



Our Business Improvement Practice

Public sector managers are working in ever more complex environments, facing the challenges on the one hand of maintaining current services at ever improving levels of quality, while on the other implementing far reaching agendas of change, whether developed locally or resulting from national policies.

Implementing the policies depend on sure-footed application of demanding techniques such as process re-engineering, aiming to improve efficiency and value for money, while improving performance against public service targets.

At the same time the change has to be managed, often taking account of a huge variety of stakeholders and interests. Increasingly this is further complicated by the need to implement the change in such a way that different bodies can operate effectively and seamlessly together across what may have been historical boundaries established centuries ago.

Dbi's business improvement practice has nearly quarter of a century's experience of reform and change in the public sector. Our consultants fundamentally understand the ethos, relationships and processes that define the public sector change environment. They recognise that change must deliver benefits, and that these need to be defined and managed.

Our consulting philosophy is that successful business change depends on success in three key areas: managing the benefits; managing the risks; and managing communications.



At Dbi we know that consultancy is a people business...

... so we have built our company, culture, and processes on this basis with confident, experienced people at the top of their game. Our clients can deal with real people who take a genuine and personal interest in you, your business and in helping you solve your problems.

Our services

Our business improvement practice has worked widely across the public sector. Our consultants have a wide portfolio of relevant skills and in most cases they have themselves worked as civil servants, local government officials, or in the Armed Forces. Our capability includes, for example:

- Reviewing an organisation's web presence in the context of their overall strategic plan and developing a web presence strategy directly aligned with their strategic objectives
- Working with a Government Agency to overhaul their organisation structure and ways of working, moving to a more flexible and reactive structure. This involved issues of developing effective operational processes, organisational design, managing staffing issues, communication and change management, and physical re-stacking of a tightly packed office building
- Reviewing the organisation, practices and procedures of Procurement and Storekeeping functions of an overseas national water authority, developing and implementing major improvements. This included taking responsibility for processes with no extant management controls, a vast warehouse with no handling equipment, no staff and no records of stock movement in more than a year, and clerical staff with limited experience
- Reviewing Defra's crisis management, disaster recovery and contingency plans to identify lessons learned and propose remedial actions to address the identified deficiencies from the Foot and Mouth disease outbreaks when it was possible to critically examine the effectiveness of the response with the benefit of hindsight. In particular addressing the resilience of the critical infrastructure and assets supporting the national contingency plan and the ability of Defra to empower individuals and teams to contribute to developing contingency plans and assuring appropriate budget and resource allocations.

"I am extremely pleased with the wide range of technical support provided and the innovative yet pragmatic solutions to the complex problems that faced us."

Quote from central Government client

Our approach

Successful business improvement depends crucially on understanding the culture of the organisation in which change is to be made. Our consultants are very sensitive to the particular culture of public sector organisations – many indeed have long personal experience of working in this environment before becoming consultants.

Where appropriate we base our assignment approach on the principles of PRINCE2®, putting particular attention on establishing a sound foundation for work at the outset – establishing client expectations, agreeing acceptance criteria, agreeing progress reporting and deliverables, and developing a clear plan of activity. We put particular attention on involving clients at all stages of our work.

Many of our clients actively seek transfer of skills to them, and our consultants are experienced in involving client staff in their work, progressively encouraging their direct involvement and mentoring them as they gain experience and confidence.

Our consultants are specialists in their fields, maintaining currency with best practice and employing this on their assignments. Without dogmatic adherence to any particular methodology, we will use whatever approach is most appropriate to the task in hand.

"The approach to knowledge transfer has included formal training sessions, work shadowing and mentoring, allowing for increasing input from us as we became more skilled. We have gained essential new skills which will help us to roll out BRP more widely across the Council. Dbi have helped to ensure that we have the tools and techniques to respond to new situations."

Quote from local Government client

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- Strategy development
 - Organisational development
 - Change management
 - Feasibility studies
 - Procurement and outsourcing
 - Benchmarking
 - Multi-agency facilitation
 - Process re-engineering
 - Quality management
 - Business assurance
 - Benefits realisation
 - Performance management

Case Study: Harlow District Council



We were engaged by Harlow District Council to review its approach to the management of anti-social behaviour as part of a national workflow project, against a background of the involvement of a number of different key agencies, each with their own procedures and supporting IT systems. A key objective was the creation of a multi-agency solution to manage and reduce anti-social behaviour.

The Outcome

From former experience in the field of sensitive data held across multiple agencies we knew we would need carefully agreed protocols for the handling of data that might need to be shared between agencies. Issues of data protection, security and technology were addressed and a data sharing protocol – focused on the specific needs of Harlow DC and its partners – was developed. With different agencies involved, each with their own IT solutions, it was important to ensure that the technical solution could exist alongside robust, purpose designed, business processes that spanned agency boundaries.

The Benefits

Careful attention to stakeholder management throughout led to common understanding and agreement to the potentially most contentious area, that of data sharing. This having been agreed, the technical issues could be resolved in an environment of co-operation. At the end of our assignment, we had demonstrated clear benefits through this pilot project, had developed agreed protocols and processes, had identified a route map for future case management and had provided a comprehensive business case to support application for future funding.



WEST YORKSHIRE

Case Study: Connexions West Yorkshire

Our assignment was to deliver the DfES requirement for the Connexions partnerships to introduce a local customer information system covering operational service delivery and information about young people aged 13 – 19, to ensure they are identified and have access to the services and information they require. This involved identifying an information strategy that would meet the needs of the Partnership, including provision of access to new partners as well as synchronisation of systems and data exchanges to avoid duplication. Achieving a high level of security was mandatory.

The Outcome

We worked with all Partners across West Yorkshire to raise awareness of this and to develop flexible implementation plans to meet overall objectives. We ran a large number of workshops and briefing sessions, following these up with one-to-ones. Young people who would be subjects of the system were involved from the start, and the focus on them was a constant throughout the work. Besides the system itself, we actively facilitated the development of a partnership way of working.

The Benefit

We overcame considerable challenges in terms of tight timescales, making an important and on-going contribution to the Identification, Referral and Tracking projects in West Yorkshire and other initiatives including Children Missing from Care. A joint working relationship was fostered that supported collaborative working and the partnership's strategic role. The success of this project was highly regarded by DfES.

About Dbi

For nearly a quarter of a century, Dbi Consulting has been providing high quality, independent consultancy, primarily to the UK public sector. We are very proud that we have built up an enviable reputation for performance, competence and professionalism.

In addition to the management consultancy that has been the core of our business throughout this time, we now offer the provision of high quality interim managers. Throughout our corporate history we have developed an assignment management approach that ensures the consultants, associates, interim managers, clients and client staff can work together fully and effectively.

What we do

Dbi provides consultancy and interim management services, primarily to clients in the UK Public Sector—Central and Local Government, Agencies, NDPBs, Defence, Education and Health. We also work with a smaller number of commercial and other private sector companies.

Our consulting experience over the past quarter of a century is wide-ranging, but we have built up particular expertise in certain core services, which we brigade into the three practices of:

- Project and programme management
- Business Improvement
- ICT services.

The Business Improvement Practice includes:



Pat Coulter

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Pat has wide experience of Central, Local Government and organisations working with the public sector both as a civil servant, officer and a management consultant. He has a track record in cross-organisational working including inter-agency involvement and collaborative, partnering, new working arrangements including using technology to deliver business objectives. He has helped organisations to deliver and improve services and partnerships, coherent strategies and plans, improving how organisations are meeting the needs of their customers, how to respond to new initiatives. Pat enjoys spending time with his family and travelling.



Nick Mellors

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Nick Mellors is an experienced public sector manager, most recently focussing on Shared Services and IT Management. He established the first UK Central Government SAP competency centre and was part of the senior management team to set up and run a cross-Government Finance Shared Service. He also has a range of consultancy experience across the areas of Project Management & Project Review; Strategy & Software Selection; and Organisation Design and Business Stakeholder Management. He is author of "The IS Department as a Profitable Company", published by the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants. Nick enjoys running more slowly as each year passes.

If you would like to know more about our Business Improvement services, please contact Pat Coulter, or a member of the Assignment Support team, on 01926 834700. We would welcome the opportunity of an informal, no commitment, discussion with you.