



By Blake Shaw

Blake Shaw is a senior partner at the Change and Innovation Agency.

There have been many articles on process management works. Similarly, there have been many questions from program administrators on process management work at a time when state agency capacities remain stagnant while demand for public assistance continues to increase. I figured that the best way to answer is let three of those who work in the field to write about their experiences.

Process Management— They Speak for Themselves

We Have No Appointments

Troy Hutson, Assistant Secretary, Economic Services Administration, Washington Department of Social and Health Services

Appointments are internally convenient, but they add rework and wasted time when over 50 percent of appointments require rescheduling. Take a typical office that currently schedules appointments and I'll show you three to six full-time employees of capacity that you could have on the front line

interviewing clients. Offices that are managing their processes are managing interviews, not appointments, and those three to six FTEs are now conducting interviews instead of scheduling and rescheduling. You can free from 18 to 90 interviews' worth of capacity per day by getting rid of appointments. Appointments are now the exception rather than the norm.

The absence of appointments has

been one of the Process Management factors that have helped us recover 104 FTEs of capacity, reduced wait times from 3–4 weeks down to 5–30 minutes, and decreased average days to process from 16–18 days down to 0–4 days.

We Are Seeing Improved Quality

Ted Roth, Deputy Director, Income Support Division, New Mexico Human Services Department

New Mexico began switching offices

to a process management model in the summer of 2008. Despite increased customers and fewer staff, our offices have shown a decrease in invalid negative actions, improved payment accuracy and improved timeliness rates. We quickly realized the correlation between improved quality checks and the ability to serve customers faster.

Applications are better tracked, as there is a team devoted to each major process step that follows the walk of the client. Proactive efforts ensure cases are renewed on time, or that customers follow through with providing verification which is giving clients individual attention they were not getting before.

We have built quality into the processes, ensuring that we catch costly errors before it's too late, as well as allowing for timely feedback and teaching to the staff that made the mistake. Managers are accessible and working with their staff to ensure that interviews are thorough, documentation is clear and verification items requested are necessary. The presence of built-in quality has not delayed clients from getting their benefits, nor

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tional year of funding for the TANF Emergency Contingency Fund, scheduled to expire Sept. 30, 2010. Nearly \$3 billion of the \$5 billion fund has been awarded to states for increased expenditures in basic assistance, short-term benefits and subsidized employment. Congress has introduced language that would make \$2.5 billion in TANF emergency funding available for FY 2011 in a number of different vehicles that, at press time, have stalled in the Senate; however, NASTA remains hopeful that legislative language preserving this valuable fund will pass in time for states to continue the proactive work they are doing with low-income families across the country who have been hard hit by the recession.

The importance of this fund was further underscored in a May meeting of Vice President Biden's Middle Class Task Force where the vice president remarked how the TANF ECF fund and its ability to reimburse states for subsidized work had been one of the "sleeper" success stories of the ARRA bill passed in the spring of 2009. NASTA's position is that far from undoing welfare reform, as some have claimed, the ECF has kept the focus on work during a protracted recession and jobless recovery providing subsidized jobs to almost 190,000 individuals nationwide.

NASTA has also been involved in work spearheaded by the Office of Management and Budget review-

ing programs which may be targeted for control of improper payments. At OMB's request, the Administration of Children and Families convened a number of stakeholders to discuss several programs, including TANF. APHSA and Rus Sykes, NASTA chair, participated on the access advisory group. Part of this discussion hinged on the possible development of measures of access for the TANF program. NASTA made a strong case against the development of such an access measurement regime resulting in the ACF's acknowledgment that there is too little information about TANF non-participation to justify the establishment of a system to accurately and fairly determine access to state TANF programs. 

has it created rework. It has actually resulted in the opposite.

Clients receive their benefits in an average of 9 days, and rework is minimal because our efforts and philosophy have driven a “do it right the first time” culture throughout our Income Support Offices. It is scary to think how we managed quality prior to making the switch to Process Management.

We See Hope

Brian Donohoe, Quality Assessment Program Officer, Public Assistance Division, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services

We have only completed our first regional roll-out, but the results we have created a buzz unlike anything I have seen since working in the public sector. Employees are becoming the ambassadors of change and I’m not sure we could we stop this train if we wanted to.

Attracting and retaining quality staff

has been a serious problem for us. With the huge increase in applications, quality staff move on to less stressful jobs. But not anymore. Process management has given our employees hope, boosted morale, and allowed us to keep our valuable human resources. I hear laughter. People walk with a bounce in their step. The change has been profound.

I have my own top five lists of things you can expect after moving to process management, though they might not be as professional as what Troy, Ted and Brian have pointed out, they are, to me, the results that tell the story.

- **Parking Spots.** Change before you walk in the door... you might just get a spot right up front
- **Empty Chairs.** Gone are the “standing-room only” days. Once overcrowded waiting rooms are now just a quarter filled most days.
- **Smiling faces.** Let’s face it, we have a

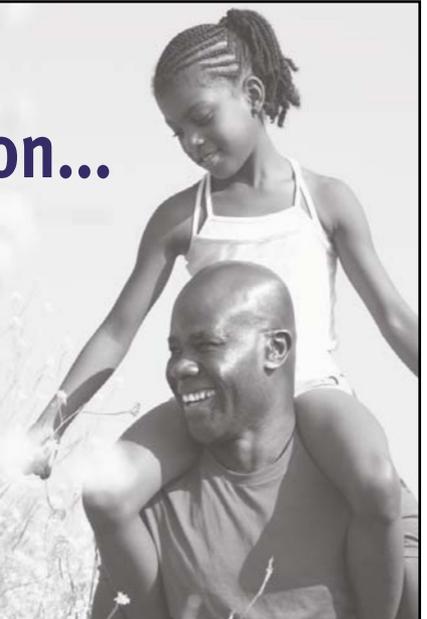
tough job. How do we get our employees to smile more? We eliminate the things that make life tough—backlog, unyielding caseloads, and frustrated clients who have been without food for weeks.

- **No kids’ toys.** When the average wait time drops from hours to minutes, mom and dad don’t need to pack half the kid’s room to keep them entertained all day.

And the No. 1 thing you can expect to see when you change... The return of dignity to the noble work we do. Dignity to our clients, who are no longer being treated like a case number and sent home to eat Ramen noodles for the 30 days it takes us to process them. Dignity for our employees who took this job to help families in need, but found themselves buried under their caseloads. Dignity to public service that has the privilege of being the means by and through which needy families get sustenance. 

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