

# Scottish Water

## Improving customer service

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Scottish Water plays a key role in protecting the nation's health by providing water and waste water services 365 days per year to 2.2 million customers and 130,000 business customers across an area, one third of the size of Britain.

### **Planning & Development Services**

Planning & Development Services was formed by merging two departments to provide an integrated service for approving and arranging new connections. Scottish Water's reputation was suffering because the new department was not meeting customer expectations for speed and quality of service.

The performance of Planning & Development Services is driven by the efficiency and effectiveness of its own activities but also depends crucially on other parts of the business and its suppliers. A business-level incident team was therefore created to improve end-to-end performance. Tefen Management Consultancy was invited to support the incident team: providing expertise in programme management, performance measurement and process improvement.

### **Identifying the issues**

The first task was to obtain an immediate assessment of the situation and understand the underlying issues so that the work of the incident team could be targeted in the right areas.

**"Tefen Management Consultancy helped us to focus on the key business processes that needed to be tackled first, to make the biggest impact. They were easy to work with and helped bring a disciplined team approach to a project that needed to be delivered at pace."**

**Alan Thomson**  
Head of Development

**Project Conducted by ERSKINE  
Management Consultancy  
Tefen Management Consulting**

Cavendish Court  
11-15 Wigmore St.  
London W1U 1PF  
U.K.  
Tel: 44-20-74090222  
Fax: 44-20-74090777  
www.tefen.com

The priority was to achieve immediate tangible improvement in service quality and response times. Once this was achieved, the focus could be moved to implementing and embedding longer term change. Programme administration was therefore kept to a minimum, enabling time and resource to be focused on making things happen.

While attention was on the front-end approvals process there were also opportunities to improve the speed, quality and efficiency of the connections service. Above all, the service needed to be managed more as an end-to-end process with better visibility and control over the flow of customer applications through each stage. The people involved needed to understand more about how their work was affecting other parts of the process and alter their priorities accordingly.

### **Achieving results**

Tefen supported the incident team for the first 4 months. One of our roles was to create the project management disciplines required to coordinate and monitor progress. We were also instrumental in establishing reliable management information on an on-going basis. However, our key role was to work with operational managers, challenging ways of working, highlighting potential improvements and facilitating changes in both people and process.

As work progressed, the results started to come through. New performance measures were put in place, focusing on the outputs being achieved rather than volumes of tasks completed. As a result Scottish Water managers could see how many customer requests were in the system and the time being taken to progress them through each stage of the process.

The new output-based measures also made it easier to identify the non-value adding parts of the process and eliminate unnecessary activity. Priorities became clearer and people started to concentrate their time on the tasks that would make the greatest difference to the level of customer service. Managers also started to observe changes in behaviour as people built up the confidence to make on-the-spot decisions that would resolve customer requests sooner.

### **Business benefits**

- **Service levels** - customer connection requests completed within 14 days increased from 43% to 74% and is still improving. The backlog of requests was also significantly reduced, in some cases to a sixth of what they were.
- **Culture & behaviour** - a greater sense of ownership has been created and people are more empowered to take the initiative and make changes for themselves.
- **Management controls** - performance management has been simplified and re-orientated towards controlling overall customer service. Priorities are clearer and more widely understood.