented reality
- Outsource our people to other countries
- Growing demand for services - people's expectations of the "the internet" are ever increasing
- Lots of people having a bad time with OS developers
- Tech specific opportunities - Salesforce, Bots
- Win market profile
- We can do marketing
- Raise our prices
- Expand into enterprise / corporate work
- Gain a profile in an upcoming technology (e.g. React)
- Gain a profile in an existing technology (e.g. Django)
- Mobile / App development
- Labour hire
- Sub contracting
- Resell products from existing clients
- Have a vertical market focus - council software, vets
- Sell TT
- Be startup advisors
- Change our billing model (e.g. retainers / income in advance)

Threats

- Staff loss
- Exodus of key staff
- Overcommit to large jobs we can't deliver on

- Lawsuits from a client
- General economic downturn
- Offshoring
- OS developers improve
- Coincidence of clients not doing new dev work
- Tech change - stuck with a tech others don't want to use any more
- Python / React becomes non competitive
- Disastrous project not being identified
- Overexpansion without the systems to cope
- Low wages / wage pressure
- Burnout
- Competitors wanting to grow
- Startups attracting high calibre developers
- Increased quality of software as a service offerings
- Over reliance on key customers
- Low turnout of devs from Uni / Inability to scale staff base effectively
- Over exposure to a smaller number of clients

Vision / Traction Organiser Review (Ben)

Review & Challenge

Review and challenge each element of the company vision.
- Core Values
- Core Focus
- 10 Year Target
- Marketing Strategy
- 3 Year Picture

This is the Annual Meeting Pulse, and nothing is sacred. Working your way through the V/TO, take a hard look at your core values, challenge the core focus, make sure everyone is still on board for the 10-year target, and confirm that the marketing strategy is still unique and valuable to the customer. Where you're not on the same page, discuss and debate until everyone is in sync.

Activities:
- Core Values Review
- Brainstorm Uniques
    - Debate Uniques

Ideal Client: Our best customers are collaborative and resourced. They rely on quality custom software and are committed to its improvement.
150 - 400K up front budgets
Successful business already.

- Core Focus Review
    - Serve, Create & Improve
    - Example I like: To build a great company, with great people & great results

- - Attributes of a good Purpose/Cause/Passion
      - It's stated in three to seven words.
      - It's written in simple language.
      - It's big and bold.
      - It has an "aha" effect.
      - It comes from the heart.
      - It involves everyone.
      - It's not about money.
      - It's bigger than a goal.
    - Are we being distracted by "Shiny Stuff"?
  - 10 Year Target
  - Marketing Strategy
    - Brainstorm Target Market (is there "A List"?)
    - Proven Process

Set Three Year Picture

Assuming you're all in agreement, you throw out the old Three-Year Picture and create a brand-new one. You want to make sure that everyone agrees on the same image three years from now. Once everyone's mind's eye can see it, the odds are greater that you will achieve it.

Revenue: 5 mil
Profit: 20%
Measurables:
      32 staff
      80% of projects delivered "on time" and "on budget"
What does it look like:

- Revenue on retainer a core part of our model
- Two IP Resale projects
- 8 projects above 150K of revenue
- Streamlined & consistent processes in Marketing, Sales, UX, Delivery (PM & AM) & Maintenance
  - Have a productised Agile approach we execute consistently
- 85% of new projects in Python and or React
- Employment process for Tech & PM's defined with repeatable outcomes
- Individual productivity targets established, measured and trained for
- Staying in our current location
- Well spread client base (no client over 15%)
- Flexible staff / contractor setup to enable expansion / contraction
- Business Model for upfront vs maintenance projects sorted

Set One Year Picture

Once the new Three-Year Picture is clear, go to work on next year's plan. Set the revenue, profit, and numbers for the coming year and then set your three to seven most important goals. Remember, less is more, so be careful. One-year planning rarely takes more than two hours. Don't overthink it. When the vision is clear, the numbers and goals are right in front of you. You just have to put them down on paper and agree with them. In addition, make sure a budget exists to support the plan and that everyone is clear on their roles and responsibilities in the coming year. Let the Accountability Chart

be your guide.
Expectation Note: This may carry over into day 2 (that's OK)

Estimated Time: 120 mins
Preparation: Read the V/TO as it currently stands to refamiliarise and be thinking about it.
https://alliancesoftware.atlassian.net/wiki/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=14549015

Specific Measurable Agreed-upon Realistic Timebased
Revenue: 3.4
Profit: 400K (reduced by 55K to 345K based on Levi being non billable for first 6 months)
Measurables:
Goals:

- SP 1 Active Resale project that creates a positive income

- SP We have won 3 new projects over $150K revenue
- SP Streamlined process in sales & marketing
  - The is a documented process for the Alliance method of Sales and Marketing

- BS Build in TT and roll out to PMs a tool capable of projecting staff workloads and scheduling new projects effectively. Create training materials for induction.
- BS Agree on a desirable retainer model, built the internal systems to handle it en masse and established it with 4 clients. Create training materials for induction.
- AG Define and document position description for Project Manager and Account Manager. Speak with current staff to determine fit for each role and retrain staff in line with new processes. Neal, Victor, Kristie, New PM to all be trained in line with defined process.
- LC Define the Alliance Agile Method & run a project with it
  - Systemise the development process:
    - Document workflow and disseminate to all staff
    - At minimum quarterly meetings to assess methodology and incorporate feedback
  - 80% of new projects to use standardised method (Django & React)
  - RAD for Django Generally (esp Admin) in use by the end of the year
  - Consistent use of automated test cases for 50% of new projects
- AG Complete TT Kanban project
  - Complete UX definition of Kanban project
  - Execute Kanban project using dedicated staff resources
  - Create accompanying training materials explaining use of the system
  - Roll out training to all client-facing staff
- AG Enhance TT to allow the recording and ongoing tracking of project budgets.
  - Complete UX definition of budget project
  - Execute project using dedicated staff resources
  - Create accompanying training materials explaining use of the system
  - Roll out training to all client-facing staff
- BS Considered alternative business models for upfront vs maintenance work projects, agreed on our model, documented it clearly, presented to PMs & staff and begun roll out to clients.
- BS Run an initial program for 5 staff of quarterly reviews of performance and career development objectives.
- AS Nunawading offices have new carpet, walls are fresh and clean (potentially repainted), paint ceilings, buy new couch in staff area; board room and meeting room professionally

presented (potentially with new furniture) and freshen up bathrooms (toilet seats, retiling, paint, general repairs) and update Kitchen (improve fridge / freezer space).
- BS Employ a new lead UX, Account manager & Tech lead
- AS Annual detailed budget is agreed upon (preferrably that integrates with Xero) and is reviewed against actual performance on a monthly basis.

Day 1 Wrap Up (Ben)

Total projected time: 10 mins

Day 2

Vision / Traction Organiser Review (Ben)

If not completed on day 1, pick up here.

Quarterly Rock Review (Alex)

Rock Completion Scoring:
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ODZmGI5QrDfLIgBXVhDIVPVBYTH1m3q6vs53a6mIL1g/edit#gid=0

Rock Presentations
- Draft Business Model (Ben / Andrea)
- Post Implementation Review Highlights (Alex)
- Forward Planning System UI
- Speculative Project Review Criteria

Set Personal Rocks
Ben
- **Rocks**
  - 3 Competitor Interviews (Model for dev vs maintenance & USP)
  - TT Scheduling for existing upcoming work built.
  - Execute a recruitment campaign for a AM
- **Todos**
  - Ben to propose allowance for internal training, documentation and development
  - Create roadmap for TT including the jobs we require from it right now, as well as a 3-5 year future of features
  - Draft rules for engagement for Account Managers with retainer model clients and present to leadership team

Alex

- **Rocks**
    - Define process for AM / PM + retrain existing staff
    - Define UX + spec TT Kanban (including interviewing Ben)
- **Todos**
    - *Establish meeting rhythm and process for risk assessment by Aug 5th (AG)*

Levi
- **Rocks**
    - Define idealised methodology and high level processes for large, complex development project from initial conception through to ongoing maintenance and determine what resources would be required (2 days effort)
    - Automated Testing for Benchmarque & Alliance Django Utils
    - Django RAD assessment for at least 4 frameworks
    - Review most recent 25 client repositories & deployments (Alex to schedule blocks of time over next 5 weeks)
- **Todo**
    - Discuss TT roadmap

Scott
- **Rocks**
    - Launch new Alliance Software Website (launch by 20th Aug)
    - Execute a new marketing campaign (begin 21st Aug)
    - Confirm partnership and model for Benchmarque resale project

Andy
- **Rocks**
    - Draft budget for approval
    - Undertake project management of office renovations
        - Create plan for office renovation, budget for it and collect appropriate quotes

Key Issues (aka high level IDS) (Alex + Levi)

Alex to drive this and have Levi take a portion for breaks

Review / Update Personal Rocks

Next Steps (Ben)

Summary of Agreed Vision, Rocks, Key Issues

Estimated Time: 20 mins

Conclusion (Ben)

Feedback - how can we make this better?

Estimated Time: 20 mins

Nice to have a place with a window
Addition of micro breaks