



The Orange County Clerk of Courts Performance Excellence Journey

A Case Study | 2008

620 W. Germantown Pike • Plymouth Meeting, PA 19462 • 484.690.0700 • www.activestrategy.com



Overview

Excellent customer satisfaction is a goal that can be tricky for any organization to achieve. Adding to this difficulty for the Orange County Clerk of Courts (OCCC) is the fact that many of the organization's customers are at the facilities to pay traffic fines or handle other civil and criminal court matters.

Yet by committing to a vision to provide Excellence through Efficiency and Effectiveness and to run the organization as a business, they have achieved remarkable results and have improved the satisfaction levels of their major customers, including those people who would rather be elsewhere.

These results were recently acknowledged by the Florida Sterling Council, who awarded OCCC with a 2008 Governor's Sterling Award for performance excellence.

Background

The Orange County Clerk of Courts (OCCC) is a government entity that performs nearly 1,000 different functions in the judicial system, including record keeping, information management, and financial management. Double-digit population growth within their county plus other contributing factors have resulted in increasing case volume, up to more than 509,360 cases in FY2007.

While OCCC's work is intricately connected with the courts, the courts do not control the operations of OCCC. The Clerk is a separate, elected constitutional officer, who answers to the voters of the County.

OCCC has three key customer segments, which include the Public, Attorneys, and the Judiciary. OCCC strives to provide value-added services that meet or exceed the requirements and expectations of all the people they serve, as well as their employees. All OCCC customers require timeliness, accuracy, professionalism, and knowledge.

The Performance Journey Begins

OCCC's journey to achieve performance excellence began in 2001, when they first began to apply principles of the Florida Sterling/Malcolm Baldrige criteria. In 2004, though senior management was very committed to performance excellence, OCCC realized that they had room for improvement in these specific areas:

- Strategic planning and deployment processes were loose
- Ability to align organizational effort to customer needs
- Public satisfaction was below targets
- Attorney and Judicial satisfaction were critical, but were not being tracked

In 2005, OCCC began working with ActiveStrategy, Inc., to help them address these needs.



Early Changes

To ensure that organizational improvements would be adopted and maintained, OCCC created governance structures, based upon the Sterling Criteria. Governance is administered by an Executive Steering Committee (comprised of senior management) and a Performance Excellence Implementation Team (made up of middle management).

With governance structures in place, OCCC needed to create a roadmap for next steps in their performance excellence journey. ActiveStrategy consultants conducted a Sterling-based assessment, which resulted in specific recommendations, including improving the strategic planning process and ensuring that plans would be deployed successfully.

Strategy Deployed

As a result of the first Sterling assessment, OCCC rolled out and utilized a refined planning process in mid-2006. They created their first top-level Balanced Scorecard, which would be the foundation for broader deployment. They also began to track Judicial and Attorney satisfaction for the first time.

Throughout the rest of 2006, OCCC cascaded and deployed Balanced Scorecards across five departments, 17 divisions, and into two key areas. To help the organization manage this quickly growing performance excellence framework, OCCC built it into ActiveStrategy Enterprise (ASE), web-based software designed for this purpose.

ASE helps OCCC align performance measurement with organizational strategies and allows OCCC to create and easily see linkages between the top-level strategy of the organization and the objectives, measures, and initiatives on various levels of scorecards.

To deploy strategy down to departments and divisions, managers within each area assemble teams and develop measures and action plans that emanate from the strategy, as reflected on OCCC's top-level Balanced Scorecard. Once action plans are defined, they are entered into ASE and are linked to related measures and action plans in the software.

The final steps in deployment are prioritization and resource allocation. OCCC implemented a systematic prioritization process utilizing Quality Function Deployment concepts. Through this process, OCCC ranks potential initiatives based on the impact of the initiative on the organization's strategic objectives, while taking into consideration the current performance and relative importance of each objective. The prioritized projects are then funded based on budget availability. This process ensures that projects are selected and funded based on rational priorities, rather than on a first-in-first-out method, and also encourages more thoughtful planning.

Ensuring Action through Business Reviews

ActiveStrategy consultants coached OCCC on how to conduct Balanced Scorecard-based business reviews in ASE software, which help the organization implement action plans, ensure plans are on track to meet set targets, and determine if modified action plans are required. Regular division and senior leader business reviews reveal performance gaps, which are now addressed more systematically than ever before.

ActiveStrategy also assisted OCCC with training on key analysis tools such as Process Mapping, Process Improvement, and Problem Solving, which allow the organization to make fact-based decisions, determine further actions, and/or provide additional resources.

When a performance gap necessitates it, improvement projects are created and linked to strategic scorecards within ASE software, allowing senior leaders to review, analyze, and adjust actions on a real-time basis. In this way, ASE reinforces and ensures organizational alignment because action plans directly link through cause-and-effect chains down and across the divisions and departments.

Results to Date



Though their journey is still underway, of course, OCCC has seen tremendous results to date. Public satisfaction has risen from 90.6% in 2003 to 95.1% in 2007. In the span of six months, Judicial satisfaction rose from 86% to 92% and Attorney satisfaction is now topping 97%.

Results like these, as well as tight organizational alignment, robust strategic planning and deployment processes, and consistent leadership all contributed to OCCC's recognition as a 2008 Florida Sterling Award winner.

"We thank ActiveStrategy for helping us in our Performance Excellence journey," said Assistant Administrative Officer John Ames. "Through their Strategic Planning guidance and Balanced Scorecard software, we were able to elevate ourselves to world-class status more quickly."