

Background Briefing Department of Transportation

I. Implementing DOT MOVE

DOT's "Management Ownership Vision Empowerment" (MOVE) program provides a forum for the Commissioner to instill her vision of the agency to staff beyond the executive and senior management level. Implemented in January 2001, this performance management and accountability system was designed to evaluate measurements of each operation's performance, identify efficiencies, and improve customer service.

a. Problem and Program Solutions

DOT MOVE was created to improve management and performance through analysis of meaningful data. It was also envisioned as a way to prioritize public safety in relation to operational goals because it forced managers and staff to take ownership of their actions and look at the larger picture, rather than the immediate problem.

b. Implementation challenges

DOT generally has two main functions: facilitating the movement of goods and people throughout the City, and ensuring public safety. Prior to the implementation of DOT MOVE, units that performed these functions operated independently of one another; as a result, DOT was a reactive agency, with extensive disconnects between agency units and actions. Instead of addressing the problem, we simply put in a quick fix. By only completing the task at hand, we were constantly faced with larger issues which went unsolved because nobody felt responsible.

c. Strategy

MOVE entails a thorough internal examination of data, processes, and policies for a particular operational area; managers are then directly questioned on the findings and held directly accountable for their decisions. To implement the program, agency leadership first broke down all functions within each division to understand how decisions were made and assess what kinds of solutions were forged when problems arose. Then, meetings were held with each division wherein line managers were required to explain their area's shortfalls to the Commissioner and more importantly, present detailed plans with timelines for implementing improvements. Follow-up sessions were also required to report on progress and ensure that goals are achieved.

By following this model, DOT has succeeded in changing its very culture by providing real solutions, not just piecemeal adjustments, to transportation issues, and confronting issues head on rather than in a reactive manner.

II. Lessons Learned

Examining the process behind each operational task helped the agency realize systemic change, but was a difficult and time-consuming process. The agency leadership had to break down all functions within each division in order to understand how decisions were made. This "simple" task actually required a huge time commitment, as there was an inordinate amount of information to digest.

By asking line managers direct questions about processes and outcomes, DOT was able to establish accountability for big-picture items as well as the task at hand. Follow-up meetings ensured buy-in because managers had to address and resolve the issue in a timely fashion.