

DVLA partners with IBM in workplace transformation

Overview

■ Business challenge

To transform the working environment and develop a flexible, collaborative, team-oriented culture within DVLA so that the Agency can deliver improved service to customers whilst meeting tight budget constraints.

■ Solution

DVLA partnered with IBM to develop an Estates Strategy. As part of the programme, a joint DVLA/IBM team proposed non-territorial working in which management and staff relinquished 'ownership' of desks and workspace to share access to a common pool of workstations and facilities on a daily basis. This has now been implemented.

■ Key benefits

- On track to achieve net present value savings of £10 million in real estate and office facilities
- 20% reduction in workspace without staff reductions
- Improved staff and management communications, motivation and leadership
- Procurement economies through reduction of workstation range from 30 to 3 types.



The UK's Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) is one of the busiest government agencies, processing over 91 million vehicle transactions and around 18 million driver transactions each year. Most of the 7000 staff are based at the Agency's headquarters in Swansea.

Faced with delivering improved services to meet higher public expectations within tightening financial constraints, and with the costs of real estate and workstation facilities amongst the largest overheads, the Agency set about a major transformation of its workspace and working culture.

DVLA partnered with IBM to develop an Estates Strategy. As part of this programme, IBM and the DVLA worked in an integrated team to implement workplace transformation/ Non-Territorial Working (NTW) for 5,000 of the Agency's employees in Swansea. According to sources in

the Office of Government Commerce, NTW had never before been implemented on such a large scale in a public sector transaction-processing environment.

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– Clive Bennett, CEO of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency.

Achieving value through government transformation

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- Improved speed and right-first-time service to the public and commercial customers
- Clear desk environment facilitated
- Enhanced team working.

The objectives were two-fold – to deliver significant cost savings through the efficient use of space and resources and to effect a major cultural change, developing a flexible, collaborative, teamwork oriented environment with more visible leadership. The scale and diversity of groups involved (including staff unions) and the degree of desired change in working culture and behaviours, made this a challenging transformation programme.

Trigger for change

DVLA headquarters are located across several buildings in Swansea. Occupied since the early 1970s, the buildings were in need of refurbishment. As in many traditional public sector administrative offices, most staff in the hierarchical structure had occupied the same desks for years, working independently in siloed groups, within an environment cluttered with paper and personal possessions.

This environment did not encourage collaborative working or innovation. It offered little flexibility in migrating staff or scaling operations to address changing requirements. With the appointment of a new Chief Executive from the private sector, the Executive Board set out to address these deficiencies through a programme of Organisational Change. As strategic partner to DVLA in a programme called Partners Achieving Change Together (PACT), IBM helped create an Estates Strategy and a strategy for workplace transformation of which NTW was a key element.

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Catalyst for innovation

Drawing on their experience, IBM consultants identified the opportunity not only to reduce occupancy costs but to use NTW as a driver for cultural change.

IBM proposed an innovative change in a working environment to make more cost-effective use of refurbished space and increase collaboration. Management and staff would share workstations in the ratio of 8 to every 10 officers and occupy a different desk each day. Space normally left vacant through sickness, holidays or staff attending meetings, would be fully utilised. Space is allocated loosely by department, with communal overflow capacity available if a department has a full complement of staff at any time. A clean desk policy applies each evening, with personal possessions kept in individual lockers.

NTW was designed to save money and align closely with the strategic objectives of the DVLA Executive Board to create a modern, collaborative working environment in which staff are empowered to contribute fully. It supports a workplace transformation that embraces teamwork by encouraging open communication between departments and between staff and management.

“With the support of IBM, we are well on track to achieve our objective of £10 million financial savings. NTW has transformed our workplace and delivered better service to our customers. It would have been worth doing for the improved teamwork, leadership and staff empowerment alone.”

– Clive Bennett, CEO of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency.

Communicating success through ‘champions’

There were several hurdles to overcome in devising and implementing such radical physical and cultural changes in a traditional, public sector environment. Unions, management and staff all had to be won over and communication was critical to the success of the project. Some staff had been at the same desks for over 10 years, and were resistant to moving desks daily and finding themselves sitting alongside management. To help break down barriers between functions and grades, the Executive Board adopted open plan working within its own environment and had high-visibility interaction with staff in all departments through visits, coffee meetings and discussion forums.

Three pilots were implemented to coincide with departments moving into refurbished floors and NTW ‘champions’ were identified in each pilot department to help foster feedback and highlight the benefits of the new working environment. At Executive Board level the HR and Estates Director took on the role of senior NTW champion providing visible Board commitment.

Operational efficiency and cost effectiveness

Determined to contain costs, DVLA implemented NTW using its existing IT infrastructure. Extensive changes had to be made to ensure individual users could log on to any workstation, see their own desktop display and share data files across the network. IBM, Fujitsu and DVLA staff worked collaboratively to introduce the necessary adjustments.

The project team also worked closely with DVLA’s telecommunications function to ensure the easy and efficient migration of telecommunications to facilitate flexible workstation occupancy.

Throughout the project, the joint implementation team adopted a consultative approach, ensuring the operational needs of staff were satisfied. The project team recognised different operational requirements in different areas. NTW was not applied rigidly in the same manner, or with the same workstation to staff ratios, in every area.

Teamwork the key to success

Teamwork was key to the successful implementation of NTW within DVLA. IBM and DVLA staff formed an integrated project team working onsite in Swansea. It quickly became difficult to distinguish which members of the project team came from which organisation.

IBM consultants reported to the DVLA project manager and the senior IBM consultant also sat on the Project Review Board, alongside members of DVLA’s Executive Board, providing strategic guidance.

“We could not have achieved the speed of deployment of NTW to fit the tight schedule of office refurbishment without the skills and expertise of IBM,” explained Myrna Linden, DVLA Project Manager.

Key components

Services

- IBM Global Business Services
 - Physical Asset Management
 - Business Transformation

Transformation at a glance

To deliver improved customer service whilst meeting tight budget restraints, DVLA set about a major transformation of its workspace and working culture to develop a flexible, collaborative, team-oriented approach. A joint DVLA/IBM team proposed non-territorial working in which management and staff relinquish “ownership” of desks and workspace to share a common pool of facilities. A more open environment has enhanced teamwork and collaboration, enabling greater responsiveness to the Agency’s customers. DVLA is on track to make £10m net savings through the removal of workstations and the avoided costs of building refurbishments.

Role model for workplace transformation

NTW in the DVLA is becoming a visible role model for workplace transformation within the Office of Government Commerce (OGC), an independent office of HM Treasury. NTW also earned DVLA the coveted Corenet Real Estate Award for Innovation.

More than halfway through the project, DVLA is firmly on track to achieving a more flexible, effective, team-oriented working culture. Having already implemented a saving of 350 workstations, DVLA are well on course to exceed the workstation saving target of 640 by July 2007. This is in line with the objective to achieve a 20 percent reduction in workspace across the organisation.

Without any reduction in staff, DVLA is on track to make £10m net savings in real estate and office facilities, through the removal of workstations, including hardware, software and resources, and the avoided costs of additional refurbishments to other buildings. DVLA has already transferred 2,500 staff to a desk-sharing environment and the improved utilisation of existing office space has reduced pressure to lease additional premises to accommodate growth.

It is difficult for DVLA to predict staff requirements more than 6 months ahead, yet real estate often involves commitments for 10 or more years. Reducing demands on space and retaining flexibility to move staff alleviates the financial and operational constraints caused by real estate commitments while the standardisation of desks, workstations and equipment has created further economies in procurement and support. The Agency now has just 3 types of workstation instead of over 30 previously.

Delivering benefits to the Agency's customers

While the anticipated cost savings are significant, the transformation is delivering additional benefits.

The flexible use of workspace makes it easier to relocate, redeploy and restructure staff to address changes in operational requirements.

A more open environment has enhanced teamwork, communication and collaboration between individuals and different business functions, enabling greater responsiveness to the Agency's customers.

More visible leadership, staff empowerment, knowledge-sharing and teamwork are transforming DVLA operations, while improved communication between management and staff is encouraging a 'right first time' culture, delivering enhanced service to the public.

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