

# Village of Bayside

## Breaking Down Silos: Working Towards A Collective Vision

9075 N. Regent Road  
Bayside, WI 53217

### Alliance for Innovation: Organizational Design



#### Contact Information

Andrew K. Pederson, Village Manager

P: 414-351-8818

F: 414-351-8819

[apederson@bayside-wi.gov](mailto:apederson@bayside-wi.gov)

Alex J. Henderson, Deputy Village Manager

P: 414-351-8813

[ahenderson@bayside-wi.gov](mailto:ahenderson@bayside-wi.gov)

July 16, 2012

# Taking the First Steps

---

While the challenges that face many municipalities throughout this country are felt throughout an organization, Bayside has taken on a comprehensive approach to customer satisfaction, results-orientated thinking, and reliability. As part of the effort, the Village follows the motto of *Integrity, Service, Solutions*, and is guided by five Values for Outcomes:

## VALUES FOR OUTCOMES

### Service Excellence

Provide solution-based innovative services.

### Civic Commitment

Provide inviting public spaces, promote aesthetic appeal and support community values.

### Citizen Engagement

Provide practical, timely and effective communications.

### Sustainability

Provide solutions to promote the Village's natural resources.

### Fiscal Integrity

Provide strong current and future financial stability.

Throughout this submission, you'll see exactly how and why the Village's reorganization and culture of thinking led to a holistic approach to local government; leaving employees more empowered and residents seeing more results.

## Public Perception

---

The sentiment about government, heightened more so now than ever, especially in Wisconsin over the past 18 months, has been the notion that the public demands more for less, especially at the local level. In the August, 2011 issue of *American City & County*, an article discusses the stress on public employees, and specifically, the feeling of anti-government. The article notes "that most people do not understand what local governments... provide for the average taxpayer." Second, government must discuss what services it should provide and what services can be performed elsewhere. "Educating people on what government does is the biggest hurdle. People don't know how county government works. They don't realize what we do every day. It's invisible government."

What local governments provide by way of service can often be a mystery to the common resident. Perhaps more perplexing is that most local government officials may not know their overall role. Yes, they know what to do from day to day, but are they aware that their everyday effort impacts every resident in their respective community? To help bridge this gap, facilitate transparency, and accountability, the Village utilizes four simplistic, yet often times difficult to achieve principles. They include:

- If the public perceives the decision making process of a project to be "fair", it is willing to live with a project that impact different interest unequally.
- Professionals do not have a monopoly on coming up with good solutions to problems.
- Whether an interest will be willing to accept a particular solution to a problem depends not just on what that solution looks like, but on whether it feels that the solution is being "imposed" on it.
- Interests who participate – or have the opportunity to participate – in an agency's planning process, generally do not... and cannot... take extremists or irresponsible positions as readily as can interest who have been completely outside the planning process.

## The Waiting Is the Hardest Part

---

At the core of many organizational issues is the way individuals interact with one another. For most local governments, several departments (general government, police, public works, dispatch, utility, etc) all come together to form one entity. On a *minimum* basis, we spend forty (40) hours per week with one another. Unfortunately, those forty hours can be spent in a bubble, or as better put – a silo.

What is a silo? Most commonly known, it's a storage tower – a tall, cylindrical building that separates and stores material on a farm. In the organizational sense, they are individuals, teams, departments or even companies that conduct business in a vacuum and don't take their actions' impact on the overall company into consideration. These separate areas of function are a drain on time, resources and often, employee morale. They often cause a duplication of efforts, reduce ability for collaboration, and reduce the opportunity for innovation. You'll often hear these types of comments or issues from those working in a silo:

- “That’s not my job”
- “Not in my job description”
- Ownership of “their” budget

Having pride and ownership of one's job is a useful and often desired hope for an employer. However, when taken to an extreme, it can often result in close-mindedness against input and feedback from others – a problem that can shut out fellow employees and stymie creativity. In local government, the role of silos can foster complacency, relying solely on the status quo. As our world changes constantly, this thinking leads to missed opportunities to improve your community, even resulting in negative financial impacts.

The question then becomes, “how do we eliminate our silos?” The answer (break them down) may seem easy enough on its face, but it's a time intensive, process driven endeavor. The one notion that would best serve those in local government is this:

*The common resident or citizen does not care how, or why, or who delivers their services. They only care that the work is done properly, efficiently, and with their best interest taken into consideration.*

An example of this is something as simple as street repairs. In many communities, roads can often be under maintenance jurisdictions of locals, counties, and even the State. A resident, however, simply knows that the road they drive on every day needs to have a pothole repaired – and they don't necessarily care who does it, so long as it's addressed in a timely fashion. This is where the silo approach of whole governments becomes an issue, pushing responsibilities off onto one another. The same analogy can be used for internal organizations. A resident entering Village Hall with questions is not going to want to be sent from department to department, building to building – they're just going to want their questions answered in a timely and accurate manner.

The disadvantages of silos are many, and we've touched on several of them here. The advantages? There aren't any.

## Village of Bayside Case Study - Change the People or.....Change the People (First Who, Then What)

---

In 2005 for the Village of Bayside, the problem of organizational silos was beginning to show its negative effects. Each department, and mostly, each individual, operated in their own silo. As some change began to take place, a new form of silo developed- one that is referred to as a “functional silo.” Functional silos often exist with teams that work together for a common goal or project (e.g. new park playground). These teams work very hard to achieve their overall outcome, but may lack in their ability to include outside interests, and seeing how the project will serve for the betterment of the entire agency. In Bayside, this was becoming the norm, with department heads creating and solving problems without taking feedback or consideration into account. While these functional silos may have seemed to solve the pending issues, they sprouted underlying consequences, including the dilapidation of trust within the organization. Trust, at its

very core is the thing that makes individuals, teams, and organization run. Department heads began to distrust other department heads, which lead to the pitting of full departments (DPW & PD) on issues that would affect the citizen base.

We had reached a point of conflict, of the destructive nature – our goal now was to create constructive conflict. From 2005-2008, the Village experienced an organizational change that led to the breaking down of silos in each department. Much of the change happened through the reorganization of pivotal positions. Some were made through attrition and retirement, others through mutual partings and some through necessary change. As Jim Collins stated in his book *Good to Great*, “...you have to get the wrong people off the bus, the right people on the bus, and then put those right people in the right position...”. Great organizations are not built over night, and this certainly wasn’t the case with the Village of Bayside. Getting the right people on the bus equated into addition through subtraction. Bringing those new personalities into the organization helped to calm some of the extremist “old school” thinkers who were averse to change. While change in Bayside began as early as 2005, it continues through present day. In 2012, we believe we’re further than we were seven years ago, but we also know that we can continually improve. While the change of people and personalities in the organization occurred first, it took time for new members to assimilate the new culture and though process of a better way to perform.

There are certainly factors that played a pivotal role into moving our organization into a more cohesive, forward thinking machine:

### **1. Focus on Details**

- Silos often exist because the focus is on getting things done and out the door. In our profession, many of us come to work with a set idea or list of goals to accomplish in that day. We shifted our focus from quantity to quality. The focus should be on doing things the correct way, not just getting it done and moving on to the next item on the list.

### **2. Moving In One Direction**

- One of the most important concepts to get all staff working towards a collection vision; was to actually define that *vision*. The incorporation of the Village’s Vision Statement, Mission Statement, and Values for Outcomes has led to defining expectations and holding individuals accountable along the way. Each department needed to realize we are all working for one outcome – the resident. Our motto of *Integrity-Service-Solutions* now adorns our communications and vehicles. We’re striving to achieve all three in our daily actions, because only achieving two of the three initiatives would be short-sighted.

### **3. Building Trust**

- In many senses, this was (and still remains) the most difficult task. Trust is something that is earned over time, through actions and follow through – not something that can be manipulated or forced. The issue of trust is something that existed between department heads, supervisors and line employees, and even between separate department employees.

### **4. Constructive Conflict (& feedback)**

- In the world of silos, individuals don’t work outside of comfort zones, or search for new ways to improve. They shy away from conflict, which causes more issues as time goes on. In Bayside we’re able to have everyone sit at the table and have productive, enthusiastic debates about how to problem solve, ways to work together, and new ways to approach old issues. Much of this was borne out of improved communication throughout the organization. Taking time to ask a laborer their opinion on a project, participating in a police ride-along, or riding along during snow removal operations are all ways to gain different perspective and feedback.

Perhaps the most important factor in the organizational change has been the communication and collaboration between departments, and gathering input and feedback from everyone, including the fringes (line employees, residents, etc.) As one of the main principles states “professionals do not have a monopoly on good ideas.” You must be open to feedback and some criticism – different perspectives open the door to different and, possibly, better solutions.

To conclude, we offer a small example of how our organizational design has shifted out of the silo way of thinking. As part of the Village’s 2012 budgeting process, each of the Village’s department heads met with the Village Manager to discuss priorities, status checks and to determine that following year’s capital improvement purchases. Each department head had previously submitted a list of possible capital expenditures. The difficulty, of course, was going to be to prioritize these needs, and get the separate departments to agree upon an equitable, needs based purchasing program (while keeping in mind the limited amount of funding available). While normal situations (and previous experience) would lead one to believe this would be a long, drawn out, stubborn process – our department heads were able to prioritize purchases, find consensus on organizational needs, and even create a relatively equitable schedule for 2012 capital projects within forty-five minutes! The conversation was productive, with team members asking poignant questions; thus creating a relaxed, yet enthusiastic and synergetic environment.

## **Take-Aways**

### ***How did the idea improve the organization/Who has benefited?***

The idea and effort to improve the organization from within has great benefits for employees and our residents. The concept is simple on its face – if employees are happy, motivated and dedicated to performing their job to the best of their ability, the residents will see the results through everyday service.

### ***What Costs/Savings Were Involved?***

This type of change didn't involve a great amount of cost, just patience and consistency. The message needs to be regular and non-wavering. Getting the right people on board isn't always an easy or quick process, but it is worth it in the long run.

The savings involved are also difficult to quantify into dollars – but they are certainly tangible. It is always cheaper to do something right the first time than to go back and redo something that was done incorrectly. The ability to reduce redundancy, improve employee self-worth & morale, and increase productivity/innovation are all positive results.

### ***What customer/community needs and expectations were identified and fulfilled?***

Our organization design change has been part of our long term Values for Outcomes, as well as our Customer Care program. Residents expect their services to be delivered in an efficient and results-based manner. As mentioned, the user doesn't necessarily care who is providing the service, but rather that it's being done, and being done correctly. Our ability to problem solve internally and meet our citizen's needs is now greatly improved.

### ***Has service delivery been enhanced/did the initiative improve access to government?***

We examined a way to solve our problem, and do so in an "unordinary" fashion. Residents want their problems solved, but sometimes doing so with innovation helps create even more participation and excitement. Our communication & emotionally intelligent process is one that promoted transparency and encourages the public to get involved and to partner with government, as opposed to becoming adversarial.

### ***What lessons were learned that could be shared with other local governments?***

We believe this is a formula that can be replicated anywhere – the way to get to a non-silo based organization is not a one-size-fits-all by any means, but some of the basic principles can be replicated. Opening lines of communications between inter-office departments, and soliciting feedback from both internal and external partners can be first steps to success.

Local governments should be aware that they need to be able to adapt and integrate new technologies and ideas that are processed much quicker than ever before. Those with silos will not be able to sustain itself.

### ***Presentation Style***

We perform our presentation with two speakers, and will likely use a PowerPoint presentation – although the text will be limited. We believe that most of our message can be conveyed in examples – stories that many of us face on a daily basis, and ways that we've worked through them. The presentation will likely be light and active, with humor used, as well as the possibility for group activity. In the past we've used live message polling and videos to help elicit audience involvement – while providing entertainment to accompany the educational.