



Case study

Name: KCOM Group
Sector: Telecommunications
Location: Hull, UK

Ringling in Change at KC

A performance improvement programme at KC has improved service delivery to customers, cut costs within the engineering operation and reinvigorated the service delivery workforce which is now highly motivated about the future.

Background

Part of the KCOM Group plc, KC provides a wide range of voice and broadband communication services to consumers and businesses in Hull and East Yorkshire and is proud of its contribution to the local regional economy.

Maintaining telecommunications services to business and domestic customers in the region falls on the shoulders of the Network and Engineering team. The operation undertakes repair services to cables between the main distribution point and customer premises as well as the provisioning of new customer connections.

Key challenges

- Maximise field engineering output to cope with rapidly evolving service portfolio
- Boost productivity and first time issue resolution
- Minimise reliance on contractors and overtime working

Key gains

- Achieved 50% improvement in engineering productivity in just 20 weeks
- Streamlining the business has already delivered significant annualised savings
- Customer SLAs have significantly improved

The challenge

Continuity of service is essential to maintaining market share and brand reputation, and KC prides itself on remaining at the forefront of customer experience. But escalating demand meant in recent months engineering resources had come under growing pressure. As a result the unit was increasingly reliant on overtime and contractor resources - all of which were eroding service margins. With a next generation access technology implementation looming, the team needed to be certain it had sufficient capacity to cope with a rollout.

"Industry benchmarking our performance would highlight if efficiency was an issue," confirms John Wardle, Head of Engineering Operations. "Everyone was telling me the answer was more engineers - but would simply throwing resource at the problem be enough to make it go away?"

The team turned to Managementors to review the end-to-end operation from initial customer call to the remote engineering fix

Uncovering the issues

The Managementors analysis revealed an operation in reactive mode, with scheduling being driven by workload alone. Disjointed processes also meant getting the right engineer with the right skills and parts to the right job first time was being impacted.

What's more, while everyone was talking no one was actually communicating within the business. Teams across the operation worked in silos with little appreciation or understanding of the challenges colleagues elsewhere in the business encountered. Plus, there was no mechanism in place to formally report issues for resolution.

As John Wardle explains: "There seemed to be a general acceptance that 'this is the way we work', with little ambition or belief that things could change. It was time to hit the reset button - and that's exactly what we did."

"Quite simply, Managementors helped us achieve more with less - introducing a 'can do' attitude that's changing the working culture. By eliminating divisions we've been able to introduce a 'better together' working approach in which everyone gains."

*Andy Whale,
Director of Engineering, KC*



First steps

To kick off the performance improvement programme, Managementors worked alongside management in reviewing 5 years' worth of historic data on work volumes and job type. Once workloads were profiled, managers could start to accurately forecast resource against demand and create performance benchmarks for jobs.

Next, processes were aligned to create an end-to-end engagement model that gave managers and supervisors greater control over interfaces with other departments that impacted engineering performance.

"Creating a new management operating system provided a common focus for everyone. The new system improved communication and everyone gained clarity on what was expected of them on a daily basis," confirms John.

Building bridges

Next, it was time to start eliminating the issues that were impacting engineer performance in the field. Office-based controllers were coached to proactively manage their engineers,

scheduling and prioritising jobs a day ahead to give operatives visibility of what was coming down the line.

"The role of a remote engineer can be lonely – we needed controllers and engineers to talk frequently through the working day, becoming each other's 'go to' partner for getting things done. Together they've become a powerful force for change."

Daily and weekly team performance reviews were initiated and team leaders were encouraged to go out into the field to talk openly about performance with engineers at daily and weekly performance reviews.

"We had to make it clear that we were passionate about removing the issues that were holding up engineers – and not acting as Big Brother, simply peering over their shoulder," explains John.

The new open forum discussions mean engineers and controllers can highlight issues which are logged for resolution and managers and team leaders report back to teams on progress.

"We've begun to transform the working culture of the engineering teams – the journey is challenging for everyone, but has initiated a new era of openness and empowerment."



"Managementors have a tried and tested methodology and a deep understanding of how to lift the lid on poorly performing operations. If anyone can do it, they can."

*John Wardle,
Head of Engineering Operations, KC*

The outcomes

In just 20 weeks, engineer productivity has leapt by an incredible 50 percent.

“We’ve already been able to generate substantial workforce utilisation improvements, using our new management reporting tools to initiate a culture of continuous improvement,” confirms John.

Eliminating inefficient working practices has unleashed increased capacity within the operation, which means that overtime costs are down as are contractor costs. Streamlining operational processes now means that the teams are able to respond to and resolve customer issues much faster and backlogs are down. But it isn’t just the customers and the business that have benefited.

Thanks to the increased capacity generated by the project, KC is now able to initiate a major industry recognised training programme for its engineers that will significantly boost their technical skills.

“Performance improvement will ultimately prove to be a win-win for staff and the business – our ambition is for KC to be seen as an employer of choice that’s committed to their future,” confirms John.

What’s more, the cost savings achieved means the unit has been able to invest in taking on 9 new engineering apprentices, made possible by the more effective utilisation of existing operational resources.

“We’re proud to be investing in the next generation of talent – it’s a great legacy for the business.”

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