

**DRIVING ORGANISATIONAL EXCELLENCE
NOW A FOCAL POINT WITHIN THE FIELD OPERATIONS
AT
HOLROYD CITY COUNCIL**

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Summary

Driving Organisational Excellence is the program in Holroyd City Council that seeks to develop and continuously improve Council operations with the purpose of delivering best value to its stakeholders the community. This program has been applied to improve Council's field operations via a number of projects which have demonstrated outstanding management initiatives and which has encouraged an environment of creativity and innovation.

Background

Holroyd City is located in Sydney's western suburbs, about 25 kilometres from the Sydney GPO. The City is bounded by Parramatta City in the north and east, Fairfield City in the south and Blacktown City in the west. The population within the Holroyd Local Government Area is slightly over 93,000.

As an organisation there are four departments – Engineering Services, Corporate and Financial Services, Library and Community Services and Environmental and Planning Services.

This paper focuses on the Engineering Services Department and in particular the Assets and Operations Unit. This work unit totals 150 staff comprising professional, semi-professional, technical, skilled and unskilled staff. All work together to accomplish the community's goals and objectives with respect to the construction and upkeep of road, building and park infrastructure, fleet management, swim centre operations, public amenity cleansing, depot operations and asset management.

Introduction

Since 1996 Holroyd City Council has used the Holroyd Model to guide the organisation in improving service delivery requirements based on business excellence principles which in 2006 were reviewed to become the following:

1. Agreed plans and a framework of accountability set a clear direction for Council and enable alignment for the achievement of our objectives
2. The direction for Council is determined by what delivers value in relation to stakeholders' and customers' expectations.
3. Realising value is achieved by continuously improving our relationships, systems and processes.
4. The decisions we make use our skills, resources and experience and are supported by facts and data.
5. Continuing to deliver value to stakeholders and the community determines our success in the future.
6. To facilitate the above, Council values and supports an environment for learning and the application of professional, ethical and innovative approaches to our operations.

In the second half of 2001 Council determined the need for baseline data in regard to the organisation. This was to provide the foundation and starting point for structured organisational development at Holroyd City Council.

The Holroyd Model provided the basis of Council's response to the National Competition Policy and engendered an approach that sought on improving existing systems, processes and services rather than wholesale cultural and structural change.

As indicated in Council's Management Plan the Model highlights a philosophy of:

- Quality services,
- Winning partnerships with community, Council and within Council
- Maintaining corporate knowledge/skills, development and encouragement of staff.

Council undertook a Guided Self Assessment in September 2001. Guided Self Assessments (GSAs) are used to identify strengths and opportunities in the organisation.

Staff participation is a key feature of the GSA with the Executive, Management and Staff contributing input to the process in facilitated workshops where their scores and comments are collected. Following the analysis, the feedback of the results was provided to all staff.

Sixteen actions were established as key issues for the organisation. In moving forward it was considered that the actions to:

- Implement leadership training program
- Develop and organisational wide structured improvement approach
- Develop and implement a Quality Program
- Encourage a culture of creativity and innovation

needed to be addressed through a training program to adequately respond to the staff's needs as well as formulating a vehicle to addressing the other key actions for the organisation. This led to the implementation of the Driving Organisational Excellence (DOE) Program.

Driving Organisational Excellence

Holroyd City Council has been implementing business excellence throughout the organisation using its Driving Organisational Excellence (DOE) program.

The Holroyd Model uses DOE to provide a structured approach to continuous improvement. This impacts all areas of Council operations. The Council operations identified as in need of improvement are an output of the Guided Self Assessment which uses the Australian Business Excellence Framework (ABEF) to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement.

The Organisational Development Team (ODT) uses the results to identify issues and areas where DOE can address those issues and develop the organisation at the same time. These are included in the ODT Plan for review and approval by the SMT.

DOE commenced in 2001 with it being extended to include a special field staff program in September 2003.

As with most organisational development programs, its implementation constitutes a journey that supports the strategic direction of Council. Its impact on the internal capability of Council also adding to the range of skills and experience of staff who participate.

DOE provides the vehicle for individual development in a team environment. It focuses on developing an individual's leadership, creative, innovative and quality skills through a process of active participation, structured to be a whole of organisation response to driving effective improvement.

Six years of experience with implementing the program, now puts Council in a position where they have sufficient knowledge of continuous improvement tools and techniques throughout Council. It can now exercise some choice in relation to how it can further drive continuous improvement through Council operations.

Driving Organisational Excellence in the Field Operations

The field program was tailored to suit the nature of the operations and the staff involved. It is an abridged version of the full DOE program which in general runs for a period of approximately 6 months. The field program is conducted over a period of approximately 8 weeks and includes at least four half day work shops and addresses all the principles which are covered in the longer version.

There have been a number of field DOE projects to date. The focus of this paper is the project which initially started as: *“OH&S Awareness Within the Depot”*.

Over the past few years and in particular since the introduction of the OH&S Act 2000, there has been a managed and pro-active approach at Holroyd Council in implementing the requirements of the Act. A DOE project to review the impact seemed an appropriate course of action. Initially the team focused on the project subject. However as the team further discussed and examined the issues at hand it decided to focus on one important facet of OH&S within the operations. That being the site signage. In doing so the team’s focus then changed to the need for, type, nature and transportation of signage. Concerns centred around the weight of the signs, the quantity of signs required, manual handling issues and safe transport.

The project officially commenced on 11 October 2005 and was carried out by a multi-disciplinary team from the Works Depot. The team was selected by the sectional manager in consultation with supervisors and interested staff. The ten team members involved were from across the spectrum of the field operations including roads, parks and mechanical workshop. This allowed for a very interactive group offering various perspectives and opinion on the one subject matter.

In reviewing the project title, the team redefined their project to the following:

“To improve the processes related to the storage, handling and transport of OH&S related signage in order to increase space on trucks and enable efficient deployment of signs at the work site as measured by :

- *Space on trucks*
- *Comments from field staff / field staff surveys*
- *Reduced time required to deploy / pack away signage on the job”*.

The DOE Process

As mentioned previously a team of ten staff was involved. There were four half day workshops. Each workshop is facilitated by an independent consultant engaged from SAI Global. During the course of the project, the team is introduced to various techniques and business excellence principles and given opportunities to put them into practice.

After a naturally very hesitant start, staff learnt and applied a four step improvement process known as PDSA (Plan, Do, Study, Act). PDSA is an improvement cycle for organising and managing change and continuous improvement. This cycle was developed by Dr. Walter Shewhart in the 1920s and put into business practice in Japan and the United States by W. Edwards Deming.

The four steps are defined as follows:

- In the **Plan** phase, the specific change or problem is defined and a plan is designed to address the problem or desired change.
- In the **Do** phase, the improvements to be made are put in place through the development of action plans.
- In the **Study** phase, data is monitored and analysed to see if the improvement is producing the desired change.
- In the **Act** phase, a decision is made as to whether the results have created the desired change or if more improvement is needed, in which case, the cycle starts all over again.

The process is independent of management interference, but that's not to say management isn't requested by the team to participate at various stages during the course of the project.

At the end of the project, the team is expected to compile a report. The recommendations are presented to senior management, peers and the field staff via the Continuous Improvement Team.

SAI Global own the intellectual property, being the ABEF. Through this framework and the results of the GSA, the Excellence in Local Government program was developed, which is called DOE at Holroyd City Council.

The Benefits

The benefits of the project included: team interaction; personal development; application of continuous improvement principles; design of light weight signage and the fabrication of a proto-type; an improved awareness of the OHS requirements; improved ownership of safety issues.

Stemming from the project a number of improvement issues have been implemented within the field operations including: improved storage on trucks and trailers to transport signs and other safety equipment; the phasing in of new light weight signs where appropriate; more consideration of such aspects when upgrading plant and equipment.

The benefits of Driving Organisational Excellence to Holroyd City Council are far reaching.

The stakeholders and the community are benefiting from the OH&S practices adopted by Council's field operations and the investment into better practice OH&S reduces injury related expenses.

Council is fulfilling its responsibilities in regard to OH&S – affecting both its staff and the community. The investment into better practice OH&S reduces injury related expenses

Staff are benefiting from the strong awareness of OH&S throughout the Depot and related sites – increasing safety for staff and those who visit those sites. More importantly from a personal development perspective, individuals are improving in the areas of leadership, creativity, innovation and quality skills through a process of active participation.

Conclusion

The Driving Organisational Experience adopted for the field operations can be best summed up using the words of one particular participant when he said “... *I didn't know what to expect, why me? but I loved every minute of it!*”

Biography

Peter Lichaa is the Manager Assets and Operations at Holroyd City Council in western Sydney. He is responsible for strategic and operational asset management, the construction and maintenance of road, park and building infrastructure, public amenity cleaning, bushcare as well as fleet management, depot operations and the management of Council's three swim centres. The Assets and Operations Unit comprises of 150 staff. Peter completed a Bachelor of Civil Engineering from the University of Technology Sydney in 1996. In 2002 he attained a MBA (Management Technology) from Deakin University. Peter has had approximately 17 years experience in Local Government with the vast majority of this time being in a supervisory or managerial capacity associated with field operations.



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