

A case study – Driving improved service from an off-shored operation centre

In Q3 2007 a global blue-chip services organisation identified quality issues in its off-shored HR Operations processing centre. Anecdotally it was known that service failures were increasing, complaints were rising and operational losses were at an all time high. However, there was little reliable Management Information to pinpoint where the problems were occurring. The key drive was to fix the impact on the end customer; the source of the rising complaints and to change the outward perceptions of the processing centre before the year end.

The approach decided upon was to firstly work with the key UK based stakeholders in order to understand the current issues, both real and perceived, and to identify specific requirements for improvement – short and long term. Three weeks later on arrival at the off-shore centre the operational focus was to analyse current processes and set up auditable tracking using quick 6 sigma methodology. However, prior to implementing this stage it was imperative to gain the trust of the operations centre leadership team and staff. This required adopting a business consulting role setting out the vision for the review, explaining the benefits to all and allaying the fears of those involved.

The actual analysis was undertaken alongside business as usual procedures by all 170 employees with a core team managing the new data gathering analytics process. The analytical process was designed to establish a culture of working to Service Level Agreements, measurement of volume throughput and monitoring success and failure rates. By incorporating this activity into business as usual procedures individuals could easily identify the progress they were making and build a sense of ownership in the quality of their output thus improving the value of the resulting MI. This was a significant culture change to the previous way of working where failure rates were either not reported or de-emphasised as the existing business targets were driving 'bad behaviour' due to the culture of 'what gets measured gets done'.

At all times the consultant leading the review worked directly with the on-site leadership team. Presenting findings and taking the role of coach, mentor and facilitator as needed in order to up-skill the leadership team to draw conclusions from the analysis and identify the necessary short term and long term changes required. A series of regular structured meetings were instigated for the leadership team to prioritise actions and acknowledge successes. The consultant initially took the lead role in liaison between the off-shore team and the UK based sponsor and end-user representatives until there was sufficient capacity for this activity to be absorbed, this allowed the off-shore team to focus on getting tangible results from changes implemented.

The output of three months consultancy support resulted in the following achievements within 12 months:

- Accurate, focused, reliable MI produced for leadership team to drive business decisions on a weekly basis
- Complaint reduction by 83%.
- Operational losses reduced by 73%.
- Quality standard improved from an estimated 96% (no accurate measures in place) to 99.95 quality achievement.
- All 174 processes reviewed and documented.
- Productivity increased by 30%.
- An empowered, capable leadership team continued to implement improvements and drive sustainable change.