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Tasmanian Police Call Centre Project – Offence Reporting Process

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This case study provides some insight into the development of a Call Centre in the Australian State of Tasmania for Tasmania Police. The Call Centre replaced the existing Criminal Offence Modus Operandi paper based system. The project was reliant on two other projects: Radio Network project and Project SAMSON (providing a standard desktop throughout the organisation). The project timeframe from conception to pilot was six months. The project had an operating budget of AUS \$166,000.

The project was managed by a project team with the development of the system outsourced to external contractors. The management of both the contractors and the internal information technology branch is a significant part of the case study along with system development. The organisation effectively used change management and change agents to help communicate information relating to the projects to the rest of the organisation.

The aim of the project was to return as many police as possible back to their core activity, that is, policing.

BACKGROUND

Tasmania, a state of Australia, has a population of 500,000 living in small towns and rural properties scattered over two thirds of an island roughly the size of Wales. The remaining third is a world heritage area. The crime rate in Tasmania has traditionally been low, but has risen in the past decade. At the same time, the cost of policing has risen, leading to greater emphasis on improving efficiencies and cutting costs. At present, there are 1,100 sworn officers in the police organisation. Tasmania Police has a three-tiered structure: upper management (commissioner, deputy commissioners, assistant commissioners, directors and superintendents); middle management (inspectors and sergeants); operational police (constables). The organisation is supported by a pool of 'unsworn personnel' with duties ranging

from management, clerical and reception to operating speed cameras. In recent times, many functions that were previously performed only by sworn officers have been reallocated to unsworn personnel.

The state is divided into four policing districts: Northern, Western, Eastern and Southern. Tasmania Police requires the sworn officers to accept transfers and move between districts. To enhance promotional opportunities, an officer should work in more than one district. Each district has a distinctive culture. However, to maximise the use of its sworn human resources, the organisation, makes frequent use of temporary secondments.

In the mid-1990s the State government guaranteed to keep police numbers stable but would not increase the budget to expand policing activities. To resolve this deadlock Tasmania Police undertook a reengineering exercise with a view to making efficiency gains. These gains would be calculated on the basis of full-time equivalents (FTEs), meaning that the gains would result in police being freed up to do policing rather than administration.

Tasmania Police hired consultants to examine their work practices as well as analyse the perceptions of both its internal and external stakeholders. Vision and mission statements were then developed to provide a strategic focus for the organisation. In addition 27 “Quick Wins” were identified to enable the organisation to assess how well its members accepted the changes. A “Quick Win” was defined as a change to a process that could be implemented in less than a year, be low in cost and cause little disruption to existing work practices. Most of the Quick Wins were subsequently implemented. An independent assessment found that the organisation was indeed ready to accept change.

Rather than undertake a full-scale business process reengineering (BPR) exercise, consultants (together with members of the organisation) prepared a four phased plan to strategically realign the organisation. The plan was given the name of BATON (Business Alignment of Technology to Operations Networks). Project BATON was a Tasmania Police initiative to make Tasmania the safest state in the nation, and to gain recognition as a first-class police organisation.

Project BATON focused on developing resource management strategies and improving business processes in line with four strategic directions:

- core policing
- operational excellence
- organisational learning

After a period of little action, BATON was relaunched in the organisation, with Customer Service presentations at most stations. Feedback sessions, using a strict methodology, were conducted to gain some insight into the ‘real’ issues or concerns in the organisation. Participants were asked to write points, either positive or negative, on cards and hand them to facilitators who grouped them into common themes. The participants were then asked to take ownership of their cards as they were read out and to explain the point further or accept or reject the category in which the card had been placed. The methodology used is very similar to a group decision support system (GDSS); this option was explored later.

SETTING THE STAGE

In April 1997, the Tasmanian premier announced a Call Centre strategy for the state. Opportunities provided by the Call Centre strategy were recognised in the Tasmania Police business case, produced two months later. The case outlined the existing system, Criminal

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