

alexander
engage. challenge. change.

Case Study

Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council - Building Control

Improving efficiency to compete in the market

In brief:

- The Building Control department wanted to improve their processes, so they could compete in the external market.
- Alexander and the Gateshead team analysed and redesigned the processes using Alexander's structured Lean improvement process.
- This resulted in the department finding savings that equated to £50,160 per year and freeing up one Information Officer's role. This role, among other things, is now focused on marketing, so that the council can compete more effectively with the private sector.

Think with us ...

If you're reading this, then you're probably just like us, always curious about new ways of working.

The aim of our case studies is to promote sharing of knowledge and from it **thought leadership**. We hope this study helps you think through and explore some of the issues we now face.

Your questions and feedback are welcome.

Call us on 023 8022 5020 or email kay.bocock@alexander-ecc.com.



 **Gateshead**
Council

www.gateshead.gov.uk

The Building Control department knew they were facing competition from local private companies. They felt this was beyond their control and that they didn't have enough time to focus on improving their processes. They knew they needed to do what they did better, but they were unsure how.

After attending Alexander's seminar 'Delivering customer-focused services & operational efficiency', Paul Dowling, Head of Regulatory Services, engaged Alexander. He wanted them to review and change Building Control's processes and performance so that their operational productivity and service quality improved. This would also help them deliver the efficiency savings they were looking for.

Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council decided their key objectives were to improve their processes so that they could:

- Find time savings, which could be reinvested into other areas.
- Ensure a quality service for their customers.
- Maintain consistent standards.
- Create a cultural change that would deliver improved performance.

The Gateshead project team was initially unsure what the outcomes would be. However, as Alexander's lead consultant, Bernie McCalla, took them through the Alexander Lean improvement methodology, they became more and more enthusiastic and aware of the positive outcomes they could achieve.

'After the initial apprehension and not knowing what to expect, we quickly saw how the Value Stream Mapping procedure developed and the possible benefits in the way it was presented.'

Steve Barr, Project Team Member, Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council

Part of the Alexander methodology is to create and work with a project team that hold a broad knowledge and understanding of the process. This ensured that all key elements in the process were captured in an 'as it is now' state and not as how someone thought it was being done. This encouraged the team as they felt someone was taking the time to really understand the situation. Steve Barr added:

'The team became more enthusiastic as we progressed through the various procedures and saw how we could accommodate future legislative changes, which might affect our working practices.'

The team worked through the analysis phase, a key stage of the project. With determined commitment, they reviewed and evaluated their current activities using tools such as 'Value Stream Mapping', 'Root Cause Analysis' and '5S'. The team also went through waste identification, which helped them recognise unnecessary processing, rework, searching and interruptions. This phase proved very fruitful. For example, a Senior Surveyor discovered he was taking phone calls over a one year period, which equated to 100 hours - in monetary value this amounted to £5,680. As a result of these interruptions, he couldn't use his time effectively.

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“They were flexible, pragmatic and willing to share their experience and help us learn as an organisation”

Angela Waite, Head of
ICT & Central Services,
Canterbury City Council

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'We're now looking forward to implementing our conclusions and our proposed changes. We'd like to thank you on behalf of all the Building Control team for the professional manner you demonstrated and, on occasion, your patience.'

Doug Basen, Building Control Manager,
Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council



Having identified wasteful tasks, the team then worked together to generate ideas that would eliminate waste and use their available resources more efficiently. Next, the Building Control team improved their processes by eliminating unnecessary steps in the process, allocating tasks to other resources in the team, setting up standard operating procedures for the activity of the surveyors and many more.

As a result of the Lean improvement programme, the team saved time in their processes, which equated to £50,160. After transferring the costs, the additional capacity gained equated to an Information Officer, whose role was focused on marketing activities for the Building Control Team, as well as maintaining and monitoring new processes.

Doug Basen, Building Control Manager, in Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council commented:

'I felt the project was well managed and led by a highly motivated facilitator. Bernie very quickly grasped the issues at hand and directed team members in a quiet yet very effective manner to focus on the real issues that needed to be addressed.'

'The whole exercise has been extremely beneficial from both a management perspective and also because it allowed team members to really understand and appreciate other team members' roles. We've started to introduce the business improvements that were identified and are beginning to see tangible results.'

'The project has been a resounding success. Much of this is because of Bernie's friendly and professional approach.'

Alexander's staff-centred approach created ownership of the change process and gave control to those most directly involved. It also ensured that skills and knowledge were transferred to Gateshead staff so that the improvements in productivity and the associated efficiency and capacity gains are embedded in the organisation's culture.

Alexander is an independent change management consultancy that specialises in strategy alignment, performance management and improvement.

For further information, please contact Kay on 023 8022 5520 or by email at kay.bocock@alexander-ecc.com.

www.alexander-ecc.com

Alexander People - what we believe

Alexander people are business people who are passionate about public services. We take what's good from the private sector and shape it to meet the demands and challenges of public service. So when we look at the world and see what's wrong, our instinct is not to complain about it, it's to do something about it. This means that, when we look at our own company, we don't just look at its performance as a business; we look at the difference we make to changing public services and society for the better.

The people who manage and deliver public services today face huge challenges. They deserve someone to think with and people who can help to do the things they haven't the capacity to do themselves.

That's why we **engage** and connect with the people at all levels in public services who face these challenges.

Then we help them **challenge** the way things are.

So that they can deliver real **change** for the better.

That's what we do: **Engage. Challenge. Change.**

There's a belief that, without a profit motive, there isn't enough to drive public services to be better. We say that the stakes couldn't be higher. For people who work in and with public services, if we fail, society fails. **We believe this is the most powerful driver there is.**

Alexander People - what we do

Knowing where to go and how to get there

- Strategic & organisational review and diagnosis
- Shared vision
- Transformation strategy
- Transformation blueprint
- Stakeholder engagement
- Change readiness
- Communications

Delivering customer value with less resources

- Lean Systems Thinking
- Service transformation, design and improvement
- Shared services
- Function and service reviews
- Options appraisals and business case development

Enabling change to happen

- Programme and project management
- Change Management and benefits realisation
- Building capacity to change
- Skills and knowledge transfer

Making change sustainable

- Leadership development
- Management development
- Continuous improvement strategy and culture
- Skills and knowledge transfer

We work with...

Alexander works with people & organisations in the public sector, including:

- District Councils
- Unitary Authorities
- County Councils
- Housing Associations
- Police Services
- Health Services

If you'd like to talk about how we can help you, call us on 023 8022 5520.

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