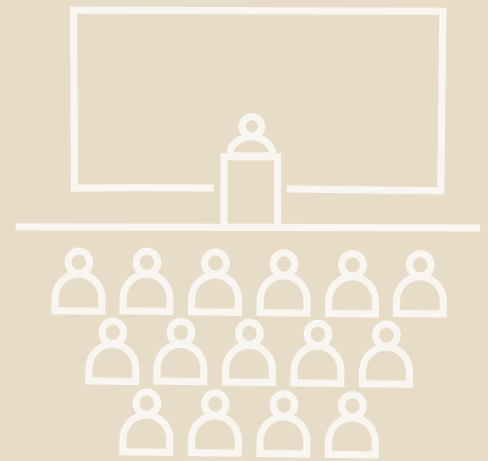


Accredited Group Programmes Northants Probation



From Possibility...

Companies all over the world have wrestled with the dilemma: *“Do we sell what we make, or do we make what we sell?”* The key decision is whether to develop a market offering around your own internal capabilities, preferences and innovations, or whether to focus your product or service on the key buying criteria of your customers. Those that choose the latter approach are usually more successful – think of Dell, Toyota or General Electric – because they sell more and don’t waste resources producing things customers do not want or value. Interestingly, this is not a dilemma faced only in the commercial sector. We recently worked with a UK Probation area facing exactly the same problem.

Northamptonshire Probation Service approached Ad Esse for help in understanding whether they could deliver Accredited Programmes more efficiently. Accredited Programmes is a key component of Offender Management where expert tutors give Offenders direct coaching in a one-on-one or group setting. They aim to address specific behavioural problems or skills deficits in such areas as domestic violence, drink-driving and anger management. Operating both in prisons and in the community, Accredited Programmes make a key contribution to reducing re-offending.

Northamptonshire faces some particular challenges in delivering Accredited Programmes. Being a rural county with four offices in different towns it is a constant logistical challenge to get staff and offenders to the right place at the right time to deliver a course. While a transport service had traditionally been provided to offenders, this has recently been curtailed. Course drop-out rates are significant, as high as 60% for some programmes.

Despite these constraints, management were concerned by a number of operational aspects of the service. Programmes were being cancelled despite what appeared to be adequate staffing levels, there was no evidence that the range of programmes being offered met the local offender profile and there was a lack of confidence in the capability of the unit to meet future completion targets. Despite meeting the central target of 200 completions for 2006/07, this was done at the highest unit cost in the region, more than double that of the best performing area. The completion rate per staff member over the year (10) also compared unfavourably with peers who all achieved rates of between 15 and 20.

These factors seemed to indicate an opportunity to improve service levels to both offenders and the community, and to reduce the cost of service provision. However, management lacked the detailed evidence to support these ideas, or a qualified set of next steps to bring about the improvements.

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They had a number of key requirements:

- Understand actual demand for Accredited Programmes;
- Identify the optimum delivery model; and
- Identify the precise resource required to meet future targets.

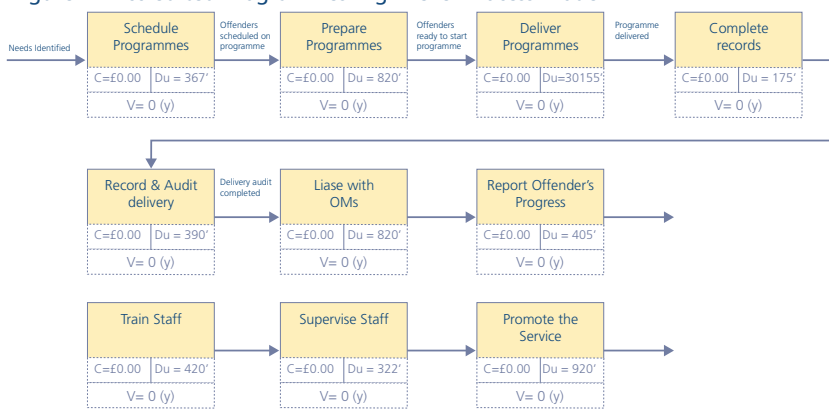
That is where Ad Esse came in.

OUR APPROACH

As with any performance improvement project, our first step was to engage with the people delivering the service on the ground. We needed to develop a clear picture of how things work at the moment, further qualify current process deficiencies and start to explore root causes. The Ad Esse team started by meeting key management personnel to understand the overall service and their expectations for improved performance. Detailed workshops were then held with team members to map existing processes, quantify process volumes, times and costs and identify wastes and potential areas for improvement. Using the Control-ES software tool, the as-is processes were captured into a live electronic process model (see Figure 1).

Having defined the process, our next step was to measure and analyse data relating to how the existing service performs.

Figure 1: Accredited Programmes High Level Process Model



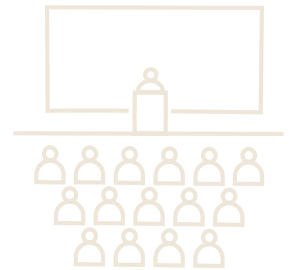
We did this by gathering staff data such as costs, standard hours and skills mix, as well as operational data such as historic number of completions by course, venue capacities, course durations and course resource requirements. Finally, we gathered data from other Probation areas to compare Northampton's performance to some external benchmarks. With this data we were able to construct a skills matrix for the existing Accredited Programmes team, compare this to the actual demand profile for courses and calculate the theoretical capacity of the existing structure. This would give Northampton Management their first data-driven assessment of current performance, and an analytical basis for confirming or disproving their concerns.

Calculating capacity for delivering a service is often more complicated than for a manufacturing operation. This is mainly because services are delivered by people, not machines. They cannot be set to a fixed running speed (unfortunately, if you ask most managers), but they are also more flexible and can change between different tasks and processes more easily. However, this does not mean service capacity cannot be calculated – it just means you need to support your calculations with robust assumptions. At Northampton we assumed that the capacity to deliver any programme in a year was the number of times that it could be delivered if every qualified Tutor delivered that programme full-time for the entire period. To calculate the capacity of the entire Accredited Programmes unit we had to make assumptions about the mix of courses delivered by any Tutor.

Our analysis produced some interesting results. Firstly, we found an imbalance in capacity between the 8 different programmes offered. One programme had more than double the capacity of any other, and 9 times that of the programmes with least capacity. This disparity in no way reflected demand for programmes, but rather the preferences of Tutors. Secondly, we concluded that the unit as a whole, with no changes to current structure, had capacity to deliver 50% more completed Programmes than had been achieved in 2006/07. This confirmed that there were significant opportunities for process improvement.

We came up with a number of other key findings:

- There was no Process approach within Accredited Programmes, and key processes had not previously been mapped, measured or fully understood;
- Significant opportunities existed to remove waste and become more customer-focussed, therefore improving efficiency and effectiveness;



- The current Scheduling process was inadequate and was more of an Allocation process based on short-term staff availability – there was no annual schedule or forecast of activity;
- Programmes were run with little understanding of offender profile or risk (i.e. need);
- The team had little access to management information to plan the service properly;
- Tutor staff were not sufficiently flexible in terms of skills mix, availability and willingness to travel;
- Treatment Managers were having to deliver Programmes to cover staffing gaps and thus spent less time on their treatment management work.

In essence, Accredited Programmes were designed around the needs, capabilities and preferences of the existing internal structure rather than the needs of offenders, the Courts and the ultimate customer: society at large. This was a services equivalent of “selling what we make” rather than “making what we sell”.

To Actuality...

GETTING THINGS BACK ON SCHEDULE

We identified scheduling as the key target for improvement and benefits achievement. We found that no real scheduling was taking place at all. The Unit Manager held a monthly planning meeting which took up to a day each month and also involved Treatments Managers, Tutors and Admin support – a significant commitment of resource. In this meeting Tutors were allocated to new Programmes as and when they became available, and according to their skill set. Consequently, Programmes were not being run according to Offender need or risk and there was no long term view of the Unit’s activities to communicate to external parties to assist in their planning. We decided this was a good place to start.

The Ad Esse team developed a simple model which could be used for Annual Programmes Scheduling and Resource Planning. Based on a number of user-defined assumptions, the model enabled us to simulate one year’s Programmes and determine the expected number of completions, number of Tutors and skills mix required. The model was designed to be easy to use so that assumptions could be changed easily, different scheduling scenarios tested and resource implications automatically calculated.

As a result of the simulation we concluded that:

- The estimated ROM completion target could be achieved with a 23% FTE reduction;
- This could be done with an average number of sessions per tutor per week that was well within achievable levels based on our external benchmarking;
- Venue capacity was not a constraint on delivery – the required Programmes could be delivered in the existing venues if properly scheduled;
- Treatment Managers would no longer be required to deliver Programmes, and a full-time Unit Manager could be appointed;
- Some multi-skilling of Tutors was needed to meet the forecast mix of Programmes, and to balance capacity more closely to demand.

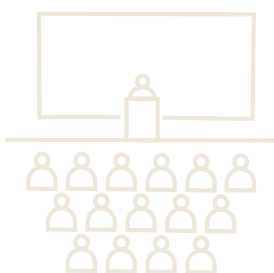
Ad Esse has a strong focus on sustainability when developing solutions for clients. The Scheduling model was therefore handed over as a permanent, easy to use, highly visual tool for future forecasting and performance monitoring to be used by the Unit Manager and Programmes Team.

A QUICK WIN

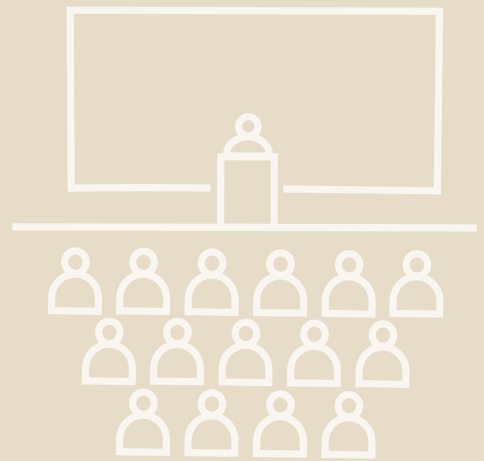
When helping clients solve performance problems we often identify simple and easy to implement actions that can be taken in the short-term to achieve quick results.

At Northampton we identified that a certain piece of video equipment needed by all Tutors was only available in one office, and Tutors based elsewhere had to travel to that office after every session to use the equipment. This caused significant wasted travel time, not to mention frustration on the part of tutors.

This seemed an easy problem to solve, so during the course of our intervention we obtained budget approval to ensure the correct equipment was available in all offices. This “quick win” enabled staff to see tangible results at minimal cost early in the process.



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OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

We left our client with a number of additional opportunities for improvement arising from our analysis but outside the scope of this particular piece of work. **These included:**

- Increase number of completions by reducing attrition rates;
- Change structure of delivery for two key Programmes to ensure better resource utilisation;
- Complete more Programmes per year by reducing changeover times between Programmes caused by excessive administration time;
- Challenge expectations of sessions delivered per tutor per week based on benchmarking;
- Further reduce costs and improve customer service by applying process improvement techniques to all processes.

THE BENEFITS

Our solution gave Northampton AP the following benefits:

- A full visual Programmes schedule for the year capable of being shared with the Director, Unit Manager, Programmes Team, Offender Managers, the ROM;
- The ability to forecast tutor and venue resource requirements throughout the year;
- The ability to forecast outputs (completions), and therefore to respond to changes in circumstances;
- An analytical basis for identifying skills gaps to facilitate training and succession planning;
- A more balanced use of resources throughout the year and a more even pipeline of completions, thus reducing poor utilisation in slow periods and minimising staff stress and under-resourced programmes in busy ones;
- Allow Treatment Managers to focus on their correct role rather than becoming dragged into delivering Programmes, thus reducing attrition rates and waiting list times.

The operational and financial results the solution will generate are as follows:

- Achieve the ROM completions target based on worst case attrition assumptions;
- Increase annual no. of completions per staff member from 10.2 to 16.8;
- Realise annual cost savings of £128,000;
- Reduce unit costs by 24%.

The change to formal scheduling of activities around the needs of customers has created a real opportunity for Accredited Programmes to offer a better, more flexible service, improve performance against external targets, reduce costs and offer better value for money. These are all benefits of *"making what you sell"* – as Toyota and others have proved.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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