# HITTING THE GROUND RUNNING

Very few of us get to start clean: getting a new organization, new space, and hiring new people for a new information management program. In over 20 years in some aspect of this profession, I have never faced that particular challenge. By far the majority of information management opportunities involve taking over from someone else. Sometimes, a predecessor has gone on to better things on his/her initiative; that is not always the case. Sometimes the group is one you were a part of yesterday. If the function functions, time moves on and changes may be needed to accommodate new technology, additional and/or changed tasks, and alterations in corporate missions. If the function does not, it is a good bet that you were hired or promoted as an agent of change. Each of these situations poses challenges. This presentation is about that first few months and first year in a new assignment. In other words, you have the job, now what?

## WORKFLOW ANALYSIS

The theory of workflow analysis can be stated in a few sentences. In the short form, a workflow analysis involves looking at:

- **What is happening now** – how work comes in, is processed step-by-step, retrieved, distributed, stored, retained for a given period, and ultimately destroyed. Absolutely look for other things, out of the direct process flow, being done.
- **What are the requirements**– including federal, state, local, corporate and customer – for the programmatic processes and/or outcomes
- **What resources are available** – money, equipment, people
- **Where and why is there dysfunction/disjunction** – between requirements and existing conditions

Note that the above stops before doing anything. A clear analysis and the resultant understanding of existing and desired conditions are absolute requirements for effective change or, for that matter, smoothly continuing a successful program. The earliest stages of taking over a new assignment are when the analysis should be done. Short time frames are not an excuse for not doing your homework. Lack of time and/or money/resources are insufficient excuses for failing to use what you were given to the best effect possible.

The programmatic goal is always the same: a legally compliant, effective information management program that meets customer, staff and your own needs. Workflow analysis is the tool I used toward that ultimate goal. The rest of this paper and the presentation are about the processes my staff and I used to meet our programmatic goals. The bottom line – where we started and where we ended up – is at the end. All of the following steps are ones I have taken, though not without the occasional stumble.

## INITIAL ASSESSMENT – CHECK YOUR ASSUMPTIONS AT THE DOOR

### *Research – the "What" of It*

Look around you. What space, equipment, budget, and other non-staffing resources are in use and what else might be available? Review the existing formal and informal organizational structure, policies, and procedures. This is particularly important for those already in the organization; remember all the things read and heard about "thinking outside the box" and "paradigm shifts". Ask yourself how the structures, policies and procedures affect the processes and people you work with and for. Are there policies, procedures and/or desktop instructions internal to the work group? How current are they? Do they accurately reflect current processes?

What exactly do you have? What is on the shelves or in some other (electronic, fiche, etc.) form of storage for which this group has responsibility? How do you know that? How is the material managed? If it is supposed to be filed by some file structure code or other organizing method, is it really? How do you know? What if it isn't? Hearsay is not admissible in court, so "this is what they told me when I got there" probably is not going to sit well in that setting, either. Consider beginning an organized, procedure-based self-assessment of what is on the shelves/in storage against the management tool. This will undoubtedly provide surprises as well as many opportunities for improvement.

## DISCLAIMER

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Do not attempt to change things now unless something illegal/immoral is occurring! If it is, correct it and look for how it got that way. Otherwise, write down your observations and move on. The intent of these questions is to analyze the entire work environment and flow before attempting improvements. Avoid the trap of asking for additional resources before a full assessment is complete. Customers and management expect visible improvements soon after providing money, staff, and/or equipment; so, do not ask for them before being very clear what the needs are and how additional resources will be used. If both programmatic goals and the assessment are clean, clear and well documented, then the necessary money and physical resources to bring them into line are easily justified.

### *Ask Questions*

Too often the analytic tendencies that brought an individual to information management cause the eye to turn to things first rather than people. Tasks are accomplished through people – a textbook definition of "management." So, with all available written and "hard" information now in hand and in the process of assimilation, talk to the staff and customers. This can be, and frequently is, a process parallel to going over the available factual material and provides useful context as well as relational data.

Assume nothing. Reading available documentation and observing intra- and inter-group relationships does not bring full understanding. Customer and staff input about their perceptions of the information management processes is essential. More important than talking is listening. The manner in which questions are asked makes all the difference. Ask the question and shut up; give the person a chance to answer thoroughly. Questioning must be non-threatening. Whether it is management, customers or staff, people who feel attacked defend; therefore, don't do it or appear to do it. Counterproductive is the kindest word for that. Yet, the question used by infuriating three-year-olds – Why? – is crucial to the success of any work flow analysis. Why?

The three-year-old is infuriating because the questions are constant and answers generate more questions. For the promoted-in-place manager, "Why do we do that this way?" said in a very puzzled tone to the room at large, many times leads to the desired reasons and discussion. The total newcomer can safely say, "Show me how things run around here, please." or "Please walk me through the ways work comes in, is processed and goes out." Small bites are better than big ones. "How does this work?" is a better question than, "What's that for?" Too much questioning, and for that matter too many answers in a row, is exhausting and confusing to all participants. Note that you've started internally. I've often wondered how we can bemoan our customers' hoarding and reluctance to submit information to our programs when our own are in disarray: How does the information management organization manage the life cycle of self-generated documents?

Talk to everyone in the organization. Do not ask one person to provide all the answers. Use of a single source tells the group things about your perceptions of them that may not be fair or true as well as biasing the analysis. Do not make assumptions about the relative value of input from exempt versus nonexempt personnel, college-educated versus less-educated, gender, time in grade or any other preconception/stereotype; especially including that from those you like versus those you don't. The manner in which questions are asked makes all the difference. The manner in which answers are received can either encourage more answers and interaction or shut them off completely. A good question to ask any- and everyone after having something explained is "What would happen if we didn't do that or did it differently?" Don't assess the validity of the answer now; just remember it long enough to write it down for future planning considerations. Keep asking questions until you can restate the activity, to the person(s) telling it, in a way with which they can agree. This serves two purposes: you really did GET it, not just think you did and they know you're listening and trying to understand. The latter is a morale and team builder.

Take every opportunity available to interact with customers and customer organization management. Ask them about their perceptions and needs in both formal (made an appointment or attended a meeting, took notes) and informal (hallways, over the counter, at lunch) settings. These contacts provide valuable information about how the information you manage is generated, how customers perceive the information management function and organization, and customer requirements. The fact that they're being asked shows interest and, properly done, leaves them with the positive impression that you care about their needs and perceptions and are looking into meeting those needs. Make no promises, make it clear that you want to know their needs so they can be considered in any future programmatic modifications.

## *Expectations – Customer, Staff, & Personal*

Every human being has expectations. Honestly deal with yourself first, so you can honestly deal with others. What did you expect to have to do and to get when you took the job? Why? Is that reasonable in context? What are you willing to do to meet your own expectations and those of your company, management, staff, customers and relevant regulatory bodies? Having answered those questions and looked at your own needs, look at those other needs.

What compliance organization expectations are there? To name a few, the *Occupational Safety and Health Act*, *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA), *Resource Conservation and Recovery Act* (RCRA), and *Fair Labor Standards Act* (FLSA) all have extensive information management requirements. As applicable to the information maintained by your group, are these requirements being met? Can that compliance be reasonably and easily proven?

Customers, analysts, and technicians reasonably look to their information managers for direction in performing their tasks. Customer tasks involve their part – notably creation – of the information life cycle and bridging the interface between that and the rest of the life cycle. Your staff's and your own part of the information life cycle – indexing, safe storage, retrieval, retention, and disposition – begin at that interface/bridge. How cumbersome, difficult, labor-intensive is the interface between your function and the customer organization(s)? Why? Is the problem on one or both sides of the interface?

What does your management expect to get from you? Why? How quickly is it expected and why? If you haven't asked him/her in the last step, now is a good time to get that clear with your manager. Your continued effectiveness and self-esteem, not to mention raises and continued employment, depend on meeting management expectations.

Ask the people doing the work – your staff – what would make it easier, quicker, more rewarding for them. Because the relationship between you as a manager and the staff is new, it is fragile. Direct questions may get "fine, everything is FINE" instead of critical input. What worked in my setting was asking for lists from everyone – unsigned and totally anonymous – of what they thought was right, wrong, needed to be done and as much "why" as possible. The only threat involved was "I will not later accept any flack about a person's input not being considered if I don't have now." Seven of the eight people in the group took the opportunity. Feedback and later self-checks will be addressed further along in this presentation. If you were there before, i.e., promoted from within, your relationships are still fragile. The entire web of your interactions with the rest of the group has changed. How you handle it directly affects how they will handle it and how well the new relationships will work to meet goals and serve customers.

Make no promises, except "I'll look into it." Staff, customer, or other, their perception of what to do, why and how, may not be the best, most cost effective answer to the perceived problem. Take in information, write it down, and think about not how to change things but about the emerging picture of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis). Make no judgements out of hand. That the new manager or anyone else doesn't see why something is or is not done does not mean there is not a reason (good or bad) for doing it. That this may be something you hated before you were manager does not mean it merits instant change. The workflow analysis must take in all aspects of the process – or at least the process step – before attempting to improve it. ALWAYS given that there's nothing illegal or immoral/unethical going on. Fix those first!

PLANNING

All relevant data in hand, now what? Plan. In order, consider:

1) **Programmatic deficiencies against known requirements** – the legal/moral things

2) **Available resources** – what there is with which to do the work; specifically MONEY ON HAND (a.k.a. this year's budget)

3) **Time constraints** – if a major audit is upcoming, what it takes to get ready for that may move up in the priority list from its original, logically sequenced, position in the plan

4) **Customer needs** – real and their fondest expectations

5) **Staff needs** – real and their fondest expectations (include your own desires, you work there, too)

6) **Future issues/needs** – this profession is changing constantly, so your program will have to include sufficient flexibility to move forward without a complete collapse and rebuilding every time something weird happens and/or a requirement changes

7) **Metrics** – against what objective and subjective criteria will this program be judged? If there aren't any, make some up and get customer/management consensus on them. There is no mileage without milestones.

8) **Process** – what exactly will be done/changed how, why, and on what schedule? See also Step 3.

9) **Feedback** – Deming's "Continuous Improvement," concept. Make provisions for assessing what comes of implementing this plan, for use with the next one. Some of our initial procedures are, 3 years later, on their 6th revision. They weren't "wrong" but forms and customer processes changed so we changed ours to match.

The planning process must be ongoing because new data always comes to light that affects the existing plan. Having said that, do not go off in a new direction every time some new "opportunity" arises. Modify the plan as necessary. Take new things into account and fit them into the plan where they are most effective.

*Buy-in*

In all cases, the marketing principle – WIIFM, What's in it for me? – applies.

Do not do all the planning alone. Involve your staff at as many staff levels and to the fullest extent possible. A very wise person once told me "everyone wants to be an instrument of change but no one wants to be CHANGED." He was right. If your staff is part of the planning and implementation at every step, they become instruments of those changes and are less likely to fight them. The same goes for your management and customers. Ask them, "what do you want to do about this" and "why". You hired the brains, not just the hands, of every "body" in your organization! Use ALL of them.

If management has the plan explained and the cost/benefit outcomes spelled out, he or she is more likely to feel comfortable with, and support, it. You and your new program will need that support when (not if) someone very happy with "how we've always done it" complains.

Customers **should not** have approval of every step in your process, just comfort with the outcomes. This is a SALES opportunity. Your customer buy-in challenge is to make them comfortable with the planned ultimate outcome. Remember four things, in getting that buy-in:

1) "Customer service" does not equate to "door mat." You do not tell them how to be engineers, scientists, and/or computer-types. You are the acknowledged expert in your area of expertise or you would not have been hired to do this job. You will have to prove to them, however, that you can and are.

2) Do not get bogged down in who did what last year, 20 years ago or the history of their field (or ours!). Allow a short amount of time for that, if it starts, then gently bring them back to the NOW and FUTURE. Those are things you can do something about.

3) Sometimes providing something more appropriate than what was asked for is the best option. This is the moral equivalent of "yes, we have no bananas" or replacing the sharp knife the child is chewing on with a teething ring. Don't condescend but don't roll over on things within your knowledge, training and/or experience. Show them how your plan meets their needs even better than the way they asked for it. This is YOUR area of expertise.

4) Do not get diverted by, or bogged down in, discussing the details of anything or any process to the exclusion of selling the planned outcomes.

## IMPLEMENTATION

In blatant disregard for well-known practices, I strongly recommend starting the implementation phase and letting go of control! Keep your eye and your staff focused on the group's mission and the plan but otherwise let them do their parts without meddling/helping. (Remember "forest" not just "trees"!) This approach is positive feedback to the buy-in process and sends a strong message of your respect for their professionalism.

In my experience, people live up or down to your expectations. Expect a lot or a little and you may just get it, either way. Everyone should know what his or her part is in the plan and be able to do it to established metrics and within the allocated time. This is also known as "working the plan." Encourage on-going feedback from staff and customers. You need to not only see the objective product but hear the subjective perceptions of it. Continue to listen HARD.

### REQUIREMENTS INTEGRATION

**Premise:** Every task that does not perform information management life-cycle activities wastes time and money.

That's a terrible thing to say! Is it? Time and money cannot be wasted on nonessentials. Every moment you and/or your staff spend that is NOT doing the tasks you are paid for is wasted. Lost time cannot be recovered and lost staff time equates to lost personnel dollars. If the plan calls for eliminating existing tasks (mine did) good, do it. If you are adding tasks, are you SURE they meet mission requirements? If not, modify the plan NOW – leave these things out or change them to meet real needs.

**Second Premise:** While the ends do not justify the means, they sometimes explain a LOT.

When we get together as professionals, we frequently bemoan customer document hoarding. Do something about it. We declared amnesty. Anyone could bring any document of any type to the record center and get candy, other food as available, praise and prizes. No questions would be asked, no punishments would be administered, no tales would be told to their management except about their wonderful cooperation.

As initially assessed, there were roughly 125 feet of legacy documents pending processing and another 40 feet of questionable "current" material. In the year represented by this presentation, over 520 FEET of hoarded material have been submitted. Nearly 384 feet of those submissions, over 45,000 documents, have been processed into the database and so are now available to meet requests. Since program inception, we've processed over XXX feet of legacy (out of the woodwork) material and an additional XXX feet had come in and been shelve for processing as of March 2000.

### POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

**Premise:** An undocumented process is cannot be standardized, proven, or consistently trained upon.

Once upon a time, I was a nuclear quality assurance lead auditor. The auditor's question is always, "how do I know your organization meets the requirements". Without a documented process that question cannot acceptably be answered. Further, as your staff does wonderfully and individuals are promoted to other opportunities or leave for whatever reasons, somebody has to be trained to do that work. Finally, performance quality and quantity cannot be fairly measured without known, consistent, documented standards. Build your metrics into your processes.

Yes, it is an ever-changing process. However, consistent information management processes determine your future ability to provide timely retrieval. Timely and consistent retrievals are THE most frequently cited customer need, and meeting that need improves customer confidence. ALL of these things are enhanced by having something to point to in answer to questions and for use in staff training.

There are three times when policies/procedures are used:

1) Training new or existing staff members on new or changed processes.

2) When being audited, to prove there is a process not just people doing stuff. Note that many laws actually require a documented records management system (NQA-1, RCRA, EPA, and OSHA, to name a few). So this is a compliance issue, as well as a functional one. The second-worst scenario is out of date procedures that make things worse and highlight noncompliance to existing requirements by their outcome.

3) When someone has messed up completely and is desperately scrambling to find a way out of the mess. In this unfortunately most common instance, the person needs something well ordered, legible, clear, and easy to read not a narrative full of "should" and "except" statements.

That third item also illustrates why periodic, at least every two years, review, discussion and revision of procedures must be done. There is information drift in the best groups. People make little notes on their copies of things and don't always share with their coworkers. There is a point beyond which self-expression stops and "noncompliance" begins. At or before that point is when the procedures need revision or the person(s) need retraining/calibrating to the requirements.

AUTOMATE: LOOK FOR THE EASY WAY

**Premise:** Any task that the computer can do, the computer SHOULD do. Time spent preparing reports of work done doesn't do any work.

If your indexing/electronic data management/whatever system can be used to produce desired and necessary production statistics it should. If not, why not and make that happening a priority. As much as possible, the process for producing these numbers should be built into the code and put in a very clear, step-by-step, procedure so that someone does not waste a lot of time with it at whatever reporting interval and it is done with absolute consistency. Data gathered differently at every interval (monthly, quarterly, whatever) is useless for proving anything.

Use data, once gathered, as many ways as possible. If, as in my setting, a monthly, quarterly, and annual summary is required, let the machine do the roll-ups. Do not waste worker time doing basic arithmetic. Do not decide to embellish existing numbers or add statistics that measure nothing and/or report irrelevancies.

**Second Premise:** Use your EDM system fully.

Is the file structure still manual, in spite of extensive computerization? Why? Combine barcode or other media management devices with the database(s) to optimize filing and therefore retrieval. If there are multiple databases, see if they cannot become one, comprehensive one. The more elaborate the file system – paper or electronic – the more likely it is to fail. The Keep It Simple Stupid (KISS) concept definitely applies here.

In my case, the files were partially ordered by an existing file-code-structure with newer documents loose on the shelves in barcode order. The implementation process (begun at about the four-month mark) included the previously mentioned self-assessment with full conversion to barcode order filing. Reuse of folders minimized the conversion expense and many documents misfiled under the old structure were found and made available to customers. Additionally, nearly 30 feet of shelf space came open when many small files containing only 1 or 2 documents were combined into a few, large, barcode-ordered folders. Retrieval of customer requested documents has been greatly facilitated (see appended statistical reports) and nervous customers who "knew how to use the old way" have been enchanted with one-on-one demonstrations of "virtual folders" arranging their requests at their whim and in seconds. The single database does it all.

VOLUNTEERS DO BEST

Limited staffing limits this section. To the fullest possible extent and taking into account ongoing work, let people volunteer for the special projects and change-related activities. As earlier stated, most people are more willing to CHANGE than to BE CHANGED. Not only will the given individual take personal ownership of the task; many times their involvement will translate into salesmanship with their customers and peers.

Give credit to the workers but no blame to those who are not comfortable volunteering. If a change task is left over, take it on yourself but ask one of the holdouts to help you get started. As they are more involved, they may run with it, if not, well, you tried. Do it yourself, anyway. This is about "carrots" not "sticks."

Whatever the milestones are, celebrate. A cake, vegetable tray or other food goodie, balloons, or SOMETHING can be relatively inexpensive but priceless to your staff and customers. If management won't or can't spring for it, do it yourself because you will benefit most from their joy at your acknowledgement. A good source of performance award ideas is *1001 Ways to Reward Employees* by Bob Nelson (Workman Publishing, NY 1994).

TRAINING

Whether it is the assessment process, change implementation, or daily routine work, it cannot be done consistently and well without training. The plan must include time and methodologies for doing this training. Train and retrain your staff as often as necessary, maybe even a little bit more.

Plan loud, multi-directional strategies for notifying and training field customers on any changes to the customer and record center interfaces. If the record center interface changes and the customer does not know that, it will be one frustrated angry customer instead of a confident happy one.

Spend the time it takes to train your customers in effectively, and hopefully painlessly, submitting and retrieving information – their side of that interface discussed earlier. Methodologies include SHORT (10-15 minute) offerings at their regular staff meetings, one-on-one at the counter or on the phone, web-sites, pamphlets, and personal e-mailings. Include door prizes and other rewards as much as possible, preferably with your group's telephone number/logo on them.

MEASUREMENT & FEEDBACK

The elimination concept applies to measurement devices and strategies. Eliminate any metric that does not meet a current legal, corporate or functional need. Years ago in another assignment, and after due consideration, I once dropped fifteen (15) reports that had accreted over time and all of which had large distributions. My manager and staff knew I quit, but no one else was formally informed. A year later, one report had to be reinstated. Time saved amounted to 1 hour/report/month = 14 work hours/month x 12 months = 168 work hours/year or 4.2 workweeks saved for use in mission-related tasks. **In this case, eliminating the separate task-tracking databases saved the ES&H RC over 200 person-hours the first year!**

Incidentally, "accretion" is a geologic term applicable to the way sedimentary rock – and associated embedded fossils – is formed. Neither a rock nor a fossil be. That is not the way to get ahead or even to stay even.

## CONTINGENCY PLANNING

Change management is ongoing. "What if..." scenarios are essential parts of the change management processes.

What constitutes a "disaster" in the work environment? How bad, in terms of functionality, lost information, outraged customers, etc., could that be over both the long and short term? Why?

Having asked these questions, there are any number of good books available through ARMA International, Inc., on disaster prevention and/or recovery in general. There are also list server groups, and personal networking as well as (in many instances) corporate resources. What will you really need, need to do, why, on what levels of urgency and with what? Answer those questions IN WRITING. Let others see the plan(s) with red pencils in their hands. Modify it, go through a few more rounds, publish, and practice. The latter item – practice – is the most important. How will it really work is a different reality from the elegance of the written word.

Take the finalized plan HOME. That middle of the night phone call will catch you without resources if you've neatly left them all at work.

Keep the plan CURRENT. Plan for the database to be backed up in a number of places and several intervals – every couple of hours, daily, weekly, monthly and annually. Particularly in a totally computer-based retrieval system, that retrieval system is as or more important to protect than anything it represents. Look at the how, why, etc. of disasters in YOUR context and consider:

- What if you don't do some of these tasks or do them badly?
- How will you/your staff perform outcome monitoring (disaster-related or not) and what constitutes "good" or "acceptable" outcomes?
- What relative values are taken for granted in the routine, non-routine, and crisis-management tasks?

## WHAT WE DID AND ARE DOING – AN EXAMPLE IN PROGRESS

### BRIEF HISTORY

The Sandia National Laboratories Environmental, Safety and Health Records Center (ES&H RC) is an active, high-rigor facility serving 350 – 400 field customers in the associated organizations. While the ES&H RC handles the most active records, it maintains nine years of files. Initially these were in two geographically separated service centers. In 1999 one of the buildings was decommissioned/demolished (D&D) and all 450 feet of files held there had to be integrated into the main center files. The larger than usual "active" period (9 versus 5 years) is due to both the availability of space optimized with mobile-aisle shelving and to customer recall patterns. The facility staff consists of 6 exempt and 4 nonexempt personnel.

- Exempt: Operations Manager, two Senior Records Analysts, two Records Analysts, Programmer/Analyst (initially on another contract, but he asked to join ours)
- Nonexempt: four Records Technicians

The Record Center is staffed during normal, 8AM to 4:30PM, working hours Monday through Friday. Off-hour and/or emergency service is provided on a case-by-case basis as approved by the contract manager. Prior to 1997, a variety of management structures had been tried by the funding field organizations. Spring of 1997 brought several decisions:

- Center would be staffed and run by one contractor organization rather than the existing multiple contractors (staff augmentation approach)
- Center oversight would be through the corporate Recorded Information Management Department to ensure compliance with corporate standards and would be funded on a pro rata basis by the field customer organizations.

Westinghouse Government Technical Services Division (W-GTSD) won the competitive bidding process in mid-July 1997. The Operations Manager (author), part of the bid presentation team, was offered the position with two weeks to close out an assignment for Westinghouse Savannah River Company (Aiken, SC) and be in Albuquerque, NM, ready to work. Note that this is a three-day drive! Moving into a hotel with the cat and leaving a husband behind to cope with selling the house and dealing with movers, contract implementation began August 11, 1997.

### WHERE WE STARTED – WORKFLOW ANALYSIS/IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES IN USE

#### *In the beginning, the ES&H RC had:*

- a 60-calendar-day backlog of new/current incoming work
- nearly 165 feet of legacy/questionable material awaited processing or review
- staffing by four contracting organizations, essentially a staff augmentation set up
- retrieval times routinely exceeding 1 day for audit-related calls and exceeding 5 working days for non-audit/batch calls
- retrieval accuracy under 90% (1.5 in 10 documents not available for customers as called)
- two filing systems – one based on an elaborate, program-tied, "file code structure" and a later group filed by barcode – at both locations

- elaborate "records filter" in lieu of corporate retention schedule compliance – some records refused, based on customer funding criteria
- material on the shelves that was not represented in or retrievable via the Safety, Health, and Environmental Automated Records System (SHEARS) database (master index/metadata)
- material represented in SHEARS from customer data downloads for which records had never been submitted
- lack of customer confidence resulting in customer refusal to submit records to the Records Center
- slow, awkward database; slowing data entry and retrieval
- incompletely or totally undocumented workflow process, with several bottlenecks
- no clear priorities for which work came first and why or for who did which work, why
- a detail-oriented task-tracking database unrelated to any information processing activities other than to report their status

### *Analysis/Implementation*

**In the first month:**

- convinced the existing 8 staff members to leave their companies and sign-on with W-GTSD
- asked for staff input as to the problems they saw, issues bothering them, possible solutions (BIN Lists). They were given opportunity to submit lists anonymously; any format as long as they did it. All I asked for was eight lists (OR, don't complain later!) and I got seven.
- gave every staff member a personal copy of the contract to run the center; so they had no questions about customer and corporate expectations
- met every field customer that came to the counters (both locations, continued for several months)
- sat down with contract manager and her department manager regarding expectations
- started through every document in the (inherited) office, the contractual requirements, existing procedures, site requirements and anything else of the "requirements" line specifically including past audit/assessment results
- drafted first improvement implementation plan based on existing knowledge
- negative variance (83% against required 90%) for processing incoming current material

**In the second month:**

- met with staff regarding a summation of their lists and got consensus on priorities – volunteers gleefully accepted
- second draft of implementation plan, with assignments and dates where possible
- eliminated FOUR redundant (task tracking) databases (quick fix)
- assigned an individual to make statistics as automated as possible and write associated draft procedure
- asked for and received staff-developed rotation schedules: for mail run, technician ER support, analyst assigned to ER, audit pager holder. No more "who's turn is it" and "not fair, I did it last week" confusion.
- began working with programmer (separately contracted to SNL) regarding database migration, priorities, etc.; included upgrade to version 7.0 from 2.0 (Microsoft Access) with associated speed & effectiveness improvements
- arranged with contract manager for ergonomic evaluations and associated work station changes, all staff & both locations
- reached agreement with contract manager to submit weekly copies of W-GTSD corporate time sheets for cost tracking instead of creating separate SNL ones every week (50% time saving & accuracy improved)
- brought all legacy materials together in submission date order and grouped/labeled by submitter, represented organization, and what we were TOLD material represented
- submitted complete revision of customer manual to contract manager, representing existing practices in dealing with customer submissions and requests
- gave volunteer task of writing procedure for 100% self-assessment: shelved materials vs. database
- met contractual metrics for retrieval AND processing new/current work

**End of first quarter:**

- no negative variance from contractual metrics
- ergonomic equipment in place, trained upon and in use
- began conversion of PCs to site common operating environment versions, including moving to Windows NT from Windows '95
- revisions to all existing staff procedures completed and submitted to contract manager and department manager for review/revision/concurrence prior to issuance (customer buy-in)
- used vendor services to get new folder labeling program (whole $250) to permit use of standardized colors and marking first and last barcode in a folder – speeding retrieval (pretty, too)
- with agreement of field customer management, staff went out and got 14 BOXES of legacy material and began processing; also retrieved 18.5 feet of frequently requested material previously held in basement storage by a customer group
- self-assessment process began at main facility

ONE YEAR LATER

**With the same people, same supplies, same equipment and same customers (plus a few groups):**

- as part of the internal assessment filing at both ES&H RC locations fully converted to a barcode-based system and the database verified against shelved documents
- shelved material not represented in or retrievable via database indexed for fully database-based retrieval
- 98% of records in database a linked to corporate retention schedules and no record material refused
- where database held data from customer downloads for which records had never been submitted, the documents were identified/acquired or the entry removed and barcode number reused for an existing document (cleans up both database and shelves)
- customer confidence in improvements demonstrated by the continued rise in the number of document submissions – both current and legacy material – and three new customer organizations
- major efforts by the assigned programmer resulted in a new, improved, faster database, improving data entry and retrieval search times and providing for automated hourly and weekly back-ups at two locations
- statistical reporting is automated to the fullest possible extent
- service contracts are in place for essential equipment (mobile aisle file systems, especially)
- imaging equipment pilot project complete, equipment selected, justified, and purchased by customer organization; some production scanning
- retrieval times for all documents are "while you wait" unless several hundred are requested at once (improved services)
- legacy amnesty program has brought in several hundred FEET of hoarded records from field customers (better document capture due to customer confidence)
- in-processing of new work is 2-3 days and documents represented in the indexing database have doubled (improved services)
- workflow priorities are established, documented/proceduralized, and worked (empowerment)
- **PERFECT Fourth Quarter evaluation (5 out of possible 5) from both contracting and field customer organizations (customer satisfaction)**
- three staff members back in college and several joined and are active in the local ARMA Chapter (staff morale and training)
- at his contract renewal, programmer requested transfer to our contract, reporting to the ES&H RC Operations Manager

TWO YEARS LATER

**With the same people, same supplies, same equipment and same customers (plus a few groups):**

- NO staff turnover since May 1998. (consistent staffing)
- Three Records Technicians will receive Associate Degrees in Information Systems by 12/2000 and an Analyst will complete her MBA mid-year 2001.
- Customer ratings are still "excellent". There have been no ratings below 4.7 on a 1-5 scale since contract conception (consistent quality)

- Records Center Operations Manager now involved in customer metrics committees and planning as well as procedure and new forms review processes
- Legacy material continues to come in, some of it very old baseline material as customer trust grows and field management sees benefit of the Records Center approach and process
- Full-production document imaging with associated procedures and restricted, read-only internal network access to SHEARS database and associated document images to field customers. This desktop access also lessens the number of times records are pulled from the shelves re-filed.
- No audit findings in three years! We received a nice letter from the regional NARA office regarding designation as "best practices" site in barcode technology and record center operations. Nice letter, too, from New Mexico Environmental Department on efficiency of records center operations after their August 1998 visit.

NOW WHAT?

### *More Customers*

As customer organizations change configuration and the benefits of letting records people do records work sink in, we're getting more customers. This translates into more procedures, workflow changes and efforts to streamline processes, since staffing is constant and likely to remain so.

### *Customer Outreach Continues*

**Party!** There is at least one full-size, multiple-day party per year and usually two, one of which is held during National Records and Information Management Week (NRIMW).

**Food!** There is always candy in a basket on the counter. The individual wrapping on each piece has the group logo and PHONE NUMBER. We also share anything else we happen to be eating on a given day – cake, cookies, special candy, fruit, whatever. It is very hard to refuse records, signatures, etc. to someone when you have their cookie in your mouth.

**Toys!** Some executive-type toys sit on the counter at the main facility. Customers with something to play with do not feel like they've waited a long time. Toys and food give the appearance of a pleasant place people want to drop in and visit – not a black hole or dentist office – and casual visits have greatly increased.

**Personal Service!** Finish this sentence: "you catch more flies with sugar than…" When someone comes to the counter, she/he is greeted by name if at all possible and served immediately. If several people have to help him/her, that comes before everything else going on. We ALL get up and go to the counter if that is what it takes. New customers are walked through the request and/or submission process without condescension, arrogance or rudeness and are introduced to the manager and other people in the group if possible. Prizes – cups, pens, calendars, magnets, etc. – are given to the new customer just for coming in, along with the instruction pamphlet and staff call list. This process continues yearly, with new prizes/gifts and outreach activities.

**Amnesty!** Customers are always encouraged to empty their desks, offices, file cabinets, etc. into the tender, loving care of Records Center personnel. Joy and delight are expressed for every page of this "legacy" material when submitted to the ES&H RC. No names, no "where the…has this been" nor criticism in any form are ever taken down or reported only the most glowing terms are used to describe this person to his/her management. There's no annual event – since this might discourage regular turnover and actually CAUSE hoarding. We do offer to come out and look at the office/records and help them box it up to ship to us if they promise to go on a regular submission thereafter.

People who do not feel threatened are more likely to walk in the door the first time. Rewards and encouragement ensure their future visits. People who are scolded or punished for submitting "old" records that "should have been here already" have a strong tendency to keep the stuff until they quit, die, retire or transfer. Maybe their successor will submit it; maybe s/he will pitch it.

The continued result of this policy has been discovery of important material from the authoring individuals and the availability of that information to others. This information, once submitted, is then appropriately protected and compliant with federal, state and corporate information management and retention requirements.

**Training/orientation!** Whenever possible, ES&H RC personnel offer to go to customers and/or groups of customers to discuss their concerns, understand their needs and resolve issues. Presentations are available (canned) to orient and/or refresh the memories of customer groups about ES&H RC functions and services. The Sandian serving as contract manager makes these presentations and/or refers the customer(s) to ES&H RC personnel.

**Meetings!** We meet with whomever, when, where, and how they want to meet. Willingness to discuss things gets both new business and a deserved reputation for openness (See also, Personal Service, above).

METRICS INITIAL VERSUS FISCAL YEAR 1998 PERFORMANCE

| Function | 1st 10/97 Monthly Report (baseline) | 9/98 Monthly Report | 1998 Annual Report Incoming or Requested | Annual Report Processed | Contractual Metrics | FY'98 Performance vs. Metric |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Processing New** | 1407 | 2,504 | 23,459 | 23, 778* | 90% ≤ 10 days | 98.97% |
| **Retrieval – Audit** | 1 | 0 | 89 | 89 | 90% ≤ 8 hours | 100% |
| **Retrieval – Non-Audit** | 128 | 233 | 3,537 | 3,220@ | 90% ≤ 5 working days | 99.91% |
| **Boxes to Inactive** | 0 | 0 | N/A | 44 | Do (no quantity) | + |
| **Copies** | 5,367 | 1,956 | 11,8253 | 11,8253 | Track | + |
| **Legacy Footage** | 1.22 | 104.12 | 520.18 | 439.42 | Process | + |
| **Legacy Documents** | No Tracking | 3,492 | N/A | 45,021 docs. | Process | + |

* difference is number of "legacy" current documents, up to 60-days old, at contract award

@ only 3 documents in database were unfound – determined to have been checked out to customers in 1996/97 and not returned. Remaining 225 had never been submitted to the ES&H RC. **Checkout process discontinued 9/97.**

| Function | Average Processed (Monthly) | Improvement Compared To First Month | Contractual Estimate |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Processing New** | 1982 | 41% | 3,000/month |
| **Retrieval – Audit** | 7 | 700%## | No Estimate |
| **Retrieval – Non-Audit** | 295 | 230% | 1000/month |
| **Boxes to Inactive** | 4 | N/A | 200/year |
| **Copies** | 9,854 | N/A | none |
| **Legacy Footage** | 36.58 | ~3000% | No standard |
| **Legacy Documents** | 3751.75 | 415%** | Included in "new" |

** Improvement percentage based on THIRD month number (902), as we could not accurately track legacy documents processed during the first two months.

## This may not be a valid measurement since audits are irregular and external to normal customer groups.

FISCAL YEAR 1999 METRICS

| Function | 9/98 Monthly Report | 9/99 Monthly Report | 1998 Annual Report | 1999 Annual Report | Contractual Metrics | FY'99 Performance vs. Metric |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Processing New** | 2,504 | 1,765 | 23,778 | 22,636 | 90% ≤ 10 days | 100% |
| **Retrieval – Audit** | 0 | 0 | 89 | 205 | 90% ≤ 8 hours | 100% |
| **Retrieval – Non-Audit** | 233 | 298 | 3,220 | 4,173 | 90% ≤ 5 working days | 99.98% |
| **Boxes to Inactive** | 0 | 5 | 44 | 181 | Do (no quantity) | **+411%** |
| **Copies** | 1,956 | 6,493 | 11,8253 | 68,487 | Track | + |
| **Legacy Footage Processed** | 104.12 | 6.83 | 383.37 | 277.74# | Process | + |
| **Legacy Docs. Processed** | 3,492 | 1162 | 45,021 | 9,787# | Process | + |

#1999 legacy processed is lower because we have run out of the "easy" things and remaining documents require more time and analyst versus technician handling. Note that 661.11 feet of legacy material were processed, more than 4 times the original holdings. Another nearly 200 feet of legacy are now shelved and awaiting processing.

*1998 versus 1999 Processing Averages*

| Function | Average Processed Monthly FY98 | Average Processed Monthly FY99 |
|---|---|---|
| **Processing New** | 1982 | 1886 |
| **Retrieval – Audit** | 7 | 17 |
| **Retrieval – Non-Audit** | 295 | 348 |
| **Boxes to Inactive** | 4 | 15 |
| **Copies** | 9,854 | 5707 |
| **Legacy Footage** | 36.58 | 23# |
| **Legacy Documents** | 3751.75 | 816# |

## This may not be a valid measurement since audits are irregular and external to normal customer groups.

**SUMMARY**

In Fiscal Year 1998, the first fill contract year, ES&H RC staff and management proved that the same people, place, customers and money, can be managed differently to greatly improve the work, customer relationships, and their own morale. Our greatest thanks go to the contract manager(s) and their manager for their initial and continued support and encouragement.

Fiscal Year 1999 numbers continue to show improvement in contractually required task performance as well as taking on new tasks with the same resources, e.g. imaging. Lower "new" processing numbers in part reflect better process control so that non-record copies are stopped and recycled before reaching the indexing/imaging phases of production. The near 400% increase in boxes sent to storage is a direct result of the annual self-assessment.

REGULATORY BODIES

- Department of Energy
- Department of Transportation
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Lockheed-Martin Sandia Corporation
- New Mexico Environmental Department

RELEVANT LAWS AND REGULATIONS LIST

| | |
|---|---|
| **10 CFR 835.701** | *Occupational Radiation Protection* |
| **29 CFR 1910** | *Occupational Safety and Health Act*, Department of Labor |
| **36 CFR Chapter XII, Subpart B** | *Records Management* |
| **40 CFR 51-61** | *Clean Air Act* (CAA) (a.k.a. Title 42 USC 7401, et. seq.) |
| **40 CFR 50** | EPA Regulations on National Primary and Secondary Ambient Air Quality Standards |
| **40 CFR 53** | EPA Regulations on Ambient Air Monitoring Reference and Equivalent Methods |
| **40 CFR 58** | EPA Ambient Air Quality Surveillance Regulations |
| **40 CFR 61** | EPA Regulations on National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants |
| **40 CFR 81** | EPA Regulations Designating Areas for Air Quality Planning Purposes |
| **40 CFR 110** | EPA Regulations on Discharge of Oil |
| **40 CFR 112** | EPA Regulations on Oil Pollution Prevention (SPCC) |
| **40 CFR 116** | EPA Designation of Hazardous Substances |
| **40 CFR 117** | EPA Regulations on Determination of Reportable Quantities for Hazardous Substances |
| **40 CFR 120** | EPA Regulations on Water Quality Standards |
| **40 CFR 122 (33 USC 1251, Et Seq.)** | EPA Regulations on Consolidated Permit Program (*Clean Water Act* (CWA)) |
| **40 CFR 129** | EPA Regulations on Toxic Pollutant Effluent Standards |
| **40 CFR 133** | EPA Regulations on Secondary Treatment Information |
| **40 CFR 136** | EPA Regulations on Test Procedures for the Analysis of Pollutants |
| **40 CFR 231** | EPA Regulations on Disposal Site Determinations Under the Clean Water Act |
| **40 CFR 243** | EPA Guidelines for Solid Waste Storage and Collection |
| **40 CFR 260-270** | *Resource Conservation and Recovery* Act (RCRA) (a.k.a. 42 USC 6901) |
| **40 CFR 401** | EPA Regulations on General Provisions for Effluent Guidelines and Standards |
| **40 CFR 403** | EPA Pretreatment Regulations for Existing and New Sources of Pollution |
| **41 CFR 101 – 111** | General Service Administration (GSA) Regulations on Creation, Maintenance, and Use of Records |
| **49 CFR 171-180 Public Law 93-579** | U. S. Department of Transportation Hazardous Materials Regulations (DOT) |
| **Title 5 USC 552a** | *Privacy Act* of 1974 |
| **Title 15 USC 2601** | *Toxic Substances Control Act* |
| **Title 44 USC, Chapter 33** | Records Management Requirements |
| **Title 44 USC, Chapter 35** | Records Management definitions |
| **DOE O 200.1** | *Information Management* |
| **DOE 1324.2A, Change 1** | *Records Management* (text canceled) DOE Records Schedules (DOERS) |
| **DOE 5500.7B** | *Emergency Operating Records Protection Program* |
| **DOE 5700.6C, Change 1** | *Quality Assurance* |
| **NQA-1** | Nuclear Regulatory Commission Quality Standard, as applicable |
| *Atomic Energy Act of 1954* | Sections 148 and 247 |

RELEVANT LAWS & REGULATIONS LIST, *continued...*

*Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act (EPCRA)*

*Federal Facilities Compliance Act* (FFCA)

*National Environmental Policy Act*

*Safe Drinking Water Act* (SDWA)

National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) *General Records Schedules*

*U. S. DOE Organization Act*

*U. S. Export Administration Act*

*New Mexico Air Quality Control Act*

*New Mexico Hazardous Waste Act*

*New Mexico Solid Waste Act*

| | |
|---|---|
| **SNL Prime Contract** | Contract authorizes and funds Sandia National Laboratories |
| **Sandia Contract AU-4900** | Contract authorizes and funds ES&H RC operations |
| **Sandia CPR 400.2.1** | *Information Management Manual* |
| **Sandia CPR 400.2.2** | *Records Management Manual* |
| **Sandia CPR 400.2.7** | *Sandia Records Retention and Disposition Schedule* |

CONTRACTUAL REPORTING CRITERIA

### *Monthly Report*

Time for completion of the monthly report statistics and explanatory text is approximately 10 FTE hours, total. Reports average six pages of text and one statistical report attachment. By the fifth working day of the following month, report work accomplished during the month, including statistical performance against contractual metrics:

- Cost status – monthly and cumulative actual vs. projection
- Describe variations (positive and negative) from contract performance requirements
- Describe problems or challenges encountered and their resolutions/status
- Number of records received/month
- Number of records processed (coded, indexed and filed)/month
- Number of customer requests per month (audit vs. all other)
- Number of copies made/month
- Number of records that were not found/month (broken down into shelved/not found and never received/not found)
- Status of any new technologies being implemented and/or other special projects

### *Semi-Annual Report*

Only a first quarter report was required by Contract AU-4900. Reception was so positive from the contracting and field organizations, however, that the contractually required semi-annual conference with the contract manager came to include issuance of a Semi-Annual Report. This report is standardized and submitted at the end of the first six months of the fiscal year with the monthly report. The Semi-Annual Report Format was established very early in the contract period to address all contractually required metrics and reporting, and includes the period's statistical and non-statistical performance:

- Achievements
- Deficiencies, including planned corrective actions
- Retrieval times (audit and non-audit)
- Processing times (new/current work)
- Personnel turnover
- Training
- Current initiatives

### *Annual Report*

There is no contractual requirement for a formal Annual Report. It has been initiated to summarize ES&H RC improvements over a longer period of time and support trend analysis through the year(s). The Annual Report format is the same as the Semi-Annual Report with the exception that Deficiencies/Opportunities for Improvement are identified first, then a summary of the achievements for the year, including actions taken to mitigate or eliminate the listed deficiencies. Initiatives are addressed in terms of both those completed and in-progress during the reporting year as well as those planned and approved for the upcoming year. Ideally, the organization should be able to look at the planned initiatives portion from one year to see if these have been accomplished in the following year.

Time for completion of the semi-annual and annual report statistics and explanatory text is approximately 6 FTE hours, each (text and data). Reports average 6-7 pages of text and one statistical report attachment.

### *Funding Statement*

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