

2008 IHT Award

Category: Technological Application

Project: The highways information management system

Summary

Not many IT restructures can boast increased efficiency rates of 400%+ and Gershon savings of over £2m - without a reduced service. But this is exactly what Islington's innovative highways information management system has achieved.

Residents and staff were frustrated at the slow pace of reactive maintenance provided by the Highways Service. Following our implementation of a groundbreaking, bespoke information system that immediately identifies problems, logs them and empowers our tradesmen; customers can now expect a repair in less than three hours, compared to previous times of up to 2 weeks.

Setting the scene

Reviewing our performance, revealed that we were carrying out lots of uncoordinated activity without management systems in place to monitor our performance – simply, we were running blind and our customers weren't happy.

To achieve a transformation in service quality and customer satisfaction, we used enterprise and ingenuity to bring about a revolution in the way we worked.

Innovation

The whole process was reviewed through the eyes of our residents, based on residents' expectations not what we traditionally delivered, residents expect:

- a positive first contact, with an accurate exchange of information;
- a speedy response;
- feedback and
- efficient service.

This meant creating a system designed to suit our customers. No such 'off the shelf' system existed so we worked with an IT provider to imbue existing systems with our professional experience and customer needs in a way that was both scalable and affordable.

The result; a customer-focused, fully integrated system. Combining the most relevant and useful technologies available - hand held devices, database technology, internet, photography, mapping and our call centre – into one unique system that coordinates everything we do, helping us react in hours not days. Service requests are instantaneously routed to the highways service and assigned to the appropriate team.

To meet these challenges we:

- provided 360° images at 20m intervals of the entire road network
- mounted the images on a GIS base, linked to the call centre
- are the first in the UK to link the call centre and highways systems
- requests instantly relayed to vehicle and hand held devices
- monitored every request and response
- empowered tradesmen to carry out repairs as appropriate and
- encouraged them to report directly to residents

Benefits

360° images linked to the call centre

Images allow the call centre staff to view and manipulate a picture of the street, allowing them to understand and accurately record the request.



An image of the street on the desk helps us to engage with callers and get accurate information

Linking the call centre and highways systems

We are the first authority in the UK to link these systems, at a keystroke, requests to the call centre are sent to the highways system.

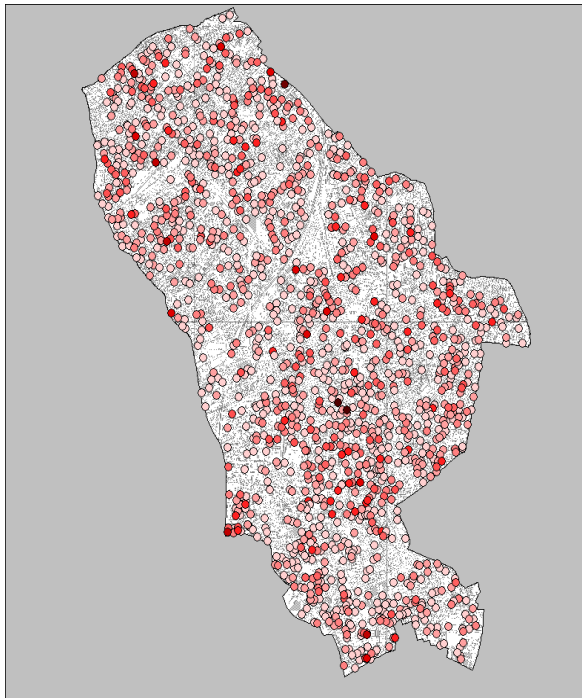


Instant relay to vehicle and hand held devices

Requests are flashed to the operational staff, no paperwork, no orders and no hassle.

Monitoring requests and responses

Our highways system is linked to mapping, allowing us to analysis our performance, identify trends and plan maintenance



Mapping annual service requests as part of our performance monitoring

Empowering staff

With no paperwork, staff are empowered to carry out what they consider appropriate

Report directly to residents

With the callers' details available, staff are encouraged to contact the caller and let them know the job is done!

Performance

In 2003-04 the operational staff responded to 1751 requests, their location and nature unknown. In 2006-07 the same workforce responded to 4578 customer requests and 2498 responses to safety inspections. The response time target is 4 hours, actual response averages 2 hours and our best has been 14 minutes.

Benefits to our community

The transformation in residents' eyes has been extraordinary; we now measure our response time with a clock rather than a calendar. The 428% increase in responses has been achieved with no increase in staff numbers, giving a Gershon saving of £2.39million.

Residents are amazed when the day that they call, a team arrives fixes the problem, then knocks at their door to tell them they've finished.

By eliminating pre-works visits by highways inspectors, they have been able to concentrate on the safety inspection programme. With a systematic inspection and repair regime we have a formidable record in refuting insurance claims against us.

Quality of product delivery

By linking up a data-heavy 'back office' with our public-facing call centre, using images of all our streets, we are setting new standards in customer service.

When it comes to best value performance indicators on e-government, we can confidently say we have far exceeded them, and created a system which is the blueprint for public highways services. And it is not just us who say so!

"Islington is at the forefront of asset management having developed the most detailed asset register and system."

Ken Hickson, managing director of Symology

Our software providers, recognise us as industry leaders and are keen to develop our protocols. We have also received strong third party endorsement from the chair of the UK Roads Board who referred to the 'innovative, exciting and interesting work the London Borough of Islington is doing with asset management.'

The Construction Industry, Research and Information Association is using our model as an example of best practice in its forthcoming guidance on asset management across the transport industry.

Implementation

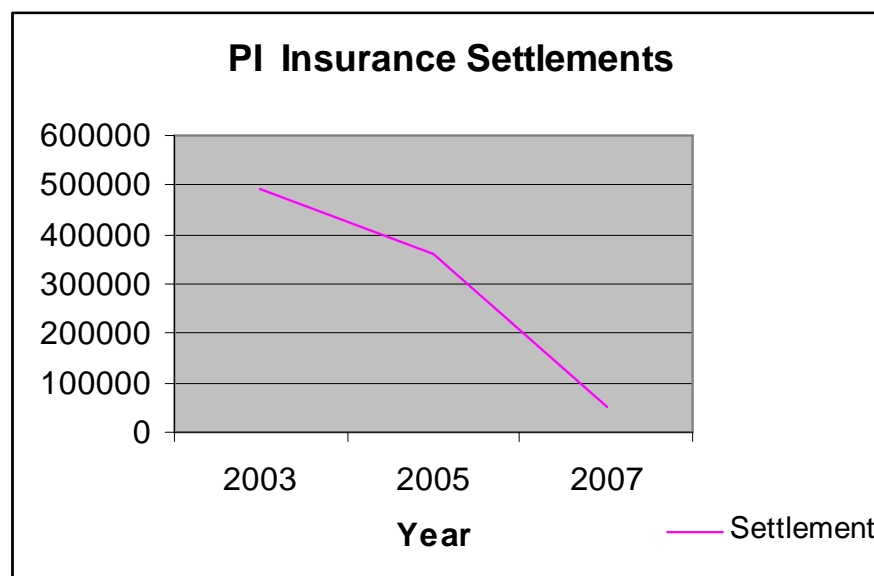
Listening to Islington' is a key corporate objective. Seeking the views of customers and then acting upon them, is reflected in the design of this system.

From the project's inception, residents, businesses, operatives and highways managers have all been consulted to ensure the system meets their needs and addresses their concerns.

The implementation process and training was shared between the management and operational staff ensuring that the end product delivered the needs and aspirations of all stakeholders.

Best value and cost benefits

Value for money has been exceptional. Our system is customer-oriented, we have been able to tap into £1m of e-government and customer care funding streams. During the first 18 months of using the system, we made Gershon efficiency savings of over £2m. Insurance settlements plummeted from £490,000 to £51,000



Plaudits

Below are just some examples of the many positive comments we receive through our customer satisfaction surveys, which are carried out each time works or repairs are complete.

"I am very happy with the work that has been carried out because I worried about the elderly and kids having to travel over cracked pavement."

Tracey Deeley, resident of Gladsmuir Road

"I was very impressed with the service provided"

Sandra Richmond, resident of Caledonian Road

"I am very happy that my concern has now been dealt with."

Juliette Bingham, resident of Amwell Road

Contact Centre

Contact Centre Manager

Contact Centre, Municipal Offices

222 Upper Street

Islington

LONDON N1 1YA

Tel: 020 7527 2000

Fax: 020 7527 5001

Date 30 January 2008

Our reference 1911919

Description Faulty street sign

Customer Anna Bailey
Tollington Park
Islington

N4

alb1979@hotmail.com

Notes

30/01/2008 23:58

Dear Ms Bailey Thank you for your email We have passed your gratitude to the operations manager for our highways department to circulate to the necessary people. Many thanks for fixing the faulty road sign I reported so quickly. It is refreshing to see a local government department responding so quickly to problems reported by the public. Please pass on my thanks to the workers involved - I hope their efficiency will be recognised by their management. Kind regards, Anna Bailey

This enquiry has been dealt with by Mike Abrams