

Case Study: Establishment of a Benchmarking Process

The Challenge

The National Blood Service (NBS) modernised its approach to processing donors, by redesigning its core processes. They realised that they needed a mechanism and methodology for continually measuring their performance improvements against other similar processes, both within the field of blood collection and in similar collection processes. The real challenge was, firstly, to select a methodology, then implement a mechanism, and train individuals to champion the desired changes to culture.

The NBS needed to know how their existing process measured up, and then, once the new process was constructed, how this performed against the chosen benchmarks. From this data, they could very easily see how far the new process had improved the situation, and build further improvement programmes leading to a culture of continual improvement—the ultimate goal of benchmarking.

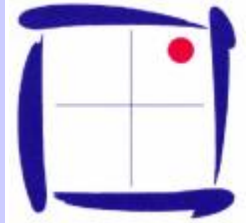
The Solution – Establish Benchmarking as a Tool for Improvement

A small project team was formed to decide the scope and objective of the exercise. It was agreed that the NBS required to benchmark both at process and customer level i.e. in the former case the need was to benchmark the blood collection process with best in class processes from other similar situations/organisations, and dissimilar organisations and in the latter case to benchmark the level of service given to donors against similar organisations. In each case the ultimate objective was to raise performance to best in class standards, clearly demonstrating the change by measurement.

It had become clear that this project required a number of steps and a trusted and tested methodology was employed. The approach was highly participative through the use of cross-functional workshops incorporating different levels of the organisation, one-to-one interviews and presentations. This was very useful for:

- Ø Communication to all groups of staff regarding the project

- Ø Involvement of all grades and job roles to achieve better quality outputs



The Scope of the Project

The project concentrated on establishing four areas for benchmarking.

1. Measurement against other blood collection agencies, firstly in the U.K. and secondly worldwide, but only in other industrial nations.
2. Measure the donor's perception of the process of giving blood versus other similar situations within his or her experience, particularly where waiting time was a key performance indicator within the process e.g. airport check in, dentists, sports events, doctor's surgeries and A & E departments.
3. Measurement against best in class logistics organisations. UPS were identified as a possible example.
4. Measurement between the ten English blood service regions, measuring ten key variables.

What we Delivered

The following methodology was deployed.

1. Plan. During this phase the specific study focus area, key measures, and definitions were established and clearly documented. In addition the data collection tools were refined and finalised, and research was conducted to identify the best in class organisations to study. Representatives from the NBS selected such organisations to benchmark against.
2. Collection. This phase had two distinct objectives. Firstly to collect qualitative data and secondly to learn from the best in class partners. The study questionnaire, produced in the planning phase, was passed to all partners for completion, with site visits or conference calls made with the partners.
3. Analysis. Received data was analysed with particular note taken of trends and identification of practises that either enhanced or hindered superior performance. Performance gaps were identified and measured.
4. Improvement. Improvements, resulting from best practise were identified, and delivery plans established to deliver the improvements.

The Benefits

Benchmarking clubs were established with suitable partners. Best in class organisations were selected to benchmark against and the relevant methodologies were created for the Blood Service to carry forward. Dummy runs were performed to show staff how to operate Benchmarking on an ongoing basis.