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Simon Priestley, Solutions Director, MITIE

power to you
Device management creates productivity gains for MITIE

MITIE is one of the UK’s most consistently high performing businesses. Since its launch in 1987, the company has grown its revenues every year. MITIE is now a £2 billion revenue business with more than 70,000 employees in the UK and Europe.

With a range of large blue chip clients and large public sector contracts there are hundreds of organisations to have chosen MITIE for one or more of its strategic outsourcing, energy, property or facilities management services.

One factor in MITIE’s success is its willingness to embrace new ideas and change. When the company decided to review key structures and operational methodologies, it sought the assistance of Vodafone’s Better Ways of Working team.

A two-phased project was developed focusing on MITIE’s mobile maintenance engineers working in the Facilities Management division. Almost 4,500 engineers keep around 10,000 buildings functioning by maintaining gas and electricity systems, central heating, water supplies, critical server environments, fire and security systems, and many other essential services. Split into four geographic teams, many of these engineers are mobile, travelling to customers’ premises on a job by job basis, or permanently based static engineers at larger facilities.

The first phase of Vodafone’s project examined workforce management processes and procedures within MITIE’s National Mobile Services team. The second had a wider brief to develop a vision for better ways of working within the Technical Facilities Management team which could ultimately become the blueprint for the entire MITIE organisation.

Holistic understanding

The Vodafone Better Ways of Working methodology is a programme of workplace transformation using lessons from Vodafone’s own transformational journey. Achieving Better Ways of Working starts by analysing the workplace and the worker groups. By mapping out a workforce and looking at their requirements in terms of Space, Technology and Process, Vodafone can deliver high performance workplace solutions which are accepted by employees (users).

The Vodafone approach promises to mobilise an organisation, and help make savings on office space, travel, infrastructure, office equipment and supplies such as paper and energy.

Flexible working applications, tools and devices can improve productivity, job satisfaction and staff retention. They can improve services for citizens too, making staff more responsive to changing needs and circumstances. In essence, technology carefully blended with the other themes is a major enabler for better ways of working.

MITIE’s Solutions Director is Simon Priestley: “Having worked with Vodafone for a number of years and visited its offices, we knew Vodafone’s Better Ways of Working approach begins in its own organisation.

“The Vodafone working environment is forward thinking in many ways, with things like fully flexible desking and a no-clutter policy. Staff can’t book a meeting room unless there are at least four people attending, any less than that and informal meeting space is used. We were pleased to involve Vodafone in looking at improvements in our own ways of working.”

Building a picture

MITIE’s National Mobile Services team provides technical maintenance services across the entire United Kingdom, responding to planned maintenance requirements and reactive calls routed through a central Customer Services Centre.

Vodafone sought the views of over 350 engineers, together with a range of managerial, administrative and other support staff, through a variety of means including an eSurvey, interviews and workshops. This research built a picture of how workforce management systems were applied on a day to day, operational basis.

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The results of Vodafone’s investigations revealed a range of opportunities to help make business processes more efficient. In particular, MITIE people were spending too much time on paperwork, for example:

- Managers spent a majority of time in the office, connecting with colleagues, going through paperwork and working through long reports and not as much desired time with customers
- Office support staff were in the office more than 80% of time with 60% spent liaising with colleagues and capturing data
- Engineers spent a significant amount of time travelling and completing paperwork, giving less time to focus on work orders and customer requirements.

It was apparent that the technology intended to support the business could be more integrated, with decisions on task allocation then being made at local levels.

Vodafone’s recommendations provided a roadmap focused on three key issues:

- Automating field service and customer management processes to empower employees to resolve queries more efficiently
- Shoring up service contract and warranty management to protect important revenues
- Investing in asset management to capture more data and improve data visibility

Vodafone’s people and culture recommendations called for a clear vision for how ways of working should change with the benefits articulated for MITIE, employees and customers.

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<th>Cost savings</th>
<th>Broader scope</th>
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<td>Vodafone also proposed investment in an enterprise level workforce management system, to support the roadmap for change and promote growth. Successful implementation of recommendations had the potential to deliver a range of business benefits, such as:</td>
<td>Phase two of Vodafone’s work had a broader scope, investigating the potential for better ways of working applied across MITIE as a whole. Investigations included an electronic survey across a wide range of roles, prompting a 48% (1,050) response rate, supported by interviews with the senior executives.</td>
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<td>- Significant cost savings would be achieved through the elimination of paper and storage, improvements in first time fix rate and travel savings through improved routing – with a 10% reduction in miles driven</td>
<td>Vodafone carried out space observations at two locations, a space utilisation assessment, a storage and furniture audit and a technology assessment, covering connectivity, security, devices, applications and services. The development of a business case was assisted by input from MITIE’s Finance, Property, Technology, and HR departments. Vodafone used its People, Process, Technology and Space methodology to capture the results of its assessments:</td>
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<td>- Proposed implementation of a full scheduling solution would substantially increase engineer productivity</td>
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<td>- A reduction in invoice disputes by using electronic paperwork and improved reconciliation of parts</td>
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<td>- Significant time savings through as much as 25% reduction in time spent monitoring and reporting across all job functions.</td>
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Clarity of responsibilities, promotion of team-wide communications and the linking of individual performance measures to operational, financial and customer metrics were other recommendations. Dedicated resources should also be assigned to facilitate the transition to better ways of working.
People – In essence, people are not seamlessly connected.

45% of the management workforce is fixed mobile with as much as 60% of time spent liaising with colleagues, gathering information and accessing files. A sizeable proportion of the mobile workforce is unable to connect to the MITIE network. Up to 30% of employees desired more mobile working, including 10% with a preference to be home based.

Process – Work practices are bringing people into the office unnecessarily.

Working practices drive the need to be in the office, to access and print records and hold meetings. Timely access to information is the biggest communication challenge identified in the survey. There is a drive for a more explicit MITIE flexible working approach.

Technology – Misalignment between work styles and tools and technology.

More than 30% of mobile management workers are unable to connect their laptop to the network. 10% of the workforce is estimated to be working on personal devices. People want to be enabled to access shared systems and use collaborative technology.

Space – Under-utilised, unexciting workspace causes distractions.

Office space is under-utilised and meetings typically involve just two people. Internal space is not optimal and does not solicit collaborative working. It was estimated that people are losing up to one hour every day due to noise, distractions and accessing files and technology. A majority of the workforce are able to work at home, but more than 60% of those able to work remotely feel that their role requires them to be office based.

Vodafone’s Better Ways of Working recommendations to address the issues raised were characterised as “mobilise people, then mobilise the organisation”. They included a combination of quick win, predominantly addressing People and Process issues, with investment in Technology and Space solutions in the medium and long term.

Structured and professional

“Vodafone’s approach was structured, professional and open minded,” says Simon Priestley. “Because Vodafone went into such detail it enabled us to create a thorough set of recommendations and develop a robust business case.

Building on its work looking at workforce management, Vodafone supported MITIE with a roll out of rugged PDA devices direct to engineers, pre-configured with all required applications and first line support, reducing internal management cost, removing paper-based data collation and building a platform for further rollout.

The solution is expected to save up to one million pieces of paper each year, paper that would have been produced by the use of traditional administration systems.

“We’ve adopted a more managed service approach to our mobile devices and PDAs, rolling out over a 100 new devices a month to our engineers. We’re already starting to see positive indicators, with less paper, fewer errors and improved productivity.

“We’re also embracing some of the technology recommendations, moving away from desktop PCs to laptops and wireless connectivity. Our use of space is another important area and we’re starting to look at our leases to see where we have the potential to make changes.”

The value of the ongoing partnership between MITIE and Vodafone was illustrated when MITIE needed to move quickly to enable engineers to fulfil a large new contract, which ultimately involved significantly enhancing the workforce and technical capability within MITIE’s National Mobile Services team.

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