



Achieve Breakthrough

# Case Study

## **Bath & North East Somerset Council - Customer Access Program**

***Core Strategic Council initiative recovered and delivering beyond Executive expectations by adopting an 'Out-Performance' culture and breaking traditional historic practices.***

### **Background**

The Customer Access Program is an ambitious project that encompasses both substantive changes to multiple manual and electronic systems and business processes together with changes in behaviour, approach and culture towards customer service, which requires cross-service collaboration and alignment of priorities. The intended outcomes of the project include:

- Customers can contact the council where and how they like
- Staff can deal with 80% of enquiries at the first point of contact
- The council can offer a consistent quality of services
- The council will increase the customer satisfaction

The two primary functional areas involved in the project were the core project team that were tasked with delivering the appropriate technology, IT systems and business processes and the front-line service delivery teams responsible for delivering services to the customer such as library services, waste and recycling, processing planning applications, collection of council tax and provision of benefits.

### **The Challenge**

The need to meet the timeframe, high expectations and visibility for this project put considerable pressure on the core project team especially when coupled with other responsibilities to meet day to day service delivery. Additionally, the financial model was tight and resources stretched with a mixed level of experience and skills at delivering a project of this nature.

As a result, there were a number of specific challenges that impacted the team's ability to work with the needed pace and alignment:

- Differing views on the vision and how the business processes and rules needed to be developed and adopted so as to transform the customer's experience
- Difficulty in making some critical decisions within the timeframes needed
- A degree of mistrust in individual's agendas and ability
- Mixed morale and confidence in the team's ability to deliver
- Mismatch in expectations between core project team and front-line service delivery teams
- Uncertainty from the Executive as to exactly what was going to be delivered when
- Critical milestones were slipping with a lack of clarity as to when they could be delivered

## The Solution

Achieve Breakthrough provided a support program that would address the underlying cultural elements that were starting to have an adverse effect on the team's ability to stay motivated and hit the critical milestones

The program consisted of a combination of 'out-performance' skills development, an introduction to a new way of thinking and approaching project meetings to combat traditional embedded practices, managing conversations and resolving the inevitable setbacks. Support was provided in a collective and sub-team environment coupled with 1 on 1 coaching and development.

## The Results

Within weeks the team renewed their commitment and resolve to the project and each other, implemented a new meeting structure and way of working that allowed people to get at the real issues fast, from a factual perspective and challenge each other constructively without fear of upset or confrontation. The change in performance was remarkable and the tangible results followed, including:

- All milestones being hit on time – and then ahead of schedule
- Everyone aligned under one vision and approach
- A significant increase in the clarity and speed of making difficult decisions
- Ability to communicate, enrol and align expectations with other front-line service teams
- Project team members coaching and supporting each other to achieve commitments and promised results

*Achieve Breakthrough were a critical element in helping our project team work at a much more accelerated pace than usually adopted in the Council, by opening the door to new ways of working and a change in culture and attitude. What was particularly apparent was a shift in openness and willingness to challenge each other's commitments, which although people found difficult at first, actually engendered a stronger 'team spirit' and sense of joint achievement. By identifying potential 'blockages' or 'breakdowns' earlier, working through them as a group and finding ways through, we started to make progress and see them as positive ways of making progress, when previously people would have given up as it all felt too difficult.*

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