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Improving service delivery through project synergies

by Barry Tuckwood



As we strive for improvements to effectiveness and efficiency it is worth reviewing the way in which we seek to achieve those laudable aims. All organisations can be reflected in the standard Input –Work – Output chain depicted in operations management texts. Let us look at that from the perspective of local authorities whose primary business is far more complex than a typical commercial enterprise. With hundreds of processes being used to deliver a vast range of services, what does a Local Authority need to concentrate on? Where can improvements be obtained? What synergies can we use to achieve them?

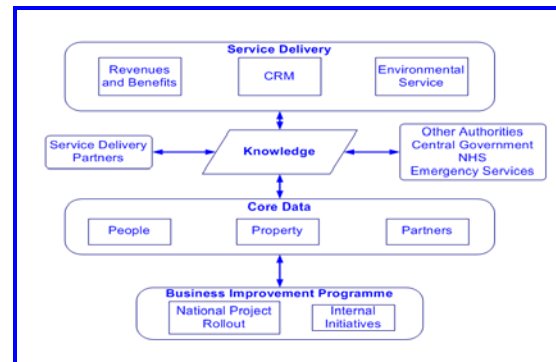
The diagram on page seven takes a hierarchical view of an organisation's approach to service delivery, with some core aspects shown at the top. CRM – Customer Relationship Management – is shown at the centre, with two others, but these are simply examples.

In order to deliver these services they require knowledge which might be shared with their delivery partners, as well as with other LA's, central government, Emergency Services, and many others.

Knowledge is dependent on information, typically identified as combining people, property, and partner data which, needs to be accurate, up to date, and appropriately referenced to be useful.

Many of the projects which LA's embark on enhance not only the quality of that data, but also the quality of the processes for maintaining it. Improvements in these efficiencies, through electronic exchange, enhance the effectiveness of the staff delivering the services. The projects do have other deliverables but they will almost invariably enhance some aspects of data and its management.

If we know which services need to be improved, and can identify what their weaknesses are, we can select projects to improve capability. They might be drawn from, for example, projects piloted under the National Projects Programme as well as from internal initiatives.



But with dozens of projects to choose from, and only a limited budget and resource to deliver them, it is crucial to combine projects to form a coherent programme. It is better to run six projects at a time as part of a rolling

programme, than to try to run 20 in one go. Here we need to examine the synergy than can operate between projects to maximise the overall delivery of business or organisational improvement. It would be foolish to duplicate work; it would also be so to carry out work which benefits one function at the cost of another. We must do the best for the organisation as a whole, by which I mean we must do our best for the organisation's service delivery.

If you can identify projects which provide a combined benefit, maximising the improvements they make for corporate benefits rather than the narrower enhancements of an individual function, you may be achieving much greater value from your investment. Consider the wider benefits of a carefully considered programme and enjoy the synergies that can be obtained through combining project initiatives. Achieve the benefits of each. And progress the programme into further phases, always keeping your eye on the strategic goals – service improvement.

Barry Tuckwood is the Programme Manager for Valuebill, one of the National Projects.
www.newham.gov.uk/valuebill;
barry@tuckwood.co.uk

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