

Improving Processes in the Public Sector

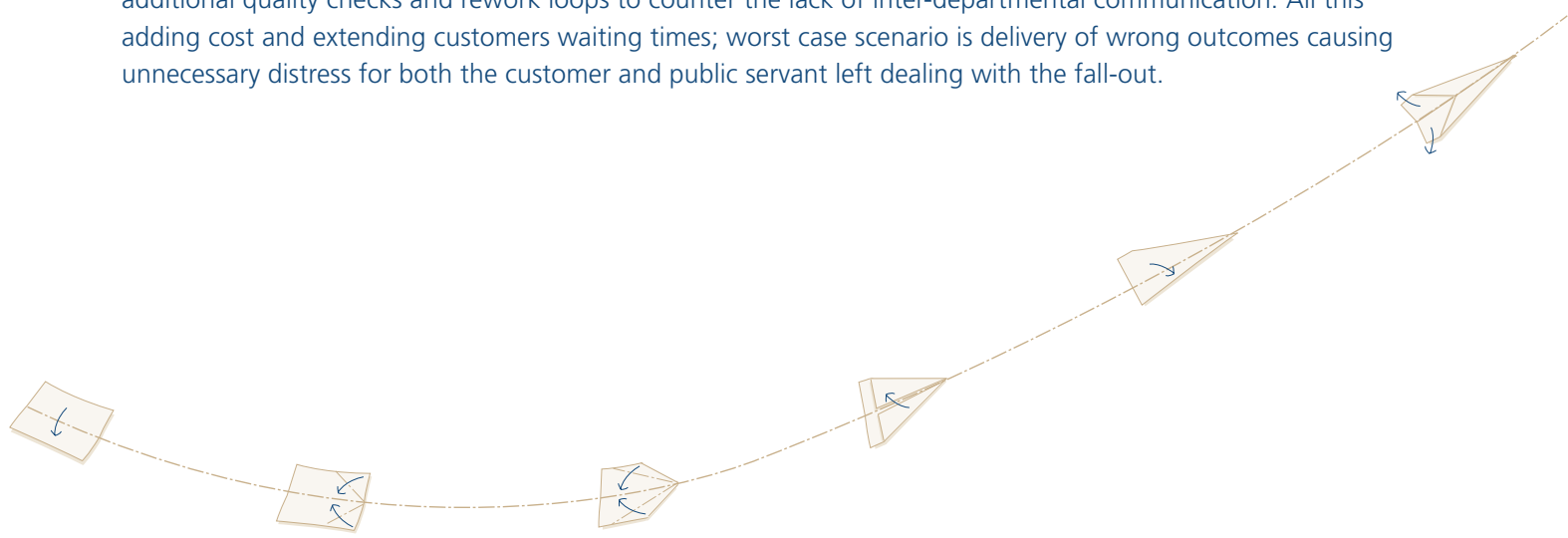
Many of our clients operate within the public sector at national, regional and local level delivering services ranging from, providing welfare benefits, administering criminal justice to organizing our national defenses. However different the services they provide, they all strive to deliver better customer experience, achieve sustained year on year efficiencies while under the close scrutiny of an army of citizen watchdogs and government reform agendas.

Despite many public services having already achieved significant progress against these agendas, customer expectations do not remain constant resulting in an ongoing requirement to deliver more upon more improvement or deliver better value for less investment.

Additionally, the Government set out specific requirements within the Public Services Reform Agenda (2006) advocating greater transparency of service delivery by;

1. Increased 'Competition and Contestability' of service provision demonstrating value for money
2. 'Outcome focussed Targets, Regulation, Performance Assessment and Intervention' to enable closer monitoring of performance against clear standards used to benchmark
3. Greater 'Choice and Voice, for customers – putting customers at the forefront of changes and designing solutions around them
4. Building 'Capability and Capacity' within the Public Sector– ensure the right calibre, skills, attitude and motivation of the workforce to transform public services

The public sector must therefore consider the end to end customer experience. This can only be achieved by viewing processes holistically and by over coming barriers that exist from years of departments working in silos and taking only responsibility for their part of the jigsaw. As a result, processes have grown arbitrarily with additional quality checks and rework loops to counter the lack of inter-departmental communication. All this adding cost and extending customers waiting times; worst case scenario is delivery of wrong outcomes causing unnecessary distress for both the customer and public servant left dealing with the fall-out.



The Public Sector also has to continue meeting the needs of internal and external oversight for reasons of contestability, audit or accountancy, to name but a few, so their processes must be documented clearly and be easily understood to accommodate cross agency/departmental benchmarking against defined, realistic standards on a national and international scale. Not achieving this resulting in closer monitoring or worse still outsourcing of the service.

Whilst enormous demands are being placed on already stretched services, the public sector has the talent and the means to deliver an excellent service.

HOW ARE AD ESSE CLIENTS OVERCOMING THESE BARRIERS AND DELIVERING EXCELLENT SERVICES?

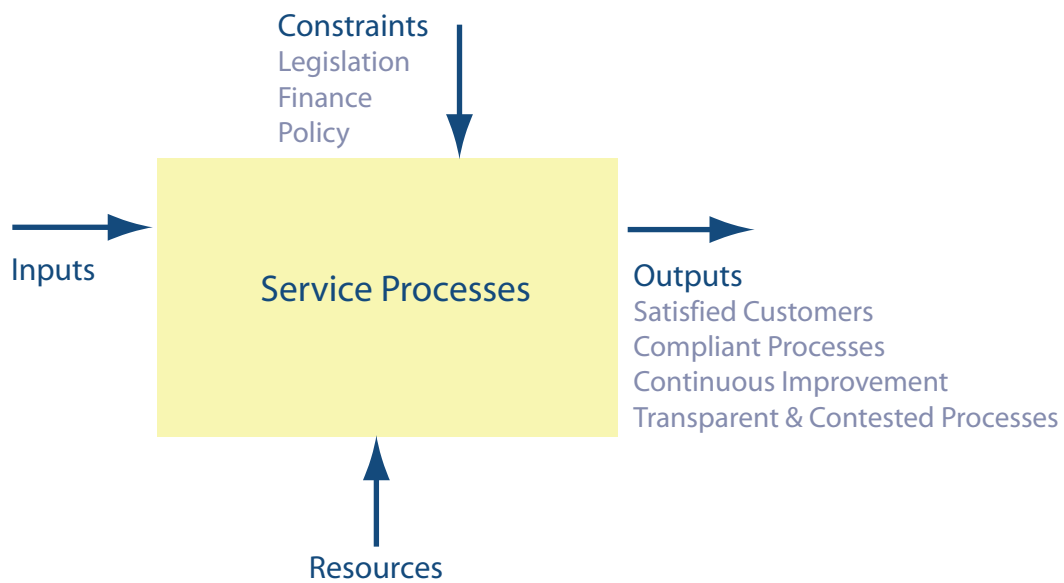
This article describes some of the approaches adopted, challenges faced, how they were overcome, and the results achieved.



We use tailored process improvement approaches based on Lean Thinking methodologies that are structured around a framework (as shown above) to ultimately ensure delivery of the right outcomes for our clients.

Recognising that one size does not fit all and that once you start upon the journey of improvement it will seldom be as straight forward as you thought, we work with you in delivering quantifiable and sustainable results against this proven framework but without being wedded to one particular tool. That said, this article will focus on how processes are improved once customers and stakeholder expectations have been defined. To understand more about the Ad Esse Sustainable Improvement framework please use this link. (Insert hyperlink to article that explains the Ad Esse Sustainable Improvement Framework)

Common to any Process Improvement approach we have used with our Public Sector clients, is mapping of the processes that are critical to service delivery; understanding it in its entirety and identifying all desired outputs. The diagram below shows the type of data required.



Once mapped we can easily determine where the real value exists within the processes, at the same time, identifying and quantifying all other requirements that must continue to ensure continued compliance with policy and oversight requirements. This allows fully informed strategic choices to be made on how improvements should be prioritised and deliver immediate efficiencies. At the same time minimising any increased risk to fulfilling compliance/audit or other regulatory requirements.

The Process or Value Stream maps, particularly those that represent complex services, assist in showing how service quality and compliance is currently being achieved and begin to identify opportunities for improvement.

DOES IT WORK?

We have recently worked with a Public Sector client looking to improve their processes by creating a value stream map demonstrating to them and their stakeholders how the process had evolved over time to compensate for the poor quality of inputs entering it. As with changes that occur overtime the true impact (additional cost) was not known to them. Analysis revealed that process times had significantly increased due to employees' complete lack of confidence in the data, resulting in 100% checking and 40% rework.

We helped our client redesign the front-end of the process to identify and remove non-quality inputs before they entered the process (an input was deemed to be non quality if it contained either inaccurate or missing data). These non-quality inputs are now being quantified and returned to the supplier with a detailed explanation of why they are deemed sub-standard. This step, an interim non-value add step, will remain while the two agencies work together to improve the overall quality of data to an acceptable level.

BENEFITS

In one specific assignment, a number of benefits have been achieved:

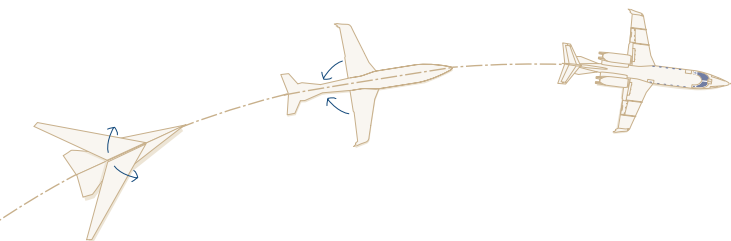
- By applying diagnostic lean techniques, our client has been able to identify several million pounds of cost avoidance for the organisation; representing 30% of its total annual running costs which are now being used to process 40% more cases.

- The same organisation has also able to quantify the cost of meeting their central accountancy requirements. From a contestability perspective it is important for them to distinguish these costs from those associated with pure service delivery to accurate reflect the cost of the service.
- This approach has also helped them ensure that activities and services provided on a multi-departmental or multi-agency basis are properly integrated and connected so that the customer does not fall into the gaps between them and other departments and agencies.
- Managers and employees have been able to use the maps to properly understand and define their processes and found being involved in the activity enabled;
 - Encouraging a positive, challenge culture (a key part of sustaining a culture of continuous improvement). Everyone being encouraged to ask why?
 - o Why do we do this?
 - o Why do we do it this way?
 - o Why do we do it in this order?
 - o Why don't we do it differently?
 - Encouraging and contributing to the continued search for performance improvement.
- Going forward these maps will form the basis of work standards that the organisation will use to undertake performance bench marking with departments delivering similar services.

The realisation of these benefits will enable the organisation to manage an expected 50% increase in case load without any increase in budget. A secondary benefit, but one seen to be just as important for them, is the sense of engagement and empowerment being felt by employees.

Contact Us:

If you want to discuss how we can help your organisation to create sustainable process improvement, give us a call on 0870 458 6162, or e-mail us at <mailto:seriousfun@ad-esse.com>



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PHONE: +44 (0) 870 458 6162 EMAIL: seriousfun@ad-esse.com WEBSITE: www.ad-esse.com