Chapter 4.20
The Online Effect:
Transitioning from the Legacy Help Desk to the Online Task Management System

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ABSTRACT

This case centres on a request management system that was developed and implemented in response to the growing requests to the Information Technology (IT) unit for assistance. Primarily, this assistance was with a core corporate application called WorkDesk, a back office processing system. The request management system, an IT unit initiative, was designed in collaboration with representatives of the organisation's business units. The initial development project lasted for approximately two months and upon implementation was well received by the organisation. This first implementation turned out to be a proof of concept for a much larger system called the Request System that has been developed and implemented as a single online channel to manage all requests made of the IT unit. The Request System has greatly increased the ability of the IT unit to strategically manage IT and its support across the organisation. The core benefit of this case is the discussion of the successful development of an online task management system and its 10 key functions. This system effectively manages all requests made to the IT unit and introduced accountability for its completion. The system described can be easily repurposed based upon the knowledge demonstrated in this case study for a wide range of task management purposes. The situation described in this case resulted in the organisation's maturing in terms of IT understanding, an issue with which many organisations are struggling and one that, if understood, will assist students to have a positive impact on similar organisations.

ORGANISATIONAL BACKGROUND

The Office of the Employment Advocate (OEA) was established under the Australian Workplace Relations Act (1996). The Employment Advocate's role includes providing assistance and advice to employees and employers on workplace legisla-

tion, especially related to Australian workplace agreements (AWAs) and freedom of association, particularly in small businesses (OEA, 2003). The OEA, an agency of the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR), is based in Sydney with regional offices in each state and the Northern Territory and consists of 180 staff. For a recent 2004 summary of the OEA, see http://www.oea.gov.au/graphics.asp?showdoc=/corporate/newsletter-sept2004.asp&Page=0 (Accessed 11/26/04).

The OEA's mission is improving Australian workplaces (OEA 2004). The primary way in which the OEA achieves this mission is through AWAs. AWAs are individual agreements struck between an employer and an employee about the employee's wages and conditions of employment.

AWAs were introduced by the Australian government to give employers and employees flexibility in setting wages and conditions, allowing them to customise arrangements to their workplaces.

In terms of management structure, the OEA is very hierarchical both physically and culturally for an organisation of 180 staff with two layers of management that report to two layers of executive. In order to manage the entire organisation, the OEA has implemented the organisational structure depicted in Figure 1. From this organisational chart, it is possible to see that the IT unit is located at the third level of the hierarchy. The IT unit is a subunit of Corporate, which is an internal organisational enabler considered a supporting business unit of the organisation. The purpose of Corporate is to assist the OEA

Figure 1. OEA organisational chart (OEA, 2004)
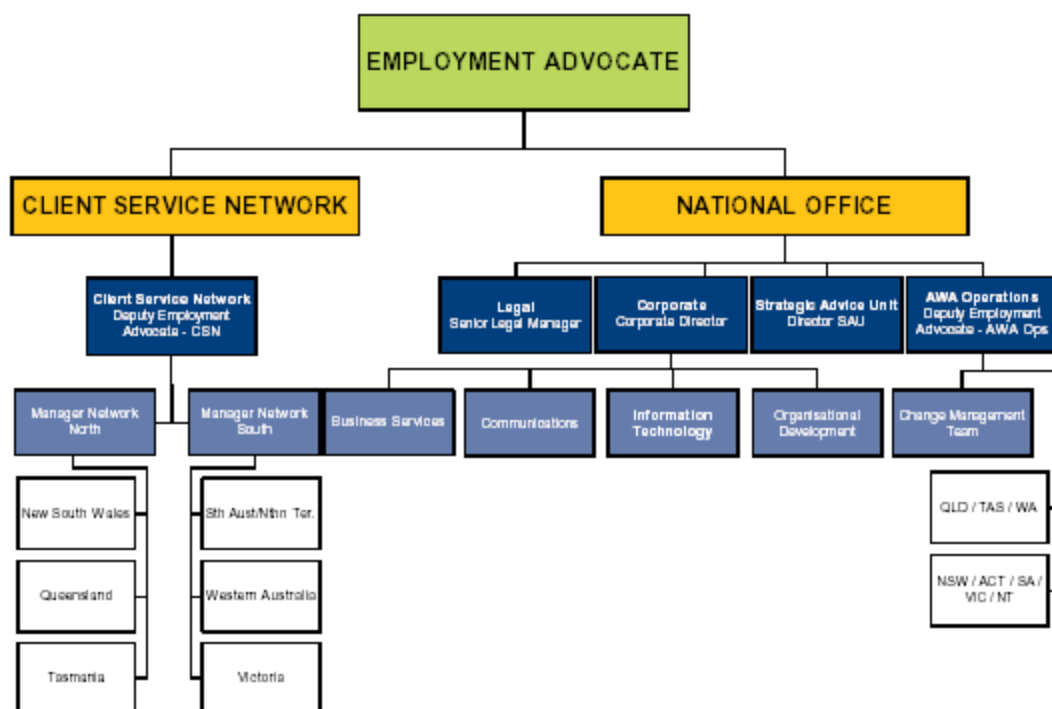
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