



Wessex Water

Wessex Water is the regional water and sewage treatment business serving an area of the south west of England, covering 10,000 square kilometres including Dorset, Somerset, Bristol, most of Wiltshire and parts of Gloucestershire and Hampshire. The company treats and supplies drinking water to 1.2 million people and provides sewerage services to about 2.5 million. Wessex Water is recognised by the water industry regulator, Ofwat, as the most efficient operator in England and Wales.

Trinity Horne carried out a performance improvement project at the customer services unit and control room of Wessex Water. As a result of the project, customer service levels rose, FTE requirement was reduced by 15%, while hours of service coverage increased. Trinity Horne also improved operating and management structures and introduced clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

The Challenge

The main responsibility of Wessex Water's customer services unit (CSU) is to answer customer calls regarding operational matters. Once calls and incidents are logged, they are passed on to the control room for investigation and resolution. The control room monitors the performance of the company's sites and assets, informing field staff if a call out visit is required. A review, carried out by Trinity Horne, of the operating structure and processes at the CSU and control room, indicated a number of shortcomings. Firstly, working hours in the CSU were out of phase with customer call profiles and incidents. In addition, there was a mismatch between the CSU and control room opening hours, leading to high levels of repeat calls, variable response time to incidents and high levels of reactive overtime being incurred by field-based operators. In the control room, central scheduling and work distribution was variable in approach and methodology, activity levels varied between schedulers and there was no measurement of workload to balance the amount of work carried out across different functions. Field-based operators' reactive workloads also varied radically. Within the CSU and control room, supervision showed little evidence of active management techniques such as regular follow-ups, performance monitoring and reporting. KPI's for the CSU were often inaccurate and measurement within the control room was inconsistent. Management structures in the control room were unclear, as were reporting lines, roles and responsibilities.

Solution / Outcome

The ten week project to reduce operating inefficiencies at the Wessex Water CSU and control room consisted of two phases. The first phase saw the development of a MOF (Management Operating Framework) plus the introduction of a consistent approach to forecasting, planning, work management and reporting. Trinity Horne also improved the use of planning systems, put in place a reliable job scheduling methodology in the control room, introduced work management techniques and individual and team performance reporting. In the second phase, Trinity Horne carried out management and team leader development. Using a programme of workshops to facilitate change, Trinity Horne trained team leaders and managers in proactive management techniques. In addition, Trinity Horne provided managers with 'on the floor', post implementation support to ensure that the changed behaviours and the new performance focused culture were fully understood and sustainable.

Benefits

- Improved handling of customer calls. Customer service rose in excess of OFWAT upper target levels for DG9 (98% in 20 seconds)
- Improved operating and management structures. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities were put in place in the customer services unit and control room
- Reduction of 15% FTE requirement with increased hours of cover
- New planning and scheduling function structure set up. Roles of planners and schedulers revised to increase visibility and improve focus
- Upgraded MOF (Management Operating Framework), consistent forecasting, planning, work management and reporting
- Better use of planning and development of a scheduling methodology. Improved job filtering resulted in call outs decreasing by 15%
- A comprehensive set of KPIs for the scheduling and field functions, leading to an improvement in scheduler productivity of 25%
- Upgraded work management techniques at planning function and field level